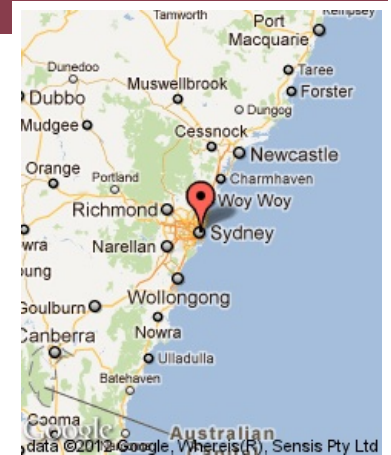


Hike The Great North Walk from Sydney



Highlights

A guided or self-guided walking tour setting out from Sydney on one of the harbour's delightful little ferries. The subsequent week of hiking journeys on the Great North Walk, between Sydney and Newcastle, and although close to the city it will feel like you are far away from the madding crowd as you travel through an area full of Australian beauty.

The main track of the Great North Walk runs some 250km between Sydney and Newcastle. Constructed in the late eighties, this trail attracts scores of avid hikers from around the world thanks to its endlessly fascinating terrain.

Starting out from the famous Sydney Harbour (make sure you get here at least a day early to check this out properly!) you'll set out on a short ferry ride to begin your walking holiday in Lane Cove Valley. Much of the walk follows the Hawkesbury river, leading you through some unmissable gorges along the way, and onto some tucked-away locations only accessible by boat.

You'll uncover many treasures during the walk which is one of the best planned routes in New South Wales. You can go it alone, or walk with the help of friendly guides who know the Great North Walk like the back of their hands.

Many people undertake portions or all of the Great North Walk every year, and very few regret immersing themselves in this gorgeous corner of New South Wales. The appeal with this tour is that it is a perfect mix of both hiking and cruising, taking you to great locations such as Berowra Waters which is not accessible by foot alone. Galston Gorge is another striking highlight on the itinerary, as is the quaint village of Brooklyn where you'll be able to sample freshly caught oysters.

Towards the end of the tour there are some peaceful coastal stretches across the beaches where you will have the opportunity to visit a local market and pick up some souvenirs for the unlucky folk back home.

Is it for me?

This holiday is a mixture of river cruising and hiking, incorporating some spectacular views and visits to quaint country villages. Although this gives you a great flavour for the Australian countryside you are never too far away from civilisation.

The accommodation is comfortable and spacious and predominantly cabin style - this won't suit all tastes if we're being honest, as aside from the hotel, these are quite rustic.

The daily walks are not incredibly taxing, and people with only a minimal amount of fitness will get a lot out of this tour, not only the great outdoor types.

Flexibility is the key for this walking trip. You have three options, you can choose a self-guided version, where you walk independently and are provided with maps for the route. Alternatively, you can have a private guide for your party, or you can join a group.

Prices from

800 GBP (6 days) per person

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If you choose to do the walk independently, you can choose whether you take 6 or 8 days. The 6 day trip is 4 days full walking, whilst the 8 days allows for a more leisurely pace, which leaves you with some additional time to explore.

Accommodation

Guided Group Walk

If you choose to go on the group walk, the first two nights are spent in a comfortable cabin settled within Lane Cove National Park, with meals served outdoors if the weather permits and the benefit of a great Aussie barbeque on one night. The next night is spent in a 3-4 star hotel but note that the evening meal is not included (alternative arrangements can be made.) The following two nights are on Milson Island in a comfortable cottage with all meals are provided. The last night will be spent in a cottage directly on Umina Beach. Not all meals are included in this cottage, but there are plenty of great places to eat close by.

Lunch packs are provided in insulated containers on long days out and breakfasts are served continental style. Special diets are catered for.

Self-Guided & Private Guided Walks

On the Self-Guided and Private Guided walks, accommodation is in bed and breakfast style accommodation. Breakfasts and a packed lunch are included, but you will need to sort out your own dinners - there are plenty of excellent restaurants to choose from. The region is famous for its fresh produce and tremendous variety. Hunter Valley wines and Sydney rock oysters are a must to try.

Itinerary

Self-Guided & Private Guided itinerary 8 days

(includes 7 nights accommodation & 6 days walking)

Day 1: Starts in Sydney any time after 2pm - no walking scheduled today. Accommodation: Sydney CBD hotel.

Day 2: Take the harbour ferry from Circular Quay to Woolwich. Begin by strolling through affluent Hunters Hill, admiring the fine 1850s architecture. Hike the first section of the Great North Walk through Lane Cove Valley. The terrain here features steep sided valleys that are characteristic of the sandstone that Sydney is built on. Accommodation: Lindfield.

Day 3: The track continues along the historic Benowie section, criss crossing pretty streams as it winds its way closer and closer to join the Hawkesbury. You'll feel like you're many miles away from the hustle and bustle of the nearby towns. Accommodation: Thornleigh

Day 4: From Thornleigh, continue along the Great North Walk. Galston Gorge is a major highlight today. Today's walking finishes with a transfer from Crosslands Reserve to the idyllically located Berowra Waters. You'll cross the river by ferry and experience a touch of river life as most of the accommodations and restaurants here are only accessible by boat – just call for a pick up! Accommodation: Berowra Waters

Day 5: A day based in Berowra Waters. You have the option of doing a walk to a nearby lookout or all the way to Crosslands where you finished walking yesterday. You can also explore the river by small boat, or just relax on the verandah of your waterfront accommodation. Accommodation: Berowra Waters.

Day 6: Climb over the high ridge in the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park via a series of delightful streams and waterfalls. Finish at Cowan Railway station and catch a train to Brooklyn. You should arrive with plenty of time to explore this delightful area and then enjoy some relaxation time at your waterfront apartment. Accommodation: Brooklyn on the banks of the Hawkesbury River

Day 7: Catch the train back up to Cowan Railway station then descend to the mighty Hawkesbury River itself. The highlight today is stunning Jerusalem Bay. Your walk finishes at sleepy Brooklyn, home for retirees, fishermen and probably a few hermits as well. Accommodation: Brooklyn on the banks of the Hawkesbury River

Day 8: The trip finishes after breakfast. Catch a train back to your car in Sydney.

Self-Guided & Private Guided Itinerary 6 Days

(includes 5 nights accommodation & 4 days walking)

Day 1: Starts in Sydney any time after 2pm - no walking scheduled today. Accommodation: Sydney CBD hotel.

Day 2: Take the harbour ferry from Circular Quay to Woolwich. Begin by strolling through affluent Hunters Hill, admiring the fine 1850s architecture. Hike the first section of the Great North Walk through Lane Cove Valley. The terrain here features steep sided valleys that are characteristic of the sandstone that Sydney is built on. Accommodation: Lindfield.

Day 3: The track continues along the historic Benowie section, criss crossing pretty streams as it winds its way closer and closer to join the Hawkesbury. You'll feel like you're many miles away from the hustle and bustle of the nearby towns. Accommodation: Thornleigh

Day 4: Galston Gorge is a major highlight today. The track continues through sandstone bushland to eventually emerge at the idyllically located Berowra Waters. You'll cross the river by ferry and experience a touch of river life as most of the accommodations and restaurants here are only accessible by boat – just call for a pick up! Accommodation: Berowra Waters

Day 5: Climb over the high ridge in the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park then descend to the mighty Hawkesbury River itself. Your walk finishes at sleepy Brooklyn, home for retirees, fishermen and probably a few hermits as well. **Accommodation:** Brooklyn on the banks of the Hawkesbury River

Day 6: The trip finishes after breakfast. Catch a train back to your car or Sydney

Group Guided Itinerary

Day 1: Starting in Sydney, you will walk down to Circular Quay and board the ferry for Woolwich. This begins with a stroll through the affluent Hunters Hill area where you can view the fine architecture. The first section of the Great North Walk will take you through Lane Cove Valley. The terrain here features steep sided valleys which are characteristic of the sandstone that Sydney is built on.

Day 2: The track continues along the historic Benowie section, criss-crossing pretty streams as it winds its way closer to join the Hawkesbury. You'll feel like you're many miles away from the hustle and bustle of the nearby towns.

Day 3: Galston Gorge is a major highlight of today's trek with its steep sided sandstone walls. The track hugs the river along this section, finishing at Crosslands Reserve.

Day 4: You will continue the track through sandstone bushland to eventually emerge at the idyllic Berowra Waters. From here you'll cross the river by ferry and experience a touch of river life as you enjoy lunch at one of the waterside cafes. After lunch the track continues uphill via picturesque streams to Cowan. Then it's a short trip by boat to a secluded island in the middle of the Hawkesbury River.

Day 5: Descend through the forest you will reach the spectacular Jerusalem Bay. The track continues through sandstone country all the way to Brooklyn, home for retirees, fishermen and probably a few hermits as well.

Day 6: After breakfast, you will board the River Postman ferry for the ride across to Patonga, which is another sleepy waterside village. From here you'll take the coastal route via Pearl Beach to Umina Beach.

Day 7: A morning beach walk brings you to Ettalong Beach and a tough decision - you can either enjoy the famous Ettalong Markets for a couple of hours, or take a cruise over to Palm Beach and back (extra cost, around \$20). After lunch, you will board a train for a very scenic ride before rejoining the bus and heading back to Sydney (arriving at approximately 3pm.)

Details

Getting there

From Sydney Harbour Circular Quay a ferry is caught up to Woolwich to the start of the walk. The return journey is by train or bus back to Sydney.

When is best

March is usually warm to hot with some humidity. By about Apr the weather changes from mild to warm with little humidity. Winter days in May-Sep are great for walking. By October it starts to warm up again. This trip is not offered from Dec-Feb as the days are too hot and humid to enjoy walking.

Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed