

Welcome to Melbourne & Victoria

Melbourne is food-obsessed, marvellously multicultural and a showpiece for Australian culture. Beyond the city limits, Victoria offers soulful history, stirring wilderness and culinary excellence.

Great Outdoors

Victorians are spoilt for wilderness choice. To the southwest, the Great Ocean Road snakes along one of the world's most spectacular coastlines, while the further east you go the wilder the coast gets, from wildlife-rich Wilsons Promontory to Gippsland's aptly named Wilderness Coast. Also east, wild rivers and epic forests of Errinundra and Snowy River yield to picturesque mountains of the High Country, where year-round activities make it an adventure destination of the highest order. Northwest, almost in the outback, desertlike national parks occupy vast swathes of the state. Opportunities to explore are endless, whether on two legs or skis, two wheels or four.

Great Indoors

In the 19th century, gold-rich Melbourne and small towns in Victoria were stamped with architectural wonders. These days many of those grand buildings survive as luxury hotels, theatres bursting with talent or colourful state-of-the-art galleries. Melbourne in particular is an art lover's smorgasbord (with signature art-strewn laneways so intimate as to feel like they're indoors), but regional Victoria holds its own when it comes to reasons to pray for a rainy day.

Food & Wine

Melbourne loves its food. A growing passion for street food has been grafted onto a long-standing multicultural culinary scene that has few peers. Throw in a highly developed cafe culture, an enduring passion for experimentation, and all manner of designer dens where serious eating is the order of the day, and you've one of Australia's true culinary capitals. Regional Victoria has a number of respected wine regions, from the Yarra Valley to King Valley, Mornington Peninsula to Rutherglen; bastions of gourmet food delights such as Milawa; and a catalogue of boutique breweries and outstanding restaurants.

History's Canvas

Victoria's history is epic, but couldn't be more accessible. The state's Indigenous story serves as a subtext throughout, but it takes centre stage with rock art and creation stories at Gariwerd (the Grampians). Fast-forward a few millennia to Victoria's 19th-century gold rush, which left behind some of Australia's most atmospheric old towns, among them Ballarat, Castlemaine, Maldon, Kyneton, Walhalla and Beechworth. And the old Murray riverboat culture of Australia's pioneering days lives on in Mildura, Swan Hill and, especially, Echuca.



Why I Love Melbourne & Victoria

By Anthony Ham, Author

I was born in Melbourne and spent my summers on Victoria's beaches. But it was only after moving overseas as an adult that I came to understand my connection with the land. In my 10 years away, I came to long for the culinary variety of Melbourne, for the forests of the far east, for the craggy Victorian coastline, for the river red gums along the Murray, for the endless horizons of the desertlike Mallee. And upon my return I discovered a city and a state that has moved forward in leaps and bounds without ever losing its soul.

For more about our authors, see page 360.