



## THE BEST THINGS IN MELBOURNE ARE...FREE!

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Actually, it is the best

things in life that are free! A cliché but oh, so true. In a quest to live more simply and to try and instill this truth in my children, I have been trying to entertain them these term holidays with 'nature inspired' activities and simple pleasures. Homemade picnics in the garden, collecting pebbles and leaves to paint, walking rather than driving, and so forth.

Now in doing so I am learning 3 things – one, my children know a lot more about recycling than I do, even my 4-year-old (for this I have their school to thank!). Two, my kids are quite happy living more 'simply'; they have much more of a respect for and interest in nature and their planet than I ever had, which I am ashamed to admit but of which I am so, so proud (and which I am determined to keep fostering as I learn too, with them). And three, that in Melbourne you can treat your children to the most beautiful nature attractions without needing to pay for the pleasure as you do with so many other activities – they are 'free', indeed just as they *should* be, for everyone to enjoy.

One of the best of these in my opinion is the [Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden](#) at the [Royal Botanical Gardens](#).

This gorgeous garden is designed specifically for children to enjoy and explore and is enclosed with only one gate in and out. It is full of interesting and interactive spots where children can play and hide, dig, climb, paddle and generally have a wonderful time learning about plants, conservation and the environment first hand. There is a wetland, a rainforest, a bamboo forest, a rocky gorge, a ruin garden with an ancient redgum, plant tunnels and a winding "river" meandering around grassy mounds. There is also a fantastic kitchen garden planted with seasonal crops.

The garden is really a great day out for all, children and adults alike (afterall, who isn't wowed by gigantic vegetables?) and a cheap one too (well....that is, providing you don't read the parking signs

incorrectly and incur an astronomical parking ticket as I did on my last trip!)

Just don't forget to pack the homemade picnic or you may have to rely on supplies from the 'Observatory Cafe' - very delicious but can be a little pricey...

-Sara

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