

Toonumbar Dam, NSW

If you have passed up dam canoeing because you don't find paddling on chocolate coloured water appealing, Toonumbar Dam will change your mind. Iron Pot Creek flows out of Toonumbar National Park, and the water in the dam is clear, clean, sweet and cold. What must have been a rocky gorge is now a narrow dam.

It is two kilometers up from the boat ramp at the dam wall to Bell's Bay ramp and camping ground. The dam is about 300 metres across down near the wall, and about 150m wide past Bell's Bay, although it does open up again two kilometres upstream.

There are five more kilometres more to the top end of the dam, past Bell's Bay. Not a very great distance, but Toonumbar is a nice place for a relaxing paddle and a chance to explore.

That said, bass fishermen use power boats on the dam, though not water skiers. There is an 8 knot speed limit. Bell's Bay is a very, very small camping ground. Outside of school holiday times, and during the week, it is a quiet place.

The Toonumbar National Park (you pass the fork in the road seven kilometres before the dam) is above the dam, and it may interest you as a more open camping spot. Places to see there include The Murray Scrub an example of lowland subtropical rainforest. The red cedar loop is a highlight of this track.

staghorn above the water



Finding it

It is 33 kilometres from Kyogle to the dam. On the northern edge of town, the road to Nimbin turns east, and the dam road goes west. There is 22 kilometres of sealed road, then 7 km of dirt, impassable after heavy rain. The unsealed road into Bells Bay, 2.5 kilometres past the dam wall, is rough and narrow. Stay under the 30 kph speed limit and take it slow.



left top row: launch ramp at the dam wall
left 2nd row: campsite at Bells Bay
left 3rd row: shoreline
left 4th row: 3 km upstream from Bells Bay

above: launch point Bells Bay

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If you are not familiar with the border area of northern NSW, you must obtain maps before venturing into the area. The access through Beaudesert, down Lions Road, is on a narrow, winding back country road, unfenced in places with stock on the road. There are many creek crossings: Running Creek on Lions Road used to be the nearest whitewater to Brisbane back in the late 1970's or so, when Brisbane had a wet season.

The road west from Murwillumbah is also narrow, and slow going. On the plus side there is wonderful scenery. A little time spent on the internet searching for the NSW National Parks of Toonumbar, and, Border Ranges, and the search terms Tweed Range Scenic Drive, and The Pinnacle, will open up access to one of the most impressive landscapes within reach of South East Queensland and northern New South Wales.