

Six must-see highlights in Melbourne this winter



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Melbourne's cooler months are renowned for delivering the city's signature "four seasons in one day" weather, but the silver lining to those rain clouds is that Melburnians know how to do winter better than most. So, fetch your finest black puffer jacket and delve into the city's favourite winter pastimes.



Alba Thermal Springs and Spa, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria

Meet the Pharaohs

NGV International is taking visitors back in time to the sizzling sands of Egypt for its latest Melbourne Winter Masterpiece: *Pharaoh*. Curated in partnership with the British Museum, the international exhibition is one of the largest presented outside London and features over 500 items, including intricate jewellery, coffins, and remnants of colossal statues. The exhibition is open daily until October 6 but book ahead for NGV Friday Nights to see one of the

museum's five winter musical residencies, each taking guests on a melodic journey to northern Africa and beyond.

Enjoy a steamy soak

Comma, in Cremorne, invites bathers to drop their towel (but not their trunks) and embrace a traditional bathhouse experience. Sink into a wooden magnesium-infused hot tub in a moody, low-lit cocoon. If you're brave, refresh with a cold pail shower then step into the infrared sauna. Further north, Sense of Self has converted the top floor of a Collingwood warehouse into a communal bathing retreat. You can also pair a day out to Mornington Peninsula's wineries with a dip at the new Alba Thermal Springs & Spa, which has 31 different geothermal and cold pools.

Catch a show

Broadway musical *Wicked* burned down the box office with record-breaking sales when it first came to Melbourne in 2008, and producers are hoping to repeat the feat at the Regent Theatre this winter (until August 25). Meanwhile, around the corner at Princess Theatre, superstar Sarah Brightman is leading a redux of Andrew Lloyd Webber's glamorous *Sunset Boulevard*. Enjoy a late nightcap at Caretaker's Cottage, recently named one of the world's top 50 bars.

Follow the lights

Melbourne's streets and gardens are aglow with luminescent displays this winter. *Lightscape* returns to the Royal Botanic Gardens until August 4, flooding the lawns with pulsating light sculptures and laser shows. At the Immigration Museum, you can practise your walkway strut, play with a happiness generator, or let nostalgia run wild inside a replica '90s video store as part of the new exhibition exploring the meaning of *Joy*. There's more joy to be found at Melbourne Showgrounds, where Lego master Nathan Sawaya has created and illuminated 100 large-scale sculptures composed entirely of Lego blocks for *Art of the Brick*.

Dine underground

The frost can't reach you at Melbourne's subterranean restaurants, only dessert. At Ishizuka, a Brutalist Japanese restaurant hidden in an apartment building's carpark, just 16 guests sit at a communal table while head chef Shin Kato and his team prepare a 10-course kaiseki menu with matched cocktails. There are tacos to be found at Bodega Underground, where you can knock back premium tequila beneath ceilings plastered with Mexican movie posters. Red neon and soft shell crab jianbing beckons at Lucy Liu, and Mjølner's Viking-inspired bar is a cosy place to slurp down their signature roast bone marrow with a whisky chaser.

Watch the footy

Weekend footy is a hallowed Melbourne tradition alongside post-match traffic jams and hot meat pies. Marvel Stadium is hoping to shake up the latter with a slew of new game-day food offerings, including fine-dining restaurant Amphora and upmarket pub Friends of Fire. In Geelong, restaurateur Chris Lucas is bringing south-east Asian flavours to GMHBA Stadium with the arrival of Club Chin Chin. While AFL hogs the limelight in Victoria, the Melbourne Cricket Ground will witness the Ampol State of Origin on June 26 and in July the Wallabies will take on Wales at AAMI Park.