

BIRDIE BEACH

Bare essentials



Birdie Beach is a lovely beach located in Munmorah State Conservation Area on the Central Coast of New South Wales. Nude bathing is legal at the northern end of the beach (known as Red Ochre Beach).

We drove up from Sydney and following the directions on the Free Beaches website we found the Munmorah State Conservation Area without a problem. Once inside the park there were easy to follow signs to Birdie Beach, which led us to a decent sized car park. After we parked the car, however, we were unsure which way to go to get onto the nude beach. Luckily we saw someone with a River Island t-shirt

so quickly followed them as they walked to the northern end of the car park where a track went down to the beach. Once we got to the beach, there was a sign that said unclad bathing was permitted 400 metres north of the sign. At least we were in the right place. It wasn't too

much further along the sand and past a clear lagoon (well 400 metres!) before we got to the nude area (always easy to recognise by the nude people).

The day we visited there was a large number of people on the beach made up of families, singles and couples. There were lots of people in the water and I even ventured to put my feet in for a few minutes. The temperature was reasonable (although anything less than a spa is too cold for me) and the waves were gentle enough that I wouldn't have minded my 6yo dragging me in to get my knees wet (calling me a baby all the way as she often does).

Birdie Beach is a favourite hangout of the Coast and Valley Naturists club (CAVN) who often organise get-togethers at the beach (see AS&H issue 6). So if you're a bit nervous about visiting the beach give them a call, I'm sure they'll be happy for you to tag along.

Surrounded by cliffs, the beach is nicely secluded. Plenty of smooth rocks line the water at the far end; great to climb on or just sit and relax. There is a clear lagoon where ducks happily swam, and which even I was happy paddling around in; fantastic for little kids to play in. There is heaps of sand, so plenty of space to



spread out on if you want to. There's not much shade but the walk is easy enough that you could take a shade shelter or beach umbrella without too much trouble and this is exactly what most people did.

The beach is located in a Munmorah State Conservation Area managed by the National Parks and Wildlife service. I've read there is a fee to get into the park, although when I've been the toll booths weren't open. There are two camping area's in the park: Freemans, which has 50 sites catering to caravans and tents and Frazer which only has 6 tent sites. Both have cold showers, toilets, gas bbq's and tap water. Freemans camping area has walking tracks leading to Birdie beach only a few minutes away. To stay in one of the camping area's area's will cost \$14 per adult and \$7 per child according to the National Parks and Wildlife web site (www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au), which also recommends booking in advance especially for the Frazer camping grounds as it's popular for nearby fishing. If you do decide to stay in the camping grounds be warned... the park closes at 6pm non-daylight saving and 9pm during daylight saving. When

I say "closes" I mean locked. Any access in or out after these hours is by special arrangement and fees apply.

There is plenty to see in the park with many walking tracks, lookouts and picnic areas and there has been over 189 species of animals and birds sighted in the park. The National Parks and Wildlife service also offer plenty of tours within the park. If you fancy something a little more adventurous, the Sea Cave tour could be perfect for you. Rated as hard, these guided tours follow unformed tracks and provide a fascinating insight into the history of the area. Sea Cave tours are only held during specific times of year and are subject to weather conditions. If you want to keep the kids occupied for a couple of hours there is the "Bug Detectives" tour or if there are plenty of relaxing guided walks if you're interested in something a little more sedate. For more information on these tours and anything else you'd like to know about the park check out www.nationalparks.gov.au and search for Munmorah State Conservation Park.

If 'back to nature' is not for you, Birdie Beach is located on the New South Wales Central Coast, a



bustling tourist area where you are guaranteed to find somewhere comfy to stay, great restaurants to eat in and plenty to see or do. It's a fantastic area for a nude beach and I for one will be going back to check out the sea cave next time I plan a weekend at Birdie Beach.

Getting There

Birdie Beach can be reached by travelling along the expressway from Sydney and taking the Newcastle exit. Follow the Pacific Highway through Doyalson to Lake Munmorah. At Lake Munmorah take Elizabeth Bay Road at the traffic lights. Continue until you see the entrance to the Munmorah State Recreational Area on the left. Turn into the park and follow the signs to the Birdie Beach car park. Don't forget, there is a fee per vehicle to enter the park.

(courtesy of Free Beaches Australia - www.freebeach.com.au)

