

# Colo River Drive ~ Hawkesbury Region NSW

Please acknowledge © Hawkesbury People & Places 2015 ~ [www.hawkesbury.org](http://www.hawkesbury.org)



This drive commences in Kurrajong Village, travels along Comleroy Road, then East Kurrajong Road, crosses the Hawkesbury River at Sackville Ferry and then proceeds on to the Lower Portland Ferry. The road then follows the course of the Colo River from its confluence with the Hawkesbury and on to Upper Colo where the drive climbs the ridge then descends again to cross the causeway over Wheeny Creek. After following the length of Comleroy Road the drive ends where it meets Bells Line of Road at Kurrajong.

**Distance: 71kms**

**Note:** Enjoy the drive but please take care as the route includes both tar sealed and narrow gravel roads. Road surface conditions are variable and are subject to change. Always adjust your speed according to the prevailing road and weather conditions. Distances are approximate.

**Driving Time:** 2.5 hours plus allowance for two vehicular ferry crossings

## 1. Kurrajong Village to Stanley Park East Kurrajong ~ 14 kms

From Old Bells Line of Road turn right at the traffic lights onto Bells Line of Road then left onto Comleroy Road. Continue for 3 kms then turn right into East Kurrajong Road.

**Points of Interest:** East Kurrajong Road follows The Bull Ridge, a landform which runs from Comleroy Road corner almost to Sackville. The road winds through East Kurrajong which was an important mixed farming area during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries famous for growing mandarins, apricots and passionfruit. The 'Caselin' early ripening apricot was developed in this area. Settlement by Europeans first took place along Roberts and Howes Creeks in the early 1800s. Aboriginal occupation of the area goes back many thousands of years and evidence may be found in the Roberts Creek area.

Kurrajong East Public School moved to this ridge top location in 1890 after being established at Buttsworth Swamp on Howes Creek in 1878. Stanley Park was gazetted for public recreation in August 1897 and officially opened with a sports carnival in 1900. It was named after Stanley Moses a gifted violinist whose father owned a property in the area. The adjacent School of Arts was completed in 1923 has been continuously operated by the local community since that time.



## 2. East Kurrajong to Sackville Ferry crossing ~ 8.5 kms

From Stanley Park, East Kurrajong proceed to the Putty Road T intersection and turn left. Shortly after, turn right into Bull Ridge Road. Then at the T intersection with West Portland Road turn right and at the next T intersection with Sackville Road turn left and wait to cross the Hawkesbury River at the Sackville Ferry Crossing. Public toilets available at this location.

**Points of interest:** East Kurrajong Road originally ran from the Comleroy Road corner in an easterly direction to Sackville prior to being dissected by the construction of the Putty Road. The Putty Road follows the approximate track blazed by John Howe in 1820 and has been known by various names over the years including the Singleton Road, Military Road and the Bulga Road. During World War Two, this inland route to the Hunter Valley was redeveloped (commencing in 1939) to form a continuous route.

A ferry has crossed the river at Sackville since about 1870 when a hand operated punt was installed to haul one vehicle or several passengers across the river at a time. The motor driven cable ferries date from 1930s and have been upgraded several times over the years. Adjacent to the ferry ramp the remains of Churchills Wharf can be seen. Land for the wharf was resumed and gazetted in January 1887. The wharf was used by steam powered vessels which plied the river system taking produce to the Sydney markets and serving the communities along the river with goods and services.

### 3. Sackville North to Lower Portland Ferry Crossing ~ 13.5 kms



After crossing the river, the road climbs the ridge. Travel for 4.8 kms and take River Road to the left at the Sackville North Fire Station. Proceed to Lower Portland, then turn left and wait to cross the river at the ferry. Public toilets adjacent to the Lower Portland Fire Shed.

**Points of interest:** Along River Road there are glimpses of the Colo River in the valley below. The road travels through 'Dargle' farm and ski gardens. Colonial era 'Dargle House' house on the right was built in 1831 by Andrew Doyle, an Irishman transported for his involvement in the rebellions of 1798 and 1801. Lower Portland Ferry is the only punt in the district not operated by the Roads & Maritime Services but is jointly funded by local government - Hawkesbury City Council and the Hills Shire Council. The three car ferry was recently replaced by a larger vessel.

A large concrete bridge which crosses the Colo can be seen from the ferry. This so called 'Bridge to Nowhere' was officially opened by the NSW Minister for Public Works 2 August 1969 and cost in excess of \$225,000. The bridge replaced a similar vehicular ferry and the ramps may still be seen on the river bank at Skeleton Rocks Reserve. Locals at the time stated that the bridge was of benefit to few as most residents lived on the Sydney side of the river hence the moniker. This grand bridge leads to a handful of properties as well as 'Una Voce', a holiday property owned by South Sydney Junior Leagues Club.

#### 4. Lower Portland to Central Colo ~ 11.5 kms

After crossing the ferry turn left into West Portland Road, travel for 3 kms then turn right into Lower Colo Road. Continue for another 8 kms until you reach the Colo River Bridge at Central Colo which passes overhead carrying the Putty Road to the Hunter Valley. **Caution: narrow road widths in some places.**

**Points of interest:** After turning onto West Portland Road on the right side of the road lies an historic homestead 'Venetiaville' (private property). This sandstone home constructed in the 1860s was the home of boat builder and champion sculler Peter Kemp. At Central Colo there are toilet and picnic facilities adjacent to Colo Park which also provides access to the Colo River. Also of interest are the war memorial plaques mounted on the rock face near the toilet block.

#### 5. Central Colo to Upper Colo ~ 14 kms

Proceed under the Colo River Bridge following Upper Colo Road to Upper Colo then turn left into Comleroy Road. **Caution: narrow road widths in some places.**

**Points of interest:** The road meanders along the bank of the Colo River through orchards, mixed farms and holiday camps. Some local families such as the Wards have farmed the fertile river banks for several generations growing citrus, sweet corn, watermelons and cabbages. This area also once boasted a millet broom factory and a jam factory. Before reaching Upper Colo, a road branches off to the right and crosses the Colo River meeting up with the Putty Road at Colo Heights.

#### 6. Upper Colo to Bells Line of Road Kurrajong ~ 19.5 kms

From Upper Colo the drive follows Comleroy Road climbing to the top of the ridge before descending to cross Wheeny Creek at the causeway. After climbing the next ridge follow the road passing Blaxlands Ridge Road and East Kurrajong Road (near the beginning of the drive) until reaching the T intersection with Bells Line of Road. Turn right then left at the traffic lights into Old Bells Line of Road and proceed to Kurrajong Village where refreshments are available.

**Points of interest:** Just after turning left into Comleroy Road and before the road climbs the ridge is Gosper's Church and Cemetery. The land was donated by the Gosper family in 1857 and the present church was constructed in 1906. It is now part of the Anglican Parish of Wilberforce. From about 1819 Comleroy Road was part of overland route to the Hunter Valley. A road to the right leads to Mountain Lagoon near Bilpin via the fire trail. As the road ascends from the valley spectacular views of the river may be viewed. There are several safe places to pull off the road and enjoy the scenery. After a couple of hairpin bends, the road passes through Wollemi National Park before descending to cross Wheeny Creek. Toilet and picnic facilities are available at the reserve.

The Comleroy and Blaxlands Ridge areas were popular tourist destinations in the first half of the 20th century most of whom arrived by train to Kurrajong. Many guesthouses were built along the ridges and boasted fresh air, generous meals and comfortable accommodation for visitors from Sydney. 'Vanay' (private property) at No. 463 was built of brick in the Federation style in 1913 by Frank (Francis) McMahon son of Michael McMahon and Mary Ann (nee Hennessey). Originally known as 'Dalganally', it became a guesthouse in the late 1920s.

Before reaching Bells Line, the Comleroy Road School of Arts constructed of local bricks was opened in June 1907 and was a venue for regular dances and local celebrations.

#### Further information

<http://coloriver.com.au/index.htm>