

Guide to Melbourne, Australia

First 14 Days of Your Life in Melbourne

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Who is this Guide for

If you've never been to Melbourne and if you plan to live there for a while, temporarily or permanently, studying or working, this guide is for you. If you spend first two weeks in Melbourne playing by this guide, you will acclimatise, settle down and feel at home much faster than most newcomers.

If you are just visiting you might find some inspiration what to do while in Melbourne.

How did this Guide come to life

I have put this guide together based on years of experiences and observations of newcomers to Melbourne. I believe that the first few weeks are crucial to how the person settles down and acclimatizes in a new City.

I limited this guide to the first two weeks only. First two weeks after arriving to Melbourne can make huge difference to your success, happiness and satisfaction with your life in Melbourne.

Most people arrive "too late" and get buried under their study or work commitments right from day one. Some people move in their accommodation, get in touch with their family and friends (if they have any in Melbourne) and spend initial time with them or alone. From my experience and observations, these approaches are not very fortunate because they postpone your settlement in your new home and it takes much longer than is necessary for newcomers to find their feet in the new City.

Your friends or relatives already living in Melbourne might have the best intentions to help you. The problem is that till you learn to find your way around the City, you can't settle down. Not really anyway. So, the sooner you start the better. There is nothing to wait for. So, why not start from day one?

Let's Start

Here is my Guide to Melbourne. It will take you through first 14 days after you arrive to Melbourne for the very first time. It will take you through each day one by one. If you follow it, after two weeks you'll feel like you've been here forever. You'll know your way around the City, you'll know about local culture and people, and you'll have been through some major Melbourne attractions.

BIG Rule:

Give yourself at least 2 weeks to settle down and familiarize yourself with the new City

If you don't do anything else from this guide, do this one. The simple fact that you give yourself at least 2 weeks to get used to your new surroundings before you "have to" do other things like study or work, will make huge difference.

Here is what I suggest you do during the first 2 weeks after you arrive in Melbourne:

Day #1 and #2: “Take it easy”

If you arrive by plane from a different time zone, you’ll be jet legged. Different people experience jet leg differently. As an average, it takes 3 days to get over jet leg.

Even if you arrive from the same time zone, I recommend you take the first couple of days easy. Move into your accommodation, unpack and settle down. If you miss anything in the house, get it organized. Like food and Internet. You need to eat. Find the closer supermarket or local store and go shopping.

Go for long walks around “your suburb” during the day. It helps with getting over jet leg and you’ll familiarize yourself with your immediate surroundings. You’ll be able to find your way around your house and to get back to where you live. After two days, you’ll be a local and that will make you feel good.

Day #3: Get familiar with the place of your studies or work

By now, you’ll feel much better. It’s time to go and have a look where you’ll be spending your working hours. Find your way to and from there. Hop on a train, bus, tram or in a car, whatever means of transport you’ll be using, and visit the place. I suggest, you’ll travel in peak hours at least one way, so that you get a feeling how crowded the public transport gets or how busy and slow the traffic is. Time the trip. How long it takes to get there in peak hours.

Once you get to your study/work place, spend at least two hours wandering around. If you can get in the building – great! Go in. Walk around the area. Have a coffee or lunch nearby. Again, get a feel for the place, so that next time you go there, you’ll know your way around and you’ll feel comfortable even on your first day of uni or work. Don’t let anybody who knows the place lead you. Go on your own. Find your way. Ask the strangers for directions. Melbourne is a safe place and people are generally happy to help. Get a feel for it right from the beginning.

Day #4: Planning Day – Plan Next 7 days

By now you should be pretty much over your jet leg and familiar with your immediate surroundings. It’s time to get ready for next 7 days of exploring and experiencing what Melbourne is all about.

Because you are brand new here, it might take you a while to get your head around maps, locations, public transport etc etc. Today is the day when you get it done – all in one day.

First things first – you need:

- To have access to Internet
- Notepad and pen
- Map of Melbourne – CBD and zone 1

If you don’t have any one of these items, get them before you start your planning.

Step 1:

Read through day #5 to #12 in this guide and get an overview of where you'll be going over next 7 days. There is no "correct order". You can change the order of the days as you wish or as other circumstances might force you. For example, if it's raining it might not be a good day for a bike ride or barbeque.

Step 2:

I provided some useful web links in the guide that will take you to websites with detailed information. Explore the links and make notes.

Step 3:

Plan how you'll be getting around.

Timetables for Public transport:

- Trains timetables - <http://www.metrotrains.com.au/>
- All the rest, including buses and trams - <http://www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au/>

Step 4:

Plan the order of "7 Days to Explore Melbourne" as it will suit you and your friends, if you plan on taking someone with you.

Days #5 to #12: 7 Days to Explore Melbourne

This might be the most important week of your life in Melbourne. I am serious. Following seven days will be crucial to your happiness and satisfaction while living in Melbourne.

During next seven days you'll transform from being "a complete stranger" into "I've been living here for a while". There is a huge difference between the two. Some people spend months even years in "the stranger" phase. That's a very unhappy, sad and lonely existence. You do not want to stay in this phase long. The sooner you overcome it, the better for you.

Next seven days are designed to get you out of "the stranger" phase once and for all. Here is what you do:

Visit some of Melbourne's top "must see" places in 7 days. I have created a sample timetable for you below. It groups the places and activities logically. For example, if two places are close to each other it might make sense to visit them in one day.

IMPORTANT!

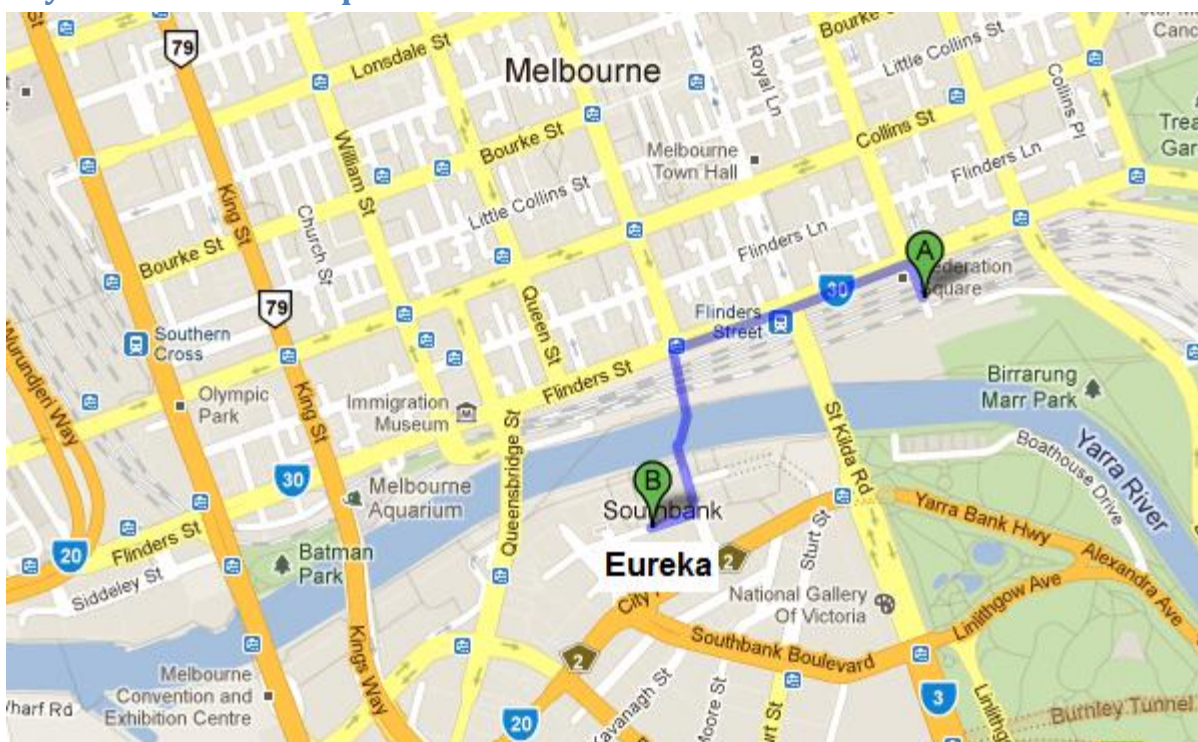
*Before you start planning your trips I want to give you one word of warning – if you have some family or friends already living in Melbourne, do NOT take them with you. That's right. Spend this week on your own or with friends who are brand new to Melbourne as well as you are. There is a good reason for it – **YOU need to do the explorations for YOURSELF**. No one can do it for you.*

There is only one exception to this – any picnics or barbeques are always better with friends. If you can do this with an Australian family or friends, that would be the best.

Other than that, sooner you get to know the city you just arrived in, the better for your wellbeing. You cannot really get to know it if you let others “hold your hand” all the time. You have to get out on your own. Why not to do it right at the beginning? There is nothing to wait for.

If you are worried about your safety, please know that all the places I am describing in this guide are safe. Generally speaking, Melbourne is very safe place to be. Anybody can move around and be safe. If you really don't want to travel on your own from the dinner after dark, catch a taxi.

Day #5: Federation Square & Southbank & Eureka Tower



Federation square is the main meeting place in Melbourne CBD. Walk through the exhibitions and galleries (they are free). Sit down and have lunch at one of the cafe's there.

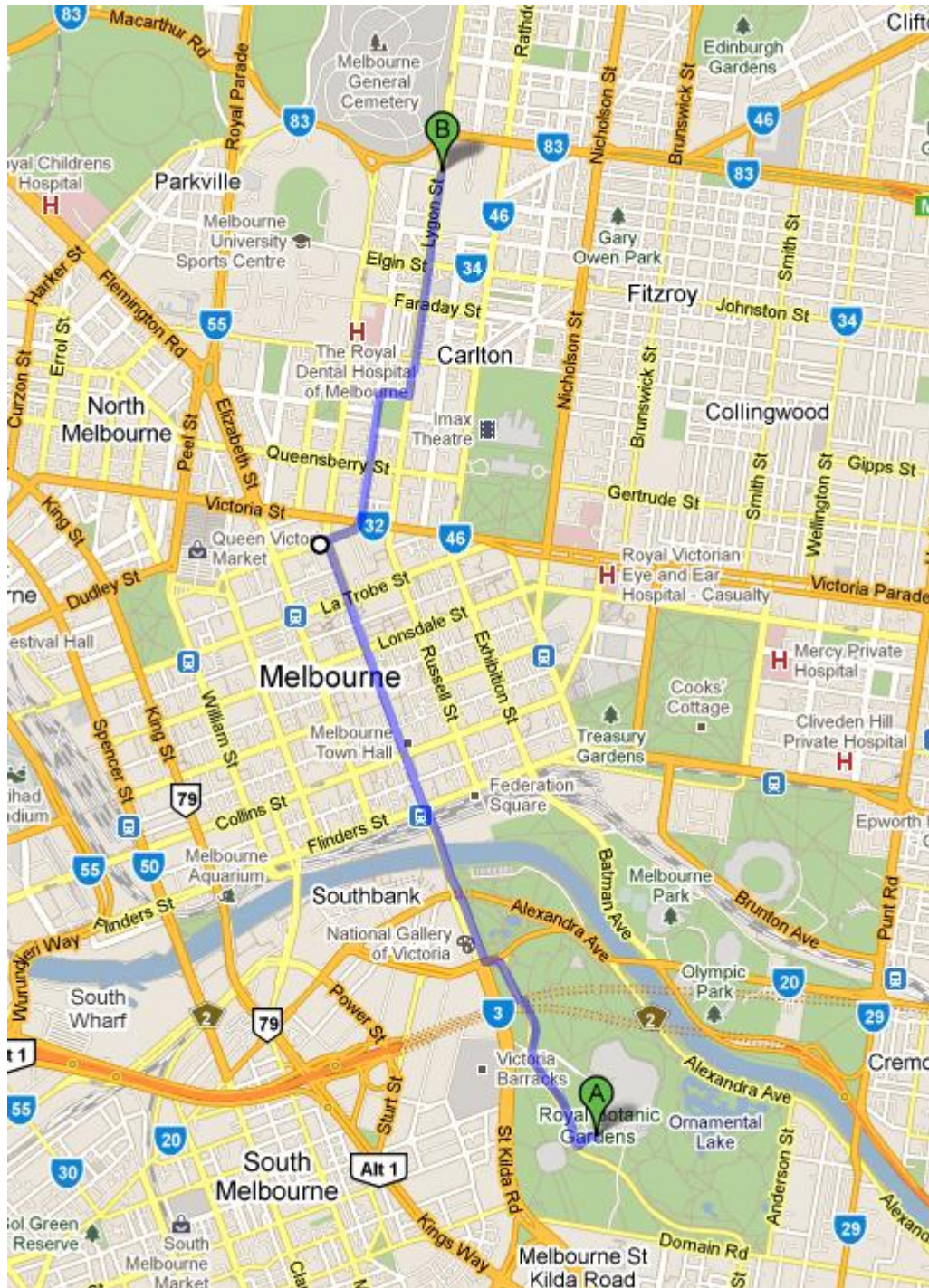
<http://www.fedsquare.com/>

Cross the river and walk along the Southbank - <http://www.melbourne.com.au/southban.htm>

Visit Eureka tower – that's the best view of Melbourne you can get.

<http://www.eurekaskydeck.com.au/>

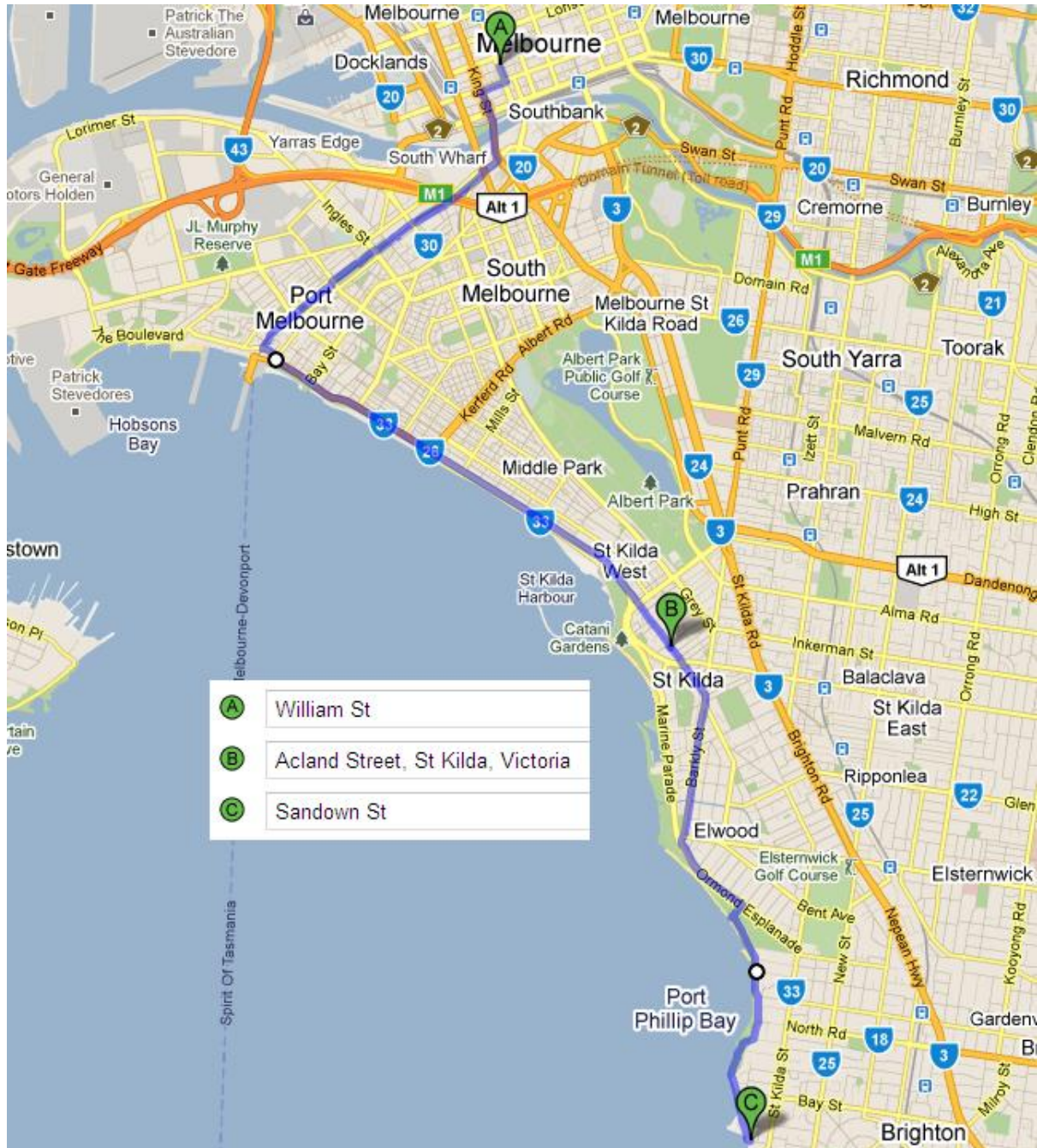
Day #6: Royal Botanical Gardens & Lygon Street



- Take a train to Flinders Street station. Cross the river and walk to the botanical gardens - <http://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/> They are huge! Just walk around, lay down on the lawns and breathe in the atmosphere. You can spend hours there. If you have friends/relatives take them with you and have a picnic.
- Later in the day walk back along the river and up Swanston Street to Lygon Street <http://www.melbourne.com.au/lygon.htm> You can catch a tram to Lygon Street if you like.
- Arrive there early evening and have a walk up and down the whole Lygon Street. Discover the atmosphere and on the way pick a place for dinner. It's as Italian as it gets in Melbourne.

It doesn't really matter which restaurant you pick, there are tens and tens of them. If it's hot summer night, that's the best. Any other time of year is good too – they all have outside heaters. Have a dinner in one of the restaurants.

Day #7: Bike ride & St. Kilda & Acland Street



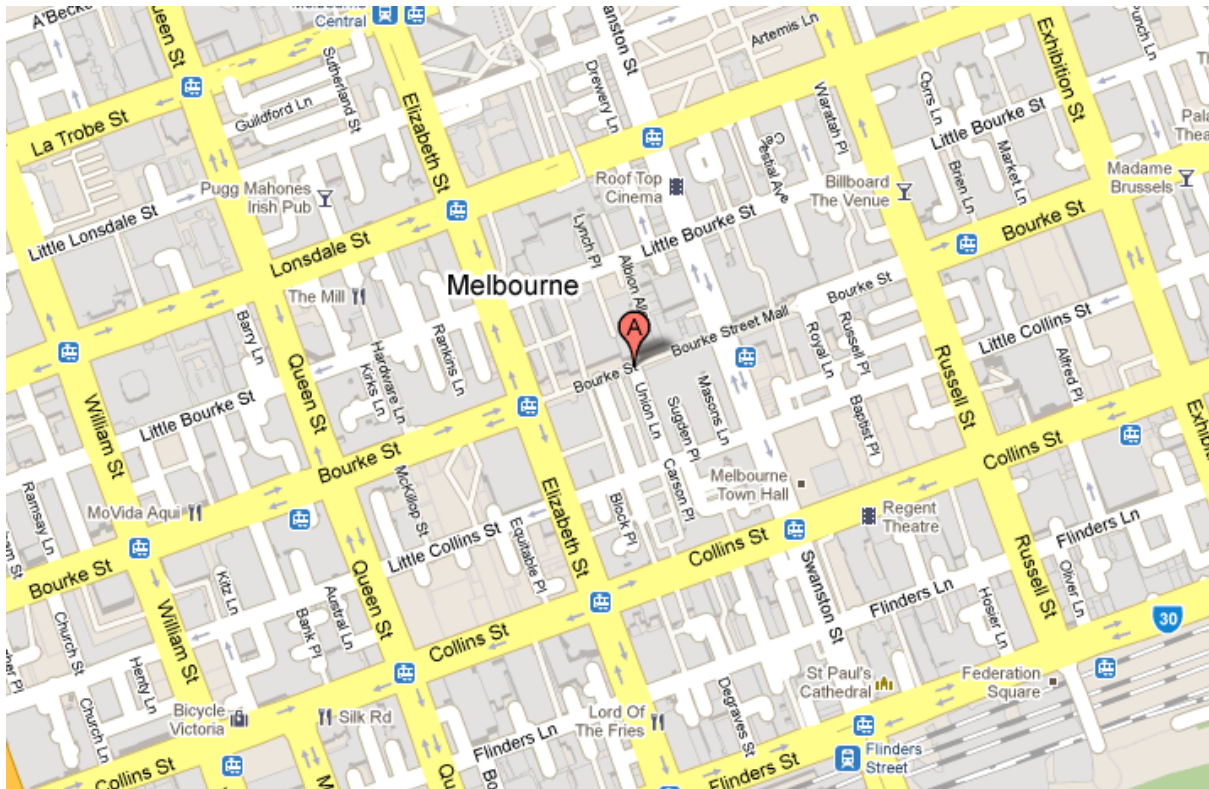
Hire a bike and go for a ride along the beaches of our inner bay side suburbs.

- I suggest you use Melbourne Bike Share - <http://www.melbournebikeshare.com.au/> There are many bike stations around the City and areas close by. You can pick and return a bike at any station. See the website for details and the map of stations.

- There is a bike path that goes for kilometres. Start in CBD, head towards the bay - Port Melbourne, then to St. Kilda, Elwood, Brighton. Go further if you like.
- On the way, stop in St. Kilda and have lunch/coffee/snack on Acland Street. That's another famous life style street in Melbourne

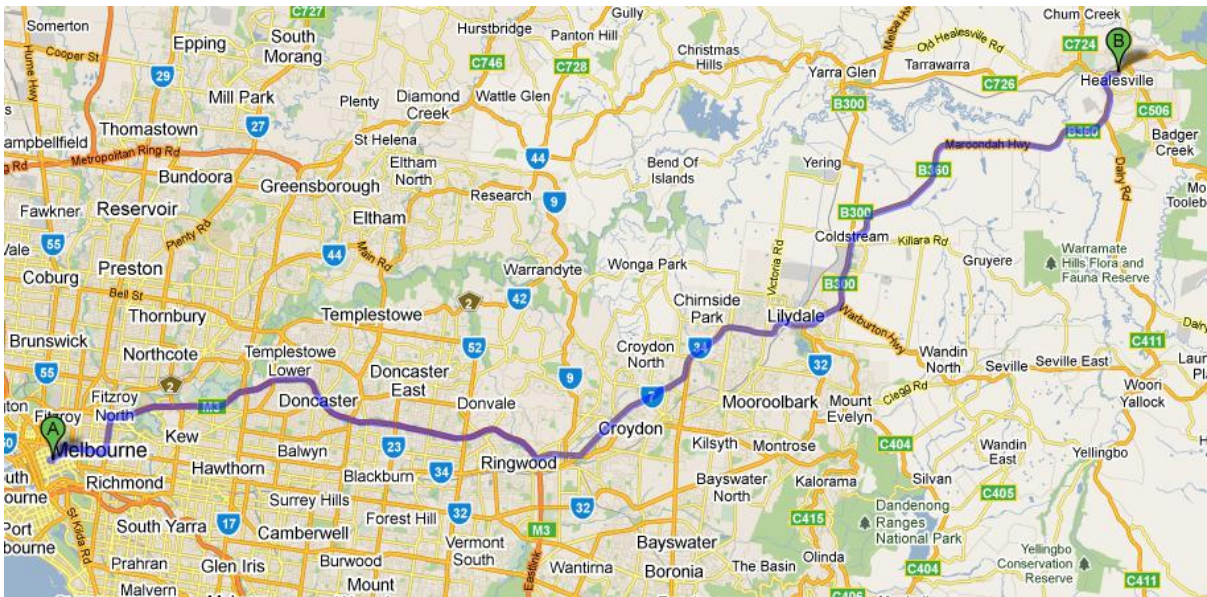
http://www.onlymelbourne.com.au/melbourne_details.php?id=6576

Day #8: Take the Tourist Tram & Go Shopping



- The brown tram running around the City is the tourist tram. It's free. You can hop on it anywhere. It will take you on a round trip around the City and you will get commentary as well. The whole trip takes about an hour and it's very well worth it - <http://www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au/route/view/1112>
http://www.onlymelbourne.com.au/melbourne_details.php?id=3900
- You can combine the tram ride with visiting the Centre of Shopping Universe in Melbourne – Bourke Street Mall. It is between Swanston and Elizabeth Streets. <http://www.australiangetaway.com/australia/travel/bourke-street-mall-map-s.html>
You cannot miss it. Lots and lots of big department stores, boutique shops and hundreds of shops of all kind hidden in the typical Melbourne alley ways nearby. Visit it. You can just walk through or spend as much money as you like. It doesn't matter. Just visit it and soak in the atmosphere.

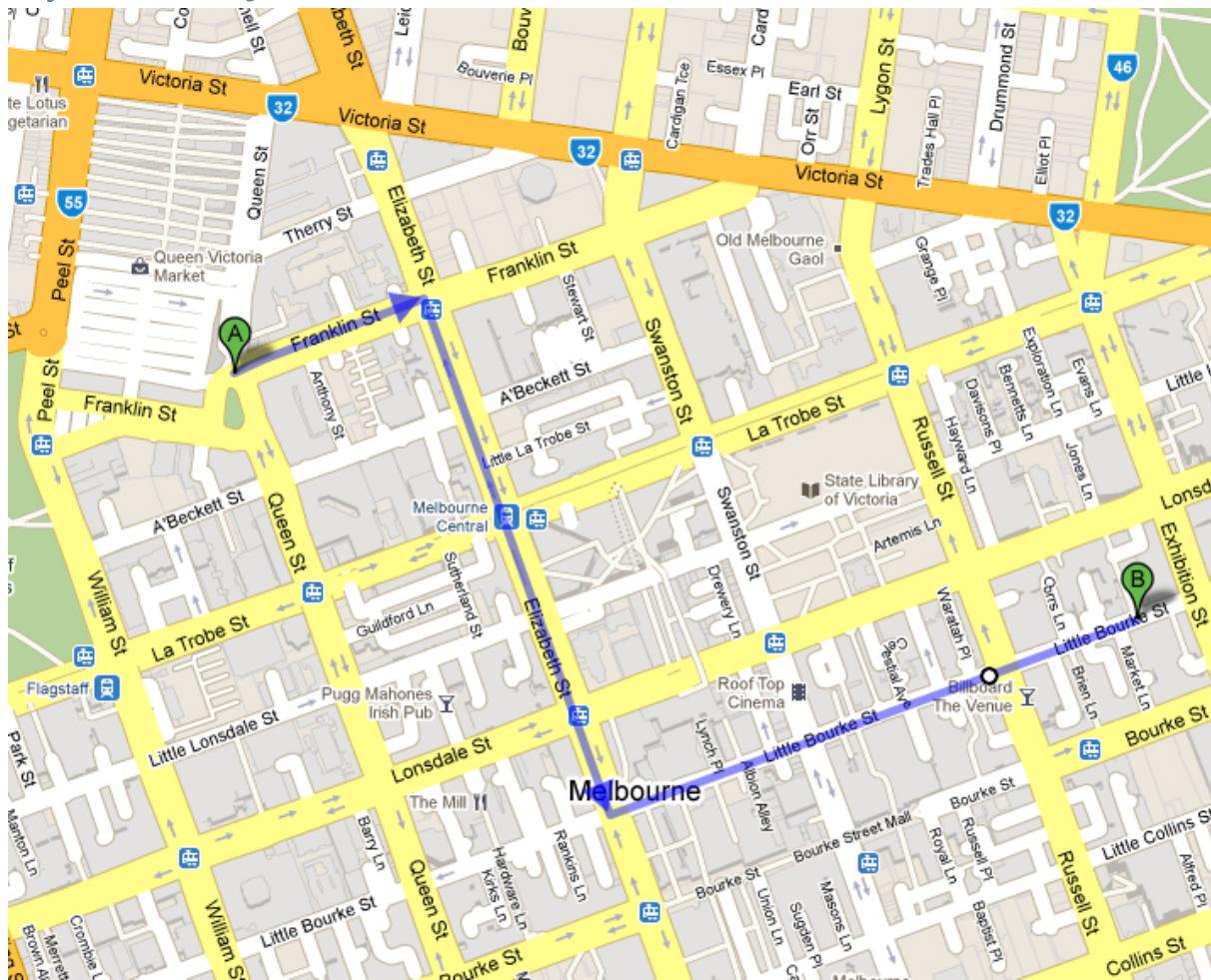
Day #9: Visit Healesville Sanctuary



<http://www.zoo.org.au/HealesvilleSanctuary>

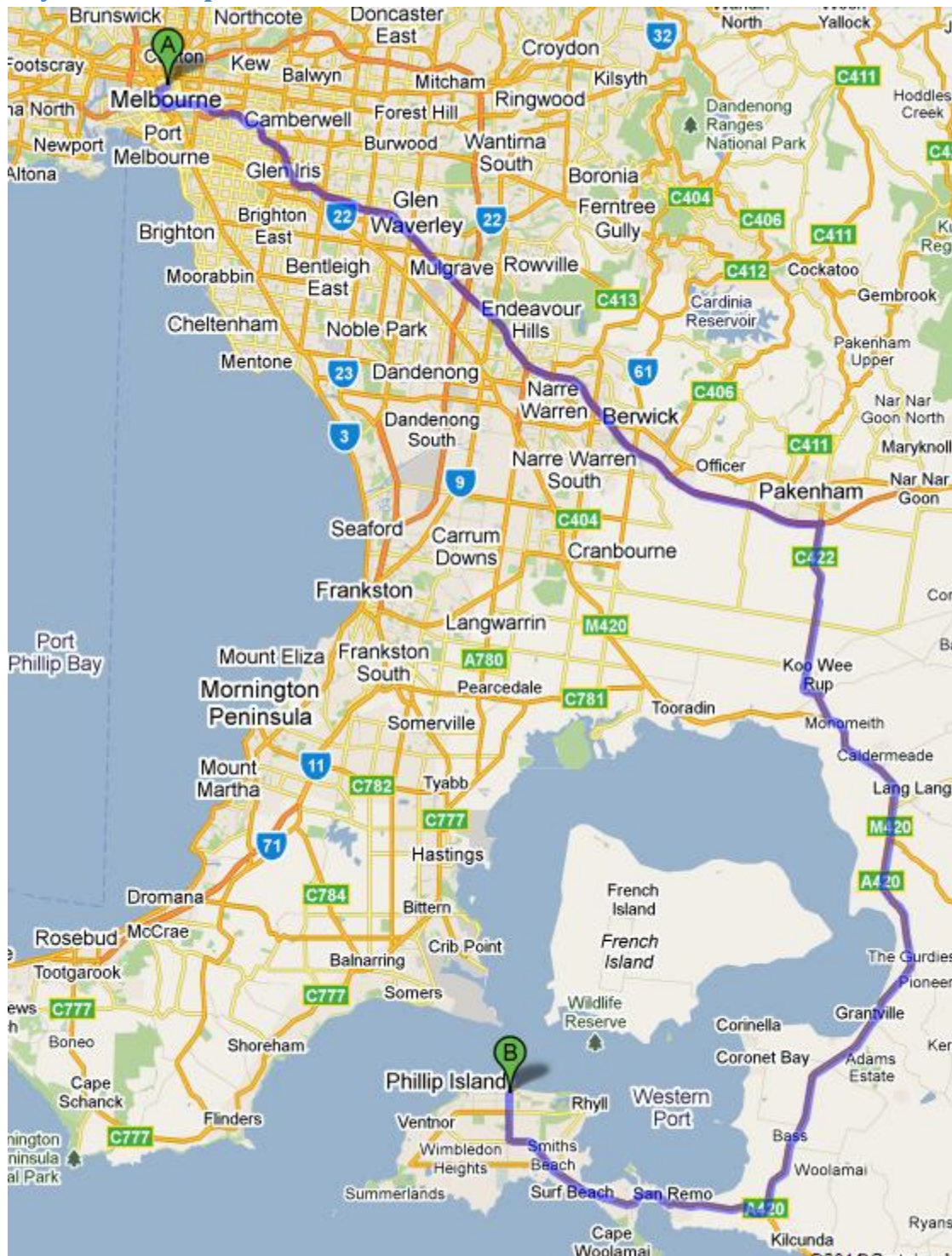
- Healesville Sanctuary is about an hour drive East from the City. If you don't have a car – hire one and go for a drive. If you don't drive, catch a train to Lilydale and then a bus, route 685 to Healesville.
- This is a whole day trip and very much worth it. Healesville Sanctuary is a ZOO with Australian native animals only. It's located in a real Australian bush on the edge of metropolitan Melbourne. It's not like any other ZOO you might have seen. Arrive as early in the morning as you can. There are many fascinating things to watch – rangers feeding platypuses, showcasing some of the most poisonous snakes on earth or flying eagles.
- If you can, ask a bunch of friends to join you. Bring a picnic or meat for a BBQ and spend a couple of hours in Badger creek reserve next door. It's one of the best public BBQ spots I know about.

Day #11: Visit Queen Victoria Market and China Town



- Melbourne is truly multicultural city. All nationalities and all religions call Melbourne home. It doesn't matter where you come from. Go out and get a taste of it as soon as you can.
- Queen Victoria Market is the largest open air market in Melbourne - <http://www.qvm.com.au/> It is located on the Northern edge of the CBD. You can get anything there, from the freshest fish, meat, vegetables and fruit, to clothing, toys and tourist souvenirs. Check the opening hours. It is closed on Wednesdays.
- China Town is right in the heart of the CBD, on Little Bourke Street - <http://chinatownmelbourne.com.au/> It's colourful and bright. There are so many eateries and restaurants. Pick any or a few and have lunch or dinner or both there. You haven't been to Melbourne if you haven't been to China Town.

Day #12: Phillip Island



Buy a 1 day bus tour from Melbourne and go to see Penguins' Parade. There are many tours operators and they provide a few varieties of tours with different inclusions like lunches, dinners or other attractions on the way. You can check this site: <http://holidaystays.tourstogo.com.au/philipp-island/tours/>

- Phillip Island is about 2 hours drive from Melbourne. It's a beautiful drive on its own. Penguins' Parade is one of the best tourist attractions within a day trip from Melbourne. It is a must see and it's lots of fun. Penguins come onshore after a day at the sea just after

sunset. Every day. They walk among spectators, just a few meters from you, going to their nests. It's something very different. It's spectacular. I've seen it many times. I take all my overseas visitors there and every time it's an amazing experience.

I suggest – just go. I am sure you'll enjoy it.

- Just make sure you'll take a warm jumper or jacket and a blanket with you. It does get very cold and windy out there while waiting for the penguins.

Day #13: Reflect on Last 7 Days

This is a day to relax and reflect on what you've done and seen over last week. How do you feel compared to a week ago? Tired, I bet!

Do you have a picture what Melbourne looks like?

This is a day to talk to your family and friends about your first 10 days in Melbourne. Share your stories with people you love and who are NOT in Melbourne. Put your pictures on facebook, send emails, call home. You know what I mean.

Also, invite everybody you know in Melbourne to celebrate with you tomorrow!

Day #14: Celebration Day

You made it! Congratulations!! Time to celebrate. You deserve it!

Invite all your friends and family. Invite people you might have met since you arrived 14 days ago. Get together and celebrate!

Day #15, Day #16, Day #100,

Your life in Melbourne has just begun. I wish you a happy, successful and memorable journey.

I hope that this guide has helped you in some ways. If you couldn't find something or have suggestions how to improve it, please drop me a line with your questions or comments. Please let me know how you went. I would love to hear your story.

Enjoy every single day in Melbourne.

To your happy life journey!

Vera Jancik

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- *Author of Guide to Melbourne, Australia*
- *Creator of "Vera's Tips Series" to a happy life in a new country*

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