

So, you're visiting Melbourne?

Great!

The following is a list of places I'd recommend you go in each neighbourhood I'm familiar with. Some of these areas will almost certainly already be on your list, and some of them will probably be a little off the beaten track.

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South of the Yarra

I can't really help you here. There are two types of people in Melbourne—those north of the river (typically insufferable left-leaning voters), and those south of the river (typically insufferable right-leaning voters).

If you've met me, I hope you know which side I'm on.

Fitzroy/Collingwood

This is an area with a history similar to Shoreditch¹—edgy and hip back in its day, but now the domain of expensive shops, expensive restaurants, and overpaid web developers.

Having said that, it's still the heart of the hipster inner north and has lots of what makes Melbourne so Melbourne-y.

The Old Bar 📍

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Back in the day, you were guaranteed to find me here every Friday night after work, regardless of where I was working. It's a dive bar with some kind of music every night. The beer garden definitely has more emphasis on beer than garden and should probably be avoided if you're not comfortable with cigarette smoke, but I love it out there.

The Tote 📍

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Punk rock mecca.

Black Pearl 📍

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Great for cocktails. Go upstairs.

Slowbeer Fitzroy 📍

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This place was formerly named Two Row, and I haven't visited since it was relaunched. I can only assume it's still a small, well-curated craft beer bar. Melbourne's craft beer scene is pretty dang friendly.

Beermash 📍

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Pretty nice craft beer shop/bar just down the road from Slow Beer.

Smith and Daughters

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Great vegan restaurant. I've got their cookbook and it's pretty great.

Smith and Deli

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Take-away spinoff from Smith and Daughters.

Wabi Sabi Salon

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There's a nice little strip of Japanese restaurants down the bottom of Smith Street, and this is probably my favourite.

Napier Hotel

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Home of the Bogan Burger, a meaty behemoth of a burger.

The Standard Hotel

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Great (but very popular and occasionally crowded) beer garden and pretty good pub food.

Industry Beans

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If I had to recommend one place to go for Melbourne's over-the-top coffee culture, this would be the one. Have at least one espresso here.

Proud Mary

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Another very, very popular cafe. Expect to need to queue if you're going here on the weekend. This is where Zoe and I had our first date.

Vegie Bar

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Cheap (for the area) and cheerful vegetarian food.

The Fox Hotel 📍

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A little removed from the hustle and bustle of Brunswick and Smith Streets, this is a nice pub with good beer and an old-school vibe.

Fitzroy North

I lived in a one bedroom flat by Edinburgh Gardens for just over two years in the early 2010s. It's a very well-to-do area, populated primarily by champagne socialists.

Edinburgh Gardens 📍

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The biggest and most popular park in the inner north. On a sunny day on the weekend, the north side of the park will be overrun with 20- or 30-somethings with beer, cider, and picnic foods picked up from Piedmontes (the local supermarket) and Blackhearts and Sparrows.

Blackheart and Sparrows 📍

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High-end bottle shop; a great place to grab a few cold beers to drink in Edinburgh Gardens.

Dench Bakers 📍

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Pretty good bakery/cafe. Worth visiting for either brunch or grabbing some bread and cakes.

The Pinnacle 📍

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Pretty nice local boozer. Good range of craft beers and reasonable food.

Danny's Burgers 📍

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One of the places in Melbourne for an Australian style burger. It's massive, sloppy, and has egg and beetroot. Some people will say that the beetroot should be swapped for a pineapple ring, but they're wrong.

Order one with the lot. You're wasting your time otherwise.

Horn Please | N 📍

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Good for Indian. They had a buffet night on Sunday. And craft beer!

Footscray

After getting a big fed up with the trappings of the hipster inner north, I moved back in the direction of my birthplace and rented a flat in Footscray with Zoe in the mid-2010s, where we lived until I left Australia.

Footscray has a reputation of being rough, but it's not really warranted these days. There are some social issues in the area, and recently some media beat-ups about "african gangs", but nothing which should scare you away.

Pho Hung Vuong Saigon VN 🇻🇳

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One of the most popular reasons to visit Footscray is the good, cheap Vietnamese food, and this is probably the best place to go. Pho is breakfast food in Vietnam, so this place is open early if you want something other than avocado on toast with a poached egg. For the price, the service is what you'd expect—not rude, but not exactly welcoming and friendly either.

To's Bakery VN 🇻🇳

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My favourite for Bahn Mi.

Footscray Market 🇻🇳

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Not the place for artisanal organic produce, but *the* place for cheap food and hubbub.

T. Cavallaro & Sons 🇮🇹

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Footscray's been a home to immigrant communities for many decades. Before the wave of Vietnamese immigration, it was known as an Italian and Greek area. One place which is still around from those days is T. Cavallaro, where you can get *amazing* cannoli.

Ras Dashen ET 🇪🇹

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After the wave of Vietnamese immigration, the next group to immigrate into the area were people from Africa, especially from Ethiopia, Sudan and Eritrea. A small neighbourhood has developed where they've opened their own businesses which has become known as "little Africa". My favourite of these is Ras Dashen.

Konjo Cafe

Ethiopian-French fusion place. Another good option for breakfast if you're looking for something different. Lots of vegan options here too.

Rudimentary

Of course, eventually the hipsters and yuppies are always going to descend on any interesting neighbourhood, and Footscray is no different. Rudimentary is probably the best representation of that, but it is a pretty good cafe. Minimalist decor set up inside a shipping container surrounded by herb gardens. It's peak Melbourne.

The Reverence

A favourite of Melbourne's hardcore scene. Vegan food and punk rock music. Good on Sunday afternoon if you want some heartfelt straightedge.

Bar Josephine

Turns out that I'm not the only person moving from the hipster belt to the west, and it seems we're starting to bring our favourite things with us as well. This is a craft beer bar which opened soon after I left Melbourne but I spent a fair bit of time there when I returned to Footscray for a week. A large number of taps rotating through an interesting selection of craft beers. A great spot to pull up a bar stool and have a chat with some locals.

Mr West

Another newly opened craft beer joint in Footscray. Again, it wasn't around when I lived in the neighbourhood, but it seems pretty nice. They were working on opening a bottle shop downstairs when I was there last.

Northcote/Thornbury

Carwyn Cellars

Yet another craft beer bar. Either I or Melbourne has a bit of an obsession with craft beer. This is one of Melbourne's best.

The City

Whisky and Alement



Small whiskey bar with friendly, knowledgeable staff; reasonable prices; and a very extensive list. Their boilermakers (a beer and whiskey pairing) are always a good place to get started.

Hells Kitchen



Degraves Street is one of the stereotypical Melbourne postcard alleyways, but most places in the area aren't great. Hells Kitchen is the exception.

Ponyfish Island



On a sunny afternoon in the city, this is a pretty nice spot to enjoy a beer or two.

Ian Potter Centre, NGV



The National Gallery, Victoria is split into two parts—the international collection (which is around the corner on St. Kilda Road) and the Australian collection which is housed in Federation Square. Both are good, but if you're in Australia it makes the most sense to see Australian art.

North Melbourne

Queen Victoria Market



The majority of this place is a massive shed which houses row after row of people selling useless crap made in China. Ignore that part and head to the food sections. My favourite has always been the dairy hall which is full of shops selling cheeses, cured meats, and lots of other tasty things, but the large fruit and vegetable section and a meat hall are pretty great place to do your shopping.

My top picks are the peppered kangaroo fillets from [The Chicken Pantry](#) followed by lunch at [the Bratwurst Shop](#).

Market Lane Coffee



Inside the Queen Victoria Market precinct, this place is serious about it's coffee.

Town Hall Hotel 🍷

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Another old-school neighbourhood boozer with a pretty good kitchen. Way back in the early 2000s, this is where [Look Who's Toxic](#) played their first gig to an appreciative audience.

Beatrix 🍰

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Tasty brunch and even tastier cakes. This place is tiny and you might need to wait for a table if you're part of a group, but I've always found it easy to get a seat when visiting alone.

1. To be fair, Shoreditch is probably a reasonable prediction of what Fitzroy will be like in five years. [↩](#)



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