

# Victoria



It looks oh so small and unassuming on the map: a tiny state dwarfed by its western counterpart and cornered from the south and north. But don't be fooled, this slight frame simmers with enough geographic and cultural diversity to keep you engaged for weeks. Victoria shows its heftier neighbours that good things do indeed come in small(er) packages.

Melbourne, Australia's second-largest city, is the state's urban hub and the nation's artistic centre. This city is a global melting pot that has retained community spirit, where culture junkies and culinary perfectionists feast on art, music, theatre, cinema and cuisine for every budget. Australia's best baristas compete for your morning trade here, but the Melburnian pace is set to an affable amble.

Scalloping its way around coves, beaches and cliffs, the Great Ocean Road is great indeed. Wild surf pounds the shoreline and enigmatic coastal towns mingle with lush national parks.

In the High Country, brilliant autumn colours segue into snowfields and back again to sleepy summer towns, haunted by pale ghost gums. Skis get a work-out in winter, and cycling, horseback riding and cheeky weekends are the mainstays of the summer bliss.

If wild landscapes are your weakness head to the Grampians National Park, sprawled amid the dry plains of the Western District. Australia's southernmost mainland tip is the spiritually reviving Wilsons Promontory National Park. More of a cosmopolitan tourist? Duck just outside of Melbourne and sample some of Australia's finest wines in the Yarra Valley and Mornington Peninsula.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Get exquisitely lost in the wilderness of **Croajingolong National Park** (p628) and **Cape Conran Coastal Park** (p626)
- Curl your way around the magical twists of the **Great Ocean Road** (p551)
- Slip, slide and revel down the ski slopes of the **High Country** (p602)
- Make merry at music festivals at **Apollo Bay** (p556), **Lorne** (p554) and **Port Fairy** (p562)
- Experience breathtaking hikes and Aboriginal culture in the **Grampians** (p566)
- Meander the Murray on a paddle steamer in **Mildura** (p573)
- Get New Age in **Fitzroy** (p509), sun-kissed in **St Kilda** (p510) and styled up in **South Yarra** (p510)
- Achieve cultural enlightenment in Melbourne's world-renowned **Arts Precinct** (p507)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ POPULATION: 5.4 MILLION

■ AREA: 237,629 SQ KM

## VICTORIA FACTS

**Eat** Vietnamese, Thai, African, Lebanese, Greek, Italian...for a tenner

**Drink** Holgate White Ale (see p543)

**Read** *The Spare Room* by Helen Garner, *Making Modern Melbourne* by Jenny Lee or *True History of the Kelly Gang* by Peter Carey

**Listen to** The Cat Empire, Jet, Nick Cave, Hunters & Collectors

**Watch** *Three Dollars*, *The Hard Word*, *Noise*

**Avoid** Hook turns, tram inspectors, jay-walking tickets

**Locals' nickname** Mexicans

**Swim at** Sorrento (p546) or Queenscliff (p541) to frolic with dolphins and beautiful people

**Strangest festival** St Jerome's Laneway Festival (p515)

**Tackiest tourist attraction** Crown Casino (p507)

## HISTORY

In 1803 a party of convicts, soldiers and settlers arrived at Sorrento (on the southern edge of Port Phillip Bay), but the settlement was soon abandoned. The first permanent European settlement in Victoria was established in 1834 at Portland (in the Western District) by the Henty family from Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), some 46 years after Sydney was colonised. In 1851 Victoria won separation from New South Wales (NSW), and in that same year the rich Victorian goldfields were discovered, attracting immigrants from around the world. Towns such as Beechworth and Ballarat boomed during the gold rush, and are veritable museum pieces today. Melbourne was founded in 1835 by enterprising Tasmanians and it retains much Victorian-era charm and gold-boom 1880s architecture to this day.

The latter-half of the 20th century saw a huge influx of immigrants into Victoria, particularly Melbourne, and the city is now widely regarded as Australia's most multicultural city. It has one of the largest Greek populations per capita in the world and is heavily influenced by Italian, Eastern European and Southeast Asian cultures.

The 1990s and 21st century has seen a period of ferocious development begin – a process that continues today, and the face of the CBD (central business district) has changed and spread markedly with the boom of the Docklands, and the construction of architectural landmarks such as Federation Square.

## GEOGRAPHY & CLIMATE

Victoria has a temperate four-season climate, although the distinctions between the seasons

are often blurred by the unpredictability of the weather. There are three climatic regions: the southern and coastal areas, the alpine areas and the areas north and west of the Great Dividing Range. Winter is from June to August; summer December to February.

Daily summer temperatures in coastal areas average 25°C, in alpine areas 20°C and in the northwest 35°C. Daily winter temperatures average 14°C along the coast, a chillier 10°C in alpine areas and 17°C in the northwest.

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. Because of 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. The Wimmera and Mallee regions have the lowest rainfall and the highest temperatures.

It snows during the alpine high country winter; the closest snow to Melbourne is on Mt Donna Buang (see Ski Resorts, p605).

## INFORMATION

**Tourism Victoria** (☎ 13 28 42; [www.visitvictoria.com](http://www.visitvictoria.com)), the state tourism body is a good source for information, ideas and contacts. Lonely Planet's *Melbourne & Victoria* guide is an excellent resource for getting the most out of your time. Some helpful websites:

**Parks Victoria** (☎ 13 19 63; [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au))  
Manages Victoria's national parks.

**Royal Automobile Club of Victoria** (RACV; Map pp496-7; ☎ 13 72 28; [www.racv.com.au](http://www.racv.com.au); 438 Little Collins St, Melbourne) Produces the excellent *Experience Victoria* guide, full of accommodation and touring information.