

BOOMING

BRISBANE

FORWARD-THINKING, INNOVATIVE AND ADVANCING:
QUEENSLAND'S VIBRANT CAPITAL CITY IS A GREAT
DESTINATION FOR FAMILIES...

WORDS: Karen Bleakley

here's so much to inspire them here," says a dad whose son is playing with my kids on the interactive exhibit at The Cube.

The Cube is one of the world's largest digital interactive learning and display spaces. Housed in Queensland University of Technology's Science and Engineering Centre, the venue has a lively atmosphere.

Three films are shown to the public on floor-to-ceiling screens. The main show is projected across the two large screens with different films on the two smaller outer screens. 48 touch panels below allow you to explore the films' themes and take part in experiments that interact with the big screens.

Our kids run around, first learning how to code robots to collect rubbish on one screen, and then unearthing digital fossils as they gaze in awe at the lifelike dinosaur valley on the screen above their heads. The main show switches to a space theme which allows them to build rockets using their choice of elements as fuel. They launch them from their small screen to see if they shoot up to the stars on the big screen above.

"This is the best place ever," exclaims Lincoln. All three of our kids are grinning from ear to ear and >>

Main image: Brisbane's glittering city skyline and Story Bridge

Images right (from top to bottom):
The Museum of Brisbane explores the city's historic roots; the *Lost Creatures* exhibition at Queensland Museum; a child plays in the lagoon at South Bank

have decided this is where they want to come to university when they grow up.

CULTURAL HOTSPOTS

Brisbane is a thriving international destination. I see the future everywhere I look, from the glimmering high rises to the culturally vibrant tourist heart which plays host to a busy programme of festivals.

Having lived north of the city for over three years, I know it's not just about how the city looks on the surface; innovation runs through Brisbane's veins. There are awards for tech companies, grants to help entrepreneurs with their digital start-ups and plenty of STEM-based activities for children including robotics, coding and engineering classes.

A short walk takes us to the Museum of Brisbane. Bringing together the city's vibrant art, culture and history, the City Hall-based museum gives an overview of life in Brisbane, past and present. It showcases how Brisbane transitioned from being a home for criminals to being the culturally rich destination it is today.

The kids gravitate towards an interactive wall that highlights 'A Day in the Life of Brisbane'. They press icons to learn facts about the city.

We join the Clock Tower Tour and take a lift up above the museum to see behind-the-scenes of the City Hall clock. The clock has been in operation since the opening of City Hall in 1930. The ornate, hand-operated elevator takes us to a viewing platform where we get a panoramic view of the city which has come a long way since the first convict colony was established in 1824.

QUEENSLAND MUSEUM

Bright and early we set off from our apartment at Mantra on the Quay and stroll past the bustling restaurants of Eagle Street Pier in the glorious sunshine. We cross the Brisbane River and arrive at one of our favourite haunts: Queensland Museum. We aren't here to see the giant squid (a must-see) or the dinosaur skeletons; today is all about Egyptian Mummies.

"We're going to see some mummies who died!" exclaims Eva to a family as we line up. "Not my mummy though, she isn't dead, just some old mummies who are wrapped up!"

The exhibition is a big hit, and our eight-year-old twins stop to read all of the displays so they can do 'Show and Tell' at school. They enjoy lifting the lids to smell the scents that are used during the embalming process.

"Can you believe they stored organs in these jars?" asks Reuben pointing to a row of containers. "I wonder if there's anything in them now! And the mummies were put in up to three different coffins after being wrapped up, one inside the other!"

A member of staff comes over as we are looking the pictures painted on a coffin. "Can you see that lady in the translucent dress in the painting? That is the lady being welcomed into the afterlife."



“The steam train chugs into the station with a flurry of smoke. “It’s just like Harry Potter,” cries Eva”

We weave through the exhibition, looking at the 200 plus artefacts and watching the fascinating CT scans that unravel the ancient mummies' secrets.

STEAMING AHEAD

We catch the historic steam train at Roma Street – it is the perfect chance to explore while resting our aching feet. The train chugs into the station with a flurry of smoke.

"It's just like Harry Potter," cries Eva excitedly as we board.

When the train leaves the station we explore the decorative carriages and get photos taken on the balcony. We sit looking through the window at the passing scenery as the train loops around the city.

As the World Science Festival is in full swing, we explore the experiment tents. After throwing paper planes into tunnels and learning how to tie-dye, we head to the stage to catch the afternoon's free entertainment. The BrainBuzz show is in full

This page, images from top to bottom: Brisbane City Hall; bars lining South Bank's River Quay; the Roma Street steam train

swing – with the hosts from the Nine Network’s new children’s science TV show. When the show is over we wait in line to get the hosts’ autographs and the kids are excited to get their photo taken with Einstein.

Our final stop of the day is the Gallery of Modern Art. The kids are worn out but Patricia Piccinini’s *Curious Creatures* exhibition for kids is just what they need to relax. Designed for children under eight, the exhibition space encourages children to engage in imaginative play as they burrow and snuggle with animal character cushions.

We watch them move the cushions around and fill up little cubby holes making safe, comfy places to jump and immerse themselves in their soft surroundings.

RICH MARITIME HISTORY

The Queensland Maritime Museum takes over a sprawling site at the end of South Bank. The kids are eager to explore after seeing the giant anchor outside.

The HMAS Diamantina is a World War II ship housed in a dry dock, and the kids can’t wait to get on board to learn what life was like on board. I follow, listening to the audio tour and filling them in as we go.

We visit the wheel house, the engine room and learn all about roles such as the radar operator. The kids are fascinated to learn that all ships had a cat on board to help control the rats.

We are told about one ship cat called Tina, after the ship. Tina was treated very well and even had her own hammock, although she preferred the captain’s bunk. All three decide they wouldn’t like to live on a ship and sleep in a hammock every night even if they had a cat for company.

Seeing Jessica Watson’s pink yacht introduces the kids to the idea of dreaming big. Jessica sailed solo around the world aged just 16 in 2010.

PRISON TIME

Jack greets us eagerly for the History Tour at Boggo Road Gaol. After a few good jokes about putting the kids behind bars, the tour kicks off.

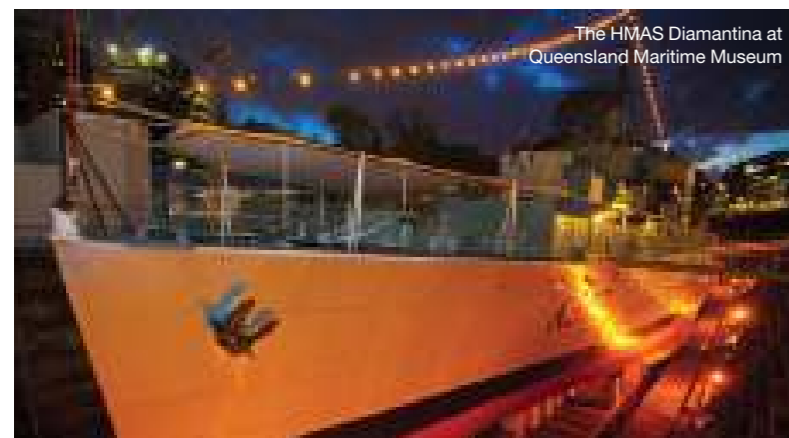
Boggo Road was a notorious prison that was opened in 1883. For many years it was Queensland’s main prison. Much of it has now been demolished, apart



Above: Experiencing a bit of cell time at Boggo Road Gaol (also pictured right)



“Jack greets us eagerly for our history tour of Boggo Road Gaol, a notorious prison that was opened in 1883”



The HMAS Diamantina at Queensland Maritime Museum

from the heritage-listed No. 2 Division which plays host to a number of themed-tours.

“Boggo Road got its name because of the boggy road,” Jack tells us. We laugh at how Australian’s like to add an ‘o’ to the end of everything. We enter and come to a large bell which the kids all have a go at ringing. “This bell ruled the days here,” explains Jack. “The bell would sound to tell prisoners when to get up and eat”.

“Later on, when they stopped using the bell, lots of local residents complained. Kids got up late for school. People were late for work. They asked that the bell be reinstated because locals were so used to it.”

We walk around the cell blocks which each housed 42 cells. Jack tells us the story of Slim Halliday, a serial



Above: The Japanese garden at the Botanic Gardens Mount Coot-tha

escaper. After being imprisoned in 1939 for breaking and entering, he escaped after finding a blind spot in a section of wall. He was caught, but escaped again in 1946 at the same spot. He was caught and eventually released only to be arrested again for another crime.

SEEING STARS

The white-domed Sir Thomas Brisbane Planetarium opened in 1978. The kids are enthralled at the replica of Neil Armstrong’s space suit which greets them as we walk through the door. They enjoy exploring the round exhibition space and then it is time for the movie to begin so we file into the show. The big, comfy tilted seats direct us to the curved screen above.

The *Perfect Little Planet* film introduces young children to the solar system through the eyes of a family of aliens. The show ends with the astronomer, Peter, giving us a guided tour of the sky as it will look tonight. We see time passing as the stars move, and he points out the main constellations. Seeing a picture of Orion laid over the stars engages the kids and gives them some recognisable points to look for.

To finish the trip we enjoy a gentle stroll through the Botanic Gardens Mount Coot-tha. The kids have fun looking at the plants and spotting the wildlife as we weave through the pathways talking about the fun things we’ve experienced over the last few days.

On this trip we’ve experienced the past, present and future. We’ve seen where Brisbane came from and have a clearer idea of where it is going. I am excited about what the future holds for our kids in this advancing city we call home. 🇦🇺 >>

USEFUL CONTACTS

QUT THE CUBE

A must for young science fans, admission into this fun learning space is free.

www.thecube.qut.edu.au

MUSEUM OF BRISBANE

Admission into the main museum is free.

www.museumofbrisbane.com.au

CLOCK TOWER TOURS

Enjoy a free 15-minute tour of the Brisbane City Hall Clock Tower.

www.museumofbrisbane.com.au

QUEENSLAND MUSEUM

Admission into the museum is free. Entry into the *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives* exhibition which runs until 26 August 2018 costs A\$21(£11) for adults and A\$12 (£6) for kids.

qm.qld.gov.au

STEAM TRAIN

Tickets cost A\$30 (£16) for adults and A\$18 (£9) for children. The train runs on select Sundays.

www.theworkshops.qm.qld.gov.au

GALLERY OF MODERN ART (GOMA)

Admission into the main galleries and children’s art centre is free. Some exhibitions have an entry fee. The Patricia Piccinini *Curious Creatures* exhibition runs until 5 August 2018.

www.qagoma.qld.gov.au

BOGGO ROAD GAOL

The one hour and 15 minute ‘History Tour’ costs A\$25 (£13) for adults and A\$12.50 (£6) for kids.

boggoroadgaol.com

SIR THOMAS BRISBANE PLANETARIUM

The exhibition area is free, with films costing A\$15.80 (£8) for adults and A\$9.60 (£5) for children. A three-show pass costs A\$36 (£19) for adults and A\$22 (£12) for kids.

www.brisbane.qld.gov.au




Kids will get starry-eyed at Sir Thomas Brisbane Planetarium




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 £600, with the cheapest time to travel being in Australia's autumn and winter.

GETTING AROUND

 The Airtrain (www.airtrain.com.au) takes you into the city from Brisbane Airport with prices from A\$37 (£20) return. The city has a network of buses and ferries (www.translink.com.au). Brisbane CBD has plenty of footpaths and cycle tracks. You can hire bicycles with a 'casual pass' for A\$2 (£1) from CityCycle (www.citycycle.com.au), which gives you 30 minutes use at a time.

CLIMATE

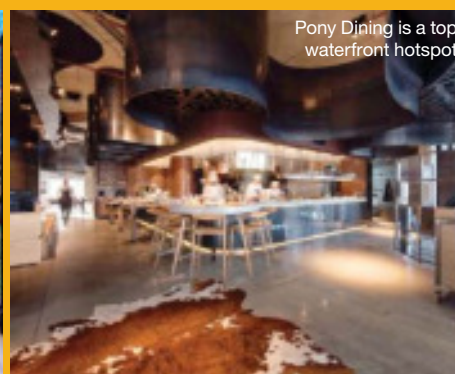
 Brisbane has mild winters with average temperatures of 16 degrees. Summers can be scorching and humid, with tropical downpours, so remember your sunscreen, hat, water bottle and check the weather to see whether you need to take your umbrella.

FURTHER INFO

 For more information about Brisbane log on to www.VisitBrisbane.com.au and www.VisitQueensland.com.au.



The swimming pool at Mantra on the Quay



Pony Dining is a top waterfront hotspot



The popular playground at Riverside Green

30°C	29°C	29°C	27°C	24°C	21°C	21°C	22°C	24°C	26°C	28°C	29°C
JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC

globetrotter

SLEEP: Snooze in style at the architecturally designed Hotel Urban (www.hotelurban.com.au/brisbane). Surrounded by Roma Street parkland, prices at this centrally located hotel start from A\$131 (£71) per night.

EAT: Enjoy a spicy fiesta at Mucho Mexicano (muchomexicano.com.au). Offering awesome margaritas for A\$10 (£5) and a wide range of Mexican treats, including chicken fajitas A\$26 (£14) and grilled corn-on-the-cob with grated queso and chipotle aioli for A\$11 (£6).

DO: Queensland Museum (www.qm.qld.gov.au) offers free entry and is fascinating for all ages. Discover Queensland's long-lost inhabitants, including dinosaurs and giant marine reptiles.

family

SLEEP: Mantra on the Quay (www.mantrahotels.com) offers a choice of studios and serviced apartments, some with spectacular views of the Brisbane River and Story Bridge. Prices start from A\$149 (£82) for a one-bedroom apartment.

EAT: Enjoy great value family food at the Plough Inn on South Bank (www.ploughinn.com.au). If you are feeling hungry, try their eye fillet steak from the pastures of Darling Downs for A\$36 (£20) as your kids tuck into flathead and chips for A\$10 (£5).

DO: Visit one of South Bank's incredible playgrounds – Riverside Green is a firm favourite. Grab yourself some sausages and cook a sausage sizzle while the kids play, then head to Streets Beach – Australia's only inner-city, man-made beach.

indulgence

SLEEP: Be one of the first to stay at the Emporium Hotel South Bank (www.emporiumhotels.com.au) which opens this month. Located in the Southpoint precinct, prices are yet to be confirmed at Brisbane's newest luxury boutique hotel.

EAT: Enjoy wood-fired flavours, boutique wines and a lively waterfront setting at Pony Dining (www.ponydiningbrisbane.com). Tuck into wagu flank with beer-pickled onion for A\$45 (£24) and snapper with radish and sea parsley for A\$38 (£21).

DO: Attend a perfume masterclass at Libertine Parfumerie (www.libertineparfumerie.com.au). Sip Champagne, learn the history of perfume and find out how to select your perfect fragrance for A\$49 (£27).