



Walk Potts Point

• by Julie Ihle

IN A CITY SPRINKLED with stylish suburbs, one of the trendiest is Potts Point. Just 3km east of the CBD, this classy 'burb is wedged between ritzy Elizabeth Bay, nightclub mecca Kings Cross and iconic Woolloomooloo. With one of the highest population densities in Australia, Potts Point is a snakes and ladders patchwork of historic mansions converted to quaint guesthouses, intimate waterholes, eateries and fashionista boltholes.

Its tree-dappled streets, wide pavements and whiff of Euro-style urban elegance, make Potts Point tailor-made for wandering. To find it, take a short train trip on the Eastern Suburbs line from the city to Kings Cross Station, where Potts Point and Kings Cross collide. From there it is a few steps up to Darlinghurst Road, where the road morphs into Macleay Street at the famous dandelion-shaped El Alamein Fountain, then you're ready to explore one of Sydney's poshest precincts.

As soon as you stroll down Macleay Street, Potts Point's lavish history springs to life. The colony's wealthy merchants soon marked out this hilltop spot as their own, away from the rough and tumble of convict settlements at The Rocks, Hyde Park Barracks and seedy Woolloomooloo Wharf below. Named after banker, Joseph Potts, elaborate Georgian manors were built on large blocks of land, later to be pulled down in the 1930s to make way for a distinctive new architectural style – Art Deco.

Today only a few Georgian homes remain and Art Deco dominates the streetscape, making Potts Point a hip mix of boho and urban glam, just perfect for shoppers, history buffs, foodies and people-watchers.

Why not start with a refreshing ale or heart starter coffee at the iconic Sugarmill Hotel, which opens early and marks the start of Potts Point. Afterwards shopaholics can indulge in a spot of shopping at nano-sized The Little Candle Shop



opposite the fountain, which has candles galore, but rest assured grandma's place this ain't – there's not a potpourri in sight. A few steps further is Booty, an uber-swish shoes and accessories store and don't miss homewares haven across the road, Becker Minty, which feels like part gallery/part purveyor of all things eclectic.

Then it's worth a short detour to Orwell Street for a gander at a gorgeous Art Deco building, The Metro, which originally showed the groundbreaking musical, *Hair*, in the heady 1960s. If time is on your side, meander around the square soaking up the village-style atmosphere, and if you're there in the afternoon, drop into Doma Bohemian Beer Café for a Czech beer or shot of absinth.

If your feet are up for it, make a downhill detour on Greenknowe Street to Elizabeth Bay House, a must-visit for history buffs.

This grand old dame, completed in 1839, is one of Australia's finest colonial buildings. With its magnificent elliptical domed saloon and curving staircase, not surprisingly it sent owner Alexander Macleay, the colony's Colonel Secretary, broke. Later it fell into disrepair and between 1928 and 1935 it became a squat where some of Sydney's bohemian artists lived rent-free with stunning harbour views, and was renovated and opened to the public in 1977. It is only open from Friday to Sunday so try to time your visit then, but the garden opposite, Arthur McElhone Reserve, with wraparound harbour views is a treat any time.



Left: Aerial view of Potts Point and the city beyond. Photo: Hamilton Lund, Tourism NSW.

Above: Elizabeth Bay House. Photo: Tony Yeates, Tourism NSW. Below left: The Sugarmill Hotel.



Night view of Woolloomooloo Bay with Potts Point and Kings Cross in the background. Photo: Tony Yeates, Tourism NSW.

MORE INFORMATION:

Becker Minty – art, fashion and furnishings in the heart of Potts Point.
7/81 Macleay Street
www.beckerminty.com

Arida – fashionista boutique for women and men.
61 Macleay Street
www.arida.com.au

Velluto – super swish champagne and wine bar.
7/50 Macleay Street
www.velluto.com.au

The Sardine Room
– stylish seafood bistro.
31 Challis Avenue
www.thesardineroom.com.au

Macleay Street Bistro
– urbane bistro dishing up contemporary Australian cuisine with French techniques.
73A Macleay Street
www.macleaystbistro.com.au

Either retrace your steps or take a staircase shortcut back to Macleay Street, which as luck has it lands you near Fratelli Fresh, Sydney's latest big thing in gourmet grocery chains. Schlepp onto a stool and chow down at their buzzy in-store eatery, Café Sopra, or stock up on default picnic fare if you want to throw down a rug at a Potts Point park.

Keep walking to Challis Street, for a cluster of great nosheries including Fratelli Paradiso, sleek Lotus, and the fabulously-named The Sardine Room for seafood tapas and an interesting wine list. Shopaholics can get yet another fix at Arida, which does a nice line in fashion and quirky collectables.

To keep exploring, head down Challis Street, eyeing off Greek Revival and Romanesque style terraces, to Victoria Street's Embarkation Park. This city park offers views and a chance to commune with nature in the heart of the city, with a dash of people watching thrown in.

For more food/wine/caffeine keep moseying up Victoria Street, a lesser-trodden version of Macleay Street, its canopy of trees and stately homes thankfully saved by the 1970s 'Green Bans', a union-led movement which preserved this unique part of Sydney's history for future generations.

The beauty of Victoria Street is that old-fashioned continental delis rub shoulders with funky bars and fine diners – just take your pick. For a long lunch with stellar city views, Mezzaluna is an Italian foodie favourite – try their signature zucchini flowers filled with gorgonzola mousse.

For all-day food, head to Café DOV, another Potts Point perennial. It is the kind of place to while away the day, and with a choice of large or small tasting platters, why not?

Barflies too need only walk half way up Victoria Street to a small barnook, Bootleg Bar, a top spot to take in a glass or two of boutique wine.

From there the choice is yours. Swoop down historic McElhone Stairs to Woolloomooloo, 'The Loo', to super-swanky Cowper Wharf Road for some celeb spotting (keep your eyes peeled for local boy Russell Crowe), chow down a pie in iconic Harry's Café de Wheels or go high end at Manta.

Or stay and play in Potts Point, soaking up the afternoon, Potts Point style. Wander the tree-lined streets, shop or dine at Macleay Street Bistro, in the heart of Potts Point, for superb cuisine with a French twist, good wine and great company. Whatever you do, a visit to this sophisticated little 'burb is sure to be a highlight of your Sydney stay.