

TRANSPORT

Melbourne's city centre is a delight for pedestrians, with trams at the ready when you're fatigued or in a hurry. Surrounding neighbourhoods can be reached easily via the extensive tram, train and bus network. All three methods of transport are overseen by **Metlink** (☎ 131 638; www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au).

In this book, the nearest tram/train/bus route or station is noted after the 🚊 🚉 🚌 symbols in each listing.

Flights, tours and rail tickets can all be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

AIR Airlines

You can fly into Melbourne from most international hubs and from all major cities and tourist destinations in Australia. Not all international flights are direct and you may need to change planes and terminals in Sydney. Frequent, and often discounted, domestic flights are offered by **Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) and its budget/leisure subsidiary **Jetstar** (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au), as well as competitors **Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) and **Tiger Airlines** (☎ 9335 3033; www.tigerairways.com), which flies out of Melbourne to all state and territory capitals, plus a variety of regional resort destinations, at rock-bottom prices. Tiger also flies to Singapore and connects through to a variety of destinations in Indonesia, China, Vietnam, India and Malaysia.

Because of the state's compact size, scheduled internal flights are limited and often

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

ludicrously expensive. Airlines that fly to regional centres around the state and other country destinations:

QantasLink (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com) Flies to Mildura and Mt Hotham, as well as Burnie and Devonport. Book through Qantas.

Regional Express (☎ 13 17 13; www.regionalexpress.com.au) Regional Express, better known as Rex, flies to Albury, Mildura and Portland. It also offers flights to Burnie, Devonport, King Island and Mt Gambier.

Airports MELBOURNE AIRPORT

The city's major airport, **Melbourne Airport** (☎ 9297 1600; www.melair.com.au), often referred to as Tullamarine or Tulla, is around 25km northwest of the city centre. All international and domestic terminals are within the same complex. There are no direct train or tram services linking it with the city (don't get us started on this pet beef for Melbourne's frequent flyers). See the boxed text [below](#) for transport options.

GETTING INTO MELBOURNE CITY

There are no direct train or tram services linking Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport with the city. Taxis can be found on the ground floor outside each terminal; a ride to or from the city centre will take between 25 and 40 minutes and cost at least \$40, plus an additional \$2 airport parking fee for inward journeys.

Skybus (☎ 9689 6888; www.skybus.com.au) runs a 24-hour shuttle between the city centre and the airport, with city hotel drop-offs (\$16/26 one way/return); depending on traffic it takes around 25 minutes.

All major car-hire companies are represented at the airport. The Tullamarine Fwy runs to Flemington, close to the city centre. The CityLink tollway (p345) forms part of the freeway. A 24-hour pass for the Tulla section costs \$4.10, or \$11.55 for 24-hour access to all three CityLink expressways. Intrepid drivers can avoid the tollway by exiting at Bell St and taking Nicholson St to the city, though it's not recommended if you are in a hurry.

For information on travel to and from Avalon airport, see p344.

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor transport generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

AVALON AIRPORT

Most Jetstar flights to and from Sydney and Brisbane use **Avalon Airport** (☎ 1800 282 566, 5227 9100; www.avalonairport.com.au), around 55km southwest of the city centre. The **Sunbus** (☎ 9689 6888; www.sunbusaustralia.com.au) meets all flights at Avalon Airport and picks up or drops off at Southern Cross Station and Franklin St (\$20/36 one way/return). Hotel pick-ups can be booked 48 hours prior to departure. The trip takes around 40 minutes.

BICYCLE

Melbourne's bike-friendly terrain is endowed with many dedicated bike lanes and paths. One note of caution: tram tracks can cause havoc for cyclists. See [p171](#) for further information, including bike hire.

Bicycles can be taken onto trains for free, but commuters with bikes are requested to travel during off-peak times (between 9.30am and 4pm Monday to Friday; no restriction on weekends). Bikes are not permitted on trams and buses.

Bicycles are carried free on all V/Line regional services provided you check in 30 minutes before departure. The system of rail trails (disused train lines adapted as bike paths) is growing in country Victoria, and provides scenic, hassle-free cycling. Some routes connect with V/Line train stations. See www.railtrails.com.au for details. V/Line bus services do not carry bicycles.

BOAT

The slow but scenic **Melbourne Water Taxis** (☎ 9686 0914; www.melbournewater taxis.com.au) services the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers, from Richmond to Williamstown – great for arriving at the Australian Open in style.

The **Spirit of Tasmania** (☎ 1800 634 906; www.spiritoftasmania.com.au), a car and passenger ferry, sails nightly to Devonport on Tasmania's northern coast from Station Pier in Port Melbourne, with additional day sailings during summer. The crossing takes around 11 hours. A wide variety of fares are available, from basic seats to private en suite cabins.

BUS

Melbourne's red and yellow buses are usually of more use if travelling out into the suburbs, but can provide shortcuts or more direct routes than trams on some inner routes. These include the 220, (which runs from the city to Doncaster, and takes in Carlton, Fitzroy, Collingwood and Abbotsford), the 220 Sunshine-City-Gardenvale (which Gardenvale bound takes you via Southbank, St Kilda Rd, Prahran, Hawksburn and East St Kilda) and the 250 Garden City-City-La Trobe University (running through Port Melbourne, South Melbourne, the city, Carlton, Carlton North, Fitzroy North and Northcote). Many, but not all, buses are wheelchair- and stroller-accessible 'bendy' buses. Call Metlink for more information about accessibility.

PLAYING HOOKIE

Melbourne has a peculiar road rule known as the hook turn. In the city centre many intersections require that you make a right-hand turn from the left lane so as not to block oncoming trams. They also appear along Clarendon St, South Melbourne. These intersections are marked with a 'Right Turn from Left Only' sign and are affectionately known as a 'hookie'. You're required to veer off to the left and wait in the front of the line of traffic at the red light. When the traffic light turns green (for the street you're about to turn in to) hook right and complete your turn. It sounds scarier than it is.

Melbourne City Council runs a free hop-on, hop-off tourist shuttle from 9.30am and 4.30pm daily. The grey and red buses intersect with the City Circle Tram and travel beyond the grid to the Shrine of Remembrance, Carlton and the Arts Centre. The **Federation Square visitors centre** (www.thatsmelbourne.com.au) has details.

Based at Southern Cross Station in Melbourne, Victoria's regional bus network **V/Line** (☎ 9697 2076; www.vline.com.au) is a relatively cheap and reliable services, though it can require planning if you intend to do more than straightforward city-to-city trips. Most buses are equipped with air-con, toilets and DVDs, and all are smoke-free zones. The smallest towns eschew formal bus terminals for a single drop-off/pick-up point, usually outside a post office, newsagent or shop.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Congestion on the city's roads and the high price of fuel makes the city's public transport network very attractive for visitors. However, many of Victoria's national parks, remote beaches and mountain regions are not readily accessible by public transport.

Driving

Foreign driving licences are valid as long as they are in English or accompanied by a translation. An International Driving Permit, obtainable from your local automobile association, must be supported by your own licence, so bring both to Australia.

In Australia, you must drive on the left-hand side of the road. The speed limit in residential areas is 50km/h, rising to 70km/h or 80km/h on some main roads and dropping to 40km/h in specially designated areas such

as school zones. On highways the speed limit is generally 100km/h, while on some sections of freeway it rises to 110km/h.

Wearing seat belts is compulsory, and small children must be belted into an approved safety seat. Motorcyclists must wear crash helmets at all times. The police strictly enforce Victoria's blood-alcohol limit of 0.05% with random breath testing (and drug testing) of drivers.

Hire

All the big car-hire firms have offices in Melbourne. Apart from the many companies in the city, you'll find **Avis** (☎ 13 63 33; www.avis.com.au), **Budget** (☎ 1300 362 848; www.budget.com.au), **Europcar** (☎ 1300 131 390; www.europcar.com.au), **Hertz** (☎ 13 30 39; www.hertz.com) and **Thrifty** (☎ 1300 367 227; www.thrifty.com.au), which all have desks at the airport. Car-hire offices tend to be at the northern end of the city centre or in North Melbourne.

The major companies all offer unlimited-kilometre rates. One-day hire rates for fully licensed drivers over 25 years of age vary between \$40 and \$60, depending on the vehicle. The longer the hire period, the cheaper the daily rate.

The **Yellow Pages** (www.yellowpages.com.au) lists lots of other firms that rent new and used vehicles of all shapes and sizes.

If you suddenly decide you'd like to take on the undulating curves of the Great Ocean Rd on a Harley Davidson, or explore the city on a zippy 100cc, then the option is there. **Gamer's Hire-Bikes** (☎ 9326 8676; www.gamersmotorcycles.com.au) has a large range of bikes for hire. Prices range from \$100 a day for a Vespa to \$275 a day for a Harley Davidson Softail Custom.

Parking

Parking spaces in the city are metered. Check parking signs for restrictions and times, and watch out for clearway zones that operate during peak hours. There are more than 70 parking garages in the city; check www.iconparking.com.au for the locations of off-street car parks, plus maps and rates.

Toll Roads

Melbourne's **CityLink** (☎ 13 26 29; www.citylink.com.au) tollway road system has two main routes: the Southern Link, which runs from the southeastern suburb of Malvern to Kings Way on the southern edge of the city centre; and the Western Link, which runs from the

PUBLIC TRANSPORT TICKETING

Melbourne's public transport system, also called the **Met** (☎ 13 16 38; www.victrip.com.au), incorporates buses, trains and trams; the same ticket allows you to travel on all three. The most common tickets are based on a specific period of travelling time (eg two hours, one day, one week) and allow unlimited travel during that period and within the relevant zone. You must validate your ticket in the validating machine when boarding a tram or bus or entering a train station.

The metropolitan area is divided into two zones, with the price of tickets (Metcards) dependant on which zone(s) you will be travelling in and across. Zone 1 covers the city and inner suburbs and most travellers are unlikely to venture beyond it; adult fares follow.

Zone(s)	Two hours (\$)	All day (\$)	Weekly (\$)
1	3.50	6.50	28
2	2.70	4.60	19.20
1 & 2	5.50	10.10	47.40

A daily **Metcard** (\$6.50), which can be used on trams, trains and buses, is good value if you will be travelling throughout the day. Otherwise a two-hour ticket (\$3.50) will suffice for a return journey within two to 2½ hours, depending on the time of purchase. There are also **City Saver** tickets (\$2.60), which allow for a one-way journey in a limited city radius. An alternative to a weekly ticket is the five x daily or 10 x two-hour Metcards, which offer the flexibility of not having to travel on consecutive days and are slightly cheaper than individual fares.

Buying a ticket is as simple as feeding your coins into a machine at the train station or on the tram, or paying the driver on a bus. Most machines are coin-only, including those on trams, so make sure you have sufficient loose change. Many small businesses, such as newspaper kiosks and newsagents, milk bars (corner shops) and 7-Elevens sell Metcards; look for the sign. You can also buy Metcards at the **MetShop** (Map pp52–3; ☎ 13 16 38; www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au; cnr Little Collins & Swanston Sts) under the Melbourne Town Hall or from the online store (<http://store.metlinkmelbourne.com.au>).

For timetables, maps and further fare details on all services, contact **Metlink** (☎ 13 16 38; www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au).

Calder Fwy intersection with the Tullamarine Fwy south to the West Gate Fwy, on the west edge of the city centre.

CityLink 24-hour passes are generally the best option for visitors. A day pass for the entire system costs \$11.55 and is valid for 24 hours from your first entry through a tollway. A 24 hour Tulla pass for unlimited travel between Bulla and Flemington Roads only is \$4.10. To buy a day pass, go to an Australia Post office (anywhere in Australia), a newsagent, Shell service station, a CityLink customer service centre or the CityLink website. Alternatively, you can pay by credit card by telephoning CityLink.

If you accidentally find yourself on the CityLink toll road (and it's very easy to do), don't panic as there's a three-day grace period. Passes are not required for motorbikes.

TAXI

Melbourne's yellow taxis can be hailed or look for one of the taxi ranks around the city, usually outside major hotels or at Flinders Street and Southern Cross Stations. A shining

rooftop light means the taxi is free. Finding one is not often a hassle, except on rainy Friday nights or New Year's Eve. The flag-fall is a standard \$3.10, plus \$1.47 per kilometre. There's a surcharge from midnight to 5am, and a fee for telephone bookings. Tipping is not obligatory but welcomed by the poorly paid drivers. The main players are **Silver Top Taxis** (☎ 13 10 08), **13 CABS** (☎ 13 22 27), **Arrow** (☎ 13 22 11) and **Embassy Taxis** (☎ 13 17 55).

TRAIN

Imposing Flinders Street Station is the main terminal for all suburban trains. There are four other stations on the underground City Loop: Southern Cross, Flagstaff, Melbourne Central and Parliament. Handy for crossing the city, the loop stops form part of other routes; see station displays for details. Trains begin around 5am and finish at midnight and run between every 10 and 30 minutes, depending on the time of day. Sunday services begin a little later. For train routes, see the Metlink site: www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au. Suburban trains are run by **Connex** ([\[melbourne.com.au\]\(http://melbourne.com.au\)\); its website lists facilities at given stations.](http://www.connex</p>
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Southern Cross Station is Melbourne's main terminus for all regional **V/Line** rail services and Countrylink and Overland trains to Sydney and Adelaide respectively. The rail network is fairly limited, so you will often need to rely on buses (see p344). See individual destination entries for details about train services within regional Victoria.

TRAM

Both iconic and useful, Melbourne's trams criss-cross the city and travel into the suburbs. They run from around 5am in the morning until midnight. Timetables are variable; expect a tram to rattle along in anything between five and 20 minutes. Travel in peak hour can require patience (and on some routes, a sense of the absurd) as delays are not uncommon. Light rail routes, such as the 96 to St Kilda, are spared traffic snarls. As the tram lines tend to radiate

outwards from the city, travel between suburbs is usually tricky (buses fill these gaps).

Tickets can be purchased on board, but you'll need coins to do so. Unless you've just purchased your ticket from the machine, make sure you validate your ticket every trip. Don't be tempted to go without a ticket even on the shortest of rides; plainclothes inspectors are as stealthy as they are merciless. Fines for 'fare avoidance' currently sit at \$162. Tram stops in the city centre are often purpose built and in the middle of the road, but further out stops are street-side. You'll need to hail trams from there and exercise caution when getting on and off (traffic is obliged to give way to passengers).

Free City Circle trams travel the perimeter of Melbourne's central business district every day between 10am and 9pm, except Christmas Day and Good Friday. The service takes in many of Melbourne's landmarks and runs every 12 minutes. The entire route takes around 45 minutes to complete and is usually plied by maroon vintage W class trams.

BUSINESS HOURS

Businesses, including post offices, are generally open between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday, with some larger branches also open on Saturday mornings. Banks open at 9.30am and shut their doors at 4pm, or 5pm on Fridays. A few banks open on Saturday morning, though this tends to be in suburban shopping centres. Retail businesses tend to open a little later, usually 10am to 6pm. Late night trading is on a Friday; shops stay open until between 7pm and 9pm. Most shops also open on Saturdays from 10am to 5pm and on Sundays from 11am or midday to at least 4pm.

Pubs open from 11am to 1am; bars from 4pm to late. Restaurants open around noon to 3pm for lunch and then for dinner from 6pm to 10pm, and often close either on a Sunday or a Monday. That said, Melbourne bars, restaurants and cafés often blur their boundaries and many are all-day affairs, serving coffee and croissants at 7am and still mixing cocktails come midnight.

Banks, businesses and many shops are closed on public holidays (see p350). Museums and other attractions are closed on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

CHILDREN

Melbourne's status as a great city for visitors extends to little travellers, who'll appreciate the city's easy pace and multitude of sights and activities. Pick up a free copy of *Melbourne's Child* (www.melbourneschild.com.au) magazine from libraries and some cafés; it includes an events calendar and ideas for local activities. The *Entertainment Guide (EG)*, published in Friday's *Age*, has a 'Children's Activities' section that details what's on for children each weekend, such as pantomimes, animal nurseries and museum programs. Kids activities are also listed in the Saturday and Sunday editions of the paper. The free *Melbourne Events* guide available from the Melbourne Visitor Information Centre (Map pp52-3) also has a children's section.

See For Children (p51) for some of the city's better places for kids. Try also: the Aquarium (p57), any of the city's public swimming

pools (p174) and *Puffing Billy* (p211), a vintage steam train that runs through the Dandenong Ranges. The city's glorious parks are always great options for keeping kids amused when the weather's cooperating. A map of the city's playgrounds is available from the City of Melbourne (www.melbourne.vic.gov.au).

The Melbourne City Council runs a **child-minding centre** (Map p52-3; ☎ 9329 9561; 104 A'Beckett St; ☎ 9am-5pm) for children up to five years old. It charges \$10.50 per hour; book a week in advance if possible.

Babysitting

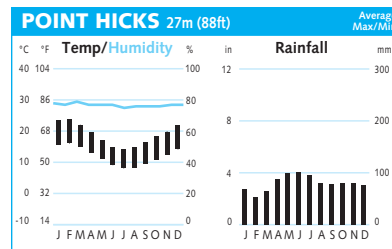
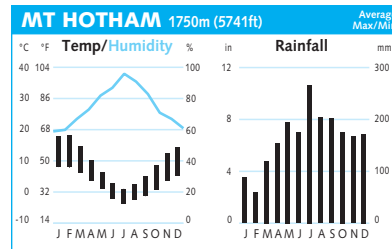
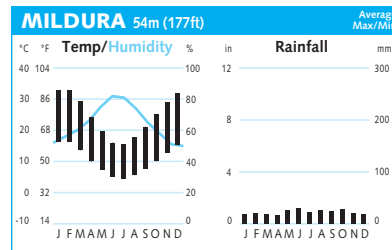
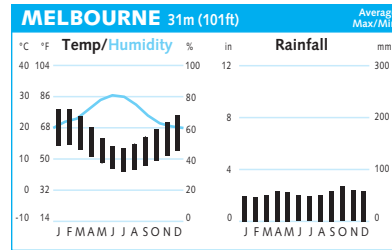
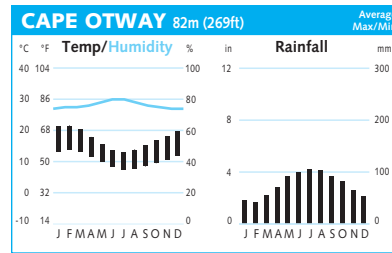
Most larger hotels will offer a babysitting service, usually drawing on the resources of a reputable agency. There are a large number of agencies that provide casual babysitting, such as Dial An Angel (www.dialanangel.com). These services should be booked well ahead. For long-term visitors, the Find a Babysitter (www.findababysitter.com.au) service is simple and easy to use, and can provide casual babysitting, nannies or after-school care.

CLIMATE

Melbourne has four distinct seasons. In summer, average temperatures range from a high of 26°C to a low of 14°C; the average winter maximum is 13°C and the minimum 6°C; in spring and autumn average highs and lows range from around 20°C to 7°C. In Australia, summer begins in December, autumn in March, winter in June and spring in September.

Of course, averages never tell the whole story. You are just as likely to wake to shocking blue skies in winter and Dublin-style drizzle in summer. As Crowded House once sang, it's be four seasons in one day. If that's a touch too poetic, the other saying goes: if you don't like the weather in Melbourne, just wait a couple of minutes.

Summer is the most popular time for visitors, although packing for this time of year can be a fraught task. Expect good beach weather but be prepared for the occasional heat wave when the mercury bubbles past 40°C for days at a time. Scorchers are often followed by the



welcome relief of a 19°C day. Nights can be hot but are usually not as balmy as those of the northern states. Melbournians love the crisp autumn months when the days are warm and the light is staggeringly beautiful. Winters are chilly, especially on windy days, but are far from extreme. Spring is glorious, gusty and grey in turn.

There are three climatic regions in Victoria: the southern and coastal areas, the alpine areas, and the areas north and west of the Great Dividing Range.

Rainfall is spread fairly evenly throughout the year, although mid-January to mid-March tends to be the driest period. Victoria's wettest areas are the Otway Ranges and the High Country. With exposure to frequent cold fronts and southerly winds, the coastal areas are subject to the most changeable weather patterns.

The weather is generally more stable north of the Great Dividing Range. It snows during the alpine high-country winter; the closest viable cover to Melbourne is on Mt Donna Buang, though falls are often reported in the Dandenong Ranges and on Mount Macedon.

COURSES

The CAE (Centre for Adult Education; Map pp52-3; ☎ 9652 0611; www.cae.edu.au; 253 Flinders Lane) runs a wide variety of courses. On offer is everything from languages, literature, visual arts and music to computer studies, cooking, history and philosophy. Its summer program usually has day-long activities of interest to travellers, although there are one-day weekend sessions all year round. Fees vary according to the number of sessions and the type of course. Course guides are available online or from the centre.

See the Eating chapter for more on cooking courses (p127), and the Arts (p164) for more on dance classes.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

Cash amounts of more than \$A10,000 and foodstuffs, goods of animal or vegetable origin must be declared at customs. This includes seemingly innocuous things such as wooden carvings, straw hats and woven baskets, which can carry unwanted seeds and other nasties. Bags are screened specifically for these items. If you fail to declare quarantine items on arrival and are caught, you risk an on-the-spot fine of \$220, or prosecution, which can result in fines over \$60,000, as well as up to 10 years

imprisonment. The authorities are keen to protect Australia's unique environment and the country's important agricultural industries by preventing weeds, pests or diseases getting into the country (Australia's isolation means that it is free of those prevalent elsewhere in the world).

There are also restrictions on taking fruit, vegetables, plants or flowers across state borders. Many Australians have amusing stories about being force-fed fruit when approaching state borders on childhood road trips. There is a particularly strict fruit-fly exclusion zone which takes in an area along Victoria's north-east border, stretching into NSW and SA. This includes most fruit (except pineapple), fruits of ornamentals, tomatoes, cucumbers, capsicums, chillies and zucchinis. Penalties do apply. For more details on quarantine regulations contact the [Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service](#) (AQIS; www.daffa.gov.au/aqis), or for questions about state quarantine contact the Department of Natural Resources & Environment Plant Standards Centre (☎ 9687 5627; 1800 084 881).

Most goods can be brought in free of duty, provided that customs are satisfied they are for personal use. Travellers over 18 have a duty-free quota of 2.5L of alcohol, 250 cigarettes and dutiable goods up to the value of \$900 (or \$450 for those under 18). Contact [Australian Customs](#) (☎ 1300 363 263; www.customs.gov.au) for more information.

ELECTRICITY

Power supply is 240V 50Hz. Plugs are three-pin, but different to the larger British sort. Universal adaptors are available from the airport, luggage and outdoor supply shops, department stores and some chemists.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Most foreign embassies are in Canberra but some countries have diplomatic representation in Melbourne. Their hours are usually from 8.30am to 12.30pm and 1pm to 4.30pm Monday to Friday, but these can vary.

Canada (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9653 9674; www.canada.org.au; Level 50, 101 Collins St, Melbourne, Vic 3000)

France (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9602 5024; www.ambafrance-au.org; Suite 805, Level 8, 150 Queen St, Melbourne, Vic 3000)

Germany (Map pp84–5; ☎ 9828 6888; www.germanembassy.org.au; 480 Punt Rd, South Yarra, Vic 3141)

Indonesia (Map pp92–3; ☎ 9525 2755; www.kjri-melbourne.org; 72 Queens Rd, Melbourne, Vic 3004)

Japan (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9639 3244; www.melbourne.au.emb-japan.go.jp; 360 Elizabeth St, Melbourne, Vic 3000)

Netherlands (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9670 5573; Level 4, 118 Queen St, Melbourne, Vic 3000)

UK (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9650 4155; <http://bhc.britaus.net>; Level 17, 90 Collins St, Melbourne, Vic 3000)

USA (Map pp84–5; ☎ 9526 5900; <http://melbourne.usconsulate.gov/melbourne>; 553 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, Vic 3004)

EMERGENCY

In the case of a life-threatening emergency, dial ☎ 000. This call is free from any phone, and the operator will connect you to either the police, ambulance or fire brigade, depending on the problem.

Other useful numbers in an emergency include the following:

Lifeline Counselling (☎ 13 11 14) A 24-hour service available in six languages.

Poisons Information Centre (☎ 13 11 26)

Police (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9247 5347; 228–232 Flinders Lane)

Translating & Interpreting Service (☎ 13 14 50) Available 24 hours.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Homosexuality is legal and the age of consent is 17. The straight community's attitude towards gays and lesbians is, on the whole, open-minded and accepting.

The gay scene in Victoria is squarely based in Melbourne (for more information, see p178), where there are exclusive venues and accommodation options. Around the state, places such as Daylesford and Hepburn Springs, Phillip Island, the Mornington Peninsula and Lorne have a strong gay presence and accommodation catering for gays and lesbians.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

Government departments, banks, offices and post offices close on public holidays. Most cafés stay open, as do some stores, particularly in busy inner-city areas such as St Kilda and Fitzroy.

Victoria observes the following nine public holidays:

New Year's Day 1 January

Australia Day 26 January

Labour Day First or second Monday in March

Easter Good Friday and Easter Monday in March/April

Anzac Day 25 April

Queen's Birthday Second Monday in June

Melbourne Cup Day First Tuesday in November (Melbourne only)

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

When a public holiday falls on a weekend, the following Monday is declared a holiday (with the exception of Anzac Day and Australia Day).

School Holidays

The school year is divided into four terms. Holidays are generally as follows: Christmas holidays from late-December until the end of January; and three two-week holiday periods that vary from year to year, but fall approximately from late March to mid-April, late June to mid-July and mid-September to early October. The Victorian Department of Education's website (www.education.vic.gov.au) has a full listing of upcoming dates.

INTERNET ACCESS

There's no shortage of internet cafes in Melbourne, and wi-fi access is increasingly common, both in public places as well as hotels. Several websites keep track of free wi-fi hotspots: Only Melbourne (www.onlymelbourne.com.au) has a comprehensive list, though we can't vouch for its accuracy. Melbourne Airport offers wi-fi for a pay-as-you-go fee. Hotels will at least offer broadband access, but often wi-fi. Rates vary from complimentary access to ludicrously expensive daily fees, so it's best to check when booking.

If you don't have a laptop, most backpacker hostels have a terminal or two where you can access the internet. Expect to pay around \$2 per hour at an internet café. Public libraries, including the State Library of Victoria, usually offer a free service but you'll often need to book. Access charges range from \$4 to \$9 an hour. If you're concerned that public terminals may contain nasties such as key-stroke-capturing software, set up a separate on-the-road email address.

LEGAL MATTERS

Most travellers won't have any contact with the Victorian police or any other part of

the legal system. Those that do are likely to experience these while driving. There is a significant police presence on the region's roads, with the power to stop your car and ask to see your licence (you're required by law to carry it), to check your vehicle for road-worthiness, and also to insist that you take a breath test for alcohol. Needless to say, drink-driving offences are taken very seriously.

If you are arrested, it's your right to telephone a friend, relative or lawyer before any formal questioning begins. [Legal Aid](#) (www.legalaid.vic.gov.au) is available only in serious cases and only to the truly needy (for details see the website). However, many solicitors do not charge for an initial consultation.

MAPS

The Melbourne [Visitor Information Centre](#) (Map p52–3; Federation Sq) and [information booth](#) (Map p52–3; Bourke St Mall) hand out the free *Melbourne Visitors Map*, which covers the city and inner suburbs.

Comprehensive street directories are produced by Melway, UBD and Gregory's, and are available at bookshops and newsagents. The *Melway Greater Melbourne Street Directory* is such a Melbourne institution that places often give their location by simply stating the relevant Melway page and grid reference, and people often refer to their home's map number with affection.

Local tourist offices around Victoria can usually be relied upon to dole out a free map, though the quality can vary. For more detailed maps, try the [Royal Automobile Club of Victoria](#) (RACV; www.racv.com.au), which has a stack of road maps available (including free downloadable route maps). For a serious guide to the states roads, pick up a copy of RACV's *Vicroads Country Street Directory of Victoria* (members/nonmembers \$45/50).

[Map Land](#) (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9670 4383; 372 Little Bourke St) is the city's best source for a wide range of maps.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Visitors from Finland, Italy, the Republic of Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the UK have reciprocal health rights, which means they are eligible for a subsidy on medical bills; register at any [Medicare office](#) (☎ 13 20 11; www.medicareaustralia.gov.au).

Alternative Therapies

A huge variety of natural therapists practice throughout Melbourne and regional Victoria. This includes naturopathy, acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and homeopathy. See the [Natural Therapy Pages](#) (www.naturaltherapypages.com.au) or [Yellow Pages](#) (www.yellowpages.com.au) for listings.

The [Southern School of Natural Therapies](#) (Map pp74–5; ☎ 9416 1448; www.southernschool.com; 39 Victoria St, Fitzroy) offers natural health care at a reduced rate. Final-year students under professional supervision staff the college's clinic.

Vitamins, herbal medicines and other supplements are widely available at supermarkets, health food stores, pharmacies and specialist retailers.

Clinics

See the [Yellow Pages](#) (www.yellowpages.com.au) for a list of medical practitioners, general and specialist.

[Carlisle Contemporary Health Practice](#) (Map pp88–9; ☎ 9537 3600; 30 Carlisle St, St Kilda) General practitioners; bookings advised.

[Carlton Clinic](#) (Map pp78–9; ☎ 9347 9422; 88 Rathdowne St, Carlton) General practitioners; gay and lesbian-friendly clinic.

[City Medical Centre](#) (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9650 3122; Level 5, 313 Little Collins St) General practitioners.

[Travellers' Medical & Vaccination Centre](#) (TMVC; Map pp52–3; ☎ 9602 5788; www.traveldoctor.com.au; Level 2, 393 Little Bourke St) Specialists in travel-related medical advice such as inoculations.

Emergency Rooms

Public hospitals with 24-hour accident and emergency departments include the following:

[Alfred Hospital](#) (Map pp84–5; ☎ 9276 2000; Commercial Rd, Prahran)

[Royal Melbourne Hospital](#) (Map pp78–9; ☎ 9342 7000; Grattan St, Parkville)

[St Vincent's Hospital](#) (Map pp74–5; ☎ 9288 2211; 41 Victoria Pde, Fitzroy)

Pharmaceutical Supplies

Over-the-counter medications are widely available at privately owned chemists throughout Australia. These include painkillers, antihistamines for allergies and skincare products.

You may find that medications readily available over the counter in some countries are only available in Australia by prescription. These include the oral contraceptive pill, topical hydrocortisone and all antibiotics. If you take medication on a regular basis, bring an adequate supply, a prescription and ensure you have details of the generic name as brand names may differ between countries.

MONEY

Australia uses the decimal system. Its currency is the Australian dollar, which is made up of 100 cents. There are 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c, \$1 and \$2 coins, and \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 notes. Although 5c is the smallest coin in circulation, prices are often still marked to the single cent. Shops should round prices to the nearest 5c on your total bill.

ATMs

Most bank branches have 24-hour ATMs and will accept debit cards that are linked to international network systems, such as Cirrus, Maestro, Barclays Connect and Solo. There is a limit on the daily withdrawal amount, which is usually around \$1000. Almost all retail outlets have Eftpos, which allows you to pay for purchases electronically.

Changing Money

Changing foreign currency is no problem at most larger banks. There are foreign-exchange booths at Melbourne Airport's international terminal, which are open to meet all arriving flights, as well as in the city and at large shopping centres. Most large hotels will also change currency (or travellers cheques) for their guests, but the rate might not be as good as from other outlets.

For an approximate guide to the exchange rate see the inside front cover of this guidebook.

Credit Cards

The most commonly accepted credit cards are Visa, MasterCard, American Express and, to a lesser extent, Diners Club. For lost or stolen card services call the following:

[American Express](#) (☎ 1300 132 639)

[Diners Club](#) (☎ 1300 360 060)

[MasterCard](#) (☎ 1800 120 113)

[Visa](#) (☎ 1800 450 346)

NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES

Melbourne's broadsheet newspaper is [The Age](#) (www.theage.com.au), which covers local, national and international news. It has various supplements during the week, including the food & wine focussed [Epicure](#) on Tuesdays, Friday's [Entertainment Guide](#) (EG) listings and arts coverage on Saturdays. It also carries the Saturday and Sunday magazines shared with its sister newspaper, [The Sydney Morning Herald](#), and a monthly city magazine, the [\(melbourne\)magazine](#). The [Herald Sun](#) (www.heraldsun.com.au) does what tabloids do well: several editions per day, scads of sensationalism and a whole lotta sport. The [Australian](#) (www.theaustralian.news.com), a national daily, is also widely available.

Most magazine publishing in Australia needs the numbers that only national circulation can provide; several attempts to establish a Melbourne city magazine have failed. Some of this slack has been taken up by online ventures such as [Three Thousand](#) (www.threethousand.com.au). However, the current affairs and culture magazine, the [Monthly](#) (www.themonthly.com.au), the [Australian Book Review](#) (www.austliabookreview.com.au) and the charitable [Big Issue](#) (www.bigissue.org.au) are published locally so tend to be less Sydney-centric than some.

The excellent [Gourmet Traveller](#) and [Vogue Entertaining](#) and [Travel](#) magazines often have Melbourne restaurant news, features and reviews. [Gourmet Traveller](#) shares a restaurant critic with the [Age](#), so there tends to be a bit of overlap. The free Melbourne's Child newspaper has listings of children's activities.

Music listings can be found in the free [Beat](#) (www.beat.com.au) and [Inpress](#) (<http://streetpress.com.au>) magazines.

Big newsagents and bookshops stock magazines suited to all interests and hobbies. Try [Mag Nation](#) (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9663 6559; 88 Elizabeth St), [McGills](#) (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9602 5566; 187 Elizabeth St), [Readings](#) (Map pp78–9; ☎ 9347 6633; www.readings.com.au; 309 Lygon St, Carlton) or [Borders](#) (Map pp84–5; ☎ 9824 2299; 500 Chapel St, South Yarra).

ORGANISED TOURS & WALKS

The free [Melbourne Events](#) guide, which is updated monthly, is available at visitors centres, hotels and newsagents, and has an extensive section on tours. Ask at the visitors centre in Federation Square if you've got something particular in mind. The National Trust publishes the [Walking Melbourne](#) (\$20) booklet, which is particularly useful if you're interested

in Melbourne's architectural heritage. Also see the [Eating](#) (p127) and [Shopping](#) (p106) chapters for special interest tours.

[AAT Kings](#) (☎ 9663 3377; www.aatkings.com/au) This multinational offers the full range of standard sightseeing tours both around Melbourne and to popular destinations like the 12 Apostles, Puffing Billy, Healesville Sanctuary and Phillip Island. They also do lunch tours to Yarra Valley wineries.

[Aboriginal Heritage Walk](#) (Map p82; ☎ 9252 2429; www.rbg.vic.gov.au; Royal Botanic Gardens; adult/concession/child/family \$18/14/9/50; ☎ 11am Thu & Fri, 10.30am alternate Sun) The Royal Botanic Gardens are on a traditional camping and meeting place of the original owners, and this tour takes you through their story – from song lines to plant lore, all in 90 fascinating minutes. The tour departs from the visitors centre.

[Balloon Sunrise](#) (☎ 9427 7596; www.hotairballooning.com.au; adult/child \$345/240) Although perhaps not fully awake (the tour leaves before dawn), you'll certainly feel dreamy floating above the building tops and peering into backyards from a hot-air balloon. This tour includes an hour's air time, plus a champagne breakfast at the Langham Hotel Melbourne (p188), from where tours depart. Balloons go up every morning (weather permitting) except Christmas and New Year's Day, though you'll need to book a few weeks ahead. Children must be over six years old. They also go up in the Yarra Valley.

[Chinatown Heritage Walk](#) (Map p55; ☎ 9662 2888; http://chinatownmelbourne.com.au/attractions_walk.htm; 22 Cohen Pl; adult/concession from \$8-34) Be guided through historic Chinatown, with its atmospheric alleys and bustling vibe. You can opt in for lunch.

[City Circle trams](#) (www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au/city_circle/routes.html) A free service operating from 10am to 6pm daily. This tram travels around the city centre, along Flinders, Spring and Latrobe Sts, and then back along Harbour Esplanade (there are also trams running in the opposite direction). Designed primarily for tourists, and passing many city sights along the way, the trams run every 10 minutes or so. Eight refurbished W-class trams operate on this route. Built in Melbourne between 1936 and 1956, they have all been painted a distinctive deep burgundy and gold. You can even dine on board a tram (www.tramrestaurant.com.au) while taking a scenic night cruise around Melbourne's streets (although this one isn't free).

[Hidden Secrets Tours](#) (☎ 9329 9665; www.hiddensecretstours.com) Walking tours of around three hours that cover laneways, art and design or wine with small groups and knowledgeable guides.

[Maribymong River Cruises](#) (☎ 9689 6431; www.blackbirdcruises.com.au; Wingfield St, Footscray; adult/child from \$8/5) One- or two-hour cruises are available. The longer cruise goes up the Maribymong River to Avondale Heights (you'll see the Lonely Planet head office on the

way). The one-hour cruise heads down to the West Gate Bridge and the docklands. Departures are from the end of Wingfield St in Footscray. Cruises run on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday and public holidays.

Melbourne River Cruises (☎ 9681 3284; www.melb.cruises.com.au; Berth 5 & 6, Southbank Lower Promenade, Southgate; adult/child from \$147.50) Take a one-hour cruise upstream or downstream, or a 2½-hour return cruise. Regular cruises along the Yarra River depart from a couple of locations – check with the company for details. It also operates a ferry between Southgate and Gem Pier in Williamstown. There are three to six sailings daily, depending on the season.

Walkin' Birrarung (☎ 8622 2600; www.koorieheritage.trust.com/education; \$13) This unique two-hour walk is a journey back through time. It explores both the landscape of the Yarra as well as the dramatic and irrevocable changes to both the people and the place. Its impact on all senses evokes memories that lie beneath the modern city. Highly recommended.

Walk to Art (☎ 9419 5848; www.walktoart.com.au; \$98 per person, including an art 'starter pack', wine and cheese) These walking tours take you to galleries, artists' studios and artist-run spaces hidden in Melbourne's buildings and laneways. The tour itinerary, around the CBD and inner neighbourhoods, is always changing and revealed on the day of the walk. The tours operate Wednesday and Saturday, in all weather conditions and last for three hours with wine and cheese afterwards.

White Hat Tours (☎ 9329 6055; www.whitehat.com.au) White Hat loves Melbourne and offers a range of quirky tours including the Melbourne General Cemetery and Melbourne by Lamplight.

If you want to venture further a field but don't feel like travelling solo, or are time-poor, there are literally dozens of tours through Victoria to suit all tastes and budgets. Recommended operators such as **Autopia Tours** (☎ 1800 000 507 or 9419 8878; www.autopiatours.com.au), **Go West** (☎ 9828 2008; www.gowest.com.au) and **Wild-Life Tours** (☎ 9741 6333; www.wildlifetours.com.au) offer day trips to similar popular destinations, including the the Grampians, the Great Ocean Road, and the Phillip Island Penguin Parade.

Activity-based tours are increasing in both number and popularity; the following is just a sample of the countless options on offer. For a more comprehensive list, contact **Tourism Victoria** (☎ 13 28 42; www.visitvictoria.com.au).

Echidna Walkabout (☎ 9646 8249; www.echidnawalkabout.com.au) Runs nature ecotrips (from day trips to five-day expeditions) featuring bushwalking and koala spotting.

Eco Adventure Tours (☎ 5962 5115; www.ecoadventuretours.com.au) Offers fascinating guided night walks in the

Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges. Ideal for animal lovers. See p215.

Ecotrek: Bogong Jack Adventures (☎ 08-8383 7198; www.ecotrek.com.au) Runs a wide range of cycling, canoeing and walking tours through the Grampians, Murray River and High Country regions.

Steamrail Victoria (☎ 9397 1953; www.steamrail.com.au) For steam-train devotees, Freudians and those who are looking for an unusual day out, this not-for-profit puts old trains back on the tracks for jaunts to various country destinations around the state.

POST

Australia's postal services are efficient and inexpensive. It costs 50c to send a standard letter or postcard within Australia. **Australia Post** (<http://auspost.com.au>) divides international destinations into two zones: Asia Pacific and Rest of the World. Airmail letters cost \$1.35 and \$2 respectively. Postage for postcards (\$1.30) is the same to any country. You can send and receive faxes from any post office for around \$1 per page. Generally, post offices are open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. You can also buy stamps from most newsagents.

The **Melbourne GPO** (Map pp52–3; ☎ 13 13 18; cnr Little Bourke & Elizabeth Sts; ☎ 8.30am–5.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–4pm Sat, 10am–4pm Sun) offers a poste restante service. You'll need to provide some form of photo ID to collect your mail.

RADIO

Melbourne has a huge number of radio stations broadcasting everything from hits-and-memories to talkback. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) offers four national and one local station.

ABC Classic FM (105.9FM) Classical music.

Nova (100.3FM) Old and new music targeting the 20- and 30-somethings.

Radio National (621AM) Thoughtful analysis and fascinating features, with a 10-minute world-news service every hour on the hour.

Radio for the Print Handicapped (1179AM) Readings of daily newspapers; between 11.05pm and 6am broadcasts the BBC World Service.

3AW (693AM) Top-rating commercial talkback station.

3JZZ (107.5FM) The ABC's national youth network. Specialises in alternative music and young people's issues; streaming online.

3LO (774AM) Local ABC station with regular talkback programs, an excellent news service on the hour and a world-news feature at 12.10pm every weekday.

3PBS (106.7FM) Independent subscriber-based station, with alternative music programs; streaming online.

3RRR (102.7FM) Excellent subscriber-based station featuring independent music, current affairs and talk-show programs; streaming online.

3SBS (93.1FM) Multilingual station.

3JOY (94.9FM) Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex community station.

3MBS (103.5FM) Classical community station that features local performers.

SAFETY

Animal Bites & Stings FLIES & MOSQUITOES

For four to six months of the year, you'll have to cope with those two banes of the Australian outdoors: the fly and the mosquito ('mozzie'). Flies aren't too bad in the city but they start getting out of hand in the country, and the farther out you go the more numerous and persistent they seem to be. A March fly looks like a bigger, uglier version of the common fly – its bite is painful for an instant, but the aftermath is much like a mosquito bite. Widely available repellents such as Aerogard and Rid may also help to deter the little bastards, but don't count on it.

Mozzies are a problem in summer. Try to keep your arms and legs covered as soon as the sun goes down and use insect repellent liberally.

SNAKES

Australian snakes have a terrible reputation that is justified in terms of the potency of their venom, but unjustified in terms of the actual risk to travellers and locals. Snakes are usually quite timid in nature, and in most instances will move away if disturbed. They only have small fangs, making it easy to prevent bites to the lower limbs (where 80% of bites occur) by wearing protective clothing (such as gaiters, boots, socks and long trousers) around the ankles when bushwalking. Snakes are quite common in country Victoria. If you see one, leave it alone.

In all confirmed or suspected bites, preventing the spread of toxic venom can be achieved by applying pressure to the wound and immobilising the area with a splint or sling before seeking medical attention. Firmly wrap an elastic bandage (you can improvise with a T-shirt) around the entire limb, but not so tight as to cut off the circulation. Along

with immobilisation, this is a life-saving first-aid measure. Don't use a tourniquet, and *don't* try to suck out the poison!

SPIDERS

Victoria's most dangerous spider is the red-back. It has a very painful, sometimes lethal, bite. Bites cause increasing pain at the site followed by profuse sweating and generalised symptoms (including muscular weakness, sweating at the site of the bite, nausea). First aid includes application of ice or cold packs to the bite, then transfer to hospital.

White-tail spider bites may cause a painful ulcer that is very slow and difficult to heal. Clean the wound thoroughly and seek medical assistance.

TICKS & LEECHES

The common bush-tick (found in the forest and scrub country all along Australia's east coast) can be dangerous if left lodged in the skin, as the toxin excreted by the tick can cause partial paralysis and, in theory, death. Check your body for lumps every night if you're walking in tick-infested areas. Remove the tick by dousing it with methylated spirits or kerosene and levering it out, but make sure you remove it intact. After a walk in the bush, remember to check children and dogs for ticks.

Leeches are common, and while they will suck your blood, they are not dangerous and are easily removed by the application of salt or heat.

Bushfires & Blizzards

Bushfires happen every year in Victoria. In hot, dry and windy weather, be extremely careful with any naked flame – cigarette butts thrown out of car windows have started many fires. On a total-fire-ban day it's forbidden even to use a camping stove in the open. Locals will not be amused if they catch you breaking this particular law; they'll happily do you in, and the penalties are severe.

If you're unfortunate enough to find yourself driving through a bushfire, stay inside your car and try to park in an open space, away from trees, until the danger passes. Lie on the floor under the dashboard, covering yourself with a wool blanket if possible. The front of the fire should pass quickly, and you will be much safer than if you were out in the open. It is very important to cover up with a wool blanket or wear protective clothing, as heat radiation is the big killer in bushfire situations.

9pm the previous day in New York, 2am in London and 11am in Tokyo. For quick time-zone calculations, go to [Time and Date](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock) (www.timeanddate.com/worldclock).

Daylight-saving time, when clocks are put forward an hour, is between the last Sunday in October and the last Sunday in March.

TICKETS & RESERVATIONS

MoshTix (☎ 1300 438 849; www.moshTix.com.au) A local outfit that sells tickets to smaller and independent concerts, theatre and other performances.

Ticketek (Map pp52–3; ☎ 132 849; www.ticketek.com.au; 225 Exhibition St) The main booking agency for theatre, concerts and sports. Book by phone, online or in person at outlets listed on the website.

Ticketmaster (Map pp52–3; www.ticketmaster.com.au; Myer, Level 5, 275 Lonsdale St, City) Another large agency for music, performing arts and sports, including games at the MCG and Telstra Dome. They have outlets at larger venues and around the city and suburbs.

TIPPING

Tipping isn't mandatory in Melbourne, but 10% is expected at restaurants, with more for notable service. Taxi drivers also welcome tips, though a generous rounding up is usually ok in lieu of a more rigid percentage calculation. For hotel porters, \$2 to \$5 should suffice.

TOILETS

Public toilets are a rapidly disappearing institution. In the city, department stores are your best bet. There are safe and clean facilities underneath the Melbourne Town Hall (Map pp52–3) on Collins St in the city. Pubs are worth a try but often frown on 'casual' visitors.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Melbourne's government-run **Visitor Information Centre** (Map pp52–3; www.visitmelbourne.com; Federation Sq; ☎ 9am–6pm) provides an accommodation and tour service and internet access. Their website is translated into several languages and offers some very comprehensive information. Its parent organisation **Tourism Victoria** (☎ 13 28 42; www.visitvictoria.com.au) has a phone service and website that are equally thorough. Their online travel planner offers maps, travel ideas and a route planner that you can tailor to your specific tastes.

There are additional **information booths** located in the Bourke St Mall and in the international

are available from providers such as **Telstra** (www.telstra.com), **Optus** (www.optus.com.au), **Virgin** (www.virginmobile.com.au) and **Vodafone** (www.vodafone.com.au).

Phonecards

There's a wide range of local and international phonecards available from most newsagents and post offices for a fixed dollar value (usually \$5 to \$50). These can be used with any public or private phone by dialling a toll-free access number and then the PIN number on the card.

TELEVISION

The Melbourne region has six free-to-air TV stations. The three commercial networks – Channels Seven, Nine and Ten – are just like commercial channels anywhere, with a varied but not particularly adventurous diet of sport, soap operas, lightweight news and sensationalised current affairs, plus plenty of sitcoms. Channel Ten differentiates itself by producing youth-oriented programs. See p33–4 for a rundown on locally produced shows.

Channel Two is the government-funded, commercial-free ABC station. They have had a recent rebranding due to the introduction of a free digital-only station. The regular channel is now called ABC1, while the digital channel is called ABC2. ABC TV produces some excellent current affairs shows, documentaries and a news service, and screens its fair share of sport and, mainly British, sitcoms and drama. The ABC also has a knack for producing comedy and drama that, if successful, gets snaffled up by the cheque-book wielding commercials.

The most thorough international news service is broadcast at 6.30pm daily on the publicly funded Special Broadcasting Service (SBS, Channel 28, UHF). SBS has a multicultural mandate and screens some of the most diverse programs shown on TV, including current affairs, documentaries, soap operas, and foreign language films. (Hence the expression 'like SBS without the subtitles', used to describe someone so drunk you cannot understand what they are saying.)

TIME

Victoria (along with Tasmania, NSW and Queensland) keeps Eastern Standard Time, which is 10 hours ahead of GMT/UTC. That means that when it's noon in Melbourne it's

places have a safe where you can store your valuables. If you are unlucky enough to have something stolen, immediately report all details to the nearest police station.

Trams

In Melbourne, be *extremely* cautious when stepping on and off trams. Don't step off without looking both ways. Pedestrians in Bourke St Mall should watch for passing trams too, though you are more likely to be embarrassed by the driver's persistent 'tinging' than be run over.

Car drivers should treat Melbourne trams with caution. Cyclists should be careful not to get their wheels caught in tram tracks, and motorcyclists should take special care when tram tracks are wet.

TAXES & REFUNDS

Australia has a 10% Goods and Services Tax (GST) automatically applied to most purchases, though some fresh food items are exempt. Visitors who purchase goods with a total minimum value of \$300 from any one supplier within 30 days of departure from Australia are entitled to a GST refund. You can get a cheque refund at the designated booth located beyond Customs at the airport. Contact the **Australian Taxation Office** (☎ 13 28 66; www.ato.gov.au) for details.

TELEPHONE

The area code for Melbourne and Victoria is ☎ 03; if dialling into Melbourne drop the zero from the area code. The country code for dialling into Australia is ☎ 61; and the international access code for dialling out is ☎ 0011. Toll-free numbers start with the prefix ☎ 1800, while numbers that start with ☎ 1300 charge the cost of a local call no matter where you're calling from.

The increasingly elusive public payphone is either coin- or card-operated; local calls are unlimited and cost 50c, calls to mobile phones are timed and attract higher charges. Some accept credit cards; many don't work at all.

Mobile Phones

All Australian mobile phone numbers have four-digit prefixes beginning with 04. Australia's digital network is compatible with GSM 900 and 1800 handsets. Quad-based US phones will also work. Prepaid SIM cards

Bushwalkers should seek local advice before setting out – be careful if a total fire ban is in place, or delay your trip. If you're out in the bush and you see smoke, even a long way away, take it seriously – bushfires move very quickly and change direction with the wind. Go to the nearest open space, downhill if possible. A forested ridge is the most dangerous place to be.

More bushwalkers actually die of cold than in bushfires. Even in summer, temperatures can drop below freezing at night in the mountains and Victorian weather is notoriously changeable. Exposure in even moderately cool temperatures can sometimes result in hypothermia. Always take suitable spare clothing and adequate water and carbohydrates.

Swimming & Boating

Popular Victorian beaches are patrolled by surf life-savers in summer and patrolled areas are marked off by a pair of red and yellow flags. Always swim between the flags if possible.

Victoria's ocean beaches often have treacherous waves and rips. Even if you're a competent swimmer, you should exercise extreme caution and avoid the water altogether in high surf. Children should be watched closely and kept out of the water if conditions are rough. If you happen to get caught in a rip when swimming and are being taken out to sea, try not to panic. Raise one arm until you have been spotted, and then swim parallel to the shore – *don't* try to swim back against the rip.

A number of people are also paralysed every year by diving into shallow water and hitting a sandbar; check the depth of the water before you leap.

Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay is generally safe for swimming – the closest you're likely to come to a shark is in the local fish-and-chip shop. The small blue-ringed octopus is sometimes found hiding under rocks in rockpools on the foreshore. Its sting can be fatal, so don't touch it under any circumstances.

Boating on Port Phillip Bay can be hazardous, as conditions can change dramatically and without warning.

Theft

Victoria is a relatively safe place to visit, but you should still take reasonable precautions. Don't leave hotel rooms or cars unlocked, and don't leave money, wallets, purses or cameras unattended, in full view through car windows, for instance. Most accommodation

sive employment listings, or try online at www.mycareer.com.au or www.seek.com.au.

Doing Business

The Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau (www.mcvb.com.au) is an industry organisation that promotes Melbourne as a city for convention and business events. The *Age* has a daily pull-out section dealing with business issues. Business- and finance-specific publications to look out for include the *Australian Financial Review* and *Business Review Weekly (BRW)*.

Volunteer Work

Good Company (www.goodcompany.com.au) is a not-for-profit organisation that matches professionals, skilled in all areas, with community organisations needing short-term projects fulfilled on a pro-rata basis. Otherwise, contact your preferred organisation directly while you're in town.

Royal Women's Hospital Health Information Service
(☎ 9344 2007)

Royal Women's Hospital Sexual Assault Unit
(☎ 9344 2201)

Women's Health Information Service (☎ 1800 133 321)

WORK

If you come to Australia on a 12-month working-holiday visa, you can officially work for the entire 12 months, but you can only stay with any one employer for a maximum of three months. Working on a regular tourist visa is strictly prohibited.

To receive wages you must have a Tax File Number (TFN), issued by the Australian Taxation Office. Application forms are available at all post offices, and you are required to show your passport and visa. Short-term job opportunities usually exist in factories, the hospitality industry, fruit picking, nannying and telephone sales. Saturday's *Age* has exten-

Organisations

Access Foundation (www.accessibility.com.au/melbourne/melmain.htm) City guide to Melbourne's accessible sites.

Access Melbourne (www.accessmelbourne.vic.gov.au) Online mobility map and information.

National Information Communication & Awareness Network (Nican; ☎ 1800 806 769; www.nican.com.au) An Australia-wide directory providing information on access issues, accommodation, sporting and recreational activities, transport and specialist tour operators.

Vision Australia (☎ 1300 84 74 66.; www.visionaustralia.org.au) The Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind has become part of this national organisation. Its services can be accessed through the centralised phone number. The Victorian head office remains in Kooyong.

VicRoads (☎ 13 11 71; www.vicroads.vic.gov.au) Supplies parking permits for disabled drivers.

VicDeaf (☎ 9657 8111; www.vicdeaf.com.au) Auslan interpreter service available.

VISAS

Visas are required for all overseas visitors except for New Zealand nationals, who receive a 'special category' visa on arrival. Visa application forms are available from diplomatic missions, travel agents, the **Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs** (☎ 13 18 81; www.immi.gov.au). Some visitors are eligible to apply for an online **Electronic Travel Authority** (www.eta.immi.gov.au).

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Victoria is generally a safe place for women travellers, although the usual sensible precautions apply. It's best to avoid walking alone late at night. And if you're out for a big night on the town, always keep enough money aside for a taxi back to your accommodation. Alcohol-fuelled violence is becoming more common in Melbourne's city centre. The same applies to rural towns, where there are often a lot of unlit, semideserted streets. Lone women should also be wary of staying in basic pub accommodation unless it looks safe and well managed.

Aussie male culture does sometimes manifest in sexist bravado, and sexual harassment isn't uncommon, especially when alcohol is involved.

We do not recommend that women hitchhike alone.

The following organisations offer advice and services for women:

terminal at Melbourne Airport. Melbourne City Council's **That's Melbourne** (www.thatsmelbourne.com.au) is also an excellent resource.

All visitor's centres carry the free **Melbourne: Official Visitors Guide**. This publication has all sorts of helpful information, including a calendar of events, transport maps, and attraction and accommodation listings.

Regional centres throughout the state will usually have a visitor's centre or tourist information booth in a central location. These are listed throughout this book.

Parks Victoria (☎ 13 19 63; www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) has an information service and will also mail out brochures; its website is loaded with useful information on state and national parks.

The **Melbourne Design Guide** (edited by Viviane Stappmanns & Ewan McEoin), available from <http://melbournedesignguide.com>, is a great reference for visitors interested in the city's unique aesthetic. The **Slow Guide Melbourne** (Martin Hughes), available from <http://slowguides.com.au>, celebrates the intimate, natural, traditional and sensory (of which there is plenty in Melbourne).

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Many of Melbourne's attractions are accessible for wheelchairs. Trains and newer trams have low steps to accommodate wheelchairs and people with limited mobility. **Access Cabs** (☎ 13 62 94) and **Silver Top Taxis** (☎ 8413 7202) have wheelchair accessible taxis; both should be booked ahead. Australian visitors can use their M50 cards and reciprocal taxi vouchers. Many car parks in the city have convenient spaces allocated for disabled drivers. All pedestrian crossings feature sound cues and accessible buttons.

The **Melbourne Mobility Centre** (Map pp52-3; ☎ 9650 6499, TTY 9650 9316; www.accessmelbourne.vic.gov.au; 1st fl car park, Federation Sq; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) offers TTY phone and web services, equipment hire and general information including a mobility map, which can also be downloaded from the website. The **Traveller's Aid Centres** (☎ 9654 2600; 2nd floor, 169 Swanston St & 9670 2873; Lower Concourse, Southern Cross Railway Station) are particularly helpful to those with special needs and offer a variety of facilities to travellers, including showers, baby-change facilities, toilets, lounge area, public telephone, lockers, stroller and wheelchair hire, ironing facilities, meeting room hire and tourist information.

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