Melbourne Walks

On the Waterfront

Spectacular bridges, Aboriginal cultural heritage, sculptures, Southbank Promenade, Melbourne Aquarium and the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre feature on this walk of discovery along the north and south banks of the Yarra River.

**Walking time** 2 hours  
**Distance** 4.75 Kilometres

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**Federation Square** is a centre of cultural activity for Melbourne. Positioned on the city’s busiest intersection across the road from **Flinders Street Station** and the most prominent section of the city’s busy tram network, it brings together several creative institutions, cafes and bars.

From Federation Square, walk south along **Princes Bridge** over the Yarra River and follow the ramp down to the riverside in **Alexandra Gardens** and then walk under the bridge. There have been three bridges on this site, each larger than the last. The first was built of timber and named after the Prince of Wales in 1845. You will pass the giant steel sculpture ‘**Dervish**’ the 1981 work of Melbourne-born sculptor Clement Meadmore, which has a current market value of around $500,000.

If you have time, take a boat’s eye view of the city with a leisurely scenic cruise. If you have time, take a boat’s eye view of the city with a leisurely scenic cruise, or tributary into the Yarra River once flowed. Elizabeth Street now covers where the creek originally ran, and still flows underground.

Heading west along **Flinders Walk** and you come to **Queen’s Bridge** just beyond the Banana Alley Vaults. In 1910, some 20,000 people watched Houdini dive into the river from this bridge, locked in chains. After 25 seconds, he came up laughing. Houdini’s spot was well chosen. The river is shallow here, just 20,000 people watched Houdini dive into the river from this bridge, locked in chains. After 25 seconds, he came up laughing. Houdini’s spot was well chosen. The river is shallow here, where a three-metre waterfall originally prevented saltwater from entering the river. It was also the only place for miles where Aboriginal people could cross the river over a reef of rocks. They believed the falls were created by Bunjil (the eagle hawk), and in its original form the area was a habitat for animals and resources that weren’t found anywhere else.

In 1835 John Pascoe Fawkner’s ‘Enterprize’ sailed up the Yarra from Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania) to create a commercial settlement. For the Aboriginal people who had lived along the river for thousands of years, the landscape would change forever.
The Yarra’s waterfall was destroyed in the mid-19th century to allow tall ships to access the wide basin or ‘pool’ of the Yarra, now recreated near Enterprize Wharf. Five carved figureheads titled Constellation evoke the spirit of these ships. However, the destruction of the waterfall also ruined the ecology of the area with salt water now flowing into the freshwater wetlands.

Early port facilities were also located here, as well as bond stores and the Customs House, now the Immigration Museum. After gold was discovered in 1850 in Warrandyte, north east from Melbourne, thousands of people from all over the world descended on the city in their quest for fortune, and this natural harbour was their first port of call. The impact on the local Kulin population was devastating – the destruction of natural food sources, the introduction of diseases and settler violence meant that the population was drastically reduced in number to approximately 200 only 30 years on from Batman’s and Fawkner’s arrival.

Enterprize Park is the site of the ‘Scar Project’. Traditionally, Aboriginal people would take pieces of bark from some trees to make canoes, shields or baby cradles, and these ‘scar trees’ would serve as a signpost for other clans to know they had entered the land of another community. These trees are rare today, but for Aboriginal people they are very precious. The ‘Scar Project’, located here on the ‘pool’ of Melbourne, is representative of these scar trees and was constructed by Aboriginal Artists who used original whale poles from Queens Bridge.

Walk past the popular SEA LIFE Melbourne Aquarium that features a breathtaking underwater wonderland where children and adults can enjoy ‘fish-eye’ views of sea life and its many different creatures.

Then cross to Batman Park and take Spencer Street Footbridge to South Wharf, and follow the river concourse to Dukes and Orsks docks (1875), now home to Polly Woodside.

The SeaFarers Bridge next to Dukes Dock will take you across the Yarra to the southern end of Docklands, Melbourne’s newest community, now home to thousands of residents and headquarters for several of Australia’s most successful companies. There’s a fantastic collection of outdoor public art throughout Docklands, and a growing number of restaurants and bars, events and parks and gardens.

On South Wharf, continue to the spectacular Webb Bridge – a snaking pedestrian and cycle link between the Southbank promenade at Yarra’s Edge and the Docklands. Designed by Melbourne artist Robert Owen with Architects Denton Corker Marshall, the design is an analogy of Koorie fishing traps, drums, baskets and the gestural flow of the river below.

Walk back along the river past the many retail outlets and restaurants located in South Wharf. The Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, made up of convention and meeting spaces and a huge exhibition hall, it is the first ‘5 Star Green Star’ convention centre in the world and is a technological marvel designed with the environment in mind using fresh air, natural light and solar power. The entry-level foyer has an 18-metre-high glass wall façade overlooking the Yarra River. Every angle and level provide spectacular views of the city.

Take a leisurely stroll along the river as you walk back to Federation Square.

Visitor Information
- Melbourne Visitor Hub at Town Hall
  Located within one of the city’s most iconic landmarks, the Melbourne Visitor Hub at Town Hall is a place for free visitor information and maps, along with recommendations for the latest things to see to make the most of your experience. Open daily 9am to 6pm (excluding Christmas Day)
- Melbourne Visitor Booth in the Bourke Street Mall
  Volunteers at the Melbourne Visitor Booth provide maps and information on shopping, attractions, events, and more. Open daily 9am to 5pm (excluding Good Friday and Christmas Day)
- Queen Victoria Market Visitor Hub
  City Ambassadors and a Visitor Hub are located at the iconic Queen Victoria Market to support both locals and visitors alike who flock to Melbourne’s favourite destination. Open Tue and Thu 9am to 2pm and Fri to Sun 9am to 3pm
- Fitzroy Gardens Visitor Centre
  Located within the heritage-listed Fitzroy Gardens, this centre provides information services, free wifi and cafe facilities. Visit the surrounding attractions including Cook’s Cottage or take part in a guided garden walk. Open daily 9am to 5pm (excluding Christmas Day)
- City Ambassadors mobile information service
  Keep an eye out for our City Ambassadors in their distinctive red uniforms and get personal assistance with directions, events and more. Mon to Sat 10am to 4pm, Sun 11.30am to 3pm (excluding Good Friday and Christmas Day).

Melbourne Greeter Service
Discover what locals love about Melbourne by taking a free walking orientation of the city. Orientations in languages other than English available on request. To book visit whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au/visitors or phone 03 9658 9658 on weekdays and 03 9658 9942 on weekends.

Useful Numbers
- Public transport queries
  1800 800 007
- Travellers’ Aid Flinders Street Station
  03 9668 8187
- Travellers’ Aid Southern Cross Station
  03 9670 2072
- Airport Bus Skybus
  03 9335 2811
- Ticketmaster
  13 6100
- Ticketek
  13 2849
- City of Melbourne Hotline
  03 9658 9658
- What’s on in Melbourne
  Stay up to date on the latest events in the city and the best places to eat, drink, shop and play all year round at whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au, or follow us @WhatsOnMelb

City of Melbourne Hotline
03 9658 9658