

SECRET MELBOURNE

Melbourne ticks all the right boxes — culture, food, coffee, sport, shopping... But outside of the box, the city starts to get really interesting.

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PHOTOGRAPHY JULIAN KINGMA

With its low crime rate, stable economy and good public transport, Melbourne has been named the world's most liveable city for three years in a row by the Economist Intelligence Unit. But there is an edgier and arguably more interesting side to this southern Australian city of about four million people. Home to the AFL, Melbourne Cup and Boxing Day Test, the city unfolds in serendipitous increments — a wrong turn reveals a tiny bar with an even tinier art gallery (see Bar Americano in 'Must-see spots', right); a friend mentions a new laneway art market (Blender Ln Artists Market; 110 Franklin St; Melbourne; +61 415 191 900); tickets to a show take you to a quirky upstairs venue (The Butterfly Club; 5 Carson Place; +61 3 9663 8107; [www.thebutterflyclub.com](http://thebutterflyclub.com)). Read on to uncover some of the offbeat places Melbourne has to offer. Then, all you have to do is go out and experience them for yourself.

GETTING THERE To book your flight to Melbourne, visit www.virginaustralia.com or simply call 13 67 89 (in Australia).



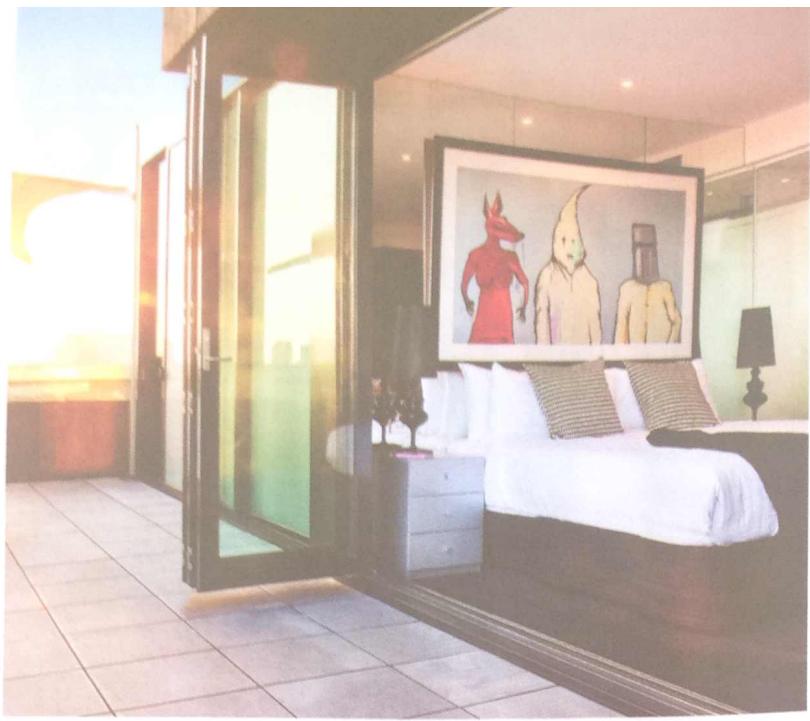
Must-see spots

You won't find the real Melbourne on a tourist map. To really experience the city you need to get out and get busy. See some rock'n'roll at **Cherry Bar** (ACDC Lane, Melbourne; +61 3 9639 8122; www.cherrybar.com.au). This grungy, sweaty, CBD laneway bar is a hangout for musos and music fans with gigs nearly every night of the week. The city's most iconic music venue, however, is St Kilda's **The Esplanade Hotel** (left; 11 The Esplanade; +61 3 9534 0211; www.espy.com.au), fondly known by everyone as The Espy. Drop by the **Slow Food Farmers' Market** on the fourth Saturday of each month at The Abbotsford Convent (1 St Heliers St, Abbotsford; +61 3 9415 3600; www.abbotsfordconvent.com.au). Farmers markets are integral to Melbourne life and this one takes place in the grounds of an interesting arts and cultural precinct set on more than six idyllic hectares on the Yarra River only a few kilometres from the CBD. Lose yourself in some laneway art: street art is huge in Melbourne and the best part is it's all free. Good spots to start exploring include **Hosier Lane**, **Centre Place** and **Union Lane**. Reward your intrepid ramblings with a coffee — or a Negroni — at **Bar Americano** (20 Presgrave Place, Melbourne; www.baramericano.com), which has the tiny **Trink Tank** gallery attached (www.trinktank.com).



Local flavours

Top contemporary British cuisine can be found at **The Commoner** (above; 122 Johnston St, Fitzroy; +61 3 9415 6876; www.thecommoner.com.au), a quirky double-storey eatery that oozes romance. "We have a huge local following, particularly within the hospitality industry," says co-owner Jo Corrigan. "It's a relaxed home away from home for many, but the food and drink is at a level that these people really appreciate and understand." For polar-opposite experiences, compare the warm, traditional Italian hospitality of **Rosa's Kitchen** (22 Punch Lane, Melbourne; +61 3 9662 2883; www.rosas-kitchen.com) with the buzzy, twenty-something excitement generated at the no-bookings South-East Asian-influenced **Chin Chin** (125 Flinders Lane, Melbourne; +61 3 8663 2000; www.chinchinrestaurant.com.au) and its downstairs bar, **Gogo** (+61 3 8663 2000). **The Waiters Restaurant** (20 Meyers Place, Melbourne; +61 3 9650 1508) used to be known as the Waiters Club, and was a spot where waiters could relax, moan about customers and eat on a budget. Now this rustic Melbourne institution is open to everyone. Trapped in a retro time warp decor wise, it's worth the climb up the rickety stairs for simple pastas and hearty stews. ▶



Where to stay

Much like the city itself, Melbourne's accommodation options range from the quirky and arty to the downright opulent.

HIP **The Cullen** (top; 164 Commercial Rd, Prahran; www.artserieshotels.com.au/cullen) is known as the most out there of the Art Series hotels, and is close to Chapel Street shopping and dining.

SWEET **The Adelphi** (187 Flinders Lane, Melbourne; www.adelphi.com.au) has undergone a makeover and been rebranded as a 'dessert' hotel, with the Om Nom Dessert Bar (above) a key attraction.

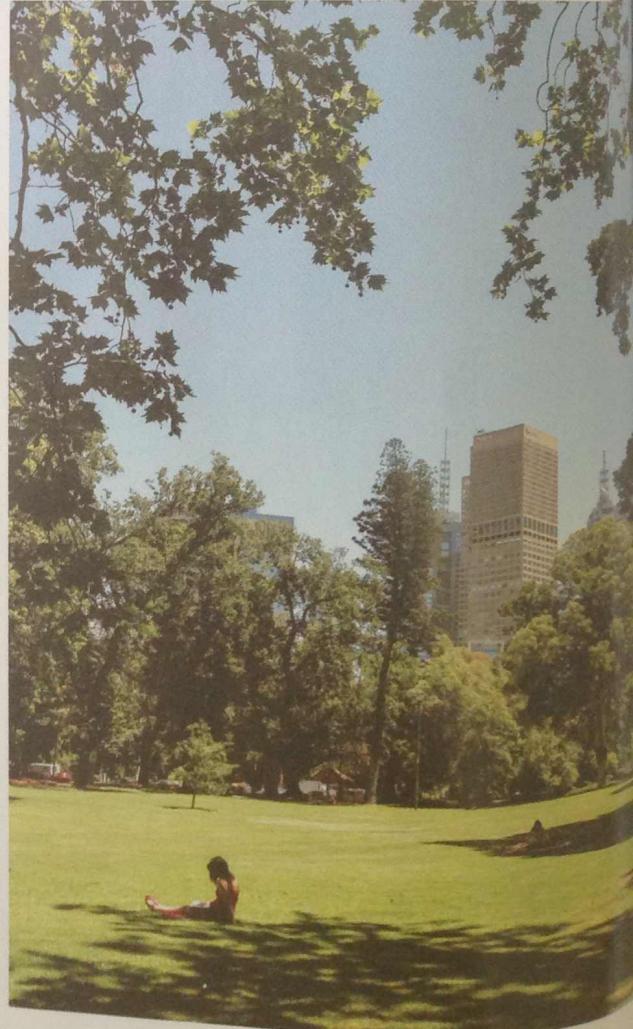
CONCEPT "Limited-service" hotel chain **Tune** (609 Swanston St, Carlton; www.tunehotels.com) is another new addition, and offers glammed-up budget rooms where you only pay for what you use (such as towels, toiletries, air-conditioning and television).

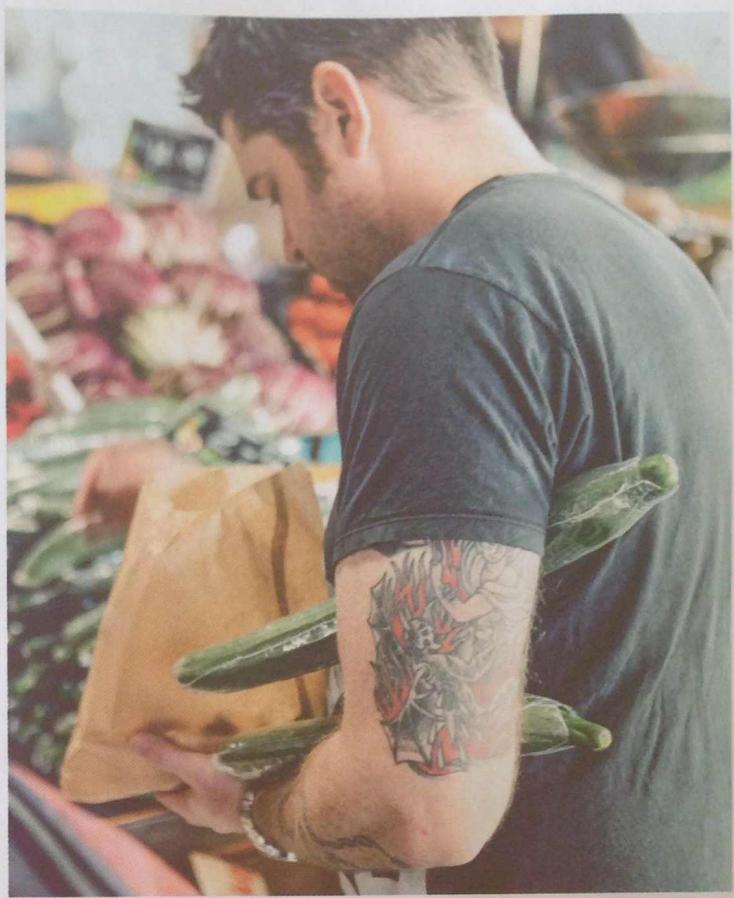
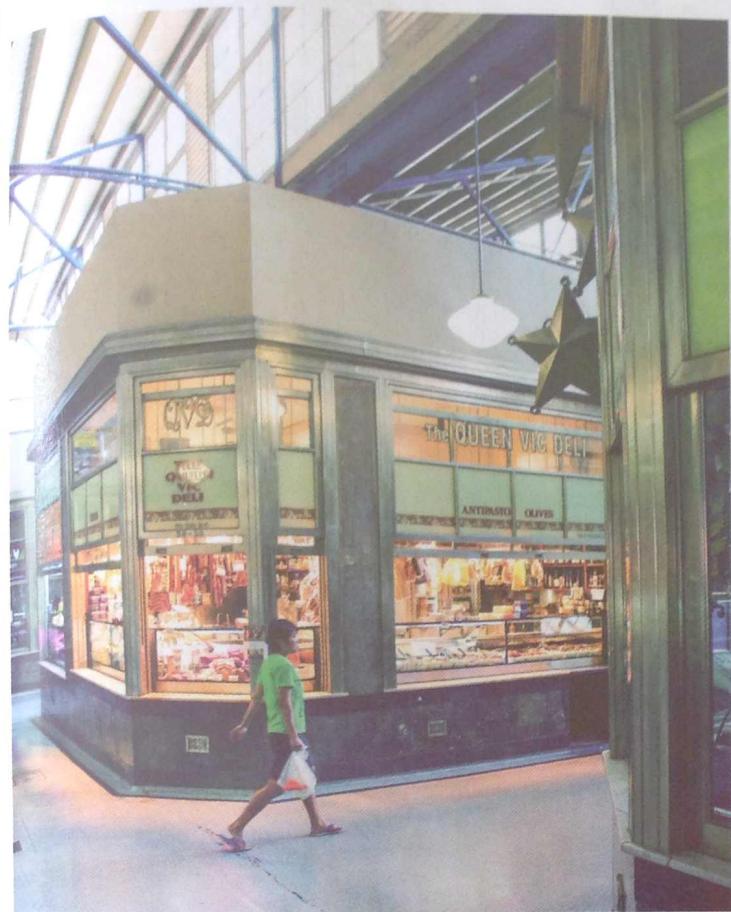
LUXURY For five-star opulence, it's hard to go past **Crown Towers** (8 Whiteman St, Southbank; www.crownhotels.com.au), named Australia's best hotel in the 2013 International Hotel Awards.

LOCATION **The Hatton** (65 Park St, South Yarra; www.hatton.com.au) is not only a four-star boutique hotel set in a beautifully restored Italianate terrace, it's right around the corner from the Royal Botanic Gardens.

DON'T LEAVE WITHOUT...

...experiencing some of the city's iconic cultural attractions. It might have been originally intended for kids but Ola Cohn's *Fairies Tree* sculpture in **Fitzroy Gardens** (below; East Melbourne; www.fitzroygardens.com) has become a favourite landmark for many Melburnians. Of course, you can't visit this city without trying the coffee. If perching at the bar at the iconic **Pellegrini's** (66 Bourke St, Melbourne; +61 3 9662 1885) is too clichéd, try **Marios** (opposite below; 303 Brunswick St, Fitzroy; +61 3 9417 3343; www.marioscafe.com.au) or one of the 'third-wave coffee' set, such as **Auction Rooms** (103-107 Errol St, North Melbourne; +61 3 9326 7749; www.auctionroomscafe.com.au). Queuing for a bratwurst at Bratwurst Shop & Co or a spinach and cheese borek at The Borek Shop in the deli hall of the **Queen Victoria Market** (opposite above: cnr Elizabeth and Victoria streets; +61 3 9320 5822; www.qvm.com.au) is a Melbourne rite of passage, as is touching the Waterwall outside the **National Gallery of Victoria** (180 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne; +61 3 8620 2222; www.ngv.vic.gov.au). ▶







SUBURB SPOTLIGHT

Thornbury, in Melbourne's north, may be small but it's definitely on the rise and is now home to a new wave of creative types (read rent refugees). A 40-minute tram ride (route #86) from the city will get you to its heart, the corner of High Street and Normanby Avenue. Travel along High Street to find great little cafes including **Short Round** (number 731; +61 3 9484 3904; www.shortround.com.au), **Lowlands** (number 923; www.lowlandsespresso.blogspot.com.au) and **Umberto Espresso Bar** (above left; number 822; +61 3 9484 8654; www.umberto.com.au). Also look for a hip florist, **North St Botanical** (above right; number 776; +61 3 9484 9760; www.northst.com.au), cool independent record stores, such as **Thornbury Records** (top left and right; number 591; +61 3 9942 0754; www.thornburyrecords.com) and **Records Etcetera** (number 557; +61 3 9481 3951; www.recordsetc.com.au), and a great, rather ornate live-music venue, **The Thornbury Theatre** (number 859; +61 3 9484 9831; www.thethornburytheatre.com). There are interesting new and vintage homewares at **The Manufactory** (number 881; www.themanufactory.com.au) and an excellent bookshop, **Perimeter Books** (number 748; +61 3 9484 8101; www.perimeterbooks.com). ►



Hidden cultural gems

Ron Robertson-Swann's modernist sculpture *Vault* created a stir in 1980s Melbourne when it was installed in the City Square. Dubbed the 'Yellow Peril' by its detractors, the sculpture languished in Batman Park for many years until it landed behind the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (111 Sturt St, Southbank; +61 3 9697 9999; www.accaonline.org.au). In the CBD, visit the **City Library** (253 Flinders Lane; +61 3 9658 9500; www.melbournelibraryservice.com.au) and hear people playing the piano on the mezzanine level. For theatre and art, check out **Fortyfive Downstairs** (left; 45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne; +61 3 9662 9966; www.fortyfivedownstairs.com). And don't forget Melbourne's quirky museums: **The Salvation Army Heritage Centre** (69 Bourke St, Melbourne; +61 3 9653 3270; www.salvationarmy.org.au); the **Victoria Police Museum** (637 Flinders St, Melbourne; +61 3 9247 5214; www.policemuseum.vic.gov.au) and the **Grainger Museum** (University of Melbourne, Gate 13, Royal Parade, Parkville; +61 3 8344 5270; www.grainger.unimelb.edu.au).



TETE-A-TETE

Victorian-born Tony Ellwood

recently returned to Melbourne to take up the role as director of the National Gallery of Victoria (180 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne; www.ngv.vic.gov.au). Here's his inside view of the city. **What do you love most about life in Melbourne?** The weather. After five years in Queensland, it is a relief to come back to Melbourne's climate. People complain about four seasons in one day — I love it. **Where do you like to shop?** The back streets of Melbourne are doing the most interesting

things. Of course, we have Fitzroy's (above) Gertrude Street, Victoria Street in Richmond and Sydney Road in Brunswick that show the diversity in Melbourne, but the little cafes that are popping up in old milk bars or corner shops behind the strips and in residential areas are brilliant. **Favourite bookstore?** Hill of Content in the city (86 Bourke St; +61 3 9662 9472; www.hillofcontentbookshop.com) and Readings in Carlton (309 Lygon St; +61 3 9347 6633; www.readings.com.au) are old haunts, but Perimeter in Thornbury (see 'Suburb

Spotlight', previous page) is a fresh take on an old theme. **The best takeaway?** South Melbourne Market's dim sims (322–326 Coventry St, South Melbourne; +61 3 9209 6295; www.southmelbournemarket.com.au). We have convinced this institution to allow us to sell their dim sims at the Gallery Kitchen during our current exhibition, *Melbourne Now*. **What's so special about this exhibition?** It celebrates what is unique about the city's art, design and architecture communities, with over 300 artists and designers showcased. ☀