

# Camden Haven River recreational fishing guide

## Ian Stockton

District Fisheries Officer, Agriculture and Fisheries Compliance Operations, Taree

The Camden Haven River starts high on the Great Dividing Range running east down through a picturesque valley and the historic river town of Kendall. The river then flows into Watson Taylor Lake, Queens Lake and Gogleys Lagoon before entering the Pacific Ocean at Laurieton, Dunbogan and North Haven. The Camden Haven area is about four hours drive north of Sydney.

Fishing is particularly popular from October through to June each year with peaks during Christmas and Easter. Water and air temperatures are generally mild during winter and very pleasant during summer.

The river has a wide range of fishing opportunities from freshwater bass in the upper reaches to estuarine species such as bream, flathead and luderick throughout the lakes.

Beach and rock fishers should try the beautiful Diamond Head, Point Perpendicular and the small village of Bonny Hills.

The North Haven and Dunbogan break walls in the estuary mouth are popular for a mixed bag of fish. Bream, flathead, whiting and luderick can be caught on a basic running sinker rig and fresh bait. The best time of the day to fish is early morning or evening, at either high or low tide as the fish can feed voraciously in the slack water between tides. The best baits are worms, nipper, pilchards or fresh mullet.

A boat is an ideal way to see the expansive Camden Haven waterways. Explore Queens Lake,

downstream into Stingray Creek and then back up into Watson Taylor Lake on your way to the Camden Haven River.

There are many shallow sections in the waters of the Camden Haven, so care must be taken with navigation.

The Camden Haven is renowned for its prawn and crab fishing and during the warmer months a great night can be had chasing them. Queens Lake and Watson Taylor Lake, which both run into the Camden Haven Inlet, are some of the most productive grounds for prawns and crabs on the north coast.

During the dark moon (new moon) each month, prawns head for the sea on the run-out tide. Dip or scoop nets are the most popular methods used by recreational fishers. A light will be required to spot the prawns and crabs. Prawn's eyes appear red in the light, while a crab's white underbelly is visible in the light when they swim.

Hand hauled prawn nets can also be used to catch prawns. This net is 6 metres long and requires at least two people to drag it through the water. This net must be registered with NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) and the best spots to use it are in shallow sandy bottom areas of the lakes.

**Note: It is an offence to take female crabs with attached eggs.**

Fishing charters are also available; further information may be gathered from the local tackle shop or tourist information centre.



The production of this publication is partly funded by your recreational fishing fee.



## Recreational fishing haven

In 2002, the Camden River became a recreational fishing haven following removal of commercial fishing downstream of Dunbogan Bridge and North Haven Bridge including Gogley's Lagoon (see Figure 1). Commercial fishers were fairly compensated using funding from the Recreational Fishing Trusts. Thirty havens were established along the NSW coast to create better fishing opportunities for anglers.

## Fishing rules

Our rules are designed to protect and conserve our fish stocks and to share the catch amongst fishers. Fisheries officers carry out regular patrols along foreshores, ramps and waterways. They are keen to help and advise, but also keep an eye out for illegal fishing. Bag and size limits are set out in the advisory material available free from your recreational fishing fee agent or any Fisheries office.

To report illegal fishing, call your district Fisheries office or Fisherman's Watch on 1800 043 536.

## Recreational fishing fee

Recreational fishers are required to pay the recreational fishing fee before fishing in NSW waters. This applies to all methods of recreational fishing, including spearfishing, hand gathering, using traps or nets and bait collection. Some exemptions apply, including children under 18 and holders of pensioner concession cards or equivalent. Contact your local Fisheries office for details of other exemptions.

You can pay your fishing fee at any one of hundreds of local agents (bait and tackle shops, caravan parks, general stores and service stations); on the internet at [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au); or by phoning 1300 369 365.

Your fishing fee supports your sport! All fees are put into special trusts overseen by angler committees and spent on programs to improve recreational fishing, such as:

- the installation of fish aggregating devices (FADs)
- creating recreational fishing havens
- angler facilities such as fish cleaning tables and fishing platforms
- stocking of freshwater fish in dams and rivers
- essential research on popular recreational fish species, mulloway stocking in estuaries, and artificial reefs
- angler education and advisory programs
- restoring important fish habitat.

## General recreational fishing rules

- Pipis should only be harvested for bait. It is an offence to take pipis beyond 50 metres from the high tide mark.
- It is illegal for recreational fishers to sell their catch.
- Fish which have a legal length may not be filleted at sea. However, they may be gilled, gutted and scaled.
- When underwater fishing, the only species that can be taken with scuba are scallops and sea urchins. You cannot fish using hookah apparatus.

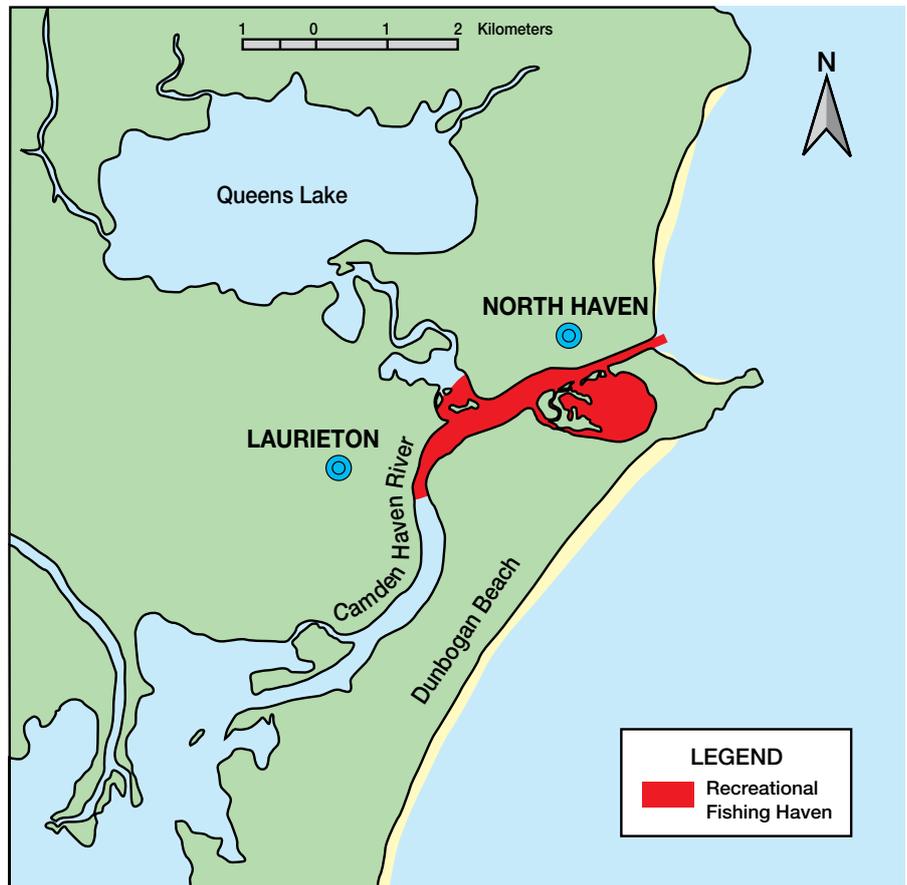


Figure 1. Camden Haven River recreational fishing haven

Lobster may only be taken by a bare or gloved hand.

- Digging for bait is prohibited in seagrasses or mangroves.
- It is an offence to interfere with any oyster lease. Please ensure that your vessel, your vessel's wash or your tackle does not interfere with any part of an oyster lease including the oysters.

### Spearfishing

Spearfishing is popular around the Camden Haven. Diamond Head and Point Perpendicular are good areas for big drummer, bream or snapper. However, **spearfishing is prohibited** in the entrance of the Camden Haven Inlet from the Dunbogan Bridge and the North Haven Bridge downstream to the ocean, including Gogleys Lagoon.

Spearfishing on ocean beaches (except within the last 20 metres at the end of each beach) is not permitted.

It is illegal to spear blue, red or brown groper, lobster or any protected fish

### Collecting oysters

Oysters can be collected from along the entrance rock break wall in the Camden Haven.

A bag limit of 50 per day is allowed. Oysters may be contaminated through either pollution or naturally occurring algae. Eating contaminated shellfish can cause serious illness or death. Commercially grown oysters are harvested under strict guidelines to safeguard public health.

### Fishing safety

Rock fishing can be extremely dangerous. Follow these basic tips at all times:

- Never fish by yourself and always inform others of your plans.
- Wear light clothing, which will allow you to swim if you are washed in.
- Wear appropriate footwear.
- Carry safety gear and wear a life jacket or buoyancy vest.
- Never fish in exposed areas during rough or large seas. Listen to weather forecasts or call the weather information phone line on 1900 937 107.
- Observe first, fish later. Spend some time watching your intended fishing spot before fishing. Plan an escape route in case you are washed in.

- Stay alert. Do not turn your back on the sea.

Detailed advice on boating safety is available in the NSW Maritime Authority publication *Safe boating handbook*. Further information can be obtained by calling the Authority on 131 256 or by checking the website [www.maritime.nsw.gov.au](http://www.maritime.nsw.gov.au).

Bar crossings can be dangerous and require utmost care.

- Avoid crossing a bar on a run-out tide.
- Wear a life jacket each time you cross a bar.
- On approaching a bar, stop and watch the wave pattern.

### Commercial fishing

When spending time around the Camden Haven you may come across some of the area's commercial fishers. These commercial fishers must abide by strict rules governing their operation to protect and sustain fish stocks and to allow a fair share between commercial and recreational fishers.

During the new moon, commercial fishers often set pocket nets across designated streams to capture prawns. These fishers work from licensed fishing boats (LFB's), anchored directly above the net. A strong rope, which lies just below the water, stakes this net. If you wish to pass a set pocket net, approach the LFB slowly and make your intentions clear to the commercial fisher, who will direct you to the safest place to cross. You will need to trim the engine of your vessel as you cross the ropes very slowly.

### Responsible fishing

Please take home your rubbish, especially plastic bags, old line and hooks. Adhere to bag limits for fish and shellfish. Bag limits ensure everyone gets a fair share of the resource and a species is not overfished. Take only what you can eat.

### Catch and release

Catch and release fishing is an increasingly popular practice among many fishers. Compliance with bag and size limits also means fishers must return some fish they have caught to the water. To maximise a fish's survival, follow these simple tips:

- Minimise the time spent to land the fish.
- Use barbless hooks whenever possible to minimise hook damage to fish. Avoid taking fish from the water. If you can, release the fish while it is in the water.

- Always use wet hands or a wet towel to handle fish.
- If a hook is located deep inside the fish, cut the line as close as possible to the fish's mouth.
- Avoid dropping fish onto the bottom of boats or other hard or hot surfaces.

**Contact:**

NSW DPI Manning District  
2/65 Muldoon Street  
PO Box 860  
Taree NSW 2430

Ph (02) 6552 6799  
Fax (02) 6552 4909

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