

## **A guide for holidaymakers - 10 free or budget friendly things to do in Shoalhaven Heads over the school holidays**

You've survived the working year, packed up the car, remembered to pack all the kids, survived the holiday traffic mayhem and made it to the best holiday destination this side of Sydney. So now what? How do you relax, but also keep yourself and the family entertained without needing to rob a bank? Here, in no particular order, are some ideas for life-affirming things you can do without having to drive anywhere.

### **1. Fishing**

Not so life-affirming for fish, but I'm told by those in the know that it's a relaxing and yet exciting hobby. Pumping the river mud for bloodworms and yabbies at the River Reserve entertained my kids for at least an hour this year so I can recommend it. Alternatively, bait can be purchased at the servo on Shoalhaven Heads Road or at the Friendly Grocer. You can also buy a fishing licence at the servo or online at \$7.00 for 3 days.

For the non-fisherpersons who are only doing it to entertain the kids, never fear. My experience as a non-fisherperson is that you're more likely to hook a seaweed fish than anything live and flapping that you actually have to DO something with. But, just in case you need to remove hooks, you may want to arm yourself with a dishcloth and pair of wire cutters and maybe something in a bottle.

### **2. Bush walking**

Shoalhaven Heads is surrounded on 3 sides by bushwalking tracks. These begin at the first entrance to Shoalhaven Heads heading from Gerroa (opposite the treatment plant), skirt along the edge of the golf course and end up at Seven Mile Beach where you can walk, if you like, all the way to Gerroa (going North) or all the way to Comerong Island (going South). There are also walking paths between the Surf Lifesaving Club leading behind Holiday Haven Caravan Park to River Reserve Park.

### **3. Swimming and surfing**

The beach at Shoalhaven Heads can be quite hazardous owing to rips and dumping type of waves. For your safety the beach is patrolled in the summer holidays from 9 am to 5 pm.

If you have a fear of sea water and fear you might be mistaken for a seal by a you-know-what (begins with an S), the public pool is always beautifully clear and blue and apart from the odd duck, does not contain any wildlife. Time and entry fee information is online. There is a covered paddling pool for the littlies. Mornings before the wind gets up are best. Mind the ducks!

### **4. Cycling/ pump track / learn-to-ride and skate park**

A paved cycle path runs the extent of the lower River Reserve and back along McIntosh Avenue (near the Holiday Haven caravan park) and along Golden Hill Avenue. A new pump track on the Jerry Bailey oval (near the pool, skate park and learn to ride track) is free to use by both kids and adults. Bikes can be hired from the pub or you might even be able to buy one from the bicycle guy for cheap (keep a lookout near the bowling club during the holidays).

Alongside the pump track is the learn-to-ride track for little ones. Opposite that is the skate park for those willing to pit their bodies and wits against hard concrete. Perhaps not for the risk-averse, but it certainly is a popular holiday spot with teens.

5. Plant appreciation

Shoalhaven Heads Native Botanic Garden on Celia Parade is a lovely, quiet haven where you can potter and enjoy native plants, watch the birds and insects and set up a picnic in the park opposite.

6. Watch the sunrise from the beach

We're talking you'll need to be on the beach by 5:30ish, but it will be worth it. When was the last time you watched the sun come up? Better than just watching, how about a very early morning beach swim?

7. Birdwatching

Shoalhaven Heads is popular with birders. In December you will be able to see all the local feathered favourites. January is peak breeding season for many shorebirds including rare and endangered local and migrating species. Please observe the signs on the beach and use your birding etiquette to avoid disturbing nesting birds in any way. Lots more information on our pretty and fascinating local birds can be found online.

8. Barefoot bowls

A great way to have some mildly exerting fun for a couple of hours and a good excuse for a drink (or two). Last I checked it was \$10.00 per adult head. The green is open Tuesday to Sunday from 10 am to about 6pm.

9. Borrow a book

Borrow a book anytime from the Tardis outside the front door of the Community Centre on Shoalhaven Heads Road (near the Vic Zealand oval), and even better, when you're done with your holiday read, donate it to the Tardis or local Vinnies.

10. Tennis

Tennis courts are located near the parking area next to Vic Zealand Oval. The cost to hire a court is \$13.00 per hour during the day and \$20.00 per hour for evening games. Keys can be collected at the Lettuce Inn (first set of shops on Shoalhaven Heads Road) on payment of a \$20.00 refundable deposit. If you don't have rackets and balls, don't let this put you off because you can borrow these for free from the Lettuce Inn when you come in to collect the key.

Finally, keep your eye open for events happening at the bowling club and pub including trivia, live music, concerts, bingo, raffles and more. Red Cross markets are on 11 January from 8 am to 1 pm and no doubt there will be a few garage sales on as well.

No excuses to be bored this holiday!