

The Gold Coast has a lively reputation and is known for its beaches, surf, nightlife, theme parks and shopping. Head a little way into the hinterland and it also boasts a network of hiking trails within Lamington National Park as well as parks further west and south. But if you're keen to stretch your legs in and around the metropolis, or you've got children who may not yet be ready to tackle the longer trails, then there are a number of beautiful family-friendly walking tracks to choose from.

Here are a few of my favourites:



*Beree Badalla Reserve is pram and dog friendly.*

## **Palm Beach Parklands**

Palm Beach Parklands is an ideal destination for a family day out. With easy access to the surf beach, there is also a great swimming location that is sheltered from the waves, making it perfect for smaller children. A pirate playground called Treasure Island is also on offer as are BBQ facilities with picnic tables and toilets. Plus there's a café with takeaway coffee, an off-leash dog beach that is close by and of course, walking tracks with wide pathways that are well maintained to make them easily traversed with a stroller or pram.

My favourite walking track in this area is the boardwalk that goes through Beree Badalla Reserve. Starting at Palm Beach Parklands, walk through Tarrabora Reserve and onward through Beree Badalla Reserve.



*Cyclists must dismount and walk their bikes along the boardwalk.*

The boardwalk is amongst the mangroves and follows Currumbin Creek. I would allow for approximately 1 hour to complete the walk from Palm Beach Parklands to the end of the boardwalk and return. There's the option to extend it by continuing until you get to the old railway bridge where you cross over Currumbin Creek and walk up the other side until you get to the Gold Coast Highway. From there, the bridge will bring you back to Palm Beach Parklands. This loop track is 4km and I would allow 1.5- 2 hours to complete the walk.



*The metropolis of Surfers Paradise is about a 10-minute drive up the coast from Burleigh Heads.*

## **Burleigh Head National Park**

Down the coast and with the skyscrapers of Surfers Paradise creating beautiful evening views to the north, Burleigh Heads is another family favourite. Known for its trendy cafe scene and great surf, the area also boasts a small national park of 27ha, which starts just next to Burleigh Hill and wraps around the headland to Tallebudgera Creek.

Burleigh Hill is a great place to sit with a picnic and watch the waves while soaking up the idyllic surroundings. There are public toilets, water fountains where you can refill your bottle as well as parking nearby, plus a handful of short walking tracks within Burleigh Head National Park. Tallebudgera Creek means 'good fish' in the Yugambeh dialect of the Kombumerri Tribe, who are the traditional landowners of this region. The creek provides a welcome cool off for visitors and families particularly enjoy the calm, kid-friendly waters.



*Tumgun lookout in Burleigh Head National Park offers a spectacular view across the inlet to Tallebudgera Creek.*

My favourite is the Oceanview walk at just over 1km one-way with the trail starting at Burleigh Hill and leading around the headland to Tallebudgera Creek. Instead of returning along the same track, we like to take the Rainforest circuit via Tumgun lookout which offers a delightful vantage for admiring humpback whales off the coast throughout winter and spring. Being aptly named, this circuit is within the rainforest and although the trail is narrow and fairly steep, you will be rewarded with magnificent views up the top. I would allow a minimum of 1 hour to walk the loop of both tracks - the Oceanview and returning via the Rainforest circuit.

If your watch is prompting you to up your step count then an extended option is to walk north of Burleigh Head National Park all the way to Lores Bonney lookout. This is approximately another 3km and can also be done on its own if little legs have had enough. The stairs up to the lookout may be tricky to navigate with a pram but the climb is worth it for the long stretches of beach and ocean views, as well as seasonal whale watching.

*This walk is great for families with toilet facilities and picnic tables along the way.*

## **Federation Walk Coastal Reserve**

The Federation Walk is part of a peaceful network of trails that include Philip Park and Doug Jennings Park. Starting at Philip Park, the walk is 8km return and heads north at Main Beach, meandering through native vegetation all the way to The Spit. The path is gravel and wide, making it ideal for riding especially with a cruiser or mountain bike. For walking, however, it is best to avoid during the middle of the day as there is very little shade, so bring a hat and other sun protection.

*The Spit is the northernmost section of Main Beach on the Gold Coast.*

The Spit is popular for surfing, fishing, snorkelling and scuba diving, and being an off-lead beach, it is also a favourite for dog owners. There are public toilets available and a café for coffee or a bite to eat.

This is an easy walk to tailor to your needs and time allowance with the option to continue south of Philip Park and onward from Hollindale Park if you wish. This southern area is busier than the northern end but the path is paved and there are public toilets and water taps along the way.

*This area is home to 274 species of animals, including migratory water birds.*

## **Coomabah Lakelands Conservation Area**

Coomabah Lakelands Conservation Area is an area of approximately 1200 hectares and is dense with eucalypt and melaleuca trees, plus the wetland, salt marsh and mangrove habitat make it ideal for spotting native wildlife. There is a small airport nearby which can occasionally interrupt the peaceful surrounds when planes or helicopters are taking off or landing, but birdlife, kangaroos, wallabies and koalas seem unperturbed and a visit to enjoy these surroundings will delight both young and old. Gates are open between 6am and 6pm

and it is best to go in the early morning or at dusk to increase your chances of spotting animals.



*There are several trails within the reserve and gates are open between 6am and 6pm daily.* The two main walking trails are the Melaleuca track which at 1.2km also includes a boardwalk and the Koala track that is approximately 6km return from the Shelter Road carpark at the southern end. Jabiru circuit and Myola Court boardwalk trail are both shorter tracks that can be added into other walks if you wish for something longer. The area is well signed to make the level tracks easy to navigate and being designated for conservation, dogs are not permitted. Whether you are cycling or walking, it's recommended to pack some mosquito repellent as these pesky insects love the mangrove as much as the wildlife. Parking is available along Shelter Road but there are no toilets or drinking water so it is best to arrive prepared with a full pack of essentials.



*You can easily spend over an hour wandering through the gardens.*

## **Gold Coast Regional Botanical Gardens**

The Gold Coast Regional Botanical Gardens is located just 10 minutes from Surfers Paradise and is open from 5am till 7pm every day. The Botanical Gardens is free to enter and includes a rose garden, boardwalks across the lakes, a playground, toilets, a café, and BBQ facilities with picnic tables. In one section of the gardens (near the playground) is an off-leash dog area offering plenty of space for dogs to run around. The tranquil setting makes it easy to spend at least an hour walking through the gardens and it is a great place to relax from the hustle and bustle of Surfers Paradise. Black swans, ducks, turtles, lizards, cormorants, dusky moorhens and butterflies all inhabit the gardens and make it a terrific place to visit with children.

**Do you have any favourite family-friendly walks?**