

Sydney's freebies

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

1 CROSS THE COAT-HANGER: it will cost you to climb it but crossing the Sydney Harbour Bridge on foot is a fun-filled and free family adventure with superb photo opportunities. It is the world's largest (but not the longest) steel arch bridge with the top of the bridge standing 134 metres above the harbour. Fondly known by the locals as the 'Coathanger', the Sydney Harbour Bridge opened in March 1932.

2 VISIT GOVERNMENT HOUSE: the most sophisticated example of a Gothic Revival building in NSW. The ground floor State rooms have an outstanding collection of 19th and 20th century furnishings. The upstairs rooms have been used as the private quarters for the Governor, Queen Elizabeth and other members of the Royal family and visiting heads of State. Viewing of the house is by guided tour only, with tours on the hour and half hour starting at 10.30am with the last tour departing at 3pm. Macquarie St. Tel: (02) 9931 5222.

3 PICNIC IN CENTENNIAL PARK: pack a picnic, bring a blanket, and enjoy Sydney's lush oasis of ponds, grassy hills and woodlands in Centennial Park. Dedicated by Sir Henry Parkes as a public open space in 1888 the park was the venue for the inauguration of Federation in 1901, and includes a monument to the birth of the nation, the Federation Pavilion and a dedicated cycle and rollerblading track.

4 HAVE FUN IN CONEY ISLAND: explore Sydney's Luna Park with free entry, rides for all ages 7 & great views of the harbour. Thrilling Sydneysiders since 1935, this iconic park is open every day.

5 SAMPLE THE STREET CULTURE: chill out to some fantastic free music and street entertainment. Martin Place is always full of talented buskers, Darling Harbour has lots of free concerts or head down to Circular Quay for street entertainment at its best.

6 HANDS-ON WITH ASTRONOMY: free astronomy displays by day at Australia's oldest existing observatory in The Rocks, Sydney Observatory. The building and gardens are open daily from 10am to 5pm. Night time tours have a fee, but during the day admission is free for you to explore the beautiful garden and wander through the old observatory building to investigate the changing exhibitions.

7 BRAIN-FOOD FOR KIDS: The Australian National Maritime Museum and Art Gallery of NSW both offer free entry and will stimulate the mind and educate active kids.

8 WRITERS WALK: walk the cobble-stone streets of The Rocks and along the promenade of Circular Quay and learn about famous Australian writers on 50 round metal plaques. Each plaque has a selection of thoughts from Australian writers and literary visitors and contributors include art critic and historian Robert Hughes; feminist, academic and author Germaine Greer; and writers Thea Astley, Peter Carey, Dorothy Hewitt and James A Michener.

9 SNORKEL AT SHELLY BEACH: enjoy the amazing submarine culture of Cabbage Tree Bay at Shelly Beach near Manly. This Aquatic Reserve has some great examples of samples of sub-tidal reef, seagrass beds and offshore kelp communities that are home to weedy seadragons, elegant wrasse and black rock cod. The Bay also provides a home for the Blue Groper.

10 WALK THE WETLANDS: follow the boardwalk at Bicentennial Park and explore one of Australia's most important wetland ecosystems. There's free entry, BBQs, picnic areas, playgrounds, pathways and cycleways, parking, access to the wetlands, salt marsh and bird hides. Additional features include Lake Belvedere, Peace Monument, Treillage Tower, Sundial, 'Cyrus the Great' statue, the Silent Hearts Memorial Garden and water features.



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