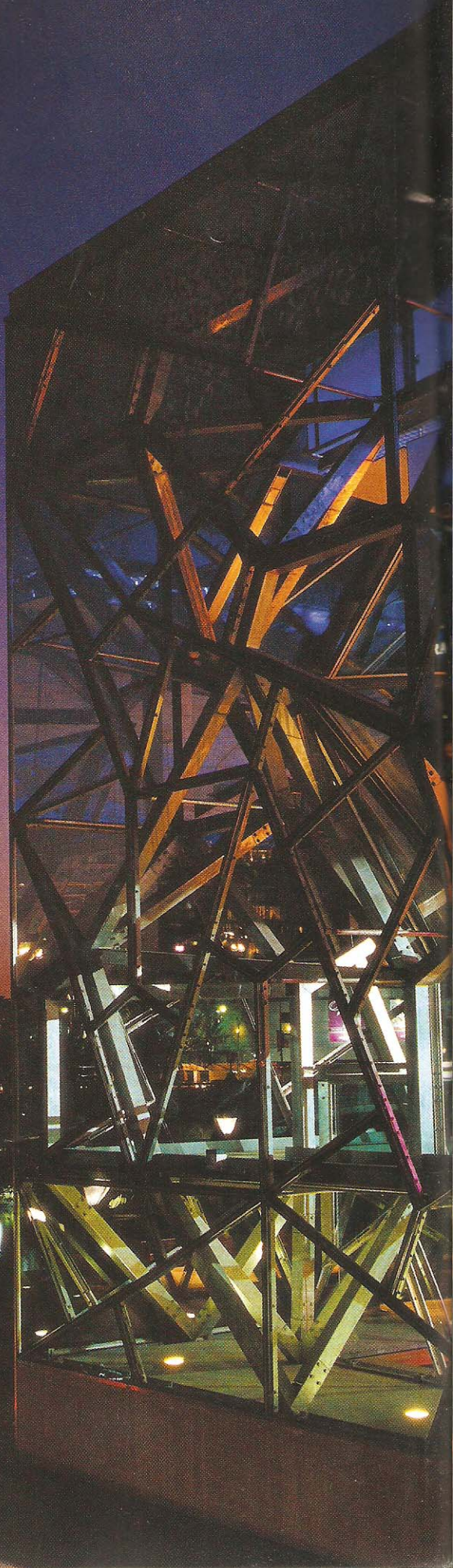


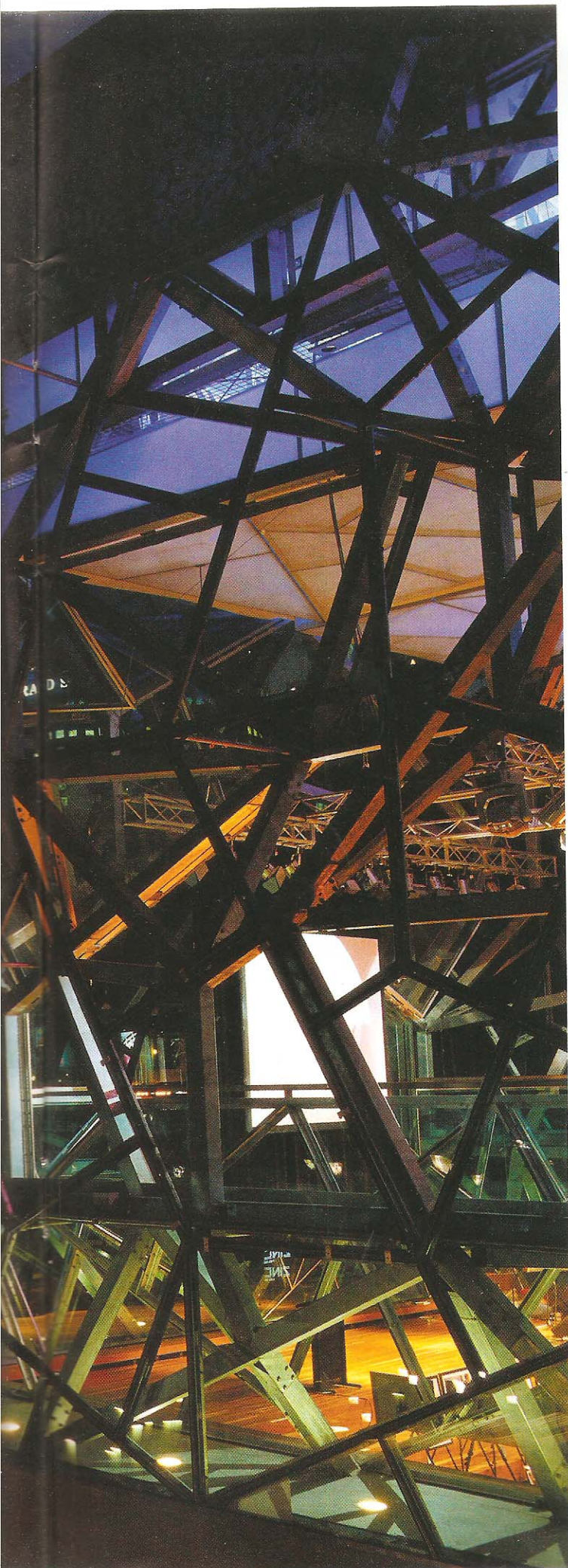
Federation Square,
Melbourne

MEL BOU RNE

Victoria's capital has long since shed its 'bleak city' tag and offers a truly cosmopolitan array of attractions.

WORDS: Chris Canty IMAGES: Tourism Victoria





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Melbourne may not have iconic attractions like Sydney's Harbour Bridge, but it does provide a lifestyle that others can only envy. Unofficially but undoubtedly Australia's fashion, culinary and nightlife capital, Melbourne blends a proud immigrant history and healthy obsession with sport with a cosmopolitan love of fine food, theatre and music. Add a CBD with hundreds of laneways ready to be explored, a picturesque riverside setting and residents who are always happy to show off their town, and it's no wonder Melbourne has been called Australia's most liveable city.

Discover secret wildlife

While thousands visit the penguins at Melbourne Zoo and on Phillip Island every day, few realise that a colony lives just a few minutes away from the CBD. Discovered in 1956, the penguins remained a secret for almost 40 years in order to keep them safe. In 1993, while part of an environmental study, Noel Butcher fell in love with the little critters and gained permission to conduct twilight cruises. Even now, their location isn't publicised.

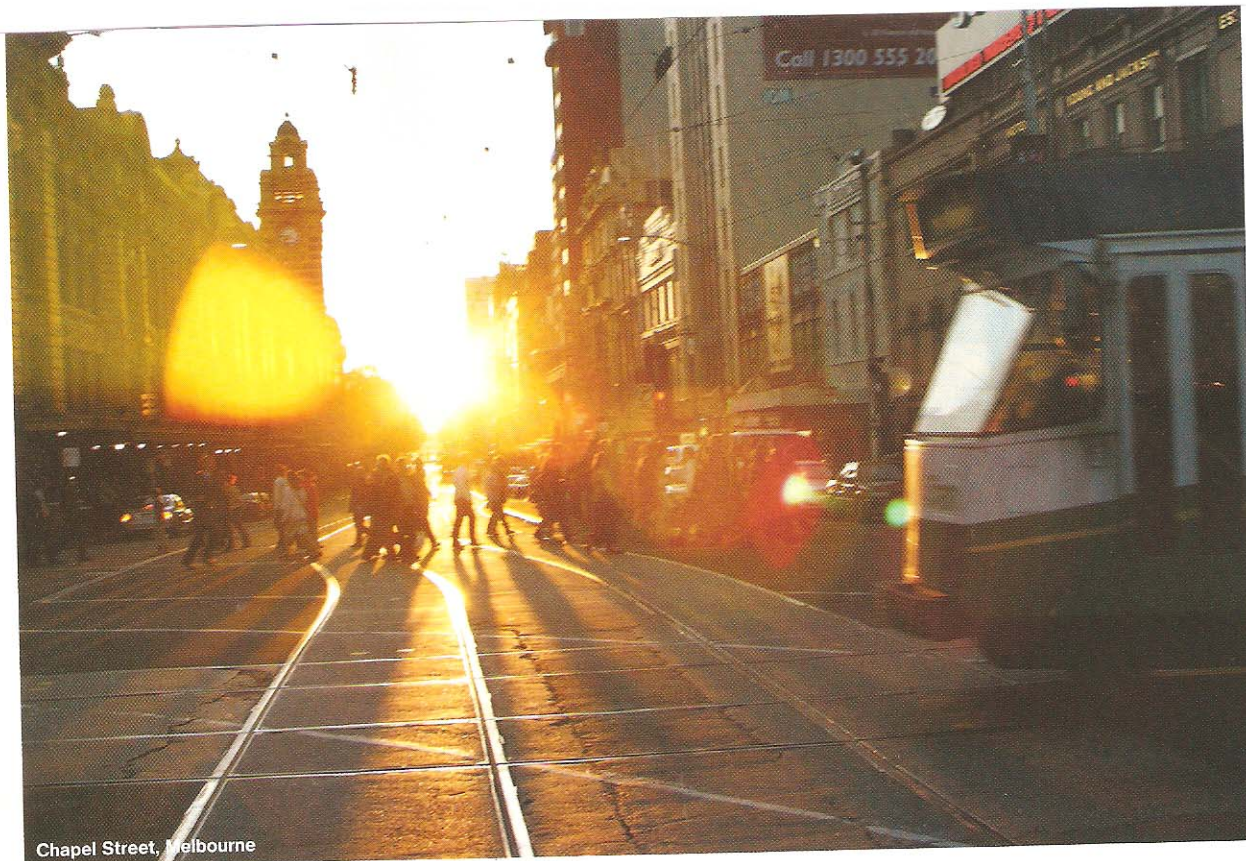
Penguin Waters Cruises, P: +61 3 9386 8488,
www.penguinwaters.com.au

Taste the culture

As one of the world's great multicultural cities, Melbourne's inner-suburban streets have a dizzying array of cuisines on offer. If you feel like Vietnamese, head to Victoria Street in Abbotsford and try the most succulent duck in town at Pacific Seafood BBQ House (number 240). For Italian food lovers, Carlton's Lygon Street is buzzing every night with busy restaurants, including Toto's (number 101), Melbourne's first pizzeria. Collingwood's Johnston Street is the place to go for Greek food and if you fancy some fresh seafood, don't miss the crabs at Jim's Greek Tavern (number 32). In Melbourne's west, Footscray is the heartland for the African community and restaurants such as Café Lalibela (91 Irving Street) offer traditional Ethiopian dishes ideal for groups. No matter what you feel like, Melbourne is sure to have it.

Go sports mad

For most Melbournians sport is a religion, with a calendar full of major sporting events all year round. While stadiums such as the Telstra Dome, Rod Laver Arena and Olympic Park are scattered



Chapel Street, Melbourne

just outside of the CBD – hosting Aussie Rules football, tennis, soccer and rugby league – the city's sporting beacon is undoubtedly the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), with a capacity of about 100,000 people. In winter the best AFL games are the 'blockbusters' featuring the big four clubs: Collingwood, Richmond, Carlton and Essendon. Grab a pie in one hand, a beer in the other, and enjoy.

Tickets for AFL games can be purchased at the MCG before the game or at www.ticketmaster.com.au.

Shop until you drop

Shopaholics in search of bargains and boutique designs will not have any trouble feeding their addiction in Australia's fashion capital. From the latest trends in Chapel Street and Bridge Road, to the back-street wholesale warehouses in Collingwood and Richmond, it will be impossible to leave empty handed. If you're not sure where to start, take a tour to find the best buys.

**Shopping Spree Tours,
P: +61 3 9596 6600,
www.shoppingspree.com.au**

Catch a band

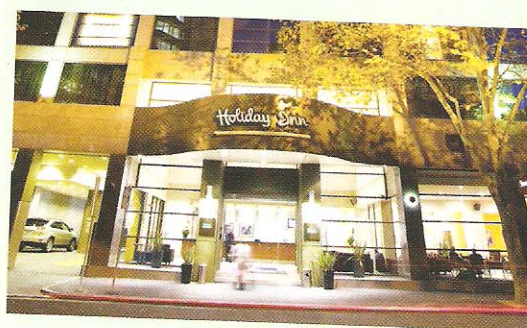
With hundreds of music venues around town, from historic music halls to dark, stuffy basements, you'll be able to dance, swing, or head-bang to the beat any night of the week. For those that like pure, gritty rock 'n' roll, venues such as the Tote and

The Corner have built an unbreakable reputation for showcasing musicians that are either talented or just plain noisy. For the jazz enthusiasts, nothing can be cooler than spending a night at Bennett's Jazz Lane, tucked securely down a CBD alley, far away from anything that resembles a suit and tie. Folk lovers will find backrooms in Fitzroy and Collingwood pubs that are ideal for soft tunes and late nights.

For music listings each week visit www.beat.com.au.



BEST BEDS



Holiday Inn on Flinders Melbourne Situated in the financial hub of the Melbourne CBD but close to myriad restaurants, bars and the new Docklands area, this hotel offers all the amenities to serve both the business and holiday traveller. Use it as a base but be sure to take advantage of the many facilities on offer.
575 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, VIC 3000.

To book great rates at any of our Holiday Inn Hotels call 138 388 or visit www.holidayinn.com.au in Australia, or call 0800 801 111 or visit www.holidayinn.co.nz in New Zealand.

BEST OF MELBOURNE

BEST BREAKFAST > CERES CAFÉ

The CERES (Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies) café is a country farm just a few kilometres from the city. Nearly everything on the menu is organic and grown on the premises, which suits the rustic and relaxed nature of the surroundings. 8 Lee St, Brunswick East, P: +61 3 9380 8861, www.ceres.org.au

BEST LUNCH > CAMY SHANGHAI DUMPLING RESTAURANT

Hidden in a CBD laneway, the 'Shanghai' might define no frills dining, but with an assortment of super cheap and incredibly satisfying dumplings, it's the perfect pit stop. 25 Tattersalls Lane, City, P: +61 3 9663 8555

BEST DINNER > ROCKPOOL

Opened in 2006, Neil Perry's first foray into the Melbourne restaurant scene has taken the city by storm. Known for serving the highest quality Wagyu beef in the country, it is already firmly placed on top of Melbourne's culinary ladder. Crown Complex, Southbank, P: +61 3 8648 1900, www.rockpoolmelbourne.com

BEST PUB > THE ESPLANADE HOTEL

Quintessentially Melbourne, the much-loved 'Espy' is the rock 'n' roll headquarters of a city known for its music. With nightly bands, a kitchen that serves huge portions and bay views from the front rooms, the Espy goes off every night of the week.

11 Upper Esplanade, St Kilda, P: +61 3 9534 0211, www.espy.com.au

BEST BAR > LAMBS GO BAR

This small bluestone cottage, nestled in the backstreets of Fitzroy, hides what is considered by many to be Melbourne's best beer list. The owner will gladly explain the choices available, and food is on hand for those that need to soak up the liquids.

135 Greeves St, Fitzroy, P: +61 3 8415 0511

BEST VIEW > EUREKA TOWER

Currently the world's tallest residential building, the view from Skydeck's 88th floor provides the ultimate panoramic outlook of Melbourne's surrounds. For the truly adventurous, try 'the edge' – a glass cube that slowly protrudes out from the building. Riverside Quay, Southbank, P: + 61 3 9693 8888, www.eurekatower.com.au

BEST SHOPPING > HOWEY PLACE

This tiny pedestrian CBD laneway has become Melbourne's designer label hotspot with a range of well-known designers, such as Alannah Hill, offering the latest styles, alongside up-and-comers like Jason Grech. Howey Place, City

BEST MARKET > QUEEN VICTORIA MARKET

Opened in 1878, the 'Vic' is the largest open-air market in the southern hemisphere. Clothes, handicrafts and the freshest food available are just some of its temptations. Cnr of Elizabeth and Victoria Streets, City, P: +61 3 9320 5822, www.qvm.com.au

BEST PARK > ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS

Covering over 36 hectares, this oasis of greenery is home to over 52,000 plants of some 10,000 species. It's perfect for a picnic lunch on the grass, but don't be startled when the native wildlife comes in for a closer look. Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra, P: + 61 3 9252 2429, www.rbg.vic.gov.au

