

Sydney Harbour Bridge

Comprehension **

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. 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 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.

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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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Questions

1. Where is the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

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

3. Who designed the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

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

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.

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

8. Why were bridge climbs introduced?
