THE SHORELINE

EXPLORE NEWCASTLE’S MARITIME AND SURF CULTURE THROUGH A SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF THE CITY.

WALKING TRAIL

1. Destiny
2. Newcastle Mercantile Marine Memorial
3. Customs House
4. Queens Wharf
5. Tug boats
6. Boat Harbour – Newcastle Pilot Station
7. The Lifeboat
8. Grounded
9. Newcastle Ocean Baths
10. Newcastle Beach – Surfest
11. King Edward Park
12. Newcastle Memorial Park

WALKABILITY

- Steep gradient\steps

< Continue to Bathers Way
< Great North Walk
3 CUSTOMS HOUSE

Continue heading east until you get to the roundabout at Wharf Road and Watt Street, where you’ll discover the stunning Italianate Renaissance Revival style architecture of Newcastle Customs House. Designed by New South Wales colonial architect James Barnet in 1877 to facilitate the collection of customs duties from the commercial traders using Newcastle Harbour, Customs House features a distinctive clock tower topped by a ‘Time Ball’.

**Did you know?** Up until the Second World War Fort Scratchley would fire a gun as the Time Ball fell at precisely 1pm, allowing ships’ masters anchored offshore to adjust their navigation instruments. Refurbishments to a replica field gun at the Fort in 2013 reinstated this historically significant maritime tradition, which continues today.

4 QUEENS WHARF

When you ask a local for directions to Queens Wharf today, they’ll guide you to the bustling dining precinct and ferry berth on the waterfront west of Customs House. But in the mid-1800s Queens Wharf was a 2000ft-long structure with numerous landing areas built to provide space for berthing ships and loading coal. After coal shipping moved over to Carrington and Stockton, Queens Wharf became a loading point for wool and general cargo before being demolished in the 1960s.

**Did you know?** Today’s Queens Wharf precinct is the result of a design competition run by City of Newcastle in the early 1980s. It includes the pedestrian promenade running the length of the Foreshore to Nobbys Beach, as well as the expansive Foreshore Park on the opposite side of Wharf Road.
5 TUGBOATS

As you continue along the foreshore promenade towards Nobbys Beach keep an eye out over the water for the fleet of tugboats that operate within the harbour.

The first tugboat to arrive in Newcastle was the Huntress in 1854. More powerful tugs soon arrived and fierce competition emerged between the rival boats for towing jobs and salvage opportunities.

Tugboats continue to be vital for the effective operation of maritime activities within the busy working harbour, which sees 4600 shipping movements per year and up to 23 vessel movements within a 24-hour period.

**Did you know?** One of the most famous tugs in Newcastle’s history, known as the Champion, was built in 1895 for local mining magnate John Brown. She was not only one of Australia’s most powerful tugs, but also its most luxurious, lavishly decorated and fitted with a piano. She sank at anchor in the harbour in 1954.

6 BOAT HARBOUR — NEWCASTLE PILOT STATION

Renowned as an incredibly dangerous port and the scene of more than 200 shipwrecks, it’s little wonder that all ships entering and exiting the harbour must do so under the advice of a ship’s pilot employed and certified by Port of Newcastle.

Pilots provide advice to the ships’ masters (captains), taking charge of the conduct of the navigation while the master retains command of the vessel.

**Did you know?** About 80% of marine pilot transfers to and from ships are completed by helicopter, with 20% by pilot cutter vessels. These are often berthed in Boat Harbour, which you can see at the rear of the Newcastle Pilot Station located south west of Horseshoe Beach.

7 THE LIFEBOAT

Continue past the rear of the Newcastle Pilot Station and you’ll find a small circular plaque commemorating the Newcastle Lifeboat Service.

The first lifeboat arrived in Newcastle in 1838 and for the next 136 years the volunteer service went to the aid of the crews and passengers of vessels in danger, carrying out more rescues than any other in Australia.

The crew of the Newcastle lifeboat was made up of volunteers from the harbour department, dredge service and customs service who risked their lives to save others while receiving little or no payment.

**Did you know?** Take a detour along the breakwall and climb more than halfway up to Nobbys Lighthouse to see the lifeboat and rocket launcher sculptures placed there in December 2013 as part of a memorial for the Newcastle Lifeboat Service and Rocket Brigades.

8 GROUNDED

Follow the path around the shoreline past Nobbys Beach and you’ll find a permanent reminder of the dangers presented when wild weather lashes the port.

Grounded is a vibrant red sculpture created by renowned Sydney-based artist John Petrie to represent the bow of the coal ship Pasha Bulker, which ran aground in heavy seas 30m from the Nobbys Beach shore on Friday 8 June 2007.

Twenty-two crew members were dramatically rescued from the vessel during the ensuing storms, which pushed the Pasha Bulker further ashore and almost parallel to the beach.

It took 25 days before the ship was successfully re-floated, leaving nothing behind except for a section of 22mm plate steel from the rudder, which is included at the base of the sculpture.
Trace the coastline east towards the famed convict-built Bogey Hole ocean pool and you’ll find yourself at the bottom of a tiered set of steps leading towards the clifftops.

Take on the uphill climb and you’ll pass the rear access point for King Edward Park, a sprawling recreation reserve first proclaimed for public use in 1865.

Take a detour off the walking tour to enjoy a picnic in the park and admire the Victorian rotunda, built in 1898, the towering Norfolk pines and the floral beauty of the sunken garden.

Did you know? During the Second World War a gun battery and bomb shelters were erected in the park. They were demolished in 1978.

Newcastle is renowned for its spectacular natural beauty, but the urge to capitalise on the tourist potential of this coastline isn’t just a modern venture.

A decline in the local mining industry during the early 20th century forced Novocastrians to consider ways to diversify the local economy with projects such as the Newcastle Ocean Baths.

Located 500m around the coast from Nobbys Beach and less than 250m north of Newcastle Beach, construction of the pool began in 1910.

Take the high path alongside Shortland Esplanade to enjoy the best view of the Art Deco pavilion's distinctive façade, which was built in 1922.

Did you know? Lifeguard patrols operate at the Newcastle Ocean Baths year round apart from Wednesdays when the baths are closed for cleaning.

Newcastle is known for the variety of its surf breaks, from the exposed reef of the Cowrie Hole, a favourite among locals, to the popular stretch off Newcastle Beach that was home to the internationally-renowned Surfest contest for two decades.

Surfest began in 1985 when Newcastle was striving to cast off its industrial image and showcase the unheralded beauty and fantastic surf of its inner city beaches. Surfest was originally called the BHP Steel International and was the richest professional surfing event in the world at that time.

Did you know? Massive southerly swells in 2006 forced organisers to move the final day of competition to Merewether Beach, before Surfest was relocated there permanently the following year.

Keep following the pathway up through the historic military installations on Shepherds Hill’s and alongside Cliff Street until you get to a driveway leading up to the Strzelecki Lookout.

This marks the eastern end of the spectacular Newcastle Memorial Walk and the final stop on this walking tour.

Completed in April 2015, the 450m-long clifftop walkway was constructed to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli and the commencement of steelmaking in Newcastle.

You can extend your coastal journey beyond the western end of the Newcastle Memorial Walk by continuing along Bathers Way, which runs south to Merewether Beach.

Did you know? The walk features a 160m clifftop bridge adorned with steel silhouettes of soldiers, which are inscribed with almost 4,000 family names of Hunter Valley men and women who enlisted during World War One.