

**HD** Swept up in trendy Melbourne culture

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WICKED may have been the focus of my visit to Melbourne, but taking an early morning walk, many other magical moments popped up for me.

Particularly exciting was a **group** of pop-up eateries that were drawing a well-heeled, suited crowd away from the brasseries, many curious to see why people were queuing up, and then happy to join the queue themselves.

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As it was explained to me, pop- up cafes may have begun as a way for aspiring **business** owners to get a hospitality leg-up or to explore fresh ideas, but now they have become mainstream in Melbourne.

**Property** developers, particularly, are jumping on the idea to inject buzz around their properties by setting up temporary food concepts.

The temporary dining hub at 80 Collins Street has seen coffee baron Salvatore Malatesta set up the Church of Secular Coffee, an offshoot of St Ali cafes in South Melbourne and Brunswick, alongside George Calombaris's souvlaki-serving Jimmy Grants

and Kong BBQ, a precursor to Korean BBQ, being set up in Richmond by Chris Lucas, of **Chin Chin** Asian restaurant fame.

According to media, the dining hub has a lifespan of up to nine months before Queensland Investment Corporation begins work on a \$550 **million**, 39-storey development on the **site**.

Not going to be around for lunch, I queued for breakfast - \$7 bought me the most delicious sourdough topped with avocado and goat's **cheese** and an enlivening large flat white coffee.

It's a long time since I've been able to find similar good value for such delicious flavours in Launceston, and could be food for thought.

What heightened the experience as I sat among strangers, comfortably perched on stools at communal tables, is the striking street art that soars skyward.

This female face greeted me when I flung open my bedroom shutters 39 floors up at the Sofitel - and now I was craning my neck to study it in its entirety.

She proved great **company** over coffee for a girl alone in a big city.

The next pop-up moment were twin brothers busking outside Myer in Bourke Street.

Their blend of roots and foot stomping indie folk music attracted such an enthusiastic crowd that several times the boys had to stop mid-set to remind people of oncoming trams.

Calling themselves simply The Pierce Brothers, these boys play with the likes of the Beards, Ash Grunwald and their latest EP Blind Boys Run was selling like hot cakes.

Sadly, it's probably too late to catch them now as next week they begin touring East Coast Australia before playing to a sold-out audience at the Lowlands Festival in the Netherlands. There they will be playing alongside the likes of Snoop Dogg,

which I mention just to indicate the quality of the boys' sound.

Interesting to me, was that they weren't the sole performers - Melbourne's inner-city hums to the energy of buskers and, in most instances, it makes shoppers smile.

While not pop-up by any stretch of the imagination, the next surprise was H&M - Melbourne's newest sensation in shopping.

But first to Emporium in Lonsdale Street, which hosts Australia's first Uniqlo, the largest designer precinct in the country.

The precinct offers 225 retail outlets and a food court and is connected to Melbourne Central, Myer and David Jones via pedestrian bridges and tunnels.

It's been called a "a retail palace" and is indeed dazzling in both retail scope and size.

Its Escher-like design sometimes disorienting in its complexity.

Still not fully open, this complex offers seven-day shopping until well after many other retailers have closed their doors.

Now, I get to H&M.

This global retail fashion giant opened in Australia in April and it's flagship store is right in the heart of Melbourne - in the city's old GPO to be exact.

The first H&M store opened in Sweden in 1947 and now has more than 2500 stores worldwide.

Offering everything from women's and menswear to towels and bedding - once bundled under the umbrella term of manchester - this store seems to be the ultimate for quality shopping at affordable prices.

On its opening day the store reportedly attracted 15,000 shoppers, and while not nearly that sort of crush on the Friday of my visit, the store was buzzing.

And no wonder, for price tags under \$50 will continually tease your purse.

H&M account manager Amy O'Shaughnessy has said clothes created exclusively for the Australian market - leather jackets, trend skirts and tunics - are proving to be among the best sellers.

While it was never on my bucket list before, H&M is firmly on my shopping list when lucky enough to be Melbourne-bound again.

Hope it's soon.

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