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TOMAREE NATIONAL PARK · UNOFFICIAL GUIDE

Day-trip checklist

Practical packing, Tomaree Head order of stops, Zenith parking Plan B, and Coastal Walk honesty for a Port Stephens day. From **tomareenationalpark.com.au** — print this page or save as PDF from your browser.

Verify before you go. Track status, beach access, camping rules and closures change. Always check NSW National Parks — Tomaree and local alerts. This checklist is independent and unofficial — not NPWS. Walks on the parent guide were not walked by the authors.

1. Before you leave home

Status & weather

- ☐ NPWS Tomaree local alerts checked this morning
- ☐ Nelson Bay / Port Stephens forecast (not only Sydney CBD)
- ☐ Kingsley Beach works window noted if walking One Mile–Fishermans Bay (listed to 12 Oct 2026 when last checked)
- ☐ Plan B if Zenith lots are full (Fingal / One Mile / skip summit)
- ☐ Someone knows your rough plan + return window

Packing (day pack)

- ☐ Water 1 L+ per person (more in heat)
- ☐ Snacks / simple lunch
- ☐ Sun hat + high SPF
- ☐ Grip shoes (summit pavement is slippery when wet)
- ☐ Phone + Emergency+ installed on home Wi-Fi
- ☐ NSW Parks app / offline map screenshot
- ☐ Cash/card for village food
- ☐ Swim kit only if a flagged beach is the plan

2. Half-day: Tomaree Head Summit (≈3–5 hrs on the ground)

- **0:00** — Arrive Zenith upper/lower or Shoal Bay Road overflow. Toilets at Shoal Bay boat ramp (~4 min). Valuables not visible in the car.
- **0:15–2:15** — Summit out-and-back. Official: Grade 5, 2.2 km return, 1.5–2 hrs, many steps, ~161 m. Turn around if pavement is a skating rink.
- **Optional** — Fort Tomaree (Grade 3, 2.5 km return, paved) on the descent if knees and weather allow.
- **Buffer** — Village food in Shoal Bay / Nelson Bay. Protect the drive home (Newcastle ~1 hr; Sydney typically 2.5–3 hrs).
- Do *not* stack the 27 km Coastal Walk onto this half-day.

3. Full-day rule (protect the day)

- **One** hero: Tomaree Head Summit if the group can do Grade 5, plus **one** extra maximum (Fort Tomaree, Fingal flags, or the signed Shoal–Fingal walk).
- Standalone Shoal Bay to Fingal Bay page: 5 km one-way, Grade 3, 1.5–2.5 hrs from Zenith. Coastal Walk map lists ~7 km summit–Fingal — both official; confirm signs.
- Do *not* treat official Day 1 (~18 km, 7–8 hrs to One Mile) as a Sydney afternoon add-on.
- If the summit is too much: Fort Tomaree, Fingal flags, Iris Moore — still a complete Tomaree day.

4. Order-of-stops cheat sheet

First-timer priority

1. Tomaree Head Summit (if stairs are honest for the group)
2. Fort Tomaree *or* village reset
3. Optional: Fingal flags *or* Iris Moore / Fishermans Bay lookouts

Skip if short on time / bad weather / full car parks

- Full 27 km Coastal Walk
- Wreck Beach as a "quick swim" (unpatrolled; official swim note points to Box Beach)
- Walking the Fingal spit to the lighthouse
- Whale cruise + dune tour stacked after a late summit

5. Parking Plan B

- ☐ Weekend / summer: arrive before 9am or accept Fingal / One Mile as the start
- ☐ Never leave bags visible; legal bays only
- ☐ If Zenith is full: read the Plan B article on the site — do not invent a verge
- ☐ Samurai campground access is 4WD only — not a day-visitor overflow lot

6. Fees (split systems — do not merge)

- Tomaree visitor-info (checked 26 Aug 2026) does **not** list a vehicle day-entry fee. Re-check NPWS passes-and-fees.
- Walking is free. Samurai camping: no camping fee; a **$6 booking fee** on the official campground page. Book only via NPWS — never affiliated here.
- Guided NPWS tours (if running) are a third system. Next listed ranger walk when last checked: 2 Oct 2026.

7. Safety non-negotiables

- Park beaches can have strong rips. Swim between flags at Fingal SLSC, southern One Mile or Birubi when patrol is on. Zenith is a sanctuary zone — different collecting/fishing rules; not a default flagged swim.
- **Fingal spit:** official visitor-info (26 Aug 2026) says currently impassable — boat only to Fingal Island. Lighthouse keepers' cottages ruins are closed to pedestrians.

- Limited mobile reception. **000** needs a signal. Emergency+ on the phone before you leave Wi-Fi.
- Grade 5 is very steep with many steps — not a lookout stroll.
- **Emergency: call 000.** This checklist cannot help with rescue.

8. Useful links

- **This guide:** https://www.tomareenationalpark.com.au/ — itineraries, trails, plan visit, maps
- Official park: https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/tomaree-national-park
- Alerts: https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/tomaree-national-park/local-alerts
- Summit walk: https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/walking-tracks/tomaree-head-summit-walk
- Coastal Walk: https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/experiences/tomaree-coastal-walk
- Samurai campground: https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/camping-and-accommodation/campgrounds/samurai-beach-campground
- Safety: https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/safety
- Printable itineraries: https://www.tomareenationalpark.com.au/itineraries/
- Practical planner: https://www.tomareenationalpark.com.au/downloads/tomaree-practical-planner.html

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