

# Sydney Harbour Bridge

## What Is It?

The Sydney Harbour Bridge is a world-famous bridge in Sydney, New South Wales. It is located on Sydney Harbour. It connects the southern and northern shores of the Sydney Harbour and is used by thousands of motorists every day. Australians are proud of this iconic landmark. It is a popular tourist attraction with millions of visitors each year.



## Why Was It Built?

The people of Sydney had needed a bridge to connect the southern and northern shores of the Sydney Harbour for a long time. It was too difficult and took too long to get from one side of the harbour to the other. Residents kept asking for one but it wasn't until the early 1920s that it was actually considered. In 1922, the New South Wales government finally decided to build a bridge. They began accepting design proposals from different engineering companies. They chose a bridge design by a talented engineer named Dr John Bradfield. It took eight years to build and opened by Jack Lang, the New South Wales premier, in 1932.

## Building the Bridge

A problem faced the builders of the Sydney Harbour Bridge before they even started building it. Prior to construction of Sydney Harbour Bridge beginning, they needed a way to let the steel used in the bridge move. This was important because in Sydney it is extremely hot in summer and extremely cold in winter.



When steel gets hot, it expands (gets bigger) and when it gets cold, it contracts (gets smaller). The engineers designed special giant latches to allow the steel to move when it needed to in different temperatures. These latches allow parts of the bridge to move 18cm without collapsing on itself.

## Interesting Facts

- The bridge is 1149 metres long.
- The road on the bridge is called the Bradfield Highway, named after its designer.
- People climb the bridge using special ropes, wires and clothing.
- It weighs 52,800 tonnes.
- It is nicknamed the 'coat hanger' because of its arched shape.

# Questions

1. Where is the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

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2. What is the purpose of the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

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3. Who designed the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

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4. How long did it take to build the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

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5. True or False: The Prime Minister officially opened Sydney Harbour Bridge.  
Tick one.

☐ true

☐ false

6. Describe the problem the builders had before construction began.

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7. How did they fix this problem?

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8. Why is the bridge nicknamed the 'coat hanger'?

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# Answers

1. Where is the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

**The Sydney Harbour Bridge is in Sydney Harbour, New South Wales.**

2. What is the purpose of the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

**The purpose of the Sydney Harbour Bridge is to join the southern and northern shores of Sydney Harbour.**

3. Who designed the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

**Dr John Bradfield designed the Sydney Harbour Bridge.**

4. How long did it take to build the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

**It took 8 years to build the Sydney Harbour Bridge.**

5. True or False: The Prime Minister officially opened Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Tick one.

☐ true

☒ false

6. Describe the problem the builders had before construction began.

**They needed to think of a way to let the steel move because steel moves when there's a change in temperature.**

7. How did they fix this problem?

**They fixed this problem by creating two giant latches which allow the steel to move up to 18cm without collapsing on itself.**

8. Why is the bridge nicknamed the 'coat hanger'?

**The bridge is nicknamed the 'coat hanger' because of its arched shape making it look like a coat hanger.**

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## Why Was It Built?

The people of Sydney had needed a bridge to connect the southern and northern shores of the Sydney Harbour for a long time. It was too difficult and took too long to get from one side of the harbour to the other. Residents kept asking for one to make transportation easier, but it wasn't until the early 1920s that it was actually considered. In 1922, the New South Wales government decided to build a bridge. They began accepting design proposals from different engineering companies. They asked for designs for a bridge that would serve its purpose and be iconic. The engineering companies were very competitive in completing this task as they knew the bridge would become an icon. Eventually, the government chose a bridge design by a talented engineer named Dr John Bradfield.

## Building the Bridge

A setback faced the builders of the Sydney Harbour Bridge before they even started constructing it. Prior to construction of Sydney Harbour Bridge commencing, builders needed a way to let the steel used in the bridge move. This was vital



because in Sydney it is extremely hot in summer and extremely cold in winter. When steel gets hot it expands (gets bigger) and when it gets cold it contracts (gets smaller). The engineers designed special giant latches to allow the steel to move when it needed to. These latches allow parts of the bridge to move 18cm without collapsing on itself.

Construction of the bridge began in 1925. They started building both the south and north sides at the same time. It took five years to build the bridge to make it meet in the middle! In 1929, building of the enormous arch began. The road and platforms were built in 1931. On 19th March 1932, it was opened by the Premier Jack Lang. Even during construction, the Sydney Harbour Bridge attracted many tourists and local visitors.

### Climbing the bridge

Not long after it was built, it was discovered that at night, people would climb the bridge. Not only was this illegal but also very dangerous. In order to prevent people from doing this, safe and legal bridge climb tours began. People are given protective clothing and are attached to a special wire to keep them safe. It takes about four hours in total to climb the bridge. Climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge is very popular because from the top, the whole city can be seen.

### Interesting Facts

- The bridge is 1149 metres long.
- The road on the bridge is called the Bradfield Highway.
- People climb the bridge using special ropes. It takes 4 hours to climb.
- It weighs 52,800 tonnes.
- It is nicknamed the 'coat hanger' because of its arched shape.
- It cost more than £10 million to build.
- It is one of the tallest bridges in the world.
- It was built mainly by immigrants that were very well paid.





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3. Who designed the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

**Dr John Bradfield designed the Sydney Harbour Bridge.**

4. In what order were the different parts of the bridge built?

**First they built the south and north sides of the bridge. Then the arch was built and lastly the road and platforms.**

5. True or False: The Prime Minister officially opened Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Tick one.

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6. Describe the problem the builders had before construction began.

**They needed to think of a way to let the steel move because steel moves when there's a change in temperature.**

7. Why do you think the bridge was a tourist attraction while it was being built?

**Due to its location on the Sydney Harbour and the size of the bridge, it would have been interesting to see.**

8. Why were bridge climbs introduced?

**Bridge climbs were introduced because people were climbing the bridge on their own at night, which was dangerous and life-threatening.**

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## Why Was It Built?

The people of Sydney had needed a bridge to connect the southern and northern shores of the Sydney Harbour for a long time. It was a long and arduous effort to get from one side of the harbour to the other. Residents kept requesting one to make transportation easier, but it wasn't until the early 1920s that it was actually considered. In 1922, the New South Wales government decided to build a bridge. They began accepting design proposals from different engineering companies. They asked for designs for a bridge that would serve its purpose and be iconic. The engineering companies were very competitive in completing this task as they knew the bridge would become an icon. Eventually, the government chose a bridge design by a talented engineer named Dr John Bradfield.

## Building the Bridge

An obstruction faced the builders of the Sydney Harbour Bridge before they even started constructing it. Prior to construction of Sydney Harbour Bridge commencing, builders required a way to let the steel used in the bridge move. This was vital because in Sydney it is scorching hot during summer and bitterly cold during winter. When steel gets hot, it expands and when it gets cold,



it contracts. Not catering for this aspect of steel would mean the bridge would collapse onto itself during extreme hot or cold temperatures. The engineers designed special giant latches to allow the steel to move when it needed to. These latches allow parts of the bridge to move 18cm without collapsing on itself.



Construction of the bridge began in 1925. Different stages began and continued while other stages commenced. They started building both the south and north sides at the same time. It took five years to build the bridge to make it meet in the middle! In 1929, building of the enormous arch began. The road and platforms were built in 1931. On 19th March 1932, it was opened by the Premier Jack Lang. Even during construction, the Sydney Harbour Bridge attracted many tourists and local visitors.

### Climbing the bridge

Not long after it was built, it was discovered that at night, people would climb the bridge. Not only was this illegal but also very dangerous - even life threatening. In order to prevent people from doing this, safe and legal bridge climb tours began. People are given protective clothing and are attached to a special wire to keep them safe. It takes about four hours in total to climb the bridge. Climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge is very popular because from the top, the whole city can be seen.

### An Australian Icon

The Sydney Harbour Bridge is located in one of the most iconic locations in Australia - the Sydney Harbour. In its immediate vicinity is the harbour and the Sydney Opera House. Because of this, it is a popular place to visit. People love to take photos here to show as many landmarks as they can. Due its iconic status, it is the location of the Sydney New Year's Eve fireworks. Each year, thousands of fireworks are set off from the bridge and the display lasts a long time. Many thousands of people travel long distances to attend this event. It is also broadcast across Australia and the world. People in other locations love to watch these fireworks because not only is the fireworks display beautiful but it's exciting and interesting because eastern Australia is one of the first places to celebrate New Year's Eve each year.

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7. Why is the Sydney Harbour Bridge the location for New Year's Eve fireworks?

**It is the location for New Year's Eve fireworks because of its iconic status and its location.**

8. Why is eastern Australia one of the first places to celebrate New Year's Eve?

**Eastern Australia is one of the first places to celebrate New Year's Eve because of its position on Earth, it is located in one of the earliest time zones.**