

# Adventures in



Float in the sky, jump off a plane, dive into deep blue waters at the Great Ocean Road, and hang out at cool cafés and bars in Melbourne, a city which is the ultimate playground for the young. **Pallavi Pasricha** spends 48 hours and comes away exhilarated.

**Photographs courtesy: Visit Victoria**

---

Facing page, clockwise from top: A view of Twelve Apostles at the Great Ocean Road; The picturesque streets are perfect for bike riding; A graffiti-filled lane in Melbourne



### Sky-high views

There is something thrilling about getting a bird's-eye view of a city from a rooftop bar or a tall observatory, but in Melbourne, one experiences a different high. It is one of the world's few cities where one can climb into a hot air balloon and float above a captivating cityscape where towering buildings mingle with Victorian architecture, tram lines and a meandering river. The adrenaline rush from the ride sets the tone for a city where vibrant cafés and bars, hidden speakeasies and adventures along the winding Great Ocean Road give Insta reels and stories an extra edge.



### On a caffeine high

In a city with a coffee obsession, kickstarting the day is easy — nearly 2,000 small and big cafés found at every turn are not just its favourite hangout joints, they serve specialty brews counted as some of the world's best. The classic Aussie flat white is a must-try — it is a single shot of espresso topped with steamed milk and a thin layer of foam. The city's signature Magic coffee, a double ristretto topped with steamed milk in a five-ounce cup, gives a stronger caffeine fix.

One of its most famed baristas, ST. ALi, whips up artisanal coffees in a brick-walled former warehouse. Apparently, American hit singer Taylor Swift's crew couldn't get enough of these inventive brews when she performed here in February. Cafés that have upped the game are Seven Seeds, Code Black and Brother Baba Budan. But one can easily skip the big names and go to smaller ones like Little Rouge, which often has a snaking line for its matcha latte. At trendy cafés that serve breakfast, Melburnians pair the espresso blends and filter brews with an avocado smash or a croffle (part croissant, part waffle).

But if coffee and croissants are a match made in heaven, then Lune Croissanterie is the go-to place. It is a legendary joint where people begin queuing from 6 a.m. to get their hands on the flakiest croissants which is prepared over three days. While their plain one is the bestseller, others like Pain Au Chocolat or Ham and Gruyere are also popular. The Almond, a buttery, nutty affair where almond flakes spill out at the first bite, is a must-try.







### Kaleidoscopic laneways

Plastered with awe-inspiring graffiti and murals in a riot of colours, the cobblestoned Hosier Street literally bursts with Insta-worthy frames. It is easy to mistake Melbourne for an urban art gallery — its laneways have become a canvas for budding and amateur artists who paint their thoughts and feelings onto walls, railings, and even bins. While one is tempted to immediately reach for an Insta post, do take a few minutes to admire the artwork, which by the way keeps changing. AC/DC Lane, in the central business district, is another hotspot for street art.



For those who enjoy the thrill of finding the perfect cocktail in hidden spots, Melbourne has a vibrant speakeasy culture

### Swinging bar nights

Want to knock back tequila shots, sip exceptional cocktails or tap your feet into the wee hours? This city's many buzzing bars and vibey clubs come alive as soon as the sun sets. Byrdi is renowned for its cocktails mixed with local and seasonal ingredients. Try Bad Apple, a concoction that takes 12 months to make because it uses every part of an apple.

At Melbourne's smallest pub, Caretaker's Cottage, which has a capacity of just 50, a young crowd nurse their drinks on benches and steps under a star-studded sky. Located in a historic building, it has the best Guinness in the city, but their cocktails are worth a swig. Bars like The Lane Duck and Heartbreaker let the party carry on till one is ready to drop.

For those who enjoy the thrill of finding the perfect cocktail in hidden spots, Melbourne has a vibrant speakeasy culture. Some are



**Left, top to bottom:** Guests lunching in an outdoors café; Bendigo Tramways (Picture Credit: Tourism Australia); Taking in the scenery at Twelve Apostles

**Facing page, top to bottom:** Hot air ballooning; Surfing at Bells Beach









tucked away in small laneways, some lie behind hidden doors, back alleys, hotel rooftops and even staircases. Pizza Pizza Pizza, One or Two, Cameo and Purple Pit are a few worth visiting in the CBD area.

### Action packed stadiums

The Melbourne Cricket Stadium, the long-time mecca for cricket fans, can also turn into a high-octane performance venue. Lately, it was the setting for a concert by Taylor Swift, who belted out numbers for a charged crowd of 96,000, her biggest audience till date. Take a guided tour to know the stadium's place in cricketing history — it hosted the first-ever international test cricket match in 1877 and is the birthplace of the International One Day match played in 1971. Virat Kohli and Sachin Tendulkar are among the sports stars whose photos grace MCG. For football lovers, this stadium also hosts this game for Australian football clubs. Tennis fans may be able to lob a ball while they tour the Rod Laver Arena at Melbourne Park, the venue for the Australian Open in January.

### High flights & deep dives

It is not just stunning views of craggy cliffs and deep blue waters that are the highlight as one zips along the iconic Great Ocean Road. It is also a place to skydive, surf, snorkel or hit a hiking trail. At Bells Beach, jump off a plane from 15,000 feet and feel the incredible rush of the free fall before gliding down smoothly. Then ride waves of up to 1.5 meters high — this beach is also counted as one of Australia's best surfing spots. When the waters are calmer, it is time to go scuba diving with an experienced guide, who can even help spot a shipwreck. Or don a snorkelling mask and delve into the underworld of the Australian ocean to watch creatures in myriad shapes, sizes and colour. There is also adrenaline action for those who are not water babies — hire a mountain bike and test your strength cycling up steep trails. An unforgettable helicopter ride from Twelve Apostles that gives dramatic views of the famous limestone pillars jutting out of the ocean is an apt finale on this iconic road. *L*

---

**Left, top to bottom:**  
 An art gallery in Melbourne;  
 Melbourne Cricket Ground;  
 Water sports at the Great Ocean Road