



Sydney Harbour Education Centre



Girls with crockery at the Big Dig Archaeology Education Centre

Sydney Harbour YHA reveals the Big Dig site

Sydney Harbour YHA is a state-of-the-art accommodation and education centre built above the Cumberland Street Dig site in The Rocks. When it opens its doors in November, the lifestyle of Sydney's earliest European residents will be revealed as the remains of their homes and workplaces are preserved within the new buildings.

An extensive archaeological dig on the site in 1994 and further recent excavations have resulted in the discovery of some of Australia's earliest houses, including convicts' houses and more than a million artefacts of daily life.

According to Dr Wayne Johnson, Archaeologist for the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA), the development of this site is of immense significance for Australia. "This is the only time that we have been able to excavate such a densely populated, rich site and preserve it.

"It is an extremely sensitive development which incorporates the old soul of the site with development. It is not removing the past, it is incorporating the heritage into the future development. Eighty per cent of the excavated site will be visible to visitors," Dr Johnson said.

Construction has involved innovative building techniques designed to preserve what lies beneath. The new buildings are suspended over the excavations on an intricate steel frame directly contacting the site in about 50 places.

Two laneways (Cribbs Lane and Carahers Lane) which have been covered over since 1915 will be reinstated.

"People will be able to stand in a laneway that existed 150 years ago and look at real objects that were used in the daily life of their predecessors. To stand where things actually happened and imagine, while looking at physical links to

the past, is rare with early colonial settlement in Australia," Dr Johnson said.

Sydney Harbour YHA will offer an engaging heritage experience for visitors. The building's design is integral to this, with all bedrooms leading to an open corridor that allows guests to look down onto archaeological remains. On site interpretation will include artefacts placed along the laneways with interpretative panels.

The YHA complex will incorporate The Big Dig Archaeology Education Centre. From 2010 Sydney Learning Adventures will run educational programmes that focus on experiential learning and offer hands-on activities such as artefact handling and a simulated dig. Four curriculum-based programmes have been developed for primary and secondary students, focusing on developing historical skills and understandings by exploring the history of the site through its archaeology.

Located just 400 metres from Circular Quay, Sydney Harbour YHA will comprise of 106 rooms including double, twin and multi-share four to six bed rooms, all with an en-suite bathroom. Facilities include a state-of-the-art Internet cafe, coffee bar, self-catering kitchens and dining area, laundry facilities, lockers, bicycle storage, lounge areas, tour booking desk and convenience store.

Groups will benefit from a designated wing with catering facilities, and a dedicated dining/lounge room. The Education Centre can also be hired for lessons and educational activities.

Standard rates are from \$42.00 per person, per night in a six bed share room or from \$159.00 per room (harbour view), per night for a double/twin room. YHA members will save at least 10%. Bookings to stay at Sydney Harbour YHA from December 18 can be made now at www.yha.com.au.

For further information, please contact YHA NSW on (02) 9261 1111 or visit www.thebigdig.com.au

Special YHA offer for National Trust members – to celebrate the new Sydney Harbour YHA and Educational Centre, National Trust members can receive \$10 off new YHA NSW and ACT adult memberships purchased up until 30 September 2010. To redeem this offer please call (02) 9261 1111 and mention that you are a National Trust member (offer not available online or via agents).



Sydney Harbour YHA roof terrace



Gloucester Street, The Rocks, looking north, taken circa 1901. Photo Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority.