

# KIDS IN THE CITY

FAMILY FRIENDLY BRISBANE HAS PLENTY TO INTEREST  
THREE NATURE-LOVING MINI-ADVENTURERS ENJOYING  
THEIR FIRST URBAN BREAK...

WORDS: Karen Bleakley

Family fun in the sun on the Cultural Forecourt at South Bank Parklands

“Wow,” exclaims four-year-old Evangeline, as we stroll under South Bank’s one kilometre-long, bougainvillea-lined arbour. Our seven-year-old twin boys run after her staring at the pink flowers that appear even more vibrant against the backdrop of Brisbane’s blue sky.

Nestled in the twist of the Brisbane River, Brisbane is blessed with a subtropical climate that averages eight hours of sunshine a day. Even in winter, daytime temperatures are often over 20 degrees, making it an ideal city destination for kids who love the outdoors.

The weather isn’t Brisbane’s only draw; the city blends its leafy, laid-back vibe with sophisticated coffee shops, gourmet dining experiences, incredible cultural opportunities and family attractions.

One of Australia’s fastest growing cities, Brisbane somehow feels comfortable in its own evolving skin, as though it’s not trying to compete with larger cities like Melbourne or Sydney, even though its progress is proudly on display with its ever increasing number of shiny high rises and cranes on every corner.

As Sue White, journalist and founder of the *Kids Who Travel* Facebook group, says: “Taking kids on city breaks has its challenges and it often requires more planning. Some cities are more set up for families than others. Brisbane offers warm weather, a city beach, river cruises and lots of family attractions and parks. Plus it is compact enough to explore on foot or using public transport.”

If these words from a seasoned travel writer aren’t enough to reassure me, seeing the kids’ excitement as they explore South Bank is.

## WHEEL OF BRISBANE

A ride on the Wheel of Brisbane – a Ferris wheel that stretches almost 60 metres into the sky – gives us spectacular 360-degree views of the city. The kids are in awe at being as high as the skyscrapers across the river.

The Wheel proudly stands alongside the river at South Bank within 17 hectares of lush gardens. The second we step off, the kids sprint to the Riverside Green Playground – an incredible park, where they ditch their shoes and climb up rope ladders, wobble over narrow walkways and slide down metal slides. >>





**Clockwise from top left:** Brisbane Rover; the boys make a beeline for the Wheel of Brisbane; dining at River Quay on South Bank – an area with a real holiday vibe

After drying off, we continue our walk, passing buskers and street artists who are entertaining the late afternoon crowds. Evangeline insists on sitting on the grass to watch a girl sing acoustic songs. She is smitten, loving her first experience of music in the sunshine.

“Can I go and say hello to her, Mummy? Pleeeaaase.” So we take her over to say hello in

“ The kids have fun in the water park and we enjoy cooling off while taking in the city views... ”

between tracks. We buy the girl’s CD and Eva is beyond thrilled to get it signed personally and to get a high-five from her.

The walkway leads us to the Epicurious Gardens – a large kitchen garden filled with fruit, vegetables and herbs. The kids run around smelling the fragrant plants and guessing which vegetable is which. It’s a garden for the senses and it gets them really excited about what they can grow in our own garden.

Exhausted from the walking, swimming and playing, it’s time to jump aboard the Brisbane Explorer – Brisbane’s hop on, hop off bus.

“Make sure you go upstairs, the kids will love it,” the driver tells us.

The bus weaves through the traffic taking us past the bustling restaurants of Caxton Street, the iconic Old Windmill – the oldest surviving building in Queensland dating back to 1828 – and the Suncorp Stadium, which is the home of rugby league in the city, as we listen to the commentary through our earphones.

Going over the heritage-listed Story Bridge – the longest cantilever bridge in Australia that was designed by Queenslander John Bradfield who also designed the Sydney Harbour Bridge – is a highlight.

## QUEENSLAND MUSEUM

Next morning, we arrive at Queensland Museum and Science Centre, ready to tackle four levels of fun. The first half of the day is spent exploring the hands-on science exhibits. From spinning chairs to testing temperatures of different colours under heat, to optical illusions – the kids dash from display to display, excited to be >>

**Above, from top to bottom:** The outdoor pool at South Bank; Streets Beach

## THINGS TO DO WITH KIDS IN THE CITY

The children will love these fun experiences in Brisbane...

### The Wheel of Brisbane

Open Sunday to Thursday from 10am to 10pm and Friday and Saturday from 10am to 11pm. Admission is A\$20 (£12) per adult, A\$14 (£8) per child under 12, and A\$57 (£34) for a family of four (two adults, two children under 12). A private gondola, holding a maximum of six adults and two children under 12 years costs A\$99 (£59).

[www.thewheelofbrisbane.com.au](http://www.thewheelofbrisbane.com.au)



### Brisbane Explorer Bus

Admission is A\$40 (£24) per adult, A\$25 (£15) per child (five to 15 years), and A\$110 (£66) for a family (two adults and two children). The bus operates daily. Price includes two tours – Brisbane City and Mount Coot-Tha.

[www.theaustralianexplorer.com.au/brisbane-explorer](http://www.theaustralianexplorer.com.au/brisbane-explorer)

### Queensland Museum

Entry to the main museum is free. Admission into the Science Centre costs A\$14.50 (£8) per adult, A\$11.50 (£6) per child (three–15 years), and A\$44.50 (£26) for a family (two adults and up to four children). Open from 9.30am to 5pm.

[www.qm.qld.gov.au](http://www.qm.qld.gov.au)

### River City Cruises

Admission costs A\$29 (£17) per adult, A\$15 (£9) per child (five to 15 years), A\$65 (£39) for a family (two adults and up to three kids under 15). Cruises take place at 10.30 and 12.30pm daily.

[www.rivercitycruises.com.au](http://www.rivercitycruises.com.au)

### The Collective Markets

Markets take place every Friday (5pm–9pm), Saturday (10am–9pm) and Sunday (9am–4pm) at Stanley Street Plaza.

[www.collectivemarkets.com.au/southbank](http://www.collectivemarkets.com.au/southbank)

### Roma Street Parkland

Open 24 hours a day apart from the spectacle gardens which are closed from dusk to dawn. The train runs for a gold coin donation from Wednesday to Friday from 10am–12.30pm, and Saturdays and Sundays from 10am–3pm.

### Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary

Admission costs A\$32 (£18) per adult, A\$19 (£11) per child and A\$76 (£44) for a family (two adults and three children). The Sanctuary is open 9am–5pm daily. Visit their website for details of events, such as markets and outdoor movies.

[www.koala.net](http://www.koala.net)



# FUN THINGS TO DO OUTSIDE OF THE CITY

Plenty of great experiences await a little further out of Brisbane...

## Old Petrie Town Markets

Explore the old-fashioned shops, jump on bouncy castles and enjoy freshly brewed coffee made on an original London big red bus. Markets run from 8am to 2pm every Sunday for arts, craft, handmade clothes.

[www.facebook.com/OldPetrieTown](http://www.facebook.com/OldPetrieTown)



## Settlement Cove Lagoon

Visit the beach-front man-made lagoon at Suttons Beach in Redcliffe. Surrounded by a grassy picnic area and plenty of barbecue points, the lagoon makes a great day out of the city. Visit on a Sunday and combine it with a visit to Redcliffe Jetty Markets ([www.redcliffejettymarkets.com](http://www.redcliffejettymarkets.com)), which run from 8am to noon every Sunday.

## Boggo Road Gaol

One of the most notorious prisons in Australian history, this heritage-listed gaol is open Thursday to Sunday each week. There are a range of tours available, including a ghost tour. Tickets start from A\$30 (£18) to A\$45 (£27). Tickets for the history tour cost from A\$12.50 (£7) to A\$50 (£30).

[www.boggoroadgaol.com](http://www.boggoroadgaol.com)



able to press buttons, pull levers and drop balls in holes. In the museum, we're greeted with everything from dinosaur skeletons through to giant squids.

We finish in the Wild State exhibition, where the kids run around looking at indigenous snakes, sharks and spiders in glass cases with an excitement for learning that I haven't seen in them before.

Back on the cultural precinct, we see posters for upcoming children's shows that are coming to QPAC (Queensland Performing Arts Centre). "Can we get tickets," plead the children when they see Mr Maker and Deadly 60 are going to be live on stage. It seems a future trip may be on the cards.

## RIVER CRUISE

River City Cruises offer hour and a half long cruises in the morning and afternoon. It's the perfect length of time for young kids who can't sit still for long. Plus it gives them an enforced rest (overtired kids are not fun people to be around).

Thanks to the engaging commentary from owner and captain, Darren Timms, the kids are entertained as the boat gently takes us up the river past the Brisbane

**Clockwise from top:** Cruising the Brisbane River; the playground at Roma Street Parkland; Lincoln with a giant squid at the Queensland Museum; the Collective Markets; a giant replica dinosaur at the Queensland Museum

Powerhouse (once a power station, now a contemporary arts centre) to trendy New Farm before stopping at Newstead and returning.

Although prone to flooding, as Brisbane is built on a flood plain, Darren explains: "Everyone wants to live along the river these days. Many of Brisbane's most prestigious addresses can be found along here."

The boat passes by apartment blocks with hammocks on the balconies, and large detached houses with private yachts moored outside. Darren points out a riverfront home and tells us: "it was sold for a record A\$14 million to Australian millionaire, Gina Rinehart".

We disembark with the kids chattering about Darren's stories of bull sharks and walk around the Collective Markets at Stanley Street Plaza. It's a fun place to pick up hand-crafted souvenirs while soaking up more live music. The kids enjoy the buzzing atmosphere.

## PARKS AND GARDENS

Roma Street Parkland is the perfect spot to unwind after a day of exploring. Set within the concrete urban

landscape, the park is an unexpected oasis of manicured gardens, luscious lawns and fabulous playgrounds.

After cooling off in the spray from the large tumbling water feature, and running around the grass, we hop aboard the little train for a tour of the horticulture. The formal planted gardens are spectacular and the kids

“Roma Street Parkland is an oasis of manicured gardens, luscious lawns and fabulous playgrounds”

enjoy walking through them and smelling the flowers as they hop on stepping stones and explore the plants. Two fabulous playgrounds keep the children entertained in between walks, with curly slides, flying foxes and climbing walls.

Lone Pine is an old favourite of ours. Set in the pretty suburb of Fig Tree Pocket, it's an easy 12 kilometre jaunt from the city. It's the place to come to hand-feed kangaroos, hold a koala for a photo and explore some

**Clockwise from top left:** Evangeline and Lincoln getting ready for the river cruise; Roma Street Parkland; The Arbour in South Bank

local wildlife in a relaxed and leafy setting. My three adore the platypus exhibit and we spend a long time watching the creatures swim around in the dark using their senses to search for crayfish.

As our visit comes to an end, we head to a café at the entrance to grab dinner before the evening's free outdoor movie begins. We unpack the big blanket from our car and settle in for the evening to watch a family movie in the open air.

Pre-kids, Matt and I used to love our city breaks. We'd visit museums, eat great food, take lots of tours and explore as many attractions as we could cram in. Who knew that even with kids in tow, a city break can still be all of those things, and more?

Travelling with kids slows you down, and it involves you adapting your itinerary, but that's a good thing. It means you notice things you'd have missed at your normal pace and you get to do things you might not have done without them there. There's nothing quite like seeing a destination you thought you knew through the eyes of your children.

The verdict from the kids speaks for itself: "Brisbane is awesome. When can we come back?" 🇦🇺





# Need to know... Brisbane


## GETTING THERE

 Many airlines including Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines, Emirates and Etihad offer one-stop flights to Brisbane from the UK. Prices start from around £800, with the cheapest time to travel being in Australia's autumn and winter, outside school holidays.


## GETTING AROUND

 The Airtrain ([www.airtrain.com.au](http://www.airtrain.com.au)) takes you into the city from Brisbane Airport with prices from A\$32 (£19) return. Once in the city, there is a network of buses and ferries to take you to key spots – find out more at Translink ([www.translink.com.au](http://www.translink.com.au)). Brisbane CBD has plenty of footpaths and cycle tracks. You can hire bicycles using a casual pass ([www.citycycle.com.au](http://www.citycycle.com.au)) from A\$2 (£1) per day.

## CLIMATE

 Brisbane has mild winters with average temperatures of 16 degrees. Summers can be scorching and humid at times, with tropical downpours, so remember your sunscreen, hat, water bottle and umbrella.

## FURTHER INFO

 For more information about Brisbane, visit [www.VisitBrisbane.com.au](http://www.VisitBrisbane.com.au) and [www.queensland.com](http://www.queensland.com).



Life-size dinosaur models at Queensland Museum



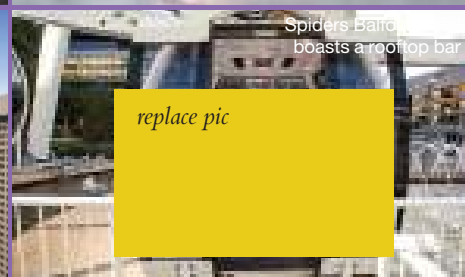
South Bank Playground



Ice cream theatre at Nitrogenie



City views from Mantra on Edward



Spiders Balfour boasts a rooftop bar

replace pic

29°C	28°C	28°C	26°C	23°C	21°C	20°C	21°C	23°C	25°C	27°C	26°C
JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC

## globetrotter

**SLEEP:** In a central CBD location, just across the river from South Bank, City Edge ([www.cityedgebrisbane.com.au](http://www.cityedgebrisbane.com.au)) offers inexpensive, basic accommodation for singles, couples and families. Prices start from A\$89 (£53) for a double room.

**EAT:** Enjoy great value food at the South Bank Surf Club ([southbanksurfclub.com.au](http://southbanksurfclub.com.au)), with lunch specials for A\$14 (£8). Try the traditional fish and chips served with a cold beer in the beachfront setting.

**DO:** Queensland Museum ([www.qm.qld.gov.au](http://www.qm.qld.gov.au)) offers free entry and is fascinating for both children and adults. Discover Queensland's long-lost inhabitants, including dinosaurs and giant marine reptiles. The kids will love venturing around the museum's Wild State exhibition.

## family

**SLEEP:** Mantra on Edward ([www.mantra.com.au](http://www.mantra.com.au)) offers a choice of studios, and one, two or three bedroom serviced apartments, with spectacular city views. Prices start from A\$199 (£120) for a two-bedroom apartment.

**EAT:** No visit to South Bank with kids is complete without a trip to Max Brenner – the ultimate chocolate bar ([www.maxbrenner.com.au](http://www.maxbrenner.com.au)) on Little Stanley Street, and Nitrogenie ([www.nitrogenie.com](http://www.nitrogenie.com)) on Stanley Street Plaza, where they make ice cream using liquid nitrogen while you watch. Try the salted caramel honeycomb crunch!

**DO:** Visit the city's incredible parks. Download the *Brisbane Kids* app (available on Android and iOS) – it lists all playgrounds with a clickable map that takes you to reviews and park features.

## indulgence

**SLEEP:** Stay at Spiders Balfour Hotel at New Farm ([www.spicersretreats.com](http://www.spicersretreats.com)). This boutique hotel is minutes from the city and is set in an iconic Queenslander-style property with a rooftop bar offering views of Story Bridge. Rooms from A\$279 (£168).

**EAT:** Dine at the Story Bridge Hotel ([www.storybridgehotel.com.au/eat](http://www.storybridgehotel.com.au/eat)), which is nestled between the foundations of the bridge. With four dining experiences to choose from, meat lovers should opt for Deery's Restaurant and Smokehouse to sample the signature Australian steaks.

**DO:** Ride on the Wheel of Brisbane ([www.thewheelofbrisbane.com.au](http://www.thewheelofbrisbane.com.au)) with a VIP gondola for A\$110 (£64). This includes tinted windows, leather seats and your choice of music. Add a food platter from A\$75 (£45).