

playgrounds with a cafe

FAGAN PARK AND LA CASA DEL CAFFE

Arcadia Rd, Galston; park open daily 7am-6.30pm daylight saving, cafe open Friday-Sunday 10am-4pm, park entry \$5 per car, 9847 6791, hornsby.nsw.gov.au

IMAGINE leaving the hustle and bustle of the city behind and escaping to 55ha of rolling green countryside. Located in Galston, just a 45-minute drive from the CBD, Fagan Park is arguably one of the most scenic in Sydney, made even more attractive by the recent addition of a coffee kiosk. Father-of-three Tony Avellino opened the cafe in response to the pleas of weary parents who were tired of bringing their own takeaways. La Casa del Caffè overlooks the recently refurbished playground and serves slushies, pies, ice creams and, of course, that much-needed cappuccino. A flying fox, sand and water play area, slides, climbing frames, spinning things (that's the technical term) and springy rockers are just some of the features on offer for the kids. Take a leisurely stroll through one of the many internationally themed gardens, picnic by the lake or visit historic Netherby Homestead, the original Fagan family home.

Kids' comment: "There's so much to do here."



BICENTENNIAL PARK AND LILIES ON THE PARK CAFE

Bicentennial Drive, Sydney Olympic Park; park open daily sunrise to sunset, cafe open daily 8am-5pm, bikes can be ridden daily 8.30am-5.30pm daylight saving, bike hire from \$10 an hour for children, 9764 6154, sydneyolympicpark.com.au, cyclehire.com.au

AN EARLY start will ensure your pick of parking spots and allow you to enjoy a leisurely coffee or breakfast at Lilies On the Park before the adrenalin starts pumping. Little ones will love the shaded playground with a freeform climbing pyramid, swings, sandpit, cubby house, slides and purpose-built disabled swing. And all this nestled among hectares of parkland surrounding a lake rich with flora and fauna. Picking up the pace, families can hire bikes to suit all ages and explore the cycle tracks weaving their way through Bicentennial Park and beyond. Back on two feet, you can venture on to the mangrove boardwalks, learning about the history and eco-system of this fascinating part of Sydney. After all that, if you need another caffeine fix, grab a table at Lilies for a final macchiato or perhaps splash out on a high tea.

Kids' comment: "I want the pink bike with the tassels on the handlebars."



BALMORAL BEACH AND BALMORAL BEACH CAFE

The Esplanade, Balmoral Beach; cafe open daily 10am-4pm, lunch, 9968 4412

PARKING can be tricky, but once you find a great day ahead of you. First-timers will love the southern end of the beach with its amazing playground. Here you'll find kayak hire and a playground boasting swings, a boat club, springy rockers, a see-saw and a climb metres from the golden sand and calm water. Ancient fig trees provide a canopy of shade over grassed areas, perfect for picnics. When it comes to coffee with a range of options on the esplanade. Closest to the playground is where you can grab your takeaway flat white coffee and chips. Chill out on a beachside bench while the kids build sandcastles or burn off excess energy splashing in the water. And don't forget to load up the car with scooters, bikes and rollerblades to make the most of the wide promenade.

Kids' comment: "Was my sandcastle the biggest?"

