

## CLOVELLY TO CRONULLA LOOP WALK L15: LA PEROUSE EAST



<b>Main Walk:</b>	<span style="color: red;">—</span>	<b>Loop and Connecting Walks:</b>	<span style="color: green;">—</span>	<b>Alternative Routes:</b>	<span style="color: red;">- - -</span>
<b>Distance:</b>	2.0km.				
<b>Time:</b>	45 mins				
<b>Level:</b>	Easy, some road walking.				
<b>Transport:</b>	La Perouse buses. 394 and L94 from Circular Quay. 393 from Central.				
<b>Connects with:</b>	Main Walk.				
<b>Facilities:</b>	Toilets: La Perouse;				
	Picnic spots: Congwong Beach, Cape Banks (Main Walk), Henry Head (Main Walk);				
	Shops or hotels: Restaurants, kiosk at La Perouse.				

This loop (plus a 6 kilometre return via the Main Walk) takes you through most of the La Perouse section of Botany Bay National Park with its captivating mixture of Aboriginal and European history with a large dash of excellent seascapes and some intriguing remnants of the Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub.

*At the Snake Pit on Anzac Parade, La Perouse walk down the steps to Congwong Beach.*

Mark Ella, former captain of the Australian Rugby team, called this “Sydney’s best kept secret” and it has always been an integral part of the “Larper” aboriginal community

Aborigines inhabited the Botany Bay region for thousands of years before the arrival of white explorers and settlers. They fished for sustenance and hunted animals during winter, gathering vegetable foods to supplement their diet. Men speared fish from rocky ledges while the women went out in bark canoes with vegetable fibre fishing lines and hooks made from shells. The women, helped by children, gathered shellfish and numerous middens have been found near the shores of La Perouse. Aboriginal rock engravings of marine creatures are further proof of tribal presence in this area.

During the sojourn of the French expedition in 1788, the Cadigal tribe moved to Long Bay but returned after La Perouse had departed. Along with the rest of the tribes around Sydney, they were almost totally destroyed by disease during the early 1800’s. Later, many Tharawal from the South Coast who came to visit and live with members of their family in the Coastal Hospital lazaretto found their way to La Perouse in the 1880s, as there were seasonal fishing links to the area. There is still a strong link between La Perouse and the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Reserve near Nowra. Fishing, native crafts, and gathering wild honey and flowers for sale in Sydney provided a livelihood for this vigorous community. A mission was established and the Aborigines Protection Board replaced this in 1883. Tin houses were erected on a seven-acre reserve. In 1929, the tin houses were sinking in the sand, so the settlement was moved further up the hill. The Reserve Manager was a major burden to the residents of the reserve; he had the right to enter any home without knocking and could remove children from their families. Housing was always a major

concern for the community and it wasn't until 1972 that decent houses were erected. In 1983, the Sydney Land Council took over responsibility for housing and the community became responsible for itself for the first time. 'Larpers' as the La Perouse community call themselves, have provided Australia with some of its finest sportsmen and women and, in recent years, artists and writers as well. The history of this community has been one of enormous privation, discrimination and hardship. However, the community spirit and good humour has lasted through the years and with better housing and education the modern aboriginal community of La Perouse has, at last, broken the shackles.

*Walk 200 metres along this white, sandy beach and then turn left (north) up a corduroy track for 300 metres to a T-junction.*

Captain Cook's crew used the creek on the left-hand side of this track in April 1770 to replenish the *Endeavour's* water supply after the creeks at Kurnell were insufficient for their needs. This area was also one of the main areas used by Sir Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander to collect over 100 new species of plants, including many unknown genera and two unknown families (*Goodenia*, *Bauera*). The plants were kept fresh in chests and wet cloth. While Solander prepared 107 pages of descriptions, the expedition artist Sydney Parkinson completed 94 illustrations.

*At the T-junction turn right (east) and follow this track for 300 metres to a junction with Henry Head Lane. Continue east along this bitumen road for another 200 metres to a fork in the road at the entrance to the Golf Club*

This Golf Club was established on Crown Land in 1926 after the Army scaled down use of the northern headland of Botany Bay after World War I. Several Army officers were involved in the establishment of the club, particularly Brigadier-General Sydney Herring who was the club's first Chairman and Major-General Gordon Bennett who was President from 1928 to 1945. It has always had strong links with the Australian military.

*Take the left-hand fork and follow this narrow bitumen road east for 100 metres to a NPWS sign "Jennifer Street" boardwalk.*

This boardwalk runs through an almost pristine patch of the Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub, a distinct ecological community that once covered the coastal area from Port Jackson to Botany Bay. This plant community has over 100 different species growing in it and only grows on the 100,000-year-old sand deposits along the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney and the northern and western shores of Botany Bay. Because of Sydney's development, only 40 hectares (or 1% of the original community) remain in isolated remnants. Most of these remnants are in decline through weed invasion and urban runoff. The Jennifer Street patch is the largest, least disturbed and most diverse of these remnants. Bush regeneration has been undertaken and the construction of a boardwalk ended the maze of footpads that once chopped up the scrub. The boardwalk also prevents erosion and does not impede the natural drainage of the scrub.

*Continue east along Henry Head Lane for a kilometre as it winds between golf fairways to the former Military Village on the right-hand side of the road.*

This is all that is left of the World War II Anti-Ship Defences known as Fort Banks. The counter-bombardment complex included two BL 9.2 inch Mark 10 guns long-range guns, anti-aircraft guns and torpedo launching facilities. These armaments were supplemented by observation posts, plotting rooms, barracks, hospital and an electricity generating plant. The gun battery was de-commissioned in 1945 but the area remained in Army hands and an Anti-Aircraft battery carried out live-round firing up until 1957. In 1962, the gun battery was removed and most of the complex was demolished except for 5 cottages and the Commandant's house on Henry Head Lane (known as the Military Village). However, some of the massive concrete structures were too difficult to demolish and so they remain. In 1995 the area was handed back to the government of NSW and became part of Botany Bay National Park. The houses in the old Military Village are now used as accommodation for National Park staff.

*Four hundred metres past the village a 4WD track on the right-hand side of the road is encountered. Turn left and follow this old, cobbled track for 100 metres down to an excellent NPWS information kiosk.*

This is a place of haunting beauty. The view north along the coastline is spectacular and because of the openness of the heath country, there is always a wind moaning through the area. This cemetery was originally within the southern boundary of the hospital reserve and contains the graves of patients and staff that died at the Coast Hospital. There are three headstones bearing Chinese inscriptions, dating back to 1883, when a few Chinese lepers were admitted to the hospital. Tragically, hundreds of wooden grave pegs, indicating the burial places of other Chinese people who died at the hospital, were removed in a clean up of the area in 1981. There are gravesites of young children struck down by influenza, smallpox and typhoid in the cemetery. The tragic graves of the young nurses, who occasionally contracted the diseases of their patients, also lie here. Many Aboriginal graves are located in the cemetery and the area is of special significance to the local Aboriginal community.

*Walk south through the cemetery on an old grave path back to Henry Head Lane and the Main Walk route.*

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