



Wonderland

It can take some time to discover the Melbourne locals know and love but once you head down that rabbit hole, we guarantee you'll be hooked

Nestled beside the Yarra River and around Port Phillip Bay, Melbourne is laid out like a checkerboard, with its neat grid of streets harbouring shopping, dining and entertainment treasures just waiting for you to discover them. This city is an art lover's paradise, with cutting edge arts and cultural companies and galleries galore. Get lost in the world's first major public gallery dedicated to Australian art, the Ian Potter Centre, or experience art outdoors at Linden Arts Centre, Heide Museum of Modern Art or Herring Island. For indigenous art, check out the galleries in Flinders Lane.

Melbourne is a coffee lover's paradise and there's always something brewing. Head to St Ali in Melbourne's north or south (Carlton and South Melbourne), where coffee is roasted on site and served up as you like it: single origin espresso, siphon or cold drip. Also worth a visit are Seven Seeds, a micro roaster which supplies beans to a number of cafes around town and has been called the best coffee in Melbourne (sevenseeds.com.au) and hole-in-the-wall Sensory Lab in Little Collins Street behind David Jones (sensorylab.com.au).

Melburnians are passionate sports fans. Whatever gives you the fever, you're sure to find it here. AFL football ("footy") is the city's unofficial religion, and taking in a match at the MCG is a quintessential Melbourne experience. In summer, the cricket whites come out and Grand Slam tennis enjoys its time in the spotlight with the arrival of the Australian Open in January. Come Autumn it's all about Formula One car racing, while Spring is horseracing season.

Head to the 'Paris' end of Collins Street, as well Bourke Street Mall and laneway arcades in Hardware Lane, Howey Place and Block Arcade for a shopping experiences tailored to every taste, from stylish boutiques showcasing local designers to sprawling department stores and international favourites.

Connect with Melbourne's history in cobblestoned laneways, which are now home to quirky cafes and gift shops, cosy bookstores and secret bars. You won't be short of entertainment options in this town, with a rolling calendar of over 50 festivals – that's one for every week of the year! – celebrating food, wine, film, theatre, arts and music. For more on Melbourne's festival scene, visit the 'Events' page of thatmelbourne.com.au. **DA**



All in a day



8AM Start your day as the locals do with a walk or jog around the iconic Tan Track that encircles Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens (rbgv.vic.gov.au).

10AM Once you've worked up an appetite, head into the gardens themselves and reward yourself with brunch at Shannon Bennett's Jardin Tan, a French-Vietnamese fusion treat (jardintan.com.au).

12PM Check out a touring exhibition or browse the NGV's permanent collection. When you need a break, treat yourself to lunch at the casual Gallery Kitchen or classy Persimmon on the ground floor. Then cross the river to Federation Square – art buffs will love the all-Australian Ian Potter Centre, while film geeks will feel right at home at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI).

5PM Toast marvellous Melbourne from on high at the Rooftop Bar at Curtain House (rooftopcinema.com.au). When you're done, head downstairs to quirky Cookie where the memorable Thai menu never disappoints.

8.30PM It's too early to go home but you're too tired to move – fear not! You can wrap up your evening without leaving Curtain House. Simply brave one more flight of stairs and you'll stumble into The Toff In Town. Turn left for food or cocktails in an intimate booth, or right to enjoy an ever-changing program of live music, theatre, comedy and DJ sets in the stage room.

Our top 5

1 Leave your vertigo at the door and head 88 floors up to the Eureka Skydeck for unbeatable views from the southern hemisphere's highest viewing platform (eurekaskydeck.com.au).

2 Experience the majesty of Melbourne from the water on a kayak tour (kayakmelbourne.com.au).

3 Take in an Aussie Rules footy match at the hallowed Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), or take a tour to relive some of the great sporting moments that have taken place here (mcg.org.au).

4 Enjoy a three-course dinner on the Colonial Tramcar Restaurant, a roving dining hall (tramrestaurant.com.au).

5 Go bar hopping in Melbourne's laneways and see a different side of the city. There are dozens to choose from, but we recommend Robot Bar, which oozes Tokyo cool, kitschy Double Happiness with its Communist propaganda posters and divine lychee martinis and social enterprise Shebeen, where the tunes are hot, the beer is cold and all profits go to the developing world.