**GUIDE TO MELBOURNE TRAMS**

**GENERAL**

1. The Melbourne tram network is the biggest in the world (in route kilometrage, not in patronage), and

2. Unfortunately, Melbourne trams are slow. There is relatively little reserved track, so the trams are caught in slow traffic.

Swanston Street in the city centre might be regarded as the centre of the Melbourne tram network. There are trams here every few seconds. Elizabeth St, Collins St, Bourke St and St Kilda Road are almost as busy.

In general the eastern and south-eastern suburbs are very pleasant middle class, northern suburbs a mixture, and western suburbs (where there are few tram lines) working class.

**RIDING THE TRAMS**

The City Circle tram, usually using older trams, is a nice way around the city centre - and it is free. Indeed, all trams in the city centre are free.

The longest tram routes are to East Burwood, no 75, to the east; Bundoora RMIT, no 86, to the north-east; and Airport West, no 59, to the north-west. All these have reserved track on the outer lengths only. An out and back trip along these will certainly give you a good idea of Melbourne tram operation, but will take a fair while, at least a couple of hours each. Next is East Brighton, no. 64, to the south (most southerly tram terminus in the world), through pleasant suburbs.

The busiest route, in terms of frequency, is North Coburg, no 19, to the north, through a variety of streets.

An interesting route is West Coburg, no 55 (soon to be renumbered 58), to the north. This is unusual because after this route turns out of Flemington Road, not far from the city centre, it traverses Royal Park. Indeed, it crosses the middle of the park, well away from and out of sight of any road. However, after it leaves the park at Brunswick Road, it just traverses ordinary suburban streets. A possibility would be to ride this line as far as Royal Park railway station, then return by suburban electric train, or vice versa.

The inner suburban routes to Port Melbourne, route 109, and to St Kilda, route 96, are interesting, because they are converted from railway lines. Indeed the line to Port Melbourne was Australia's first railway.

What is most strongly suggested are round trips, eg:

1. Route 16, from Swanston St in the city centre, along St Kilda Road, through the inner suburb of St Kilda, then through the very pleasant south-eastern suburbs to Kew. Then back to the city via route 109, or vice versa.

2. A similar trip, through similar suburbs would be Swanston St, route 72, through similar suburbs, to link up with route 109 again.

In the inner and middle suburbs of Melbourne, there are a very, very large range of possible round trips by riding tram lines to a suburban railway station, and then returning by suburban electric train. See the Public Transport Victoria website at <https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/getting-around/maps/#networkmap> for a range of maps. However, most unfortunately, there is no official map showing the tram and suburban railway networks together. The tram network map offered on this site is very poor indeed. It is highly stylised; and the inner area is greatly magnified, and the suburbs compressed. Even Robert Schwandl's usually excellent Urban Rail website (<http://www.urbanrail.net/au/melb/melbourne.htm>) doesn't provide good maps. There is, fortunately, an integrated map, at the Australian Rail Maps website at <http://www.urbanrail.net/au/melb/melbourne.htm> although this, too is stylised. I suggest studying ordinary street maps, when you get them, to work out the large number of possibilities of integrated tram/rail round trips.

**PHOTOGRAPHING TRAMS**

1. FREQUNCY: Stand at the city centre intersections of Swanston and Bourke, Swanston and Collins, Elizabeth and Bourke, or Elizabeth and Collins. There are trams crossing every few seconds all day. Superb! At the city centre intersection of Swanston and Flinders, there are slightly fewer trams, but this is compensated by the very interesting background of Flinders St railway station - a very unusual building (and on the opposite corner St Paul's Anglican Cathedral).

But anywhere along Swanston St, Elizabeth St, Collins St, Bourke St or St Kilda Road will provide very busy tram scenes.

2. SCENIC BACKGROUND

St Kilda Road is the place to go. This is immediately south of the city centre. It is a wide, tree-lined boulevard, with a very busy service of trams every couple of minutes. Almost all trams to the south and south-east suburbs go along St Kilda Road.

Very similar, as busy, tree-lined boulevards are Royal Parade very close to the north of the CBD, Flemington Road close to the CBD to the north -west, and Victoria Parade, next to the CBD to the east.

Dandenong Rod in the suburb of Armadale, similarly, provides a very pleasant wide, tree-lined boulevard background.

William St through the City is not busy, but, on the other hand, it is an attractive, tree-lined street.

For trams against a background of busy, shopping areas, the possibilities are so huge that they cannot be listed. In Melbourne, because of the easy accessibility provided by the large tram network, traditional, strip, street shopping centres have survived everywhere. You will find these backgrounds along every route. One especially stands out: The Glenferrie Road shopping centre in the suburb of Malvern along route 16 (to Kew). What makes this stand out is that between High St (which is traversed by route 6) and Wattletree Road (which is traversed by route 5), in the middle of the busy shopping precent, there is the Malvern tram depot.

3. UNUSUAL

The corner of Spencer and Flinders Streets in the City provides a combination of busy tram routes and a busy railway on the bridge above, but scenically unappealing.

Near Royal Park railway station (mentioned above) is a rail over reserved track tram bridge. This provides nice shots, but the chances of getting a tram and a train together are slight.

A bridge at the corner of Albert Road and Canterbury Road on the border of the suburbs of Albert Park/Middle Park offers an overbridge of a reserved track tram line crossing over an ordinary street tram line.

At the northern end of the very busy Southern Cross railway station in the city centre, trams cross over the station approach tracks. You will certainly be able to get trams and trains together here.

The corner of St George's Road and Miller St, Preston (northern suburb) on route 11, should provide some views into the main maintenance depot.

**TICKETS**

You will need to buy an electronic ticket called myki (as in My Key), at a railway station, convenience store or newsagent. This covers all public transport - trams, trains and buses. It will be a bit of a nuisance to buy, but once you have it, it is very convenient. However, it does not cover the SkyBus to/from Melbourne Airport.

**GENERAL**

1. Toilets (a sometimes unsaid, but very important part of being out all day being a tourist): In general, it is not a problem in Australia finding toilets. There are usually public toilets in shopping areas, either inside shopping centres, or as stand-alone buildings. In addition, you can go inside the local hotels (pubs) and use their facilities. However, be aware that when riding the trams in the Melbourne eastern suburbs of Camberwell and Box Hill, the hotel option is not available. These are "dry" areas. There are no hotels. Don't be shy about going inside other public buildings, if necessary. It is rare to have to pay to use toilets.

2. Food: This will definitely not be a problem. There are innumerable food outlets in the innumerable shopping areas along all tram routes.

3. Safety: All areas of all Australian cities are safe, subject to taking the usual precautions you should take everywhere. The only possible exception is nightclub type areas of inner cities, late at night.

4. Tipping: Australians do not tip. Tips are not expected (except in swanky restaurants).

5. Both Melbourne and Sydney have reputations for changeable weather. Before going out, try to see a weather forecast. Even if it looks sunny when you go out in the morning, it is often wise to have with you a light raincoat and rain hat.

**SUBURBAN TRAIN TRIPS**

If you are tempted to also sample the suburban electric train network the best line would be to Belgrave line (to the east) as a lengthy line through a variety of suburbs, with the last few stations in a very hilly area. Next to the Belgrave station is the Puffing Billy station of Australia's oldest and most successful preserved, heritage, narrow-gauge railway. So go there to view the rolling stock and the book/souvenir shop. (If you are tempted to ride on the Puffing Billy line, this will take the major portion of the day.)

Another excellent and lengthy line is to Hurstbridge (to the north east). A big variety of suburbs are traversed, including hilly areas, and then beyond Diamond Creek, although in a suburban train, you are out in the countryside.

Other lengthy suburban railway lines are to Frankston (south), Pakenham (south east) or Sunbury (north west) but these do not provide scenic variety.

**SYDNEY**

SYDNEY GENERAL

The electronic public transport ticket in Sydney is called an Opal card.

Sydney Central station is not central. Rather, it is at the southern fringe of the CBD.

Central station is one of the most attractive stations you will find anywhere. Olympic Park station on a short branch (shuttle trains) in the western suburbs is an interesting, modern station.

The railways serve the CBD via underground lines.

The underground railways in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth CBDs are not stand-alone systems. Rather than are integral parts of the suburban railway systems.

SYDNEY TRAM

There is currently one tram line in Sydney from Central station to Dulwich Hill through the inner western suburbs. It starts along city streets, but most of it is along a former freight railway. The easiest places to photograph it is in the city streets.

New tram lines are currently under construction to Randwick and Kingsford in the (rail-less) south eastern suburbs.

SYDNEY SUBURBAN TRAINS

If you are tempted to sample the Sydney suburban train system, due to the nature of the network, there are many possibilities for round trips, out on one line, back on another.

The best round trip for a combination of railway interest and scenery is this:

Depart Sydney Central on an Intercity train for Newcastle (runs every half hour). This traverses the mainline through the inner western suburbs - very, very busy, six tracks. At Strathfield it turns onto the main North line - a combination of four, three or two tracks. (some of these augmented tracks completed only last year). After crossing the Parramatta River via a significant bridge, you are in upmarket, leafy suburbs. This line carries an interesting variety of suburban trains, longer-distance passenger trains, and freight trains.

Detrain at Hornsby (major station in the northern suburb). Return to Sydney via the so-called North Shore line. This is shorter, but not quicker, because you are in a suburban train stopping all stations. This line, too traverses attractive, upmarket, leafy suburbs. North Sydney is an important centre in its own right. The next station is Milsons Point. Then a highlight as you cross the Sydney Harbour Bridge, then it goes underground under the CBD.

Or do this vice versa.

To go further, to the area just beyond the suburbs. The lines south to Wollongong, north to Newcastle (at least as far as Gosford) and west to Lithgow (also traversed by the Indian Pacific train) are all exceptionally beautiful.

SYDNEY HARBOUR FERRIES

For a combination of public transport interest and exceptionally beautiful scenery, it is impossible to do better than travel on Sydney Harbour Ferries. Indeed, on a fine day, to do so is like being in paradise! Worth travelling across the world for! Ferries depart from Circular Quay at the northern end of the CBD, right next to Circular Quay railway station. The Opal card includes the ferries.

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