Melbourne's little laneways began life as rear access to properties facing big streets. Many were later roofed as 'arcades' to provide refuge from the weather and crowds and to provide more space for shops. Today, some lanes have been reborn and hum to the rhythm of daily city life. Others are still waiting to be discovered.

Begin your walk at a traditional meeting place 'Under the Clocks' at Flinders Street Station. Cross Flinders Street, turn left and continue on. Turn right into Degraves Street where William Degraves' steam flourmill pumped away in the 1850s. Nowadays, it's espresso.

Degraves Street is a mecca for Melbourne's cafe society. Check out the healthy delights at the organic shop or the juice bar. Order a coffee at Degraves Espresso Bar, where the seats are recycled cinema seats and benches from a former magistrates court.

At the end of Degraves Street, on the other side of Flinders Lane, is the Majorca Building – still as stylish as in its 1920s heyday. The building's terracotta facade has Spanish or Moorish influences, reflecting the exotic destinations that captured imaginations at that time.

Centre Place is a breeding ground for cafes – some so small you can barely stretch to stir your coffee. Ask for the delicious soup of the day at pocket sized Jungle Juice Bar, squat on the box seats and enjoy noodles at Yen or retreat upstairs to dimly lit Hell's Kitchen and look down on the passing throng. This area is also a must see for those interested in street art.

Step up to Centre Way (1913) – an early steel-framed building with a post-modern makeover – then cross Collins Street and turn left before entering the exquisite 19th century Block Arcade. The arcade was named after the fashionable Collins Street block between Swanston and Elizabeth Streets where 19th century Melburnians liked to promenade or ‘do the block’. Today, it is still a hive of activity, with its mosaic floors and fascinating shops to explore.

Pick a table at Block Place and grab a bite to eat before you cross over Little Collins Street to the elegant Royal Arcade (1869) - the oldest shopping arcade in Australia. Don't forget to look back up to Gog and Magog, the two legendary giants of the ancient Britons who have struck on the hour since 1892.
Reaching Melbourne’s shopping heart at Bourke Street Mall, turn left and cross the Bourke Street Mall, pass the sculpture and Public Purse outside Melbourne’s GPO, then turn right to continue along Elizabeth Street. The Underground Public Toilets are historic: the men’s were built in 1910, while the ladies waited longer, until 1927.

Go left up Little Bourke Street and cross two laneways before you discover a superb group of 1880s warehouses at 23-31 Niagara Lane. Look for the picturesque barrel hoists. The lane was named in the 1860s after the Niagara picturesque barrel hoists. The lane was longer, until 1927.

Round the corner, after a short walk up Elizabeth Street, the Underground Public Toilets are historic: the men’s were built in 1910, while the ladies waited longer, until 1927.

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As you head back to Federation Square, carry on along Flinders Lane before strolling through the heritage shopping laneway Cathedral Arcade with all of its original fixtures. A walk through this art deco laneway will connect you to Swanston Street. Your final stop is at Young & Jackson where the beer has flowed for over a century. Upstairs is the nude portrait that shocked conservative Melbourne and made the hotel famous. Enjoy one last drink here as you take in the grand view of Federation Square.