



Don't be caught in the buff at the bluff.

### Secret Spaces Hidden Places

## A gateway to adventure at the Bluff lookout

Think you know the Northern Beaches? Our monthly feature aims to help you uncover the unique spaces and places in our very own backyard.

Hiking along a rocky service trail in the backroads of Killarney Heights might not be top of the bucket list - yet. But take a few steps further and you'll turn the corner to sweeping views of Bantry Bay into Middle Harbour at this hilltop vista called The Bluff.

Nestled amongst the suburban streets is the entry point for the Bluff trail in Garigal National Park, a short but highly rewarding meander. It begins as a wide trail amongst eucalyptus and banksia trees and soon opens up to a large hilltop of boulders with 360 views over the bay, surrounding national park and backdrop of the cityscape. On a sunny day, the view stretches so far you can even spot the Sydney Tower Eye from here.

The awe-inspiring views are the main attraction of this relatively secluded spot, but the rock features, with honeycomb formations and caves, will also draw you in. Spot playful parakeets in the banksias or squawking cockatoos flying overhead, as the unspoilt nature is home to hundreds of birds, and even threatened native species such as the southern brown bandicoot.

This suburban escape is also an adventurer's gateway with mountain bike and hiking trail offshoots in every direction. A direct offshoot from the Bluff lookout is the Gahnia and Serrata mountain bike trails, two hand-built trails totalling 6.5km of track for experienced riders.

Or for full or half day hiking

adventures, the trail connects up with the challenging Natural Bridge track all the way to Davidson Park or Seaforth Oval. A shorter side trip into the valley will lead you to the Natural Bridge, which as the name suggests, is a sandstone arch that is used as a natural bridge to cross the creek.

### Did you know...

When you're soaking up the view from up above, you might be wondering what the relatively isolated buildings in Bantry Bay are. Despite public outcry over the proposal of using this popular recreation area for residents and day trippers since the 1840s, to build new explosives magazines, the work went ahead. Operations officially stopped in 1973 but many of the buildings still stand with sites remaining closed to the public due to explosives contamination.

### How to get there

Don't be fooled by Google Maps which will lead you towards an overgrown pathway behind the French's Forest Scout Hall. Instead, head towards the end of Grattan Cres, sandwiched between the Austrian Club and the Ararat Reserve. Here you'll find the start of the Bluff Trail - a short 1km return trip down rocky service trail. When you reach the first fork in the path, take a left and wander to the end where you'll be greeted with this spectacular lookout.

Have a great spot you think should be featured?  
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