

# Secrets of Thorny Beach, Phillip Island

**Take your car a little further along Phillip Island from your base at Summerhays Cottage, Cape Woolamai, and experience an exhilarating walk to a lookout, a wreck, a possible Aboriginal midden and a deserted beach.**

An easy 12 minute drive to the west of Summerhays Cottage, you will find Kitty Miller Bay road. The wetlands bordering this short beach access hint of the natural wonders you are about to experience. Pack good walking shoes, hat, sunscreen, bathers, towel, camera, a pack with water and snacks, and your imagination.

From the top of the stairway pause to view this isolated horseshoe bay. Observe its reefs, its waves, its beaches, its bounding hills. It may be a seal you see out there ... or perhaps a skin diver.

If you have an interest in geology, turn right at the base of the stairs, wade the beach and scramble the rocks to the sea-pounded area known as Kennon Head. At least 18 different minerals have been found here- even quartz - but no gold ... yet!

If you have an interest in mystery turn left.

Stroll across the beach to the well-worn goat track and climb to the highest point of the small hill crested by the wind-formed bush buttress - Watt Point. Face Tasmania and wonder at the majesty of sea-carved rock, surf and unending ocean. There will be wind, perhaps so much that you have to shout to your companions. Instead close your eyes and listen...

Imagine a moonless night ravaged by a gale. Can you hear the shouts from the ocean? Sailors screaming to each other as they tug, pull, slip and slide helplessly across the deck of the S. S. Speke rammed far too close to the reefs by raging storm.

They didn't make it.

Look down to your left at the rusting residue of what was, at the time, the largest steel three-masted fully-rigged ship in the world. Built in 1891. Destroyed on February 22nd 1906. One crew member died, but all others were rescued by Islanders who flocked to the scene. In gratitude for 'the kindness shown by the People of the Island' the ship's bell was given in trust to the Presbyterian Church. It is still used today to call people to worship at the Cowes Uniting Church.

Can you see the rough track to the wreck? Clamber down - you might even have to slide in parts - to commune with the fragments of a once mighty ship that in just one more lifetime will be completely consumed by the ocean.

From here, the walk to the sunglazed sands of Thorny Beach, further to the East, begins easily. But look up at the sand dune face before you leave the wreck. Can you see it weeping? It's tears green the tenacious ground cover beneath it. Fresh water leeching from the earth. Look around behind the nearby small dunes. Shells; lots of them in places. Water ... food ... did the Bunurong people camp here? They are the traditional custodians of this land.

Walk on along the beach as they must have done.

Scaling the next rocky outcrops can be a little tricky depending on the tide and the waves, so be careful. But your secret lies on the other side. An expanse of sun-drenched sand that is just yours. There aren't many who know the secret of Thorny Beach, or are prepared to trek to enjoy it. Relax, explore, play, paddle. But don't swim; remember the Speke.

Doug. Williams, 2010