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home abroad.

## Relocation Guide to Melbourne, Australia

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*IOR makes every effort to ensure that the information contained in this guide is as current as possible. If you notice errors, or information which is no longer accurate, please contact us immediately so that we may correct the issue.*

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## WELCOME AND OVERVIEW



Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Melbourne is the capital of Victoria, Australia, and home to more than four million people. It is one of the youngest global cities in Australia. Melbourne grew from a tiny pastoral outpost into a sprawling economic hub within 30 years, reaching approximately one million inhabitants by the turn of the century. At the heart of this growth was the gold rush – one of the largest ones in world history – which saw a huge influx in migrants and a surge in wealth.

In the 1880s, Melbourne was given the title ‘Marvelous Melbourne’ and presented itself as competition to the great cities of Europe and North America. Melbourne hosted the 1880 World’s Fair in the Royal Exhibition Building, which also hosted the first parliament and still stands in the magnificent Carlton Garden. In 1901, the British colonies of Australia became an independent federation and Melbourne was made the federal capital of Australia, at least until Canberra was built in the late 1920s. After World War II, Melbourne grew rapidly, with its mainly Anglo-Celtic population boosted by immigration from Europe. From the mid-70s, many immigrants came from Southeast Asia, particularly from Vietnam and Cambodia. There is also a sizeable Chinese population in Melbourne dating back to the gold rush.

Although Sydney eventually grew larger, Melbourne remains a financial hub and is considered the cultural, sporting and food capital of the nation. Melbourne is the birthplace of cultural institutions such as Australian film (as well as the world’s first feature film), Australian television, the Australian impressionist art movement (known as the Heidelberg School); and is a major centre for contemporary and traditional Australian music. Melbourne is the historic home of Australian Rules Football (Aussie Rules) and hosts the Australian Open Tennis championship and many other major sporting events. The city has the most vibrant food and wine culture in the country, and the food industry is world renowned for its diversity and quality. In its 2014/2015 global rankings The Economist rated Melbourne as the world’s most liveable city.

Source: [Walking Melbourne](#)

## City of Melbourne Overview

- [Official Website of the City of Melbourne](#)
- [Melbourne Tourism Website](#)
- [Melbourne City Council](#)
- Population: 4.4 million
- Land Area: 8,806 km<sup>2</sup> (3,400 mi<sup>2</sup>)
- Currency: Australian Dollar
- [Melbourne Library and Locations](#)
- [Melbourne Weather Guide](#)
- [Museums in Victoria](#)
- [Melbourne Exchange Rates](#)

## Suggested Travel Guides

- [Melbourne Travel Guides](#) (Lonely Planet)
- [Fodor's Melbourne Travel Guide](#)
- [New York Times Guide to Melbourne](#)

## Where to Find Arts & Entertainment

- [The Age \(Melbourne Newspaper\)](#)
- [Live Theatre](#)
- [Movie Theatre Locations](#)

## Restaurants and Food

- [Good Food Guide](#)
- [Broadsheet](#)
- [Victorian Wineries](#)

## Post Office

- The official post office of Australia is [Australia Post](#)
- You can use [Track-Australia-Post](#) to track your mail with an English Website

## Tourist information

Melbourne Visitor Information Centre

2 Swanston Street, Federation Square

+61 3 9658 9658

Opening hours: Daily 9am-6pm

Map of Greater Melbourne



Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

## DAILY LIVING TIPS

For additional cultural insights, go to [IOR Global Services Knowledge Center](#)

**Your IOR DSC can assist with these items and any questions; please call for assistance.**

- Melbourne is generally safe, but if you travel by train at night, stay in the front carriage close to the driver's area and note emergency buttons. If a problem occurs, push emergency buttons on the train or railway station to attract attention. Robbery on the train is rare, but it never hurts to pay careful attention when traveling at night.
- Although scams are rare in Melbourne, be wary of real estate agents (especially if you have newly arrived and plan to stay only for a short term). There have been many cases of real estate agents preying upon overseas students in particular. Common scams include charging tenants for costs that don't exist (such as charges for 'advertising' when tenants move out) and deducting costs for non-existent reparations and cleaning from the bond. Be sure to consult the Tenants Union of Victoria and know your [rights as a tenant](#) when you are charged for anything while moving in and out.
- Melbourne is known for its changing weather and can often experience 'four seasons in one day'. Layering is your best bet as it allows you to deal with a range of temperatures. While the city doesn't experience much humidity, the sun can be extremely hot and locals and visitors alike should always have sunscreen on hand.
- Tipping is generally not required in Melbourne, though it is becoming more common, particularly in nice restaurants. However, for more casual meals, coffee, etc., tipping is not generally practiced. Similarly, service providers such as hairdressers are not tipped. Taxi bills can be rounded up to the nearest dollar; however if paying by card (all taxis allow payment by credit card, with a surcharge) then tipping is not expected.
- As with vehicles, pedestrians walk on the left side. The exception to this is when traveling on escalators, where people stand on the left and walk on the right.

## EMERGENCY/IMPORTANT CONTACTS

**IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY  
DIAL 000  
FOR FIRE, AMBULANCE, POLICE**

**For Fire, Ambulance, Police but no cell phone network: 112**

**Poisons information: 13 11 26**

**Lifeline: 13 11 14**

**They will ask for the following information so keep this page close to your phone:**

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

### **Important Contacts:**

National Security Hotline	1 800 123 400
State Emergency Services	13 25 00
Poisons Information	13 11 26
Gas/Fire Emergency	000

### **Medical Services**

Alfred Hospital Commercial Rd (Corner St Kilda Rd)	9076 2000
Nurse -on-Call Telephone (health line, providing immediate, expert health information and advice 24 hours a day 7 days a week)	1 300 60 60 24
Royal Melbourne Hospital	9342 7000
Royal Womens Hospital	8345 2000
St Vincents Hospital	9288 2211
Australian Red Cross	1 800 131 701
Salvation Army	13 72 58
Counselling Services Life Line	13 11 14
Mensline Australia	1 300 789 978
National Association for loss & Grief (Victoria)	1 800 100 023
Suicide Helpline Victoria	1 300 651 251
Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line	1 800 806 292
Victims of Crime	1 800 819 817
WorkSafe Victoria	1 800 136 089
Maternal Child Health Line	13 22 29

**[U.S. Consulate General in Melbourne](#)**

553 St Kilda Road

Melbourne, Victoria 3004

Telephone: (03) 9526-5900

**[Other Consulate Directory \(for Australia, not specifically Melbourne\)](#)**



### **Hospital & Clinics**

There is a variety of health providers in Melbourne and medical care is very accessible to both residents and visitors. Depending on country of origin and insurance situation, temporary residents may be required to pay in full for emergency or other treatment received at a public hospital. Similarly, routine doctor visits will require full payment at the time of the visit, but may subsequently be covered by insurance. To access a list of hospitals, general practitioners and other medical services, refer to [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) and use the 'Find a health service' feature.

To find a physician go to the [Better Health Channel](#).

### **Dental, Pharmaceutical and other Health Services**

Dental services are also easily accessed. To find a dentist near you, refer to [list of dentists](#).

Pharmacies also go by the name Chemists and are easily found in most neighborhoods. Many pharmacists will offer the option of a cheaper 'generic' drug manufacturer when filling a prescription. In addition, you can find a pharmacy close by your house [here](#).

Melbourne is home to a vast network of healthy living services, sporting institutions and activity providers. A good start on finding local sporting associations and facilities is through [Sport and Recreation Victoria](#) for a list of sporting groups and how to access them. Local council websites also provide a list of their services and recreation facilities.

### Educational System

The Australian system provides an extremely high standard of education, which incorporates current global pedagogy. Initially based on the British model; there continue to be strong influences both in the style and content of the curriculum.

Though there are slight variations between the states, the educational structure is basically the same. The country is working to implement a standardized Australian Curriculum from kindergarten through to year 12 in all states.

The current structure of education in Victoria is as follows:

- **Kindergarten:** While kindergarten (which may also be called pre-school) is not compulsory, it is almost universally undertaken in Victoria. Programs can begin at 3 years of age and continue for 2 years, or children can be enrolled at the age of 4 for a one year program before school starts.
- **Primary School:** Primary school consists of the years from Preparatory (Prep) to Year 6.
- **Secondary School:** This begins at Year 7 and finishes at the end of Year 12.

Excluding Kindergarten, most children living in Melbourne will complete at least 13 years of schooling, from Prep to Year 12. In order to start school in Victoria (at the Prep year), a child must have turned 5 by April 30th of that year. Legally all children must be in school in the year they turn 6 and remain there until they turn 17 years of age.

### Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary education is offered in two sectors - the vocational and technical education sector and the higher education sector.

- **Vocational and Technical Education (VET)** in Australia operates under a national training system which is industry-led, competency-based, nationally-consistent and quality assured.
- **Higher Education** is a nationally-consistent system offered by universities and other accredited higher education institutions. Higher education programs lead to the following qualifications:

### Diplomas

- Advanced Diplomas and Associate Degrees
- Bachelor Degrees
- Graduate Certificates and Diplomas
- Master Degrees
- Doctoral Degrees

## **Choosing your school**

Victoria does not really offer 'International Schools', so most expats living in Melbourne send their children to the same government and independent (private) schools that local children attend. Children in Australia as temporary residents are permitted to enroll in a free government school as long as they live in the school's catchment area. However, it is more common for expat children to attend private schools; where they pay the same fees as local children. Melbourne has an extremely high rate of private school attendance, which can make it difficult for international children to find placement.

A number of Melbourne's private schools offer the International Baccalaureate program, though generally in the primary years and/or the final two years of schooling only. A handful of schools in the city offer the program beginning in the primary years and continuing the entire way to Year 12.

The school year in the southern hemisphere commences in late January and extends to mid-December. This difference means that children coming from a northern hemisphere system will need to either repeat part of a year they have completed, or jump ahead to the middle of a year they haven't yet started. Decisions are generally made in liaison with school staff and based on age, assessment and history of the particular child.

In whichever school you enroll, English as a Second Language (ESL) support will be provided for your child. A minimum starting level of English is required. If the student's English level is not sufficient, the child will be placed in intensive English studies program before they start school.

The **Australian Higher School Certificate** is world recognized.

Though the majority of private schools have religious affiliation, this has more to do with the historical nature of the establishment of schools in Australia than strict religious affiliation. The exception to this is Roman Catholic schools that may require parents to be active parishioners. Some of the top schools may have long waiting lists due to the popularity of the local school system for Australians.

## **Australia - School Year**

This graph aims to show, at a glance, the organization of the school year, which includes when the school year starts, the number of terms and length of main holiday. It also shows the length of the school year. The level of responsibility refers to the body responsible for organizing the school year within the statutory number of days for the school year.

## Australia School Year\*

Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	School Year	Level of Responsibility						
																		200 Days	State

Key

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Main Holiday	Other Holidays
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## BANKING

The Australian dollar is the currency of the Commonwealth of Australia. Australia was the first country in the world to have a complete system of bank notes made from plastic (polymer). These notes provide much greater security against counterfeiting. They also last four times as long as conventional paper (fibrous) notes. Australia's currency comprises coins of 5, 10, 20 and 50 cent and one and two dollar denominations; and notes of 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 dollar denominations. You can find the exchange rate for the Australian Dollar [here](#).

### International Banks

- [HSBC](#)
- [Bank of America](#)
- [CitiBank](#)
- [Deutsche Bank](#)
- [You can find a longer list of international banks here](#)

### Local Banks

- [Bank of Melbourne](#)
- [Common Wealth Bank](#)
- [ANZ](#)
- [Bank West](#)
- [National Australia Bank](#)
- [St. George](#)
- [Sun Corp Bank](#)
- [Westpac](#)

Banks and other financial institutions, such as credit unions, offer a variety of services. These services include:

- checking and saving accounts
- online bill pay
- loans
- insurance
- financial planning

**Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will assist you in locating bank branches in your neighborhood.**

### **Checking and Savings Accounts**

Generally salaries and government benefits are paid directly into a bank account in Australia, so an account is necessary for those who work or reside in the country. Bank accounts at any of the larger local banks can easily be opened before arrival in Australia, though a face to face appointment upon arrival is necessary to activate the account. By completing the identify check within 6 weeks of your arrival in Australia, you will be required to show only your passport. However, if you do not present at the bank or open your account until later than six weeks following arrival into Australia, you will be required to undergo a more stringent identification verification process involving multiple forms of I.D.

Documents that may be accepted include:

- Driver's license
- Australian Medicare card
- Utility bill
- Birth certificate
- Car registration document
- Rental receipts

### **ATM, Debit Cards, Credit Cards, and Online Banking**

The most popular way of obtaining cash is by using an ATM card, also referred to as a debit card. ATM machines are located in most banks, malls, airports, grocery stores, and in many other public places. Not all ATMs accept foreign bank cards, and those that do may not accept all foreign cards. Therefore, it is recommended to have cash on you at all times.

Most bank accounts will be associated with a debit card, which can be used at ATMs to access cash, and to pay for goods at virtually all commercial venues. Most vendors now utilize paywave, which allows for payment by simply waving the card in front of the machine (transactions above \$100 may require a pin), rather than physically inserting the card. Grocery stores, post offices, etc. allow customers to also withdraw cash at the time of payment for goods. Local banks will issue credit cards to temporary residents depending on length of visa, work history, salary, etc.

Melbourne is increasingly moving to a cashless society. Bills can be paid online, even small transactions are frequently paid by debit/credit card and cheque books are almost nonexistent. Many vendors are now accepting payment via smart phone, so not even a bank card is required.

### **Taxes**

- **Sales Tax** - The Value Added Tax (VAT) equivalent in Australia is referred to as the Goods and Services Tax or GST. The current rate of GST is ten percent and is applied to the supply of most goods and services. There are some exemptions which include basic foodstuffs, medical and educational services and exports. The GST is already included in most, if not all, displayed prices for goods. Service prices may be quoted pre-GST. The revenue collected from GST is distributed to all the states. State governments do not levy any state sales taxes although they do impose stamp duties on a range of transactions.

- **Income Tax** - Federal income tax is levied under a two-tier system:
  - The First Class system applies to the self-employed and companies.
  - The Second Class system, called Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG), is for employees.

The self-employed pay their tax in arrears, whereas an employee's income tax is deducted at source from his salary by his employer. The income tax year in Australia runs from 1 July to 30 June, although in certain circumstances an accounting year beginning on a different date may be used for tax purposes. Changes in federal taxation are usually announced in the annual budget statement in May. Australian income tax law recognizes the following general types of taxpayer: companies, individuals, partnerships and trusts. Specific provisions apply to certain businesses, minors and superannuation funds.

An individual's tax situation will depend on residency and visa factors. You are considered a resident for tax purposes if you are visiting Australia for more than 6 months and for most of that time you live at the same place, and you establish ties in the local community. However, if you have a temporary work visa then you are considered a temporary resident and can declare only income you derive in Australia, plus any income you earn from employment performed overseas for short periods while you are a temporary resident of Australia.

Temporary residents arriving in Australia should apply to the Australian Taxation Office for a Tax File Number (TFN) which is a personal reference number in the tax system. While TFNs are not compulsory, they are advisable and an individual may pay more tax without one.

### **Security**

Melbourne is generally a safe place. Follow basic safety rules and you should be fine. Be aware of who's around you at an ATM. Do not use the machine if you are suspicious of someone's behavior. It is safer to find another ATM or to come back later.

Credit card theft is another increasing problem. In order to protect your card from being abused, never give your credit card or credit card number to a service provider you have not called. Another precaution is to destroy or shred copies of receipts and bills. Criminals will not hesitate to dig through the trash to find a copy of your credit card number.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION/DRIVING

Getting around in Melbourne is easy thanks to an efficient public transport that includes rail, tram and bus services. The wealth of options available when it comes to transport in Melbourne really helps new arrivals get comfortable with the metropolis. However, those living in some of the more isolated suburbs of Melbourne might find it handy to have their own vehicle. Expats should research transport options when considering where to live in Melbourne.

### Public Transportation

Melbourne uses the 'myki' system for public transportation ticketing. The myki system uses a contactless, reusable smartcard called the myki card and must be purchased in order to travel on train, bus or tram in Melbourne. Even tourists and visitors here for a short stay are required to purchase a card in order to travel on public transport. You can either store a weekly, monthly or annual myki pass on the smart card or myki money which can be used to pay for single journeys. When your myki money balance gets low or when your pass runs out, you simply top up at station or myki vendor. More information on how to set up myki [here](#).

Go to [Public Transport Victoria](#) for more information.

### Tram

Melbourne has the world's largest tram network with nearly 500 trams running on 28 routes and servicing 1,813 tram stops. There are two light rail routes which are also part of the tram network. The City Circle is a free tram that operates in a circular route in the heart of Melbourne's central business district. It passes major tourist attractions and links with other tram, train and bus routes in the city.

Trams run on all the major roads in the inner suburbs, but only some trams operate on roads in the middle and outer suburbs. Trams in Melbourne are frequent and stop every 10-15 minutes. The trams that service areas further away from the city-centre are less frequent, running every 20-30 minutes.

### Trains

Melbourne's rail network consists of 16 railway lines which are all covered by the myki ticketing system. Several sections of these lines are part of the V/Line network and fall into the metropolitan areas. These metro trains stop every 10-15 minutes during peak hours.

There are also seven passenger railway lines which connect Melbourne to various towns and cities in Victoria. The centre of this regional passenger rail network is Southern Cross Station in Melbourne's city-centre. Melbourne is also connected to Sydney by the CountryLink XPT and Adelaide by the Great Southern Railway.

[Link to High-Resolution map of Melbourne's train network](#)



*Southern Cross Station*



## **Bus**

The bus network in Melbourne consists of buses operated by over 50 different bus companies under a franchise from the state government. There are almost 300 bus routes in operation with varying degrees of service frequencies.

There is a special NightRider bus system which operates on Friday and Saturday nights. Most of Melbourne's bus network is part of the myki ticketing system. Expats may also find that several local government councils operate free local community bus services with the local areas.

## **Bicycle**

Melbourne is a cycle-friendly city and has an extensive network of bicycle paths and cycle lanes on the roads. These are utilized regularly for commuting to and from work. Melbourne also has an innovative bicycle sharing system, which is the first of its kind in Australia. Melbourne Bike Share has over 600 bikes, which commuters can pick up and drop off at any of the 50 docking stations scattered throughout Melbourne's city-centre. The first 30 minutes of every journey is free and then there are a number of different pricing plans available to suit a variety of needs including weekly and annual subscription packages. Helmet usage is mandatory.

## **Taxis**

Melbourne has a fleet of around 4,000 bright yellow taxis. Expats will find that many of these taxis are wheel chair accessible. They operate according to a meter system and passengers are charged for the distance they travel. There are base fares and then passengers are charge a rate per kilometer or per minute stuck in traffic. Taxi fares usually increase by 20 percent at night or on public holidays. In addition, most taxis will request a prepaid fare if travelling between 10pm and 5am. You will need to pay the driver the estimated fare as a deposit, then either pay more or receive change at the end of the trip. So although Melbourne's taxis provide a door-to-door service, they are definitely the city's most expensive mode of transport.

There can sometimes be an issue with taxi availability, especially during peak hours, so if you know where you are going it is best to pre-book ahead of time.

To estimate the cost of a trip, go to the [taxi fair estimator](#)

## **Driving in Melbourne**

Expats living further away from Melbourne's inner city will find having a car quite handy. However, Melbourne' highways and roads become very congested during peak hours. Driving in Melbourne is fairly straightforward, especially for those who are used to driving on the left hand side of the road. One difference which expats might need to get used to though is sharing the road with tram services.

Expat drivers will be pleased to know that parking is not a problem in Melbourne. The city has over 70,000 parking spaces available. While most of the inner city streets have metered parking, parking is easy to find and very safe. Car parks throughout Melbourne offer deals on short and long stays, early bird specials and disabled access.

## **Airports**

Air is the most common method of reaching Melbourne, and if you're not in Australia, pretty much your only option. The city is served by two airports: Melbourne Airport, which has international and domestic flights, and the domestic-only Avalon Airport.

Melbourne Airport, also known as Tullamarine Airport, is 22 km north-west of the city centre in the northern suburbs. There are regular flights from all major Australian and New Zealand cities, and there are direct international flights to many Asian hubs with onwards connections to Europe. There are direct flights to the west coast of the U.S. and Canada, Santiago, Fiji and Hawaii.

Taxis between the airport and the city centre cost around \$50-60 and take about 25 minutes in clear traffic. Skybus runs a 24/7 shuttle to and from the Southern Cross Station Coach Terminal on Spencer Street at the west end of the Central Business District, just north of Lonsdale Street. Cost of Skybus is \$18 for an adult and \$9 for a child for a one way trip

Avalon Airport is situated in the Geelong outer suburb of Lara. The airport is located 55 km to the south-west of Melbourne, and is considerably further from Melbourne CBD than the Melbourne airport at Tullamarine. A taxi from the Avalon Airport to Melbourne CBD will cost up to \$100. SITA coaches operate coach shuttle service to Melbourne's Southern Cross Station at \$22 per adult and \$10 per child one way. An additional \$7 per person charge is made for a transfer to city hotels. Bikes can be carried only if boxed.

## **Map Websites**

- [Google Maps](#)
- [Expedia](#)
- [MapQuest](#)
- [Bing](#)

### Identification

With the exception of Australian and most New Zealand citizens, all people traveling to Australia require a visa or an Electronic Travel Authority, ETA. If you want to work, you need to apply for a specific ETA-business.

Becoming a permanent resident is hard. You can apply on several grounds:

- Working visa - you need a company to sponsor you. They will need to prove that you are the only person who can do the job you are going to do for them and it will cost them money. You are then bound to that company for about 4 years. But the good thing about it is that after 2 years you can apply for permanent residency.
- De-facto relationship or marriage - you must have lived with your Australian partner for at least 1 year and must be able to prove it with personal letters, bills in both names, joint bank account, letters from friends and family willing to testify that you have been together, photos, etc.

### Getting a Driver's License

The requirement to change your overseas driver license to a Victorian driver license depends on whether your stay in Victoria is temporary or permanent.

If you are in Victoria on a temporary visa, you can drive on your overseas driver license for as long as it is current providing it is in English or accompanied by an English translation or International Driving Permit. There is no requirement to get a Victorian driver license.

If you have entered Victoria on a permanent visa issued under the Migration Act 1958, you may drive on your overseas driver license for:

- Six months from the date you first entered Australia if the permanent visa was issued before you entered Australia; or,
- Six months from the date when the permanent visa was issued to you if the permanent visa was issued to you whilst in Australia.

If you want to continue driving in Victoria after this time you must change your overseas license to a Victorian driver license.

### Applying for a Victorian driver license

To obtain Victorian driver license (full or probationary) you need to make an appointment to undertake a [road law knowledge test](#), a [hazard perception test \(HPT\)](#), eyesight test and a [drive test](#) (unless you are exempt from the test) at a [VicRoads Customer Service Centre](#). You must complete and pass the road law knowledge test and hazard perception test before you attempt the drive test.

If your overseas driver's license is no longer valid for driving in Victoria (see above information regarding permanent visas), you will still be able to undertake the driving test, as you are exempt from holding a learner permit for the duration of the test.

### **Exemptions from license tests**

If you hold a driver's license from a [recognized country](#) or if you are 25 or over and from an [experienced driver country](#), you are not required to undertake any tests. This is provided your overseas license is current or not expired by more than five years. However, you still need to make an appointment to changeover your license if you are from these countries.

### **Make an appointment for your test**

- Book [online](#)
- Call VicRoads on 13 11 71 (Mon-Fri 8.30am - 5pm, Sat 8.30am - 2pm). You can pay by credit card (Visa or Mastercard); or
- Visit a [VicRoads Customer Service Centre](#). You can pay by cash, cheque, EFTPOS or credit card.

You can book the driving test and knowledge tests for separate days if you wish. If you are making your booking over the phone, you must pay by credit card (Visa or Mastercard) at that time to make sure you secure your appointment.

**Important:** You must bring the appropriate [evidence of identity documents](#) with you when you sit for your learner permit or license test. If you do not have the appropriate evidence of identity documents, you will forfeit your appointment and test fees.

**You can find more information on drivers' license study material [here](#).**

**You can find more information on obtaining a drivers' license in Victoria [here](#).**

**Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will also assist you with the proper procedure.**

### Electronics

Australia operates on a 240V system, as compared to some other countries that use 110V; and power outlets use a 3 prong plug. Many computers and other electronic devices will allow you to operate on either 110 or 240 as long as the device is switched to the appropriate mode. In this case all that is required is an adaptor. Other appliances can't operate on 240V without a transformer, which actually converts the electric current.

### Internet

The internet in Australia is readily available in Melbourne. In recent years, the public wireless system has begun to spread and many cafes, hotels, etc. provide internet accesses that are pretty accessible in general. For internet at home, there are many providers and you will find all the necessary information on their web sites.

- [Optus](#)
- [Telstra Big Pond](#)
- [iiNet](#)
- [TPG Telenet](#)

### TV

There are almost 30 free to air channels available in Melbourne, with the most watched being ABC, SBS, 7, 9 and 10. The ABC has a high Australian content, SBS has an international flavor and screens multicultural/multi-lingual broadcasting, while 7, 9 and 10 broadcast many of the popular U.S. programs. The biggest provider of cable TV is Foxtel, which has a variety of sports and entertainment packages. Netflix has many subscribers in Australia, as do Stan and other content providers.

### Phone

The three main mobile providers are two privately owned carriers, Optus and Vodafone, and Telstra. Networks vary in their long distance charges; some offer flat national rates, others have rates depending on how far you call.

When you sign up for a plan, there is usually a choice between a 12 month period and a 24 month period. Australians have a huge rate of mobile phone usage, so the phone plans are pretty varied. For those who stay in Australia for a shorter period it can be more economic to buy pre-paid cards (more information on pre-paid cards can be found [here](#)). It is also the most economic solution (after Skype) for international calls. Example: a card of \$20 AU provide almost 400 minutes of communications France-Australia! These cards are sold almost everywhere.

For more information:

- [Telstra](#)
- [Optus](#)
- [Vodafone](#)

## Utilities

Renters are generally responsible to pay electricity, gas and water costs throughout their tenancy. All utilities will need to be switched to the tenant's name at the beginning of occupancy. Often tenants choose to continue with the existing provider (in the case of water there is no choice), or have the real estate agency manage the process as part of completing the lease. If tenants do wish to compare energy companies, please reference this [government service](#) information.

- **Gas:** On the day before the move, take a final reading of your natural gas meter, and go on the site of [AGL](#), the main supplier in Australia.
- **Electricity:** Electricity is de-regulated in Australia so you have a choice between different providers. You have the choice between:
  - [Ausgrid](#)
  - [Energex](#)
  - [Energy Australia](#)
- **Water:** Water is generally paid by tenants, not landlords, with the exception of apartments (though not all). Water companies operate by area, so there is no choice of company, as only one operates in your area.

## Shopping

Myer and David Jones are large department stores that have many venues throughout Victoria, including flagship stores in the central business district. Discount chains such as Target, K Mart and Big W are also prevalent in Melbourne. The country's biggest indoor shopping centre, Chadstone Shopping Centre, is located in Melbourne, approximately 13kms south east of the city.

The main grocery chains (Woolworths, Coles, IGA, Aldi) have many locations throughout the city, including in the central business district. Convenience stores (7-11) and small specialty food shops are also plentiful.

Australia has also a lot of mega big suburban shopping centers with 4 or 5 floors. They are good when it is too hot outside (40 degree C) because they are air- conditioned! You will need a car as although buses do go there, the distances to be traveled are longer than what you might be used to.

While there are many indoor malls in Victoria (which are ideal when it's very hot as they're air conditioned), many locals do their shopping in smaller shopping strips within their suburb. These strips have a range of shops, generally including one of the grocery chains as well as butchers, fruit shops, bookstores and many small boutiques.

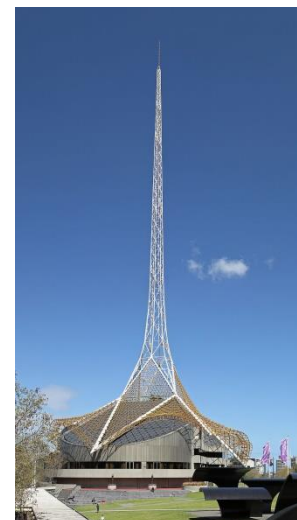
## RECREATION

Lovely, laid-back Melbourne has something for everyone: family fare, local and international art, haute boutiques, multicultural dining, Australian and Aboriginal history, spectator sports, and pulsing, swanky nightlife. Cruise on the free City Circle Tram loop to check out unique attractions like the Royal Botanical Gardens and the Healesville Sanctuary, which buzzes with local animal species.



City Circle Tram in front of Parliament House

- The National Gallery of Victoria possesses the largest art collection in Australia.
- The Melbourne Museum is located on the north-eastern fringe of the CBD, and is home to Melbourne's IMAX cinema.
- The Victorian Arts Centre at Southgate is a Melbourne landmark with its enormous skyward spire. It hosts Opera Australia's Melbourne season, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, the Melbourne Theatre Company, the Australian Ballet Company, Chunky Move (one of Australia's best-known contemporary dance companies), and other touring productions.
- The Melbourne Aquarium contains a variety of exhibits showcasing marine wildlife found in the Southern Ocean and the Antarctic.
- Luna Park Melbourne is an amusement park located on the foreshore of Port Phillip Bay in St Kilda, an inner suburb of Melbourne. It has been operating since 1912.
- See interesting films at the [Art Deco-styled Astor Theatre](#) in St Kilda. There are several moonlight cinema programs in summer. The [Melbourne International Film Festival](#) is in August.
- The Yarra Valley region, producer of high-quality wine and with beautiful rainforest scenery nearby is an easy day trip.
- The Surf Coast near Geelong, with excellent surf beaches and the spectacular views of the Great Ocean Road is also a recommended day trip from Melbourne.
- Melbourne is also known for great street art often located down narrow laneways. This art is displayed on [approved outdoor locations](#).
- Learn about aboriginal culture and history at the [Koorie Heritage Trust](#)
- Visit a comedy club. [The Comic's Lounge](#) has shows for \$10-25 including a show filmed for Channel 31 on Mondays, or dinner and show for \$45. [The Comedy Club](#) has dinner and show for \$32 and shows only beginning at \$7 (discount ticket price).
- Watch the mesmerizing process of personalized hard candy being hand-made at Suga. Around lunch time is a good time to see (and sample!). There is a store at [Queen Victoria Market](#), but if you visit the Royal Arcade location, you can also watch chocolate making next door at Koko Black.
- Watch a game of [AFL football](#) at the MCG or Etihad Stadium during the winter or a Cricket Match during the summer.



Spire of the Arts Centre

- Kick back at one of Melbourne's fantastic cafes in the CBD (Degrares St, The Causeway, and other laneways are fantastic for this), South Yarra (Chapel Street) or Fitzroy (Brunswick Street, Smith Street).
- Melbourne has an exceptionally vibrant live music scene. Many bars and pubs will have copies of the free magazines "Beat" and "Inpress" which provide local gig guides. Fitzroy, Collingwood and St. Kilda are generally your best bets for seeing some of the great local talent Melbourne has to offer. Venues where you generally can't go wrong include: "The Tote" and "The Evelyn".
- The [Black Light Mini Golf](#) is located at the Docklands. This is an 18-hole mini golf range designed with an Australian theme. It is under black light with a sound system and featuring fluorescent colors.
- Melbourne is home to the Annual Australian Open tennis tournament broadcast globally on television and online.
- [Indoor rock climbing with a view](#). Hardrock on Swanston Street has an indoor climbing wall suitable for beginners and advanced climbers.
- [Things to do in Melbourne with kids](#). Find things to do for families with kids in Melbourne.



*Melbourne's Royal Botanic Garden*



## PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Holiday name	Date	Weekday	Where it is observed (if location specific)	Holiday type
New Year's Day	1-Jan	Friday		National holiday
Australia Day	26-Jan	Tuesday		National holiday
Labour Day	14-Mar	Monday	Victoria	Common Local holidays
Good Friday	25-Mar	Friday		National holiday, Christian
Easter Saturday	26- Mar	Saturday		National holiday, Christian
Easter Day	27-Mar	Sunday		National holiday, Christian
Easter Monday	21-Apr	Monday		National holiday, Christian
Anzac Day	25-Apr	Monday		National holiday
Queen's Birthday	13-Jun	Monday		Common Local holidays
Queen's Birthday	26-Sep	Monday		Common Local holidays
Melbourne Cup Day	1-Nov	Tuesday	Victoria	Local holiday
Christmas Day	25-Dec	Sunday		National holiday, Christian
Boxing Day	26-Dec	Monday		National holiday, Christian

All information can be found [here](#).