



MELBOURNE INSIDER

Lucy Feagins

Lucy Feagins is the brains behind Australia's biggest design website, The Design Files. Every month her site introduces over 120,000 readers to the latest in local design, from architecture and interiors to art, craft, graphic design and illustration

There certainly wasn't any grand plan to beginning The Design Files – it all unfolded quite unexpectedly! When I finished university, I found work as a runner and then a set dresser in the film industry, which was fun and very varied. I found myself constantly meeting great local retailers and different creative people while sourcing products and pieces for television sets. At the same time I began reading lots of different design blogs but I felt there wasn't an Australian voice in the mix, so in early 2008 I decided to start my own blog (www.thedesignfiles.net).

At first, it was a side project to document my latest discoveries or people that inspired me. Originally it was read by a handful of readers, but it soon snowballed into the site you see today. I have since left the film industry and now work full-time on The Design Files, and I also employ Lisa, our full time editorial co-ordinator. The site is now more of a broad online publication rather than a blog, as we have weekly and monthly columns, guest contributors, produce photo shoots and create original content daily.

As the site has grown, so have my plans and we've been able to do more ambitious projects. I always say, The Design Files knows where it's going and I'm just racing to keep up!

When I began blogging, I had no idea it would be possible to make the site my full time job. There just wasn't any precedent for full time blogging at that time in Australia. But as the site readership grew I began to field more and more commercial requests, and slowly I started to introduce advertising on my own terms. It's definitely been a cautious progression as I've been careful to retain the independent spirit and integrity of the site.

I am passionate about Australian art and design, independent publishing, and all things beautiful! Good design is thoughtful. Good design is inherently efficient. Good

design improves daily life, both functionally and aesthetically.

My perfect day in Melbourne would begin with a stroll (or jog if I have the energy!) around the Tan track at The Botanical Gardens, which is always so beautiful on a sunny day. After that, maybe a spot of bookshop browsing – I love The Avenue Bookstore in Albert Park (www.avenuebookstore.com.au) for art and design titles, and Readings in Carlton (www.readings.com.au) for its community spirit and excellent range of cookbooks and travel titles.

For lunch, I'd pop into Jimmy Grants, George Calombaris' new 'tuck shop' style Greek canteen in Fitzroy (www.jimmygrants.com.au). The souvlakis are the main drawcard here, but I usually go for a melt-in-your-mouth lamb and grain salad to share between two. Super delicious and ridiculously good value. Dinner would have to be at Izakaya Den (www.izakayaden.com.au) – a firm favourite for me on a Friday night. I once read an excellent review that went something along the lines of, "Izakaya Den is where you take your friends from Sydney just to prove Melbourne really is the cooler city!" Couldn't have put it better myself! I'd finish the night at Mr Wilkinson (295 Lygon St, Brunswick East). This bar is my number one drinking spot in Melbourne and that's because my fiancé Gordon is one of the owners! You'll find me here at least once a week. It's a good old fashioned 'local' – super relaxed, with friendly faces, personal service and well-priced drinks.

There is no shortage of good coffee in Melbourne. One of my favourites would be Seven Seeds in Carlton (www.sevenseeds.com.au) – Melbourne's coffee king Mark Dundon and his team can do no wrong! I also love Market Lane coffee at the Prahran Market (www.marketlane.com.au).

The best day trip for out-of-towners is a drive down the Great Ocean Road. You can't beat that view. I must admit I'm not much of an outdoors person, although I recently spent two days in Mt Buller for a photo shoot and I loved it. I must make more of an effort to get to the snow in wintertime. It's worth all the effort!

The one touristy thing I would love to do in Melbourne is see the view from the Eureka Skydeck, (www.eurekaskydeck.com.au). I really should do that one of these days!

Winters are long in Melbourne, so I always appreciate spring when it comes around. Everyone comes out of hibernation and it's such a social time of year. Spring racing is a big deal here – lots of people get dolled up and head to the races each year. When you see impossibly glamorous ladies tottering through the city with enormous hats on, you know summer is nearly here!

The best way to spot a quintessential Melburnian is to look out for someone wearing skinny jeans, sporting at least three visible tattoos, and wheeling a fixed-wheel bike through the city whilst sipping an excellent takeaway coffee.

Melbourne is... cultured, worldly, understated, friendly, foodie. **DA**

