

Perth's freebies

10 great things to see and do in Perth, for free.

1 TAKE A BUS: all bus and train travel is free in the central Free Transit Zone (FTZ) of the city. In addition there are free CAT bus services which operate around the city and in Fremantle.

2 PERTH MINT: the world's greatest collection of gold investment bars is on display at The Perth Mint. The Industry Collection of Gold Bars Worldwide has more than 700 pieces with some 120 dazzling samples showcased in a spectacular exhibition housed in the 105-year old vault. Watch 200oz of 99.99% pure, molten gold being transformed into a solid gold bar. Wander through dramatic gold exhibits and a reconstructed 19th century Prospectors' Camp and see millions of dollars worth of brilliantly finished coins and medallions being struck on huge presses. 310 Hay Street, East Perth. Open weekdays 9am-5pm, weekends and public holidays 9am-1pm. Gold Pours: weekdays 10am, 11am, 12 noon, 1pm, 2pm, 3pm, 4pm; weekends and public holidays 10am, 11am, 12 noon.

3 THE BERNDT MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY: is one of Australia's best collections of traditional and contemporary Australian Aboriginal art and artefacts with works from Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory and the southwest, desert and Kimberley regions of WA. University of Western Australia. Open Mondays and Wednesdays 2-4.30pm, Fridays 10am-2pm.

4 THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA: has a good gallery of Aboriginal culture; a marine gallery with the skeleton of a 25m (82ft) blue whale; a gallery of dinosaurs and a good collection of meteorites, including Australia's largest. The museum complex also includes Perth's original prison, built in 1856 and used until 1888 - a favourite spot for hangings in the past. Open daily, 9.30am-5pm. James Street, Perth. Entry by donation.

5 ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA: an excellent collection of Western Australian art. The Gallery schedules free public tours of the collection and exhibitions every Tue, Wed, Thurs, Fri and Sun at 1pm. Tours change monthly. The 'Friday Focus' tour at 12.30pm focuses on a particular work on display. Perth Cultural Centre, Roe Street. Open daily 10am-5pm.

6 FREMANTLE HISTORY MUSEUM: follow the East Fremantle Heritage trail, which takes you past historic buildings, including the Fremantle History Museum. Originally the asylum, it is reputed to contain a ghost. Cnr Ord and Finnerty Streets, Fremantle. Open Sunday-Friday, 10.30am-4.30pm; Saturday, 1pm-5pm.

7 KINGS PARK: set beside the Swan River in the heart of the city, the 406 hectare park is the heart, lungs and soul of the city. A mix of bushland, botanic gardens, walkways and grassy lawns it's the place to go for lunch time strolls and weekend picnics or barbecues. In spring, the park is home to some of the most impressive wildflower displays in the state and in summer, an outdoor cinema.

8 FEDERATION WALKWAY: a spectacular elevated 52m glass and steel arched bridge suspended amongst a canopy of tall eucalypts which extends 620 metres through the Botanic Garden.

9 CITY BEACHES: Spend a day at one of Perth's 19 city beaches. City Beach and Floreat Beach are excellent for body boarding and sunset beach fishing. Surfers should head further north to Scarborough Beach and Trigg Island, 15 minutes north-west of the city. Best time to go is in the morning, before the afternoon breezes kick in. You can find calm river beaches on the Swan at Peppermint Grove and Crawley.

10 LAKE MONGER: the lake, in the northern suburbs at Leederville, is a wild fowl refuge, and home to the famous black swans of Western Australia. There are also picnic facilities.



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