

Welcome to *Melbourne*

Lauren Rosewarne introduces you to marvellous Melbourne, where delectable dining, amazing art and shopping, sport and spectacle a'plenty await you.

Melbourne CBD.
© Gordon Bell



GPO.
© Robyn Lea

Juggling accolades as Australia's premier city for art, culture, coffee, dining and shopping, Melbourne has no shortage of tempters to lure in visitors.

For the artistically inclined, the adventure begins at the National Gallery of Victoria – Australia's oldest public gallery. Tom Roberts' iconic *Australian Shearing the Rams* (1890), Picasso's *Weeping Woman* (1937) and the enormous *Banquet of Cleopatra* (1743-1744) by Giambattista Tiepolo are among the 500 works on display.

For a more contemporary fix, only a short stroll away is the Australian Centre for the Moving Image at Federation Square, which is home to all things film. Cross the Yarra River for more modern fare at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art at Southbank and only a stone's throw away from the shopping and dining precincts of Southgate and Crown.

For those interested in art of the more wearable kind, few cities rival Melbourne as a stellar destination for shopping. Any good spending spree starts in Bourke Street, home to the flagship of the David Jones and Myer department store chains: both recently renovated and each now housing dazzling cosmetic and perfume emporiums and floors devoted to shoes, clothing and accessories. Also on Bourke Street is the spectacularly

renovated former post office known as the GPO and the 19th century Royal Arcade, both beautiful destinations for fantastic shopping and breathtaking architecture.

Turn left into Swanston Street and your first stop will be QV, home to laneways of quirky boutiques at street level and groceries underground. Cross the road for Melbourne Central, a mall of more than 300 stores, cinemas, a bowling alley and the iconic glass cone, encasing the historic Shot Tower.

Nearby Collins Street caters to more refined tastes and is flush with high-end stores of the Prada, Tiffany and Co, Chanel, Gucci and Bulgari ilk. For more eclectic palates, head to the Block Arcade, home to the Melbourne flagship of the delicious Australian Haigh's chocolatier, a destination worth a visit purely for the impressive etched glass roof alone.

After so much retail therapy, Melbourne has no shortage of cafés to refuel and rehydrate. The notably lovely Degraves Street, one of Melbourne's numerous laneways, runs between Flinders Street and Flinders Lane, and offers cafés, cupcakes, waffles and burgers amid some of the city's most beautiful architecture. Beneath the street is the Campbell Arcade for even more eccentric shopping and more cafés.

Lonsdale Street.
© Robyn Lea



Larger appetites are well-catered for in Melbourne, home to some of the country's finest dining. For the finest of fine fare, a trip to the Crown Entertainment complex is in order. Neil Perry, one of Australia's most lauded chefs, has two restaurants in the complex: Rockpool, Perry's posh take on the steakhouse, and Spice Temple, a sultry spin on regional Chinese cuisine. With locations in London, Tokyo and Las Vegas, it should come as no surprise that Nobu – actor Robert De Niro's cutting edge Japanese fusion food foray – would also house an outpost at Crown.

For more casual dining, head to Little Bourke Street for Melbourne's Chinatown: a district of affordable Asian options and laneways offering everything from haute Asian to cheap-as-chips dumplings.

Those pesky calories will eventually need to be burned off and Melbourne is a beautiful place to do it. The city is relatively flat, making it eminently walkable and laid out on a grid, so it's effortlessly navigable. Open daily until sunset, the Royal Botanic Gardens is perfect for a leisurely amble or a faster-paced jaunt along the 'The Tan', the Gardens' running track.

Carlton Gardens is another special location for strolling and also home to the architectural wonder of the 19th

century Royal Exhibition Building, one of the world's oldest remaining exhibition pavilions.

For those yearning for a little wind in their hair and sweat on their brow, hiring a bike is a very good option. Dotted all around Melbourne are bright blue bike racks: hire at one rack and drop off at another. For those feeling lazier, the free City Circle Tram runs on a circular route around the CBD, stopping at major tourist attractions and linking passengers with other public transport. The other free choice is the Melbourne City Tourist Shuttle: hop on and off or stay put for the 90-minute fully-narrated tour criss-crossing the city.

For those seeking exercise of the spectator kind, the Melbourne Cricket Ground – known fondly as the 'G' – should top your itinerary. It's home to cricket, but the G is better known for the Australian Rules football matches played regularly to capacity crowds. The much-loved Aussie Rules is also played at Etihad Stadium located at the Docklands complex, a sprawling waterfront development of residential, commercial, retail and leisure facilities.

It may not be Australia's political capital, but when it comes to food and fashion, art and culture, Melbourne turns on one stellar show for visitors. **w**