



65 event ideas

Trying to think of an event for the next History Festival? Here's a list of 65 ideas to get the ball rolling:

1. Open a building to the public with an unusual, interesting or contested history.
2. Think about recent history – what has changed in the last 10-20 years? Hold a pop-up museum and invite people to share stories of the recent past.
3. Invite local Elders and Aboriginal community members to share the cultural significance of place (see handout on the History Festival website from the 2016 workshop on Including Indigenous Histories for more suggestions).
4. Whose stories are missing from your displays? Do you tell the story of the farmer, but not his wife? The settlers but not Aboriginal histories? The master and mistress of the house, but not the servants? Arrange a special tour to share different perspectives.
5. Film night – screen some historical films or invite people to share some of their home movies.
6. Use a single photograph or object as a starting point to explore the wider history of an event or era (see ABC RN's *Shooting the Past* program: <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/shootingthepast/> for inspiration).
7. Out of the vaults – do you have collections in storage that are rarely seen, or kept in areas that are not on public display?
8. Organise an Auslan interpreted tour of your museum/exhibition.
9. Arrange a torchlight tour of a historical place.
10. Favourite things – invite local identities to select their favourite objects from your collection and write their own labels for them.
11. Take people on a tour of backstreets and laneways.
12. Find some local storytellers and put on an event at the local pub.
13. Put together a panel of researchers for a public discussion around a theme.
14. Ask current and former students to run school history tours.
15. Collaborate with a local Aboriginal cultural organisation to create an event.

16. Invite young people to try their hand at curating a history exhibition.
17. Launch a history book, website or exhibition.
18. Uncover stories about the characters from the local shops/main street and tell their stories on a tour.
19. Find some local recipes – talk about their significance to the community.
20. Investigate a local myth/legend/story from different perspectives and build a tour or event around it.
21. Run a walking tour of an industrial area.
22. Put on a scavenger hunt and invite people to become historians and analyse the evidence.
23. Bring together different cultures in the area to discuss history with food/dance/art/craft/talks.
24. Have a hands-on workshop to learn a new skill from the past and talk about history as you go.
25. Invite retired workers from a particular industry to talk about their careers and skills (perhaps at the local watering hole).
26. Invite residents of different ages to talk about the community and how it has changed over time.
27. Put on a food making demonstration or workshop and talk about historical significance (cheese making/baking/winemaking).
28. Recreate a menu from a significant event in the past and hold a dinner, discussing the wider historical context as the event progresses.
29. Take a historical boat trip with talks about how it works and how it was used.
30. Screen a historical film and serve popcorn.
31. Hold a debate around a controversial issue in your area of history.
32. Get young visitors to recreate your town or suburb using found and recycled materials.
33. Hold a scanfest at your local research centre and invite people to bring their personal photos and documents to add to the collection.
34. 'Greetings from...': take us on a tour of your place. What makes it like it is? Who are the local characters? What do different areas of the place mean to different people? Invite some locals to give a quick talk along the way.
35. Have a 'night at the museum'.
36. Run a research poster competition with the local school.

37. Invite children to display their current favourite toys alongside toys from their grandparents' era.
38. Find some interesting, poignant, funny, topical letters to the editor from the local paper and invite people to a reading.
39. Following on from the point above - 'what happened next' - look the community response/outcomes of the issue.
40. Run a competition to caption historical photos (aiming for funny/clever responses).
41. Set up a temporary display in a vacant shop window.
42. Invite visitors to rewrite or draw labels in 'horrible histories' style.
43. Walking tour about what is going on under people's feet (way to talk history of gas pipes and water supply, land reclamation, environmental issues with industrial land...).
44. Have a bake-off/cook-off using local ingredients or traditional methods.
45. Have a day/evening to collect some oral histories for your site/building/area.
46. Hold a pet friendly event/tour.
47. Take the history to those that can't get out – put up a display at a local hospital, visit a nursing home dressed up or sing songs from post-war/pre-war eras.
48. Get hands on with music – show children how to play historical instruments or learn how to make their own (playing spoons, whistle with gum leaves, etc.).
49. Organise etiquette lessons or have fun looking at lessons to be learned from 1950s housewives.
50. Organise a historical themed/dress up pub crawl.
51. Arrange a family-friendly themed bicycle tour around your local area.
52. For those savvy with social media, organise a historical themed Instameet.
53. Hold a photography competition.
54. Is there a famous/infamous animal in the history of your community? (think Bob the Railway Dog). Tell their story as an exhibition/presentation. Invite people to share other animal stories.
55. Partner with two or three other museums/historic buildings and have a progressive dinner, with starters, mains, desserts, tea and coffee along with maybe a short talk or display at each different venue.
56. Organise a community archaeological dig (perhaps with the Archaeology Department from Flinders University) and invite visitors to watch or take part.

57. Bring various age groups together to share and swap skills of their era: eg traditional string games (cat's cradle), French knitting, ball room dancing versus skateboarding, video games, Rubik's cube etc.
58. Create a memory box of items (that can be handled) and photographs on a particular theme like childhood, holidays, cooking, sport etc. and share with residents from an aged care facility to inspire reminiscence and conversation.
59. Based in a historical building? Have after dark, candlelit (or replicate gaslit) tours or get performers representing characters that once lived/worked there tell their stories.
60. Organise a musical evening or theatrical performance in your historic building/grounds and encourage a new audience to visit you.
61. Have an Open Garden afternoon; with talks/presentations on traditional gardening/cooking methods eg making compost, keeping chickens, making preserves, creating sculpture from recycled materials.
62. Research the names on your local war memorial and tell their stories.
63. Invite a local community that has only recently migrated to the area to tell their stories in your museum/library etc.
64. Borrow one of the History Trust's FREE travelling exhibitions for the duration of the History Festival. The exhibition can stand alone or be supplemented with objects, photographs and stories from your own collection.
65. Recreate a typical event of the past from your community eg a strawberry fete, a 'continental', a euchre party, or a beetle drive. Make it a fun fundraiser: get people to dress up in appropriate period costume, and perhaps collaborate with a classic car club so participants can arrive in style.