

Brisbane



Brisbane Whale Watching with Eye-Spy

INSIDER TIP
The January floods took their toll on Brisbane's iconic Southbank, but the **Parkland's lagoon** is all fixed and is once again the top spot to enjoy an inner-city swim.

SHOP TALK
Jet Black Cat Music began life as a market stall but grew into a fully-fledged shop, one with just the right amount of grunge. Open most days, unless there's a music festival on. 72A Vulture St, West End, tel: +61 (0)419 571 299

CHEAP EATS
Pho Hoang Gia serves up bargain-priced meals. The large serving of *mi bo kho* (beef stew) will test the limits of your stomach, not your spending power. 146-148 Wickham St, Fortitude Valley, tel: +61 (0)7 3252 8808

TOP TABLES
Alastair McLeod is a big name on the Australian culinary scene and his **Tank Restaurant** was recently one of only three Queensland restaurants to feature in a national newspaper's best restaurants list. Others may feel slighted, but Tank definitely deserved its place. 31 Tank St, tel: +61 (0)7 3003 1993 🍷🍷

AT YOUR LEISURE
Oktoberfest is one of the most authentic – and enjoyable – beer fests this side of the Rhine. It runs over the weekends of 7–9 and 14–16 October at the RNA Showgrounds, Gregory Terrace, Fortitude Valley, www.oktoberfestbrisbane.com.au

LATE & LIVELY
Melbourne is renowned for its funky little bars and upon entering **Kerbside**, you could be forgiven for thinking you've been transported to Victoria's capital. With an award-winning barman mixing the cocktails, satisfaction is assured. Constance St, Fortitude Valley, tel: +61 (0)7 3252 9833, www.kerbside.com.au

OVERNIGHT
It doesn't get any more central than just above Central Station, which is where you'll find the **Sofitel Brisbane**. The Sofitel brand is synonymous with luxury so you know you won't be disappointed with a stay here. 249 Turbot St, tel: +61 (0)7 3835 3535, www.sofitelbrisbane.com.au 🍷🍷

Melbourne



Siglo Bar on Spring Street

INSIDER TIP
Melbourne goes **horse crazy** in October so head to either the Caulfield, Moonee Valley or Flemington tracks to catch some of the world's most prestigious races.

SHOP TALK
Spread over four levels, Collingwood's iconic **Lost and Found Market** is home to everything from vintage clothes and furniture to books, art and a great music collection. 12 Smith St, Collingwood, tel: +61 (0)3 9419 4477, www.lostandfoundmarket.com.au

CHEAP EATS
The shopfront at **Gami** says it all: "chicken and beer". Ideal for groups, this eatery's piled-high plates of Korean-style fried chicken are the ideal accompaniment to a cheap jug of beer. 100 Little Lonsdale St, tel: +61 (0)3 9671 3232, www.gamichicken.com.au

TOP TABLES
Byblos is a jewel. Featuring Lebanese dishes like *makanek* (spiced sausages), the Mezza Banquets (multi-course feasts) make for a great introduction to the menu. G12 World Trade Centre, tel: +61 (0)3 9614 6400, www.byblosbar.com.au

AT YOUR LEISURE
Melbourne's finest restaurants come together from 15–18 September to celebrate gourmet produce at the **Taste of Melbourne** festival. Become involved in tutorials and tastings. www.tasteofmelbourne.com.au

LATE & LIVELY
With live music most nights, craft beer and a menu rife with sustainable meals, **Grumpy's Green** has enough to satisfy even the most discerning diner. Take advantage of the hidden courtyard out the back when the sun starts to shine. 125 Smith St, Fitzroy, tel: +61 (0)3 9416 1944, www.grumpysgreen.com

OVERNIGHT
For those who want to be minutes from the CBD but ensconced in relaxed surrounds, the **Park Hyatt** is for you. A boutique option next to the Fitzroy Gardens, it boasts all the luxuries you'd expect of the Hyatt brand. 1 Parliament Square, tel: +61 (0)3 9224 1234, www.melbourne.park.hyatt.com 🍷🍷

Sydney



Sydney Opera House

INSIDER TIP
Kicking off on 1 October, the month-long **Crave Sydney Food Festival** features hundreds of activities and events, including noodle markets at Hyde Park, laneway dinners and breakfast on the Harbour Bridge.

SHOP TALK
Check out the **Pop Up Project** at The Rocks, where you'll find a colourful mix of art, music and fashion from Sydney's hottest up-and-coming creative talent. 47-85 George St, tel: +61 (0)401 713 998, www.therockspopup.tumblr.com

CHEAP EATS
Take a taste of all things American at **The Dip**, a popular diner that dishes out an irresistible line-up of hot dogs, nachos and pulled-pork sandwiches. 55 Liverpool St, tel: +61 (0)2 9238 8792, www.thedip.com.au

TOP TABLES
A leading fixture of the Sydney dining scene, **Gastro Park** serves up eminently inventive dishes. Signature creations include a snapper with crisp fried scales, liquid pumpkin gnocchi and a "nitro" Pavlova. 5-9 Roslyn St, Potts Point, tel: +61 (0)2 8068 1017, www.gastropark.com.au 🍷🍷

AT YOUR LEISURE
Grab your iPod and enjoy a **guided audio tour of historic Centennial Park**. Follow the trails and hear stories about its fascinating past that you won't find in history books. Walks begin at the Centennial Park Café, Parkes Dr, Woollahra, www.walkingtours.com.au

LATE & LIVELY
Good things come in small packages and **Stitch** is no exception. Decked out in vintage furniture, sewing machines and haberdashery, this underground speakeasy sells mean cocktails, many of them made with unusual ingredients. 61 York St, www.stitchbar.com

OVERNIGHT
As if the central location isn't enough, the **Hilton Sydney** offers special relaxation rooms where you can unwind in your very own hydro spa bath – it's the perfect way to wrap up a long day. 488 George St, tel: +61 (0)2 9266 2000, www.hiltonsydney.com.au 🍷🍷