

# CAFFEINE BUZZ IN MELBOURNE

Head out on to the city’s lesser-known roads and see a facet never revealed before



An ariel view of Melbourne

Kalpna Sunder

I am in the brazenly modern Federation Square, a warren of exhibition spaces and galleries linked like a Rubik's Cube with triangular shards of glass, sandstone and zinc. Melbourne is a city with cutting edge fashion, art, architecture, food and music; where you have to be a forensic artist and delve deeper to ferret out its little secrets. Fiona Sweetman's 'Hidden Secrets' is an innovative attempt to guide visitors through the laneways of Melbourne — narrow streets between the city's broad thoroughfares, filled with eateries,

bars, shops and restaurants and offering a parallel city, so to speak. I am taking the Café Culture walk, which is just not about coffee alone — but brings you up-close with many independent businesses and local enterprises. "Melbourne is a city founded on an entrepreneurial spirit and wealth from the Gold Rush, and even today small businesses are major players in sweeping in big changes," says Fiona. The city does not tolerate 'chains' and it's a telling point that Starbucks had to close three fourths of its shops in 2008, a few years after entering Australia! Fiona speaks about how the Italian immigrants were the

ones to introduce espresso in Melbourne. And when they could not find good beans, they would even use ground chicory or acorns. There is the iconic Pellegrino's Espresso Bar, which imported the first Gaggia machine in the 1950s. Crossly Street is the lane of boutiques and small innovative businesses. We peer in to the windows of Lucy Folk — a quirky jeweller who specialises in her 'foodie jewellery'. There are food-inspired pieces ranging from popcorn and pretzels to tortilla chips. The mecca of the caffeine world is Degrares Street, lined with cafes with umbrellas and red plastic chairs. We have a coffee here at Degrares



Open bagels at the Manchester Press café and re-usable coffee cups

Expresso, which uses recycled cinema seats and benches from a magistrate's court! We swing past Hardware Lane, famous for its line of open-air cafes. La Belle Miette is a French patisserie that serves divine macaroons in lit-



tle boxes designed by a graphic artist. It's run by the daughter of a perfumer, who uses unusual scents to flavour the macaroons. There are also small cafes with character, in large corporate buildings. There is

Truffula Seed hiding in the Steel House building on Spring Street, a name inspired by Dr Seuss's book The Lorax! Their USP is the ethically sourced beans from the Social Roasting Company delivered on green bicycles and carry-home cups that you can re-use. The Manchester Utility building is a beautiful Art Nouveau structure designed by the famous architect Marcus Barlow in 1932 and built in nine months to counter the effects of the Great Depression with the first escalator in Melbourne. What we are here to see is the Switchboard Café, imaginatively run out of the closet space that housed the build-



Street art on Rankins Lane

## Public art

Melbourne also has a thriving street art culture. We see a variety of graffiti art on narrow lanes, with aerosols, stencils and paste ups. In a city plagued with grey skies, the bursts of colour

are welcome... "The whole concept is that people don't have to necessarily go to a gallery to see art, they can even enjoy this as they are rushing to catch their train," says Fiona.



Hardware lane with its line of cafes

ing's telephone system! The Tuck shop in the foyer of the NAB building at Bourke Street derives its name from the name given to comfort food at school lunches. It's a small café that serves a myriad salads and luscious hot dogs along with coffee. Our walk ends in

Manchester Press on Rankins Street — one of the newest cafes located in an old printing press building and very popular with the young crowd — they have amazing open bagels. It's another link in a city which is using its old spaces imaginatively in new endeavours...



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## Kerala is home to some very beautiful places

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Q&A inbox

**Q** I wish to visit Rameshwaram and also want to enjoy my holidays at nearby locations, preferably Kerala. Please help me.

**Ranjana**  
You can visit Rameshwaram and visit Kerala, famous as God's own country. Kerala has some of the most beautiful places to see in South India. A trip to Kerala can be planned for five to ten days. Here are some amazing places to visit:  
1. Kochi  
2. Kottayam  
3. Kumarakom  
4. Munnar  
5. Alleppey  
6. Thekkady  
7. Kodaikanal

**Q** Is it safe to take a taxi to catch the night train from Dharamshala/ McLeodganj to Pathankot? Or, if I plan to hire a cab, how long will the journey be?

**Ankita**  
There are plenty of buses that ply from Dharamshala to Pathankot. You could take any one of those, according to what fits your departure time from Dharamshala. It takes about three and half hours to complete the journey from Dharamshala to Pathankot. I suppose you could take a taxi, which is safe, that is, of course, if you leave Dharamshala by around 6 pm.

HolidayIQ