

# Riding Segways



**FUTURE CHIC:** Segway slalom races (above) demonstrate the machines' versatility; and the Segway adjusts to any terrain (right). Pictures: Briar Jensen

## Just flat-up hilarious

The eco-friendly machine gets a standing ovation for changing our notions about fun transport, writes **Briar Jensen**

MUDDY water splatters the back of our jeans as we ride slalom-style in and out of a soggy ditch.

Grinning wildly, we race across the field before swirling figure eights and spinning 360s.

We're riding Segway personal transporters at Newington Armory, Sydney Olympic Park, and it's hilarious fun.

The eco-friendly Segway looks a bit like an old-fashioned push mower with a pressure-pad platform to stand on.

Thanks to dynamic stabilisation technology, which includes gyroscopic sensors, it's self-balancing and, once you get the hang of it, so simple to operate.

To move forward or backward, you just lean forward or backward; to stop you stand up straight and to turn you lean in the direction you want to go.

Segways sense both the changing

terrain and your body position at 100 times a second, which is apparently faster than the brain can think, and it soon feels like an extension of your body, intuitively responding to your subtle movements.

It's a thrilling sensation that has me smiling from ear to ear – maybe not quite as cool as the Jetsons' jet pack I dreamt of owning as a kid but pretty close.

Anyone who can stand up can ride a Segway – as long as you're between 30kg and 120kg.

I'm here with my husband and son on our second Segway adventure. Last time we rode slightly smaller models on a sightseeing tour of Sydney Olympic Park, before the tours were suspended due to legal issues.

Laws governing Segways differ between countries.

While they are street-legal in LA with the same rights as cars (I did a Segway Celebrity Homes tour there), in Australia they don't fall into any current vehicle classification.

According to NSW police, that puts their legality in road-related areas such as Olympic Boulevard in question.



### More Segway tours

**Queensland:** Segway Safaris are available at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary and O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat. See [www.segwayqueensland.com.au](http://www.segwayqueensland.com.au)

Corporate experiences are available in Brisbane [www.xperiences.com.au](http://www.xperiences.com.au)

**New Zealand:** Tours run in a variety of locations from the Bay of Islands to Queenstown.

[www.segway.co.nz](http://www.segway.co.nz)  
**World:** For more guided tours around the world see [www.segway.com](http://www.segway.com), [www.segwayguidedtours.com](http://www.segwayguidedtours.com) and [www.citysegwaytours.com](http://www.citysegwaytours.com)

hurtling his Segway 90 degrees straight into a fence where he bounced back and forward like a cartoon character. It was hysterical and we couldn't stop laughing for the rest of the tour, but not something I thought

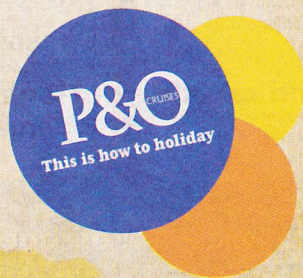




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So Segway Tours moved their operation to Newington Armory and upgraded their inventory to Segway X2 all-terrain models with larger wheels for cross-country action.

All rides start with a short familiarisation video and individual training before heading off to gain experience. We're the only guests on this 90-minute Adventure Plus ride and guide Lexi soon has us mastering advanced riding techniques, such as balancing halfway down a steep hill before reversing back up.

Excitedly we progress from "turtle" mode to the top speed of 20km/h and we're off. Hubby scatters a flock of purple swamp hens and our son zooms between cones lined up on the grass.

I'd told the boys, "No racing", following a previous incident (more on that later) but Lexi actively encourages us and acts as timekeeper on the slalom course, popular in corporate challenges.

The incident (read "stack") was on the company's previous Segways, which turned by twisting the handle grip. The three of us were racing ahead of our group (and were thankfully out of sight) when, in a bid to go even faster, motorbike-owning hubby instinctively twisted his "throttle",

we repeat.

We explore Newington Armory, formerly the Royal Australian Naval Armament Depot on the Parramatta River, though our focus isn't the heritage buildings.

Lexi seeks out natural obstacles to test our skills and has us ducking branches while swerving between trees, scooting up and down hollows and wobbling along a stony path that has me wishing I'd worn a sports bra.

As we follow an old narrow-gauge railway track between knee-high retaining walls I'm admiring overhead bridges when suddenly I find myself in the bushes on a sodden embankment with the Segway wrapped around my ankles.

I've no idea what happened – obviously I was too distracted soaking up the surroundings.

But even a wet bum and bruised ankle can't dampen my enthusiasm and I leap back on, eager for more action. (Though secretly I'm annoyed I can no longer tease hubby about being the only one to stack his Segway.)

The writer was a guest of Segway Tours. See Briar Jensen's travel blog at [www.briarstravelbeat.com.au](http://www.briarstravelbeat.com.au)

## Go2 NEWINGTON ARMORY

### Getting there

Newington Armory, Jamieson St, Sydney Olympic Park. Parking is available outside the armory. Public transport to Sydney Olympic Park includes ferry, bus and train. See [www.sydneyolympicpark.com.au](http://www.sydneyolympicpark.com.au)

### Touring there

Segway Tours operates seven days a week, offering fun rides suitable for all ages. Rides include 30-minute Fun Rides \$45 adults, \$35 children (from nine years), students and seniors; 60-minute X2 Adventure \$89 and \$70 (children from 11 years); 90-minute S2 Adventure Plus \$109 and \$89 (children from 11 years). Corporate and private group activities available. Bookings are recommended and see website for specials. Ph 1300 85 99 83, [www.segwaytours.com.au](http://www.segwaytours.com.au)