



## melbourne

■ Population: 3.7 million ■ Currency: Australian dollar (AUD) ■ Country and city code: +61, +3 ■ Tourist info: Melbourne Visitor Centre, housed underneath Federation Square, directly opposite Flinders Street station, Tel: +61 (0)3 9658-9658 *websites: www.visitvictoria.com.au*

### FUN FACT

**i** Melbourne has the largest remaining tram system of public transport in the world.



Spring Carnival of Racing

### OUT & ABOUT

**Melbourne's Spring Carnival of Racing** ([www.springracingcarnival.com.au](http://www.springracingcarnival.com.au))

Starting on 1 October, Melbourne comes alive with the hoof beats, fanfare and photo-finishes of exhilarating horse-racing. With more than 50 excitement-packed days, including show-stoppers like the Caulfield Cup, Cox Plate and the Melbourne Cup, this is one of the main reasons why Melbourne is Australia's premier sporting, fashion and partying capital.

**The ferry to Williamstown** (**Southbank Promenade, tel: +61 (0)3 9517 9444**) The historic village of Williamstown, which dates back to the 1850s, is made up of charming pubs, eye-catching terrace houses and striking churches. With numerous seafood restaurants close to the water, some visitors come just to sample the best of what the bay has

to offer on any given day. Ferries leave Southbank seven times a day and the trip takes from 45 minutes to an hour. Return fare is AUD25 (SGD33).

### TOP SHOPS

**Pink Buddha (Level 2, 252 Collins Street, tel: +61 (0)3 9663 9660)** It's all about relaxation, well-being and pampering at Pink Buddha. With Crystal Healing, Reiki and massages that have caused untold numbers of workers in the Central Business District to arrive back to the office late from lunch, the Pink Buddha is a little slice of tranquillity amid the crowds.

**Hill of Content Bookshop (86 Bourke Street, tel: +61 (0)3 9662 9472)** For almost 90 years, this stalwart retailer has been stocking a blend of new, classic and outright bizarre books. Resembling an old university library where the walls are stacked high with books as far as the eye can

see, Hill of Content makes for a great pit-stop while touring the city on foot. The staff are always ready to offer suggestions on reading materials for the flight back home.

### BEST BITES

**Chocolate Buddha, (Federation Square, tel: +61 (0)3 9654 5688)** Those with a taste for hearty Japanese noodle dishes take note: Chocolate Buddha woks up some of the best in town. Take a seat at the communal wooden tables, with views of the square, and you're bound to choose a winner. Especially good is the Yaki Udon at AUD19.50 (SGD25) which includes flat udon noodles with free range chicken and two varieties of mushroom among other vegetables. **\$**

**Ceres Cafe (8 Lee Street, Brunswick East, tel: +61 (0)3 9380 8861)**

Fancy dining at a farm that's only 10 minutes by car from the Central Business District? Ceres Cafe (Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies) serves wholesome organic produce amid beautiful parklands on the banks of Merri creek. Their "Big Organic Breakfast" is an institution – and truly big (AUD17/SGD22). Open Monday to Saturday from 8.30am to 5pm, Sundays from 9.30am to 5pm. **\$\$**

### AFTER DARK

**The Order of Melbourne, (Level 2, 401 Swanston Street, tel: +61 (0)3 9663 6707)** A rare find, this place attracts all sorts – from students and after-work types to bohemians. After Dark's two main strengths are its extensive wine list (prices run from AUD8/SGD6.10 per glass to AUD2,500/SGD1,899.70 per bottle) and the great rooftop terrace that looks out towards the city skyline.

**The Fox, (351 Wellington Street, Collingwood, tel: +61 (0)3 9416 4957)**

This converted old-school pub maintains the charm of yesteryear but also boasts an incredible beer list (some claim it's Melbourne's best). There's a rooftop beer garden, hearty pub fare and live music most nights of the week. For some, it must be tempting to move to Collingwood just to call this their "local". Don't miss the unique "artwork" of hundreds of retro beer cans displayed across the back wall.

### SLEEPOVER

**Travelodge Southbank (corner of Southbank Avenue and Riverside Quay)** Located in the heart of increasingly popular Southbank, this hotel is only metres away from Eureka Tower, the Botanical Gardens and all the shopping and cuisine you could desire. This hotel is perfect for those who want the best of Melbourne available within minutes of their hotel door. Room rates start from AUD145 (SGD189).

**The Sands Resort, (2 Sands Boulevard, Torquay)** Just steps from the famous beaches of Torquay, this new resort offers luxurious accommodation on the doorstep of one of the Victoria's most challenging golf courses (designed by Aussie golf champ Stuart Appleby). With an indoor swimming pool, funky bar area and an excellent restaurant that overlooks the surrounding area, you may be tempted just to stay on the hotel grounds. Rooms start from around AUD200 (SGD260). **\$\$**

BY CHRIS CANTY

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The Sands Resort beach



## launceston

■ Population: 100,000 ■ Currency: Australian Dollars (AUD) ■ Country & City Code: +61, +3 ■ Tourist Office: Launceston Travel and Information Centre, Cornwall Square, 12-16 St John Street, tel: +61 (0)3 6336 3133, website: www.lvtasmania.com.au

**FUN FACT**  
Just 20km south of Launceston, The Longford Racecourse was established in 1847 and is the oldest continually running horse track in Australia.



## mackay

■ Population: 90,303 ■ Currency: Australian Dollars (AUD) ■ Country and city code +61 +7 ■ Tourist info: The Mill, 320 Nebo Road, Mackay, tel: 1300 130 001, website: www.mackayregion.com

**FUN FACT**  
The huge Mackay Civic Centre complex features a fountain identical to the one in the King's Cross area of Sydney.

### OUT & ABOUT

**The Princess Theatre** (57 Brisbane Street, tel: +61 (0)3 6323 3666) The oldest theatre in Tasmania, the Princess retains a strong sense of its nearly 100-year history and yet is very much alive with a wide range of events and performances. With a capacity of around 1,000 people, the Princess makes for an intimate and historic setting for its patrons' enjoyment of the arts.

**The Old Launceston Seaport (Seaport Boulevard)** This lovely picturesque seaport makes for a peaceful respite from the central business district, with luxury yachts sharing dock space with rowboats. The seaport is dotted with restaurants, bars and cafes, which are the ideal pit stop for those wishing to take in the eye-catching views of the water against the backdrop of the Trevallyn hillside.



### TOP SHOPS

**Evandale Market** (Falls Park Logon Road, Evandale, tel: +61 (0)3 6391 8900) The sleepy township of Evandale, just a short drive south of Launceston, comes alive every Sunday (8am to 2pm) when thousands

arrive in search of bargains. With over 100 stalls selling everything from crafts and bric-a-brac to organic produce, you're sure to find something you never knew you wanted.

### BEST BITES

**Calabrisella** (56 Wellington Street, tel: +61 (0)3 6331 1958) This super comfy Italian eatery may have you thinking you've been transported overseas. There is nothing fancy here, just simple home-style Italian food made with the freshest ingredients. The pizzas are a local favourite. \$

### AFTER DARK

**Launceston Saloon** (191 Charles Street, tel: +61 (0)3 6331 7355) If you're wondering where the local population likes to party, look no further than Launceston Saloon. Live bands, DJs and karaoke are on offer and with a 5am closing time on weekends, patrons can party into the wee hours. Hearty pub grub is also on offer.

### SLEEPOVER

**Ashton Gate** (32 High Street) This National Trust-listed historic bed and breakfast has been keeping guests happy for more than 40 years. Ashton Gate offers a blend of old-school comfort and modern touches). Within a few minutes' walk of downtown, the hotel is perfect for those who with an interest in Launceston's historical streetscapes. Room rates start from AUD135 (SGD174). \$\$\$   
BY CHRIS CANTY

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Bampton Island

### OUT & ABOUT

**Lamberts Beach (Pacific Esplanade, Lamberts Beach)** With fabulous sea views of the Cumberland Islands, this beach is a great spot for whale-watching. It's also family-friendly, with picnic tables, play equipment and barbecues. Take a walk through the nearby Slade Point Reserve, home to one of the last areas of coastal dunes and paperback wetlands in the Mackay region.

### TOP SHOPS

**Ants General Store** (Mackay Marina, Mulherin Drive, tel: +61 0(7) 4955 0418) This is a one-stop shop for yachties who need to stock up on gourmet goodies and essentials before they set sail. As well as the usual pantry staples, you'll find yummy delights like organic coffee beans, cheeses, fresh pasta, sauces, and olives. Upon request, Ants can also supply prepared meals such as roasts and picnic hampers.

### BEST BITES

**Toscani's Cafe Bar and Restaurant** (corner of Sydney and Gordon Streets, tel: +61 (0)7 4951 4965) Discover traditional Italian and Mediterranean food, prepared in the Tuscan way with fresh, quality

ingredients. Whether it's a hearty breakfast, light lunch, or delicious dinner you're after, Toscani's huge menu has something for everyone. Mains start from AUD24.95 (SGD32.65) to AUD93 (121.70). \$\$\$

### AFTER DARK

**Harrup Park Country Club** (Juliet Street, tel: +61 0(7) 4944 0000) This award-winning club is home to a first-class cricket ground and golf course, as well as 120 gaming machines, a sports bar and bistro. There's even a supervised kid's club. The bar has a sunken lounge overlooking the golf course and cricket ovals, a plasma TV, and claims to serve the coldest beer in town.

### SLEEPOVER

**Voyages Bampton Island Resort (Bampton Island)** Take a breather on this idyllic island just off Mackay. With 12 beaches, water babies can enjoy sailboarding, snorkelling and jet skiing. There are accommodation and dining options to suit all budgets. Room rates start from AUD159 (SGD120.80) \$\$\$   
BY BRONWYN MARQUARDT

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