



50 Fun Facts about Sydney Opera House

1. The original indigenous people of the area were the Gadigal clan.
2. The Aboriginal name for the Point was Tu-bow-gule meaning meeting of the waters.
3. Sydney Opera House sits on Bennelong Point. The Point was first developed as a fort, named after Governor Macquarie. It was later used as a tram shed.
4. 233 designs were submitted for the Opera House design competition held in 1956.
5. In January 1957, Jørn Utzon was announced the winner. He won £5000 for his design.
6. The original estimate to build Sydney Opera House was \$7 million.
7. The final cost of Sydney Opera House was \$102 million.
8. Sydney Opera House was largely paid for by a State Lottery.
9. It was originally estimated that building Sydney Opera House would take four years.
10. Work commenced on Sydney Opera House in 1959 and 10,000 construction workers were engaged.
11. Sydney Opera House was opened by Queen Elizabeth II on 20th October, 1973.
12. Many of the world's best known construction companies were involved in building Sydney Opera House including Arups Structural Engineering, Hornibrook and Rider Hunt.
13. The Sydney Opera House sails were built using three tower cranes made in France for this job, costing \$100,000 each. Sydney Opera House was one of the first buildings constructed in Australia using tower cranes.
14. 6,223 sq metres of glass were used.
15. The topaz coloured glass used in the building was made to order by Boussois-Souchon-Neuvesel in France in a shade unique to Sydney Opera House.
16. 350 kilometres of tension cable was laid during construction of Sydney Opera House. If laid end-to-end this would stretch to Canberra.
17. There are 1,056,006 roof tiles covering an area of approximately 1.62 hectares that sit over the structure. They were made by a Swedish tile company, Höganäs.
18. The concrete ceiling beams change shape as they rise from a T shape to a Y and then a U shape, depending on where the level of stress is greatest. These folded beams replace the need for columns to support the weight of the structure.

19. The sails sit on top of a heavy podium, which is believed to be the biggest pillar or column free chamber in the world.
20. The highest roof shell of Sydney Opera House is 67 metres above sea-level, the equivalent of a 22 storey building.
21. The building is 187 metres in length
22. The building is 115 metres wide.
23. The entire site covers an area of 5.798 hectares.
24. Eight Boeing 747s could sit wing to wing on the site.
25. The building's footprint is 1.75 hectares.
26. There are 2,679 seats in the largest venue, the Concert Hall.
27. The Concert Hall Grand Organ is the largest mechanical organ in the world, with 10,154 pipes.
28. It took 10 years complete the Grand Organ.
29. Two mechanical stage-lifts move scenery and props from the scenery dock to the Opera Theatre. Unlike most theatres, scenery is stored two floors below the stage.
30. In one day, a stage hand working in the Opera Theatre walks an average of 18,681 steps or 13 kilometres.
31. 15,500 light bulbs are changed annually.
32. Sydney Opera House is open to the public 363 days a year - closed on Christmas Day and Good Friday. Staff work every day of the year, 24/7.
33. There are seven performance venues at Sydney Opera House – the Concert Hall, the Opera Theatre, Playhouse, Drama Theatre, The Studio, the Forecourt and the Utzon Room.
34. Since the building opened in 1973 until June 2005, 87,839 performances and events have been staged at Sydney Opera House.
35. 57, 273,728 people have attended performances and events since Sydney Opera House opened in 1973 until June 2005.
36. Paul Robeson was the first person to perform at Sydney Opera House. In 1960, he climbed the scaffolding and sang *Ol' Man River* to the construction workers as they ate their lunch.
37. The Playhouse was originally used as a cinema and in the late 1970s was a popular venue for surfing movies.
38. In the Concert Hall, Arnold Schwarzenegger won his final Mr Olympia body building title in 1980.
39. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has visited Sydney Opera House five times.
40. A net was installed above the orchestra pit in the Opera Theatre during the 1980s following an opera (*Boris Godunov*) featuring live chickens when one of the birds walked off the stage and landing on top of a cellist.
41. The Studio is a licensed venue and patrons can take alcohol into the theatre.

42. The biggest crowd to ever attend a performance at Sydney Opera House was in 1996 for the *Farewell to the World* concert of the band, Crowded House, which was televised around the world.
43. The crime novel, *Helga's Web*, by Jon Cleary, was set at Sydney Opera House with a body found in the building's basement. In 1975, the book was made into a film called *Scobie Malone*, starring Jack Thompson.
44. Sydney Opera House has its own opera written about it, called *The Eighth Wonder*.
45. In May 2003, Sydney Opera House architect Jørn Utzon was awarded the prestigious Pritzker Prize – the Nobel Prize of the architectural community.
46. In October 2003, Sydney Opera House celebrated its 30th Birthday.
47. Four generations of the Utzon family have been architects – Aage (Jørn's father), Jørn, his son Jan, plus Jan's son Jeppe and daughter Kickan.
48. The recently refurbished Utzon Room is the first Utzon-designed interior at Sydney Opera House. Due to changes made to the building after Utzon left the project in 1966, this will be the only ever 100% authentic Utzon interior.
49. It took four weavers more than 8 months to create the new Utzon Room tapestry.
50. If unravelled, the wool in the Utzon Room tapestry, *Homage to CPE Bach*, would stretch 4,500 kilometres.