



‘Iconic and Historic Swimming Places of Sydney’ Swimtour



Sydney's Coogee Beach - our home for the week

- Swim where the kings and queens of Australian swimming learned their craft
- Swim where freestyle was invented
- Swim where lifesaving in Australia began (both still water and surf)
- Visit some of Sydney's historic buildings and galleries
- Check out some marvellous scenery
- Shop in some world-renowned boutiques
- Sample great world-class eateries.

Otter Aquatics will again be leading a five (or seven) day trip to Sydney in November 2017 sampling a number of that city's iconic and historic swimming places, many of

which are 'ocean and harbour baths', and all of which are of great importance in the history of Australian swimming.

Queensland has its great beaches of course, but Sydney's are just that bit different. Beaches near Brisbane are usually long expanses of sand and sea and away from the suburbs. Sydney's beaches tend to be shorter, lie in among the suburbs and are framed by rugged, rocky headlands. Queensland has some good swimming pools of course but, again, Sydney's are just that bit different. There are many ocean or harbour baths in Sydney, full of importance not only in the history of swimming in Australia but of swimming and lifesaving internationally and, indeed, in the overall social history of Australia.

Some even venture to describe swimming in Sydney's ocean or harbour baths as sacred:

Of course, much more than simply swimming happens in this sacred space; it's way deeper than exercise. Rome has the Vatican, Mecca has the Kaaba, but for Sydney it is the water which is holy; the ritual place we go to meditate. Sydney Morning Herald 23 December 2013.

The tour will depart for Sydney from Brisbane in the late morning of Monday 13th November 2017 and return from Sydney to Brisbane in the late afternoon of Monday 20th November (some of us will be returning in the late afternoon of Friday 17th November). In the meantime, you will be able to swim in the best of Sydney's historic and iconic swimming places as well as having plenty of time to shop-till-you-drop, sample some of the best eateries in the country, check out unbelievable scenery, and experience the galleries and museums that make the birthplace of settled Australia so special.

All swims are entirely non-competitive and indeed optional. Non-swimming partners can do their own thing or accompany us brave swimmers from the land while holding our towels and clothes and taking photos. The longest swim is the early morning, pre-brekkie dash across Coogee Bay – about 350m or less if you want to cut it short (how many laps you do is up to you) – a cinch for regular ocean swimmers.

In November, the water in Sydney will be just that little bit cooler than in Brisbane (but not too much) – not the bathtub water temperature of Queensland, but the stuff that you really love deep down, right? (Sort of).

Why do it?

- You may swim at Dawnie's in Balmain where the Queen of Australian swimming, Dawn Fraser, learned to swim
- You may swim at Murray Rose Baths where the King of the Golden Age of Australian swimming, Murray Rose, learned his craft
- You may swim where modern freestyle (we should use its real name of 'Australian Crawl') was developed

- You may swim where both the Royal Lifesaving Society of Australia and the Surf Lifesaving Association of Australia were born
- You may swim where other early world champions began their careers – such as Wilhelmina Wylie and Fanny Durack, two of Australia's first female Olympians, and Andrew 'Boy' Charlton
- Some of you may swim at McIver's Baths, formerly known as 'the nuns' pool', the only 'Ladies only' pool in Australia and where Fanny Durack learned to swim (sorry fellas, this one's not for you)
- You may swim at some of Sydney's many small and beautiful ocean beaches, such as Clovelly and Tamarama (aka 'Glamorama')
- You may swim at the 'Icebergs' at Bondi, the first licensed winter swimming club in the world
- You may swim, if that is your inclination, at one or more of the few legal clothing-optional beaches in Australia.

What is included in the price?

- Return airfares to Sydney from Brisbane (guests from Porvoo, Reykjavik or wherever will need to get themselves to Sydney, and we will adjust their price)
- Seven (or four) nights' accommodation, including breakfast, in a quaint, comfortable, friendly, 'small-design' hotel ('The Dive Hotel'. www.divehotel.com.au. 234 Arden St, Coogee NSW 2034. Phone: 02-9665 5538). It is right on Sydney's Coogee Beach. Accommodation is on a twin/double share arrangement. There will be an extra charge for a single-use room
- Minibus or taxi transfers to and from Sydney airport
- A seven (or four) day public transport pass to cover you for all of Sydney's buses, trains and ferries
- Entry into those pools that charge a fee
- Talks from a former academic historian and swimmer on the historical and social importance of the places we will visit (you are welcome to shut me up if I talk too much)
- Supervised swims at each location by an experienced swimming instructor/coach/lifeguard/surf lifesaver (i.e. me again)
- The hotel will provide beach towels for guests for day use
- Advice, suggestions and possibly accompaniment on tours of many of Sydney's interesting spots (which is most of the place of course) by an ex-Sydney boy who can't quite get the place out of his system (you guessed it, also me)
- Souvenir t-shirt, cap, swimming cap and backpack to mark your glorious achievement
- An end-of-trip dinner at a destination to be decided by popular choice.

What you will have to provide yourself:

- Transfers to and from Brisbane airport. I suggest using the *Airtrain* so you can leave your car at home. Alternatively the long-stay car park at the airport may be more economical if you car pool

- Funds to cover the cost of all lunches and dinners (except a group dinner, probably on the Thursday night). There is a wide range of dining options to suit all budgets just around the corner from the hotel in Coogee as well as short bus rides away at 'The Spot', Randwick and Bondi Junction. And the city, Paddington, Woollahra, and Oxford Street are only a 30 minute bus ride away. We can dine separately or together – whatever you want
- Swimming togs, goggles, fins/flippers (if you really need them) and wetsuits (the latter for sooky Queenslanders who may still be cold in Sydney's mild spring waters)
- Clothing and personal items. It will be 'almost' summer in Sydney (kind of) so, while shorts and t-shirt should be OK, they might not. While it will not be Melbourne-cold, it will not be Brisbane-warm either, so pack a jumper, jeans, rain jacket, etc.
- Bring a good pair of walking shoes/joggers, sunnies, sunscreen, a hat/cap and a water bottle
- Funds to cover personal entertainment, shopping, souvenirs, etc
- Personal medications
- Decent dollops of senses of adventure, fun and humour, a willingness to enjoy the hell out of the experience and a preparedness to brag about it all once you get home.

What the program will look like:

On our first evening, after we have arrived and dipped our toes into the sea at Coogee Bay, we can gather together over dinner and work out a rough plan for the week – it is your holiday and we will do whatever you want. Then each morning over brekkie, we can decide with a little more exactitude what our program will be like for that day. I will make suggestions of course and the following guide is based on my ideas.

Day 1

At about 10am, we will meet at one of the group check-ins at Brisbane domestic airport

11am: fly to Sydney, arriving at about 2pm

Transfer to our hotel

Then we can do a pre-wetting in Coogee Bay or do something else far less important.

Day 2

Optional wake-up yoga on Coogee Beach to be followed by a (also optional but highly recommended) swim across Coogee Bay at about 6am. (I'd like to make both of these compulsory but advice from those sager than I suggests that they remain optional.) After this, you will feel so good you will want to swim up a waterfall or wrestle a polar bear, but you might just have to settle for brekkie back at the hotel.

At about 10am (or whenever we are all ready), we will embark on the cliff walk from Coogee to Bondi via Gordon's Bay, Clovelly, Bronte and Tamarama. While this is a walk rather than a swim, it takes in a number of the iconic swimming places mentioned above as well as offering world-class scenery. While the distance is only about 6km, there are quite a lot of ups-and-downs and you will want to stop many times along the way to swim, have coffee, lunch, or just to stop and admire the views; so it may take most of the

day. See: <http://bonditocoogeeewalk.com/>. On this walk, we will take in the birth places of both still water and surf lifesaving as well as freestyle swimming – all at Bronte. I will tell you the true history of surf lifesaving, not the ‘false history’ that those Bondi or Manly types like to tell you.

From Bondi, we can take a bus back to Coogee or, if you have packed your dancing shoes, you can proceed to ‘do’ Sydney Town in the evening.

Day 3

After what will by then be our traditional yoga/early morning swim and brekkie, we can decide what we would like to do. I would suggest any one or more of Dawnie’s in Balmain*, Murray Rose’s in Woollahra, the ‘Boy’ Charlton Pool in Woolloomooloo, Thorpie’s in Ultimo, Fanny Durack’s in Petersham or North Sydney Olympic Pool (home to many record-breaking swims and right under the northern approach to the Sydney Harbour Bridge). Dawnie’s and Murray Rose’s are traditional Sydney harbour baths whereas the last three are standard modern pools but significant because of whom they are called after or what happened there.

Afterwards, you can take in other Sydney attractions, returning to Coogee whenever you want.

Day 4

Yoga/swim/brekkie as usual.

My suggestion is to bus it into Circular Quay then take a ferry to Manly on Sydney’s northern beaches. There we can take in a number of surf or harbour side beaches and swims. One I would highly recommend is *The Bold and Beautiful Swim* (<http://www.boldandbeautifulmanly.com.au/>). We start at Shelley Beach, a 30 minute walk from the Manly ferry terminal along the Cabbage Tree Bay Eco-Sculpture Walk, then swim the 750 metres to back to Manly’s main beach (and return if you like). This is a stunningly beautiful swim in water so clear you can see all sorts of marine life swimming along below you. People do this swim every day of the year.

In the evening, we will gather for a group dinner at one of the many eateries in Coogee, The Spot or other nearby places.

Day 5

Yoga/swim/brekkie as usual.

My suggestions for the morning include Wylie’s Baths at Coogee (where Wilhelmina Wylie trained under her father’s tutelage for her silver medal at the Stockholm Olympics in 1912) and/or the Ladies Baths at Coogee, where Fanny Durack (gold medal in 1912) taught herself to swim (both are short walks from the hotel) followed by anything that you didn’t have time for on the other days.

In mid afternoon, those returning to Brisbane early will transfer back to the airport for the flight back to Brisbane. The rest of us will be extending our holiday over the weekend, taking in anything we missed earlier in the week or doing some of the cultural, tourist or shopping spots.

Getting around Sydney is easy by public transport (don't even dream about driving if you are new to the city – or even if you are not). You will be given an Opal card to use on all buses, trains and ferries (if they run out of credit, I will top them up). I will tell you the bus routes to get between Coogee and the city or Circular Quay.

Some non-swimming things to do:

- the Art Gallery of NSW
- the Museum of Modern Art
- the Museum of Sydney
- the Mitchell Library
- other iconic and/or historic sites including NSW Parliament House, Sydney Hospital, Hyde Park Barracks, St James Law Courts, a couple of gothic-revival cathedrals, the remains of the Tank Stream (Sydney's original water supply), Darling Harbour, Oxford Street (the venue for the annual Mardi Gras) , and so on
- cruises on Sydney Harbour – perhaps to Taronga Park Zoo?
- the Opera House
- the Harbour Bridge (including walking over the top of the span if you are game! Or at least climbing up one of the pylons)
- all sorts of entertainment options such as concerts, movies, casinos
- shopping
- great walks all around Sydney's eastern suburbs – or beyond.

Or maybe some of these will have to wait until our next Sydney venture.

Other notes

- To do the swims – surprise, surprise – you do have to be able to swim, but only of a standard expected of a once-in-a-while swimmer (let's say, as a rough guide, the ability to swim 100 metres or so – any stroke, no rush). Of course all swims are non-competitive and all are completely optional
- Some swimming instruction/stroke correction can be provided if required
- While, for safety reasons, we will endeavour to do our open water swims in a bunch (or bunches to cater for different swimming abilities), the open water is just that; so safety will be your own responsibility
- You should be aware that swimming – especially open water swimming – entails a certain degree of risk and you will need to acknowledge and accept this risk.

What will it cost?

As a guide, our 2017 trip cost \$2,500 per person, but a more accurate price will be advised later.

The price will assume double or twin accommodation. There will be a slightly higher price for single accommodation.

Cancellations

It will not be possible to cancel the trip as the low cost of hotel bookings and airfares I am able to secure must be paid for in advance. But, if something crops up that prevents you coming, a substitute will be acceptable.

I hope you can come. It really will be great!

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