



Stockton Beach Sand Dunes

Discover Stockton Bight, 32 kilometres of sand dunes just 30 minutes north of Newcastle. The wind-blown sand dunes of Stockton Beach comprise the largest continuous mobile coastal sand mass in the Southern Hemisphere. Not only do they hide the remote community of Tin City in their shadows, but also 12,000-year-old Aboriginal middens, numerous shipwrecks, remnants of WWII fortifications and a wealth of birdlife and shellfish. The 30 metre high dunes are formed by sand being washed ashore from the ocean and then blown upward by the wind.

Experiencing the dunes of Stockton Beach for the first time is an awe inspiring adventure. There are plenty of activities to suit everyone from the avid adventurer to the family group.

The dunes are enormous, very steep and quite thrilling! There is nothing like experiencing them from the back of a quad bike as part of a Quad Bike King guided tour. Or if you prefer to explore the desert wilderness of Stockton Bight in your own 4WD, pick up a beach vehicle permit (\$10 for a 3 day pass) courtesy of NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service and access the dune via the Lavis Lane entry point at Williamtown. To see the dunes from the passenger seat, hit the slopes for a fun-filled sand boarding session with Port Stephens 4WD Tours and slide screaming down the huge 60-degree slopes. Or if you consider yourself a romantic, then picture yourself galloping along the white sandy beach with Sahara Trails Horse Riding as you explore the many unique sites of Stockton Bight.

More than 100 merchant ships have sunk in the waters off Stockton Beach. Following a violent storm in 1974, with winds up to 185km/hr, Stockton Bight received its most famous landmark the wreck of the Sygna. The 53,000 tonne Norwegian bulk carrier is one of the largest ships ever to be wrecked on the eastern coast of Australia.

As the sand moves about, it exposes sections of barbed-wire entanglements left over from World War II. Also, running across the beach was a line of heavy concrete pyramids designed to slow down tank movements. Many of these tank traps are still where they were placed all those years ago. Some of the blocks have been moved to line the beach car park at Birubi Point.

Aboriginal ties are strong within the area; the Worimi people have called this area home for thousands of years. Aboriginal middens (piles of pippi shells and animal bones) can be found throughout the dunes, and occasionally, tools and implements are discovered.

Tin City, as it is euphemistically known, was a tight-knit permanent settlement first established as a squatter's village during the Depression in the 1930s. Left abandoned half a century ago it now appears as a pile of rusted tin scraps half buried by the white shifting sands at the northern end of Stockton Bight.

Stockton Bight is teeming with wildlife. At the water's edge, oyster catchers, gulls and terns wait to see what the pounding surf reveals. In the dunes an ibis wrestles a sand crab from a burrow, while overhead ravens scan their territory for a tasty scavenge. The beach is popular with fishermen with patches of bream, whiting, tailor and jewfish. Underfoot, pipis (clam-like shellfish) live in abundance. Amuse yourself by scraping and digging through the sand to catch them, and then release them back into the water to watch them burrow safely into the sand (there are strict laws governing the catching of pipis).

This almost surreal dune system with its brilliant white sand, amazingly high sand dunes and unique attractions is extremely popular with photographers. It also features in many commercials and movies (remember the Mad Max movie).

A journey down this thirty-two-kilometre beach is an adventure full of beauty and discovery.

For more information contact:

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Port Stephens 4WD Tours ph: (02) 4984 4760 or www.portstephens4wd.com.au

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