



Goldfields & the Grampians

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Best Places to Eat

- Royal Mail Hotel (p230)
- Public Inn (p221)
- Mason's of Bendigo (p215)
- Mr Carsisi (p218)
- Catfish (p209)

Best Places to Sleep

- The Schaller Studio (p214)
- D'Altons Resort (p229)
- Little Desert Nature Lodge (p234)
- The Newnorthern (p221)
- Flop House (p217)

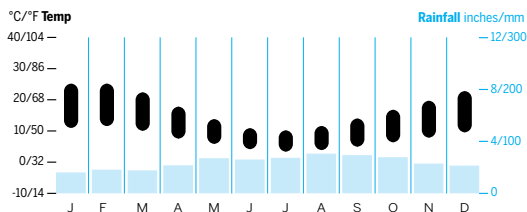
Why Go?

History, nature and culture combine spectacularly in Victoria's regional heart. For a brief time in the mid-19th century, more than a third of the world's gold came out of Victoria and, today, the spoils of all that precious metal can be seen in the grand regional cities of Bendigo and Ballarat, and the charming towns of Castlemaine, Kyneton and Maldon. This is a fantastic region for touring, with a range of contrasting landscapes, from pretty countryside and green forests, red earth and granite country, to farmland, orchards and wineries.

Further west, there's a different type of history to experience at Grampians National Park, one of Victoria's great natural wonders. Some 80% of Victoria's Aboriginal rock-art sites are found here, and the majestic ranges are an adventurer's paradise, lording it over the idyllic Wartook Valley and the towns of Halls Gap and Dunkeld.

When to Go

Ballarat



Easter Join the dragon procession at the Bendigo Easter Festival.

Mar–May Autumn colours, hiking and wine touring without the crowds.

Sep–Nov When the wildflowers bloom in Grampians National Park.

BALLARAT

POP 93,501

Ballarat was built on gold and it's easy to see the proceeds of those days in the grand Victorian-era architecture around the city centre. The single biggest attraction here is the fabulous, re-created gold-mining village at Sovereign Hill, but there's plenty more in this busy provincial city to keep you occupied, including grand gold-mining-era architecture, art galleries and microbreweries. Rug up if you visit in the winter months – Ballarat is renowned for being chilly.

History

The area around here was known to the local indigenous population as 'Ballarat', meaning 'resting place'. When gold was discovered here in August 1851, giving irresistible momentum to the central Victorian gold rush that had begun two months earlier in Clunes, thousands of diggers flooded in, forming a shanty town of tents and huts. Ballarat's alluvial goldfields were the tip of the golden iceberg, and when deep shaft mines were sunk they struck incredibly rich quartz reefs. In 1854 the Eureka Rebellion pitted miners against the government and put Ballarat at the forefront of miners' rights.

Sights

★ Sovereign Hill HISTORIC SITE
(Map p206; ☎ 03-5337 1100; www.sovereignhill.com.au; Bradshaw St; adult/child/family \$54/24.50/136; ☀ 10am-5pm, until 5.30pm during daylight saving) You'll need to set aside at least half a day to visit this fascinating re-creation of Ballarat's 1860s gold-mining township. The site was mined in the gold-rush era and much of the equipment is original, as is the mine shaft. Kids love panning for gold in the stream, watching the hourly gold pour and exploring the old-style lolly shop.

The main street here is a living history museum, with people performing their chores dressed in costumes of the time; check the schedule for daily parades and demonstrations. Sovereign Hill opens again at night for the impressive sound-and-light show, **Blood on the Southern Cross** (Map p206; ☎ 03-5337 1199; www.sovereignhill.com.au/sound-light-show; Bradshaw St, Sovereign Hill; show only adult/child/family \$59.50/31.80/162, combined with Sovereign Hill ticket \$113.50/56.30/298), a dramatic simulation of the Eureka Stockade battle. There are two shows nightly, but times vary

so check in advance; bookings are essential. In July, its Winter Wonderlights (p208) festival is a blockbuster event.

Your ticket also gets you into the nearby **Gold Museum** (Map p206; ☎ 03-5337 1107; www.sovereignhill.com.au/gold-museum-ballarat; Bradshaw St; adult/child \$12.90/6.80; ☀ 9.30am-5.30pm), which sits on a mullock heap from an old mine. There are imaginative, modern displays and samples from all the old mining areas, as well as gold nuggets, coins and a display on the Eureka Rebellion.

To get here from town, take bus 21 from Ballarat Station.

★ Art Gallery of Ballarat GALLERY
(Map p206; ☎ 03-5320 5858; www.balgal.com; 40 Lydiard St Nth; ☀ 10am-5pm, tour 2pm) **FREE** Established in 1884 and moved to its current location in 1890, the Art Gallery of Ballarat is the oldest provincial gallery in Australia. The architectural gem houses a wonderful collection of early colonial paintings, combined with modern art, with works from noted Australian artists (including Tom Roberts, Sir Sidney Nolan, Russell Drysdale, Albert Tucker, Fred Williams and Howard Arkley) along with contemporary works. There are free guided tours at 2pm daily.

Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka MUSEUM
(MADE; Map p206; ☎ 1800 287 113; www.made.org; 102 Stawell St; adult/child/family \$12/8/35; ☀ 10.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun) Standing on the site of the Eureka Rebellion, this fine museum opened in May 2013 and has already established itself as one of Ballarat's top attractions. Taking the Eureka Rebellion as its starting point – pride of place goes to the preserved remnants of the original Eureka flag and multimedia displays that re-create the events of 1854 – the museum then broadens out to discuss democracy in Australia and beyond through a series of interactive exhibits.

Its Saltbush Kitchen (p208) cafe is worth eating at to sample indigenous flavours.

Botanic Gardens GARDENS
(Wendouree Pde; ☀ sunrise-sunset) **FREE** On the western side of the lake, Ballarat's beautiful and serene gardens were first planted in 1858. Stroll through the 40 hectares of immaculately maintained rose gardens, wide lawns and colourful conservatory. Visit the cottage of poet Adam Lindsay Gordon or walk along the Prime Ministers' Avenue, a