



Melbourne's West takes the stage with a series of surprises

Old. New. Urban. Rural. Established. Contemporary. Raw. Edgy. Natural. Whichever way you look at it, Melbourne's West is a fast-emerging tourism hotspot and it's an area full of fresh energy.

Following the Maribyrnong River past the fast-growing foodie neighbourhood of Footscray and through the cosmopolitan Flemington, the region stretches in a north westerly direction through Moonee Ponds and Essendon all the way to the extensive parklands of Melton.

Heading directly west from Melbourne's city centre and following the coast line, the region takes in the eclectic villages of Spotswood and Newport, through to Williamstown and its maritime history and on to Werribee and its wine, wetlands and wildlife scene.

Encompassing six city councils, the Melbourne's West region promises a welcome surprise in every one of its diverse and multicultural suburbs and villages.

Surprise #1: a collection of urban wineries all within 45 minutes of Melbourne's city centre

It's no secret that Victoria is home to many of Australia's finest boutique wineries, and Melbourne's West is home to a collection of undiscovered urban wineries. One can easily spend a day sipping on wines and getting lost among the vines without even leaving Melbourne's urban fringe.

The renowned Shadowfax Winery in Werribee is just 30 minutes from the city centre, officially making it Melbourne's closest winery experience. Sip on wines at the cellar door or graze on the Mediterranean-inspired menu served in the restaurant

Not to be outdone, nearby Rose Creek Estate boasts award-winning olive oil in addition to its wine varieties. Galli Estate Winery and Witchmount Estate in Plumpton, Arundel Farm Estate in Keilor, and Russo Estate in Diggers Rest also sparkle in Melbourne's West.

Surprise #2: one of Australia's best birdwatching sites can be found at a water treatment plant

Most Melburnian's know where their sewerage goes, however many don't realise the historic Western Treatment Plant in Werribee not only sustainably treats half of Melbourne's sewage, it's also home to an internationally-recognised bird habitat. More than 280 bird species have been recorded at the plant including migratory shorebirds that travel from Siberia each year. It is recognised as one of Australia's best birdwatching sites.

This is just one of multiple wetlands and nature reserves that can be found throughout Melbourne's West. Extensive birdlife can also be found at Brimbank Park, which is also a popular urban location for spotting kangaroos. Cheetham Reserve at Point Cook National Park is another internationally recognised wetland.

Surprise #3: a genuine castle and other grand designs

Werribee Mansion could be straight from the scenes of Downton Abbey; the Victorian-era building is a shining example of the Italianate architecture style, while its idyllic grounds are coloured with bursts of flowers. Completed by wealthy pastoralists, the Chirnside family in 1877, the Mansion boasts 60 rooms in several wings with many of the Chirnside family's items, including clothing and furniture on display.

Nearby, Point Cook Homestead and its stables – crafted from bluestone – is one of the earliest examples of a pastoral home in Victoria, as is Eynesbury Homestead in Eynesbury. Keilor is home to Overnewton Castle, which replicates a miniature Scottish Baronial Castle in Victorian Tudor style, its charming settings are perfect for high tea.

Surprise #4: urban villages that aren't 'too cool for school'

Locals and hipsters of all ages unite in the eclectic villages of Melbourne's West, which are still to be discovered by the masses. Boutiques, bespoke goods, independent bookshops, arts and crafts and the finest produce stores are all concentrated in charming shopping strips – not to mention cafés and restaurants with a rich variety of international cuisines, wine bars and other cool evening spots.

Spend a day discovering the wonders of Williamstown's foreshore or the fabulous Ferguson Street; Puckle Street in Moonee Ponds is a thriving hub of activity; Union Road in Ascot Vale will impress with only a short tram ride from the city; and Spotswood and Newport Village's on-trend shops are only a few steps from the train station.

Surprise #5: cuddle dingoes and visit Africa

The Dingo Discovery Research Centre in Melton provides a rare opportunity to meet, cuddle and photograph adorable dingo cubs on weekend Open Days (subject to season). Or head to Werribee Open Range Zoo and experience an African adventure close to Melbourne with off-road safaris and encounters with lions or gorillas. For the kids, a hippo water play area and indoor play space will also impress at the zoo.

Other family-friendly activities in Melbourne's West include a visit to Scienceworks museum in Spotswood where you can see the universe via its Planetarium or race against Cathy Freeman. Harpley Adventure Playground in Werribee is impressive with an Australian animal theme, two flying foxes and a lookout tower. Brimbank Park Playscape in Keilor East is another winner featuring a maze and 'build-your-own' cubby house structure.

Surprise #6: Australia's first female-owned brewing company

Connoisseurs of craft beer will find some refreshing surprises in Melbourne's West including Two Birds Brewing in Spotswood – Australia's first female-owned brewery – and its venue aptly named 'The Nest' where visitors can enjoy fresh beer on tap, great food and good company. Fury & Son in Keilor Park is a family-run brewery where its speciality beers can be sampled along with American Barbecue each Friday. Or try Hop Nation in Footscray, housed in a former whale fat candle and wax factory with uber-cool architectural features.

Surprise #7: a multicultural food scene that's attracting big name chefs

Culturally diverse Sunshine serves up a delicious offering of Vietnamese restaurants serving up flavoursome pho and banh mi, and Chinese yum cha venues like Gold Leaf where the queues can be

out the door. Sri Lankan and Afghan food also shine in this underappreciated suburb only 13km from the city.

In other areas of Melbourne's West, modern and fine dining abound with The Boathouse on the Maribyrnong River providing an oasis for locals; Hellenic Republic brings George Calombaris' version of the Mediterranean to Williamstown; and The Park in Werribee sees award-winning chef Jonathon Ford create a fusion of food to compliment the extensive craft beer list of 250+ ales from around the world.

Surprise #8: the second oldest air force in the world began in Point Cook

The RAAF Museum in Point Cook tells the story of the birthplace of the Australian Flying Corps and the Royal Australian Air Force. The interactive flying displays, which run three times per week, feature heritage aircraft in flight – sometimes with an aerobatic display. The Newport Railway Museum houses the largest collection of Victorian Railways steam locomotives.

For those who prefer to take to the water, HMAS Castlemaine is a museum ship docked at Gem Pier in Williamstown. Round the corner, the recently refurbished Seaworks Maritime Precinct is a working waterfront with a diverse calendar of cultural, food and boating events. With the stunning backdrop of Port Phillip Bay, the precinct also includes a Maritime Museum. Discover the Heritage-listed Black Powder Mill in Cairnlea and learn about the history of gunpowder, or head to Truganina Explosives Reserve in Altona and its historic homestead.

Surprise #9: where life is all roses (5,000 of them, give or take)

Stop and smell the roses with over five hectares of the sweet smelling flowers in Werribee Park. The Victoria Rose Centre is just one of the extensive gardens, wetlands, reserves and parks scattered throughout Melbourne's West.

Melton Botanic Gardens is an evolving exhibition of mainly native plants, while the Maribyrnong River winding down from Keilor to Footscray and beyond provides a tranquil way to walk, bike ride, canoe or simply picnic. Organ Pipes National Park in Keilor North is named for its set of basalt columns formed by the cooling and cracking of molten lava. Point Cooke Marine Sanctuary is fantastic for snorkelling and diving while the nearby Cheetham Wetlands are a natural bird haven. For an educational hike, Point Gellibrand Heritage Park in Williamstown provides an insight into Australia's colonial past including links with Ned Kelly. For an alternative taste of the outdoors, relax or swim at the picturesque, pine-tree lined Altona Beach.

Where to stay

Quest Hotel Apartments offers a multitude of options in Melbourne's West with modern accommodation and maximum comfort. Locations: Caroline Springs, Maribyrnong, Moonee Valley, Williamstown, Williamstown North and Sanctuary Lakes.

Werribee Mansion Hotel & Spa provides a truly special way to stay in the region by melding heritage with luxury. To the north west, Melbourne's first Hyatt Place can be found at Essendon Fields.

A wide range of B&B and cottage accommodation can also be found spread throughout the region. Many of which are bookable via platforms such as AirBNB and HomeAway.

For more information visit melbourneswest.com.au or follow [@love_the_west](https://www.instagram.com/love_the_west) on Instagram.

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A selection of high resolution images can be viewed [here](#). For additional images or if you are interested in finding out more about Western Melbourne Tourism's familiarisation program please contact:

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About Western Melbourne Tourism Inc (WMT)

WMT is an urban regional tourism board aiming to develop a more competitive tourism sector in Melbourne's West. It encompasses the municipal boundaries of:

Brimbank – Sunshine, St Albans & Keilor

Hobsons Bay – Williamstown, Newport, Spotswood & Altona

Melton – Melton, Plumpton & Caroline Springs

Moonee Valley – Essendon, Moonee Ponds & Ascot Vale

Wyndham – Werribee, Point Cook & Hoppers Crossing

Maribyrnong – Footscray, Yarraville & Seddon