

## **COWAN CREEK AND SURROUNDING AREAS**

### **SUGGESTED 2-3 NIGHT OR WEEKEND**

If you haven't visited the beautiful Hawkesbury River before, we recommend that you visit and explore the tranquil waters and inlets of Cowan Creek. This area has some of the most spectacular scenery on the Hawkesbury River and is a very popular area. In summer it can be very busy in this area and moorings are in great demand. Secure one early.

Cowan Creek extends 12 km from Eleanor Bluff to Bobbin Head, where there is a small kiosk and takeaway shop. This area is entirely enclosed by Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, consisting of nearly 15,000 hectares of rugged bushland.

#### **DAY ONE**

Once we depart the vessel at the 'pick up point' near the motorway bridge, turn right and drive east. At the end of Long Island, ahead you will see the Railway Bridge and Dangar Island. This Railway Bridge was a major engineering achievement in its time and, when it was built in 1887, its piers reached a depth of 162 feet - the deepest in the world. The spans were assembled on Dangar Island.

Dangar Island was originally called Mullet Island and Captain Phillip's exploration party landed here in 1788. Bradley's Beach is named after one member of the expedition and well worth a visit. The island was later renamed Dangar Island after Henry Dangar who bought it in 1864. The remains of the water tower he built can still be seen. There is also a nice walking track around the island that takes about 1 1/2 hours. There are wonderful views across the water to Long Island, Brooklyn and Little Wobby Beach. There is a General Store on the northern end of the island.

As you pass Green Point and Croppy Point, you will see Gunyah Beach on your right. Croppy Point got its name because it was the favoured crossing spot for runaway Irish convicts travelling south, many of whom had cropped their hair short to show sympathy for the French Revolution.

Gunyah Beach is a beautiful sandy beach and a good spot for a picnic. Sea Eagles may sometimes be seen in this area and a little further upstream Aboriginal engravings.

After travelling south you can see Lion Island and open water ahead to the east. Remember that the area past Challenger Head and Juno Point is very dangerous and out of bounds to houseboats.

Veer right and follow the river down Cowan Creek. Pleasant places to stay for the night are Americas Bay or Refuge Bay - on your left just before you get to Halletts Beach. Both these bays provide good sheltered moorings or anchorages and there is a lovely waterfall, particularly after rain, at Refuge Bay.

The name Americas Bay probably originated from American whaling and sealing vessels which worked along the coast in the mid 1800's and used the bay as a safe and convenient anchorage. Refuge Bay got its name as a top-secret training base for Force Z in 1943, which was preparing for an assault on Japanese shipping in Singapore Harbour using the **Krait**, a 20m Japanese fishing boat. The Krait sailed from Refuge Bay in January 1943 and returned to Darwin in October and is now in the National Maritime Museum in Sydney.

Incidentally, a little known fact is that the original Australian Constitution was actually drafted at Refuge Bay on a paddle steamer called "Lucinda", anchored here over Easter 1891.

#### **DAY TWO**

Continue your cruise down Cowan Creek, passing Halletts Beach on your left. There are public moorings here and nearby is Cottage Rock - an unusual sandstone formation where there are additional moorings. Continue around Cowan Point and into Yeomans Bay - a lovely place for lunch or a rest. Castle Lagoon will be on your left. This is a very small bay and very sheltered and provides an spectacular view of a sunset.

On the other side of Cowan Creek lie the entrances to both Jerusalem Bay and Little Jerusalem Bay. Note that the water in Jerusalem Bay is very deep and therefore difficult to anchor unless very close to shore. Some stakes mark the remains of a boatshed built by George Rhodes in 1895.

Returning to Cowan Creek continue on down to Cottage Point veering left into Coal and Candle Creek. Or you may wish to spoil yourself with lunch or dinner at Cottage Point Restaurant. Bookings are essential, especially in the summer. A less expensive alternative is Cottage Point Kiosk (built around 1918), where you can also obtain provisions. The public moorings are on the Cowan side next to Cottage Point Inn. Secure your houseboat to the mooring and use the dinghy to reach the jetty.

Coal and Candle Creek is about 8 Km long and effectively ends at Akuna Bay. There is a large and very busy marina complex at Akuna Bay. At Akuna Bay there are a number of shops (including liquor), general store, takeaway and a restaurant. Visitors are welcome but are sure you moor off and go in by dinghy. Unfortunately the water is very deep here and will require constant attention to the anchor. For this reason we do not recommend you stay here for long. If you are on a two day one night hire, you will need to start returning to Holidays Afloat base by about 1.30pm.

### **DAY THREE**

If you have a longer hire you may wish to spend the remainder of your stay in and around this beautiful area where there is still so much to explore. Continue on down Cowan Creek towards Bobbin Head. Smiths Creek on your left is another very beautiful and sheltered area and worth spending some time in. Anchoring here is difficult however because of the depth of the water. Further on there are more public moorings at Swallow Rock and Waratah Bay.

Waratah Bay is the site of one of the earliest buildings in Cowan (built by Edward Windybank around 1890). Although this was unfortunately burnt down the foundations still remain. There is also a wreck in Waratah Bay, thought to be the remains of a coastal steamer.

Before you reach Bobbin Head you will see Appletree Bay on your right, with a red post on the point opposite. It is a popular picnic spot, with kiosk in summer, toilets, BBQs etc. There are also lots of other little inlets and hideaways along this stretch of water! Do not take your houseboat in here but use your dinghy for exploring.

Bobbin Head is a very busy spot and usually crowded with moorings. There is a large public wharf (built in 1987), but remember it is only to be used by ferries and private vessels. A full range of facilities, light refreshments and meals are available. Again, you should anchor the houseboat and use your dinghy to access the jetty.

There are a number of interesting walks in the Bobbin Head area and along the shores of Cowan Creek you will see a number of Aboriginal sites and middens. The Eora and Guringai people originally inhabited this area.

There are several walks in the Bobbin head area and we suggest you contact the Information Centre at the National Parks and Wildlife Shop, which is located in Bobbin Head Inn near the bridge.

Cowan Creek extends past the limit set for our houseboats - but can be navigated by dinghy if you wish to explore further.

If you are on a 2 or 3 day hire you will now be thinking about returning to base. Remember that Bobbin Head is about 3 hours motoring time from Holidays Afloat. You will find the approximate motoring times back to the pick up point from the most popular spots on the console of the vessel.

Lastly, please be aware of your position on the map at all times and at no stage proceed past Juno Point and Challenger Head as this will take you out to sea and into prohibited and dangerous areas.