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# How to enjoy Manly like a local

ALL tourists are told to come here, but when they arrive, they have no idea what to do. Here are the secrets to enjoying Manly like a local.

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Manly Surf n Slide

MANLY is one of Sydney’s most famous tourist attractions but may also be one of its least penetrated and understood.

“Every concierge in Sydney will tell their guests to come here,” says Manly Centre Manager Meegan Clancy. “But when they get off the ferry, they don’t have a clue what to do.

“Some remark how tiny Manly beach is, presuming it’s the one by the wharf on the harbour. Others ask how else they can get on and off the island.

“Most never see more than the Corso between the wharf and the beach.”

Manly was named after Captain Arthur Phillip for the “confidence and manly behaviour” of the indigenous people living here when he led the First Fleet into Sydney in 1788.

It could be that many of Manly’s modern day visitors are just as lost by their surroundings.

Clancy suggests visitors who come to Sydney base themselves in Manly. “It’s a surf village on the edge of the city,” she says.

But Manly is no Bondi, the locals will tell you.

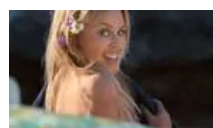
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One of Australia's very best beaches. Picture: iStock Source:Supplied

Clancy, who is originally from Adelaide but has lived in the northern beaches hub for 15 years.

“The vibe here is different. More relaxed,” she says.

“There’s a warm blanket over Manly, which allows friendships to grow, and people to grow.” And the best way to grow like a local? “Follow the people with dogs and prams,” says Clancy. “Get away from the main drag.”

Armed with tips and recommendations from those who know and love Manly, I aim to spend a weekend like a local. Here are some of the gems I discovered.

### GRAB A BITE

Manly’s food and bar scene has exploded in recent years. [Hugos](#), on Manly Wharf, remains a favourite. The gourmet thin-crust pizzas, classic Italian dishes and cocktails are a delight and there’s no better place to watch the iconic ferries come and go.

But some of Manly’s best bars and restaurants are off the beaten track. Belgrave Street and Pittwater Road could well be the suburb’s coolest corner.

Try [Jamtown](#), a small, vibrant spot serving Jamaican classics such as BBQ jerk and curried goat alongside 20 Jamaican rums, and [Sunset Sabi](#), which serves up imaginative and modern Japanese fare.

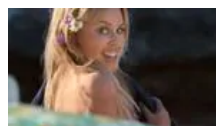
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Some of the best food outside Jamaica can be found at Jamtown, Manly. Picture: Braden Fastier Source: News Corp Australia

A few doors down, the Belgrave Cartel (6 Belgrave St) is your perfect shadowy wine bar complete with dripping candles, tiled walls and more than a few eccentric knick-knacks. It also serves decent food.

At no. 10 Belgrave St is [Good Hope](#), one of Manly's newest restaurant and wine bars. Serving seasonal share plates and fine Australian wine, it's the perfect place for a tasty catch-up with friends.

Some of Manly's restaurants have stood the test of time — the [Boathouse](#), a rustic beachside kiosk, cafe and restaurant on beautiful Shelley Beach, is one of them.

Nor should you overlook the Steyne, the road that hugs the beach. If you're up for a cosy drink or a bite among books, [Hemingway's](#) is your pick, while [The Pantry](#), right on Manly Beach, offers the best views in town of the beach and surf. It's open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

For a late night hotspot, [Donny's](#) is your place. There's a niche selection of craft beers, high-end tequilas and rare whiskeys and live music on Friday and Saturday nights.

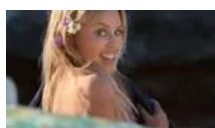
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Booze and books? Yes please. Hemingway's, Manly. Picture: Braden Fastier Source: News Corp Australia

## FIND SOME BALANCE

Manly locals are big into healthy living. After your Saturday morning acai breakfast bowl (try superfood cafe [Bare Naked Bowls](#)), follow the flow to the yoga studio.

The Yin Yoga at [Power Living](#) isn't just any yoga. "It works on our connective tissue not our muscles," says instructor Eliza, "so it's more like a pillow party than a workout class."

It's certainly a way to get intimate with the locals; our room is packed.

## EXPLORE THE UNDERWATER

The walking trails on the headland around Shelley Beach offer stunning views out to sea and to the beaches further up the coast. But after swooning at the turquoise waters of protected Cabbage Tree Bay, the best thing to do is dive into them.

Cabbage Tree Bay is divided up into three differing environments: the rocks, the sandy bottom and the kelp forest. So there's a huge variety of wildlife to see. Highlights are the sharks (Port Jacksons, dusky whalers and wobbegongs) who come into the protected waters to breed, as well as the turtles and bright blue gropers.

There's also an eerie old motorbike on the seabed, which Manly Council secured with concrete blocks after it became a habitat for so much marine life. For info on bushwalking and snorkel tours, visit: [www.ecotresures.com.au](http://www.ecotresures.com.au).

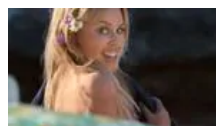
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Cabbage Tree Bay Aquatic Reserve, Manly. Picture: Destination NSW Source:Supplied

### GET ONTO THE HARBOUR

With the ocean and beach as a playground, why wouldn't you be inspired to get up early and get active? [Flow mOcean](#) offers fitness classes with a difference: your gym is the water, your machine a stand up paddle board or kayak.

My group of kayakers is mostly locals who check out the weather from their window when they wake up on Sunday morning. If it's fine, they come on down for a paddle.

We kayak across the harbour to the Quarantine Station where we do a workout class on the wharf before kayaking over to stunning Store Beach, where the station's food was kept safe from hungry residents. These days it's still only accessible by water.

We hop off for some ab work on the beach, saving some energy to speed paddle across the ferry lane back to Manly Sea Life Sanctuary.



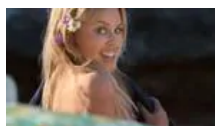
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Despite what's on offer for locals and tourists, the best thing about Manly is the natural beauty that has been enjoyed since the days of the first settlers. Shelley Beach is one of the city's most sheltered coves, which makes it perfect for children. And since the suburb juts out into the sea, with Manly Beach on one side and Harbour Beach on the other, it is one of the rare places in Sydney you can sit on the sand and catch both the sunrise and sunset.

**IF YOU GO**

**GETTING THERE:** Manly is easily accessible by Sydney's CBD by road or by ferry. The latter is by far the prettiest way to arrive. For info, visit: [transportnsw.info](http://transportnsw.info).

**STAYING THERE:** The [Novotel Sydney Manly Pacific](#) offers comfortable rooms with balconies overlooking the beach. From \$236 per night.

**PLAYING THERE:** For more info on what to do in Manly, visit [manlyaustralia.com.au](http://manlyaustralia.com.au) or [sydney.com/destinations/sydney/sydney-north/manly](http://sydney.com/destinations/sydney/sydney-north/manly).

*The writer travelled as a guest of Destination NSW.*



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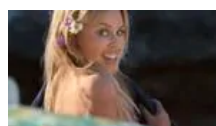
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