

Wherever you are in the world

## Best and worst of museums

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The Guardian

**Billy Bragg, songwriter, activist, and father of 10-year-old Jack**

Jack loves the Tank Museum in Bovington, Dorset. As soon as the sky darkens and the rain begins, he looks over the top of my newspaper and says, "Can we go to the Tank Museum, dad?" It's because it's lots of climbing on things rather than looking at things in cases. It's the largest collection of tanks in the world, but you don't have to be a militaristic nutcase to go there. My dad - Jack's grandfather - drove a tank in the second world war. I think it's important that Jack knows what it's about and understands what happened.

It's not Jack who's got in trouble at a museum, but me. I once was nearly locked in. I was killing time between sound checks in Dunedin in New Zealand. I was the only person at this museum, full of Maori artefacts and giant stuffed moas. It got to about 5.30pm, and all the lights went off. I imagined the headlines - "Billy Bragg Spent Night in Maori Diorama Sleeping in Grass Skirt in Mud Hut". It was a bit Hitchcockian - to be surrounded by giant stuffed moas in a darkened room.

- . Tank Museum, Bovington, Dorset, [www.tankmuseum.co.uk](http://www.tankmuseum.co.uk)
- . Otago Museum, Dunedin, New Zealand, [www.otagomuseum.govt.nz](http://www.otagomuseum.govt.nz)

**Charlotte Moore, author, and mother of George, 14, Sam, 12 and Jake, 6**

The Science Museum has a basement with lots of hands-on stuff. It was a huge success. Sam, who is autistic, was obsessed with machines, particularly washing machines and tumble dryers. He used to talk all the time about two he'd invented himself - a splokiator and a splainiator - and how nobody knew where they were. But when we went to the Science Museum, they were there - funny made-up machines. One blew ping-pongs up on hot air. So he was absolutely thrilled.

When Jake was little we took him to the Arte Reina Sofia museum in Madrid. We'd given him a fried squid ring earlier to chomp on. We'd got up to Guernica and everyone paying homage to this great work. Suddenly there was this explosion, and the squid ring shot out to Jake's mouth and landed right in front of Guernica, just missing it. It shattered the atmosphere. I felt like disowning him.

But our worst experience was at Pashley Manor Gardens near where we live in Sussex. I was getting the tickets, and we had two grannies with us so they got a discount, and I asked if George and Sam would also get one. "Huh, they ought to pay double!" the lady said. "We had some children like that [autistic] here the other day and they broke one of the sculptures!" I said I'd try and make sure my sons didn't break any sculptures. "They all say that!" she replied.

- . Science Museum, London, [www.sciencemuseum.org.uk](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk)
- . Arte Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid, [www.museoreinasofia.mcu.es](http://www.museoreinasofia.mcu.es)

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