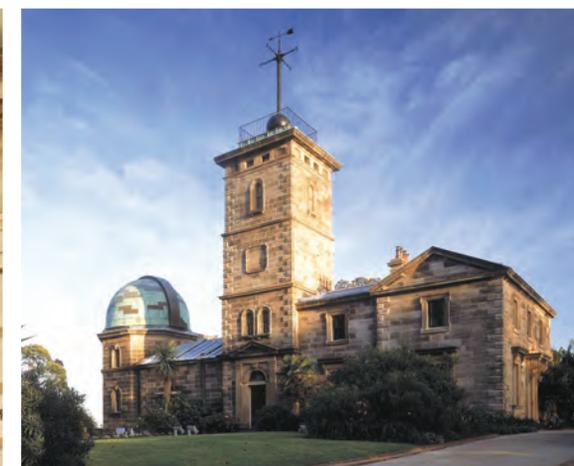


# Walking Wonders

Make like a local and explore Sydney's iconic destinations on foot.

By Christine Knight.



SYDNEY IS A CITY of history, art and culture. It's also very walkable, and many of its key attractions are free to see. Take this walking tour of Sydney to discover its beauty, stories and a few secret gems.

Start the walk by catching a train or ferry to Milson's Point, at the base of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Walk back over the bridge using the pedestrian walkway on the eastern side for some of the most breathtaking views of Sydney Harbour—without costing you a cent.

At the other side of the bridge, continue walking up to the Sydney Observatory and Observatory Hill (maas.museum/sydney-observatory). The heritage-listed Observatory was built in 1858 and began as the centre of scientific research for the colony of New South Wales. From its prime location, perched at the highest point over Sydney Harbour, the Observatory played an important role in the history of timekeeping, meteorology and astronomy. Today the Observatory is a museum and

public observatory with an 1874 29cm lens telescope available for public viewing during ticketed tours. It is free however, to wander the grounds and take in the spectacular view from the top of Observatory Hill. Take a quick look at the three remaining walls of Fort Phillip that were built 1804, before strolling downhill to the historic Rocks district.

The Rocks was the first European settlement in Australia. It was established by Captain Arthur Phillip of the First Fleet in 1788 as a penal colony. Take a stroll through the cobblestone laneways and discover some of the 100-plus heritage sites and buildings in the area, including Cadman's Cottage, the oldest house, built in 1816, and the Dawes Point Battery, which is the oldest remaining European structure, built in 1791.

A look inside The Rocks Discovery Museum (facebook.com/TheRocksDiscoveryMuseum),

housed in a restored 1850s sandstone warehouse, is free, and will give further insight into this fascinating part of Sydney. The Museum includes a unique collection of archaeological artefacts found in The Rocks and interactive exhibits that highlight the area's history, including the story of the land's traditional custodians, the Aboriginal tribes who lived in Sydney before colonisation.

The Rocks is also a vibrant community of restaurants and boutiques, with markets and live entertainment. After taking in the history and incredible view, wander inside the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA, mca.com.au).

The MCA is Australia's leading contemporary art museum, housed inside a grand art deco building. It's free to see most of the cutting-edge Australian and international art inside the museum, with over 4,000 works on display, including Aboriginal artists. Head to the rooftop café for spectacular views of the Sydney Opera House.

Next, amble through Circular Quay, watching the iconic Sydney ferries arriving. If you have time, take a ferry from here to waterfront spots including Taronga Zoo, Luna Park, Watson's Bay and Manly.

At the end of Circular Quay lies the grand Sydney Opera House (sydneyoperahouse.com), designed by Danish architect Jørn Utzon. The performing arts venue was formally opened on 20 October 1973, and is now one of the most recognised buildings in the world. The Sydney Opera House is home to regular performances by the Australian Ballet, Opera Australia and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Book a ticketed event such as a show or a guided tour, or simply walk up the stairs and around the famous sails for an up close look.

Afterwards take a look on the northern VIP steps of the Opera House for a wild long-nosed fur-seal nicknamed "Benny" who has been known to sunbathe here, then continue walking onwards to the Royal Botanic Garden (rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au).

PHOTO: NAESI/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN SYDNEY. PHOTO: STEVE BACK. DESTINATION NSW. SYDNEY OBSERVATORY. ARGYLE STAIRS, THE ROCKS.



(From top) Art Gallery of NSW; The Calyx; Archibald Fountain.

The heritage-listed Royal Botanic Garden is located in an unbeatable spot on Sydney's harbourfront. Meander through the various gardens and check out the sculptures, eel pond and flowers, ending with a visit to The Calyx, where a free exhibition "Plants with Bite" is on display, telling the story of carnivorous plants.

A must stop in the Garden is a visit to Mrs Macquarie's Chair, an exposed sandstone rock hand-carved into a bench by convicts in 1810 for Elizabeth Macquarie, the wife of Major-General Lachlan Macquarie, Governor of New South Wales. The Chair is one of the best vantage points for Sydney Harbour.

Walk up from the Garden to the State Library of NSW ([sl.nsw.gov.au](http://sl.nsw.gov.au)), the oldest library in Australia. Established in 1826, it's free to browse the various exhibitions, take a heritage tour or gallery tour and visit the richly embellished Shakespeare room.

The nearby Art Gallery of NSW ([artgallery.nsw.gov.au](http://artgallery.nsw.gov.au)) features paintings, photographs, drawings and sculptures by local and international artists, including a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gallery. Browse art works by pioneering 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Australian artists such as Arthur Boyd, William Dobell, Tom Roberts and Brett Whiteley.

The gallery also includes a selection of 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century European art with paintings by masters such as Pablo Picasso, Paul Cézanne, John Constable and Vincent van Gogh on display.

Walk up Art Gallery Road to your next stop, the heritage-listed Hyde Park. Australia's oldest park is divided by Park Street, with the ANZAC Memorial building and visitor centre, and pool of reflection on the south side, and with the Archibald Fountain, themed gardens, monuments and water features on the north side.

The ANZAC Memorial is a heritage-listed war monument and museum, the state's principal memorial to all Australians who have served in the Defence Forces. It's free to wander through the memorial and pay tribute to the service and sacrifice made by all servicemen, servicewomen and their families ([anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au](http://anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au)).

Nearby Saint Mary's Cathedral ([stmaryscathedral.org.au](http://stmaryscathedral.org.au)) is the spiritual home of Sydney's Catholic community. Built in English Gothic revival-style from 1866 to 1928, the spires finally where completed in June 2000. The breathtaking underground crypt is a must-visit, with its striking architecture and ornate terrazzo floor, considered to be one of the finest mosaic floors in the world.