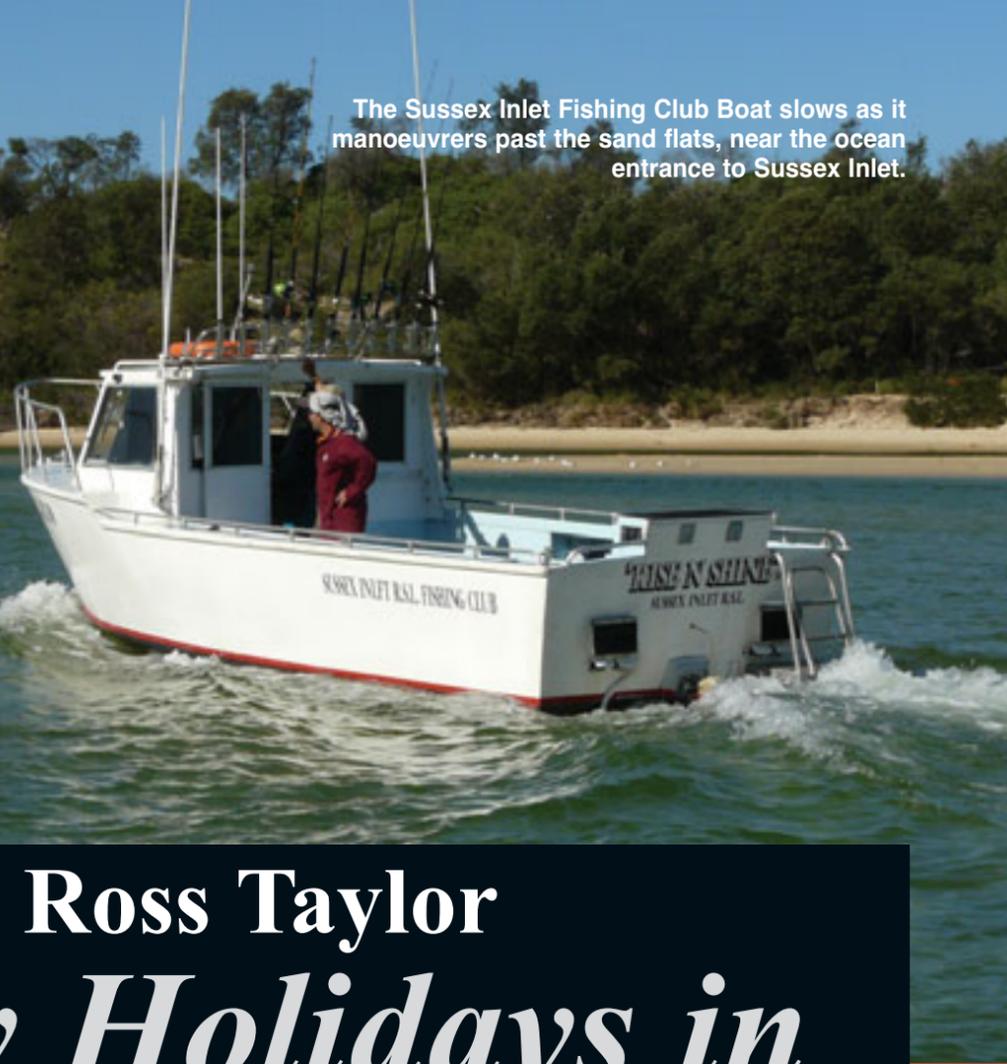


The Sussex Inlet Fishing Club Boat slows as it manoeuvres past the sand flats, near the ocean entrance to Sussex Inlet.



Ross Taylor

Lazy Holidays in Sussex Inlet, NSW

Known as the Island Township, Sussex Inlet is a NSW south coast town built around a series of canals. The main part of the Inlet links St Georges Basin with the Tasman Sea and is found just south of Jervis Bay, within the Shoalhaven Region.

It is located approximately 200 kilometres south of Sydney. It is about 30 minutes drive south of Nowra and a similar drive north of Ulladulla.

Sussex Inlet started making a name for itself after World War Two once transport improved. War veterans were offered the opportunity to settle here which led to the founding of the local RSL Club. This would turn out to be the beginning of our family's association with this popular fishing destination.

About the Town

Sussex Inlet is based on a series of natural and man-made canals. Planning for the canals began in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

It has always been a holiday fishing destination. As the area developed, hired putt putts became a common feature on the water. So too were craft like our family's 13 foot wooden boat powered by a cantankerous British Seagull outboard.

By the early 1980's, the largest canal development yet was established, between River Road in the east, Ellmoos Ave and Jacobs Drive to the north, and the road bridge in the west near the intersection of Jacobs Drive and Sussex Inlet Road.

The canals were turned into a series of cul-de-sacs so to speak, for waterfront homes, drastically altering a

favourite shore based fishing and prawning location. The newer branches of the canals didn't aid tidal movement, so the tea coloured tannin look, already an issue for the area, was further accentuated, turning us off fishing and swimming in the canals for years.

The influx of capital investment brought with it town water and sewer in the mid-1980s. Gone was the dirty brown bore water and the 'wrigglies' that swam around in the old corrugated rain water tanks.

This period of major development also saw the RSL Club redeveloped and expanded at the end of Jacobs Drive. The RSL Club is an important part of the town and has a fishing club, casual moorings and decent food.

With time, the boat ramp, near the old Harbord Diggers flats (Harbord Rd,

off River Road), was decommissioned, the same for the hidden dirt road ramp that was accessed via Ellmoos Avenue. This was the area where we regularly launched our family's Savage Tinnie, the one we still own today.

At the end of Jacobs Drive you will find the old Sussex Inlet Marine Centre on the waterfront near the RSL Club where you can hire putt putts and tinnies, as well as obtain fishing licences, fuel, bait, tackle and refreshments.

Heading Outside

South Sussex is home to a large boat ramp with a modern pontoon that can be accessed from Lakehaven Drive. This ramp is typically used by larger craft to head outside across the bar for a day's fishing. There is plenty of parking and the facilities are good.

Fishing outside must be well planned. Besides the weather conditions, the tide must be right, otherwise boats or vessels with a deep draft might get themselves into trouble. Having plenty of power and backed by local knowledge is a distinct advantage.

Upon exiting the entrance, the preferred route past the rocky outcrop is to turn to port and follow the beach northward for a short distance before heading out into the aptly named Wreck Bay.

The winds will need to be monitored closely once outside, as the southern headland only offers limited protection around the entrance. Once the winds pick up by mid-morning, they can build quite strong, and can howl up the coast from Ulladulla.

A lot of fishermen head eastward towards St Georges Head, a distance of about 9 kilometres east of the entrance, and work this area and the area north east of there, towards Cape St George, south of Jervis Bay.

You would expect to encounter yellowtail kingfish, salmon, and snapper with luderick, bream and tailor closer to shore. Travel to this area should really only be done in dedicated offshore craft.

Is you want to stay closer to home, and a safer bet for a variety of craft, there is an area which I believe is a reef, a couple of kilometres off the Sussex Inlet entrance, due east, which you can try. Here you can try for flathead, snapper, and mulloway.

My advice is, before heading

outside, speak with the Sussex Inlet RSL Fishing Club at 200 Jacobs Drive on (02) 4441 2076, or via email enquiries@sussexrsl.com.au ; or contact the local Coastal Patrol Base, now known as Marine Rescue NSW at South Sussex, they can be contacted on (02) 4441 1444. Their call sign was VMR208 prior to the change of name.

Navigating the Inlet

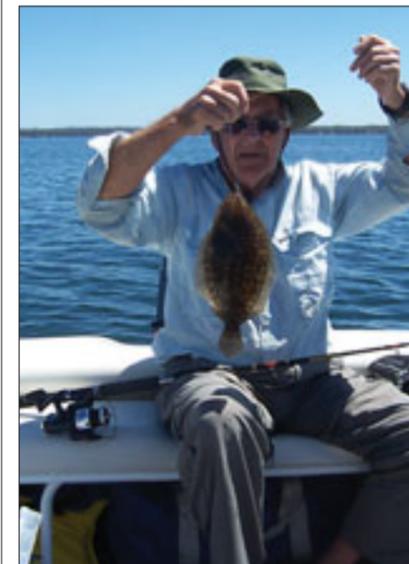
The channel from near the South Sussex Boat Ramp to the entrance has unfortunately become heavily silted and very narrow. Even tinnies under 5 metres can hit bottom whilst navigating a course past the caravan park to the sandy beaches near the entrance.

The sand flats near the entrance are a good place to pump for nippers. Keep in mind though, that the area north and east of the Inlet is Commonwealth land, much of it known as Booderee National Park, and as such, most of the area has restrictions in place.

The southern shoreline opposite the sand flats consists of heavily vegetated sand dunes. This area has suffered over the years and use to be a popular spot to walk to the entrance from the caravan park upstream. Sliding down the dunes was very popular - however, it has become unsafe because of fallen trees, especially at high tide, so children should be steered clear of here.

Because of hazards and the environmental factors, such as the mangroves, exposed foreshore and dune erosion, much of the waterway that skirts around South Sussex is rated at 4 knots.

Fishing is excellent here, with the



waters being very clean. The sandy bottom lends itself to fish for flathead, whiting and tailor.

There are some sections that are dark and weedy and with some occasional structures which will be perfect if trying for bream and luderick. The stretch of water off the caravan parks near the Marine Rescue base comes to mind.

Booderee National Park

Heading upstream from here, the Inlet meanders past the sandy shoreline typical of the vegetated Booderee National Park near South Sussex. There are numerous fallen trees and snags along this stretch which would typically be a haven for bream.

However, it has a very sandy bottom and we have had more luck conking a flathead on the head with a sinker here than catching bream.

The western shoreline is predominantly dense mangroves with shallow approaches.

As the Inlet heads north, passing sand flats, it becomes an 8 knot zone and straightens. Near this point, there is a narrow and shallow canal that heads westward, past a new boat ramp, under an old concrete road bridge (River Road) to waterfront homes.

Around the boat ramp, the water is like a haven for all sea life; it is rather like looking into an aquarium. On numerous occasions we have found turtles, sea rays and schools of fish, and it is home to a variety of sea grasses and vegetation.

The boat ramp is small and only accommodates about a dozen trailers. The ramp itself literally falls short (somebody did not order enough concrete) and can be difficult to use as your trailer wheels fall off the end of the ramp into the water.

Around the western side of the road bridge is a perfect sandy spot to take children prawning in the summer months. Care should be taken near the rocks surrounding the bridge and where the channel deepens. Cars can be parked close by in old Harbord Road.

Back in the main channel, weed is predominant. The run down past the private jetties to the RSL Club on the western side is traditionally a very good luderick spot and has been fished by three generations of our family.

From the old Marine Centre, the Inlet starts turning in a westward