

# Love it...

Love it or hate it, Spring Racing Carnival has arrived. Here are our top tips for enjoying - or avoiding - the day that stops a nation.

By Kate Tapping

## Top tips for Melbourne Cup lovers



### Go!

Nothing beats being at Flemington in person to cheer your horse past the winning post. General admission tickets are \$74, less for concession, and can be purchased through Ticketmaster.

### Birdcage in your own backyard

If you don't fancy heading out, re-create the members' car park at your place with a marquee, chicken sandwiches, and, of course, oodles of champagne.

### Country roads

Go bush and hang out with locals at the country races held all over Victoria - Bairnsdale, Moe, Echuca, Wangaratta, Yarra Glen, and the list continues. Sure it's a bit of more of a trek, but attractions include genuine country ambience, all the action from the big smoke on giant screens, live bands and activities for the kids.



# or leave it!

## Top tips for Melbourne Cup haters

### Head for the hills

The Dandenongs and the You Yangs are gorgeous this time of year and situated only a short drive from Melbourne. Soak up some nature far from Flemington's maddening crowds.

### Shop 'til you drop

It may be the race that stops a nation, but it doesn't stop Chadstone. Or Highpoint. Or any other major shopping centre. Yep, the shops will be open for business as usual. And with equestrian lovers

otherwise occupied, you may find the stores less crowded than normal.

### Act arty

National Gallery of Victoria, on St Kilda Road, is also open on Melbourne Cup day. With hundreds of interesting pieces of artwork permanently on display, and additional special and touring exhibitions, it's a great time to visit Australia's oldest public art gallery, which is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday this year.

### Read a book under a tree

What better way to spend a day off than stretched out in your favourite garden with a great book? If you haven't read them already try *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga, *The Old Devils* by Kingsley Amis or *Shantaram* by Gregory Roberts.

### Beach baby

If the sun is shining, head to one of Melbourne's great beaches and get your dose of sand and sea. Don't forget the sunscreen.



### Fashions on the field, a la Vinnies

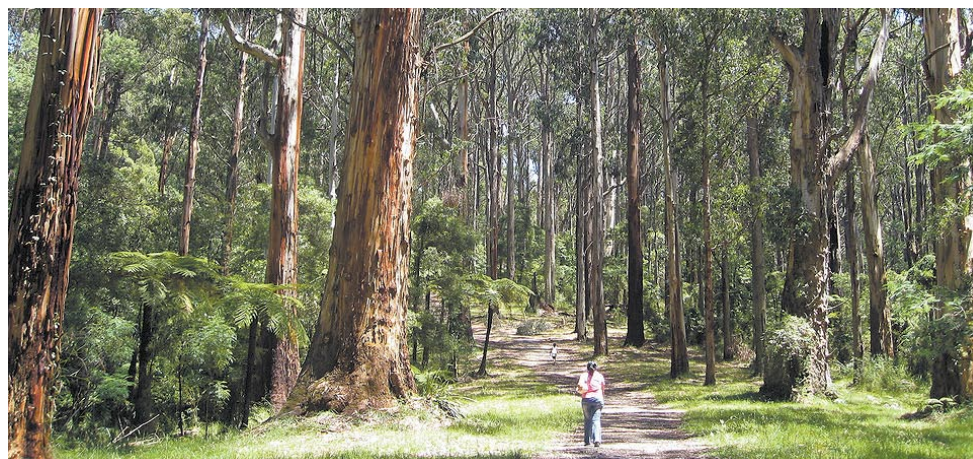
And if you're staying home with friends to enjoy the day, host a fashionista contest with a difference. Decide a budget and visit your local second-hand shop with a group of friends, see who can come up with the best outfit at your very own home grown fashion on the fields.

### Heads up

In the same vein, challenge your guests to create their own headgear using items they find around your house. Colander fascinator? Saucepan lid hat? Looking good with a bunch of grapes, an elegantly draped tea towel, or a paper tissue origami horse - what's there not to love?

### Street sweep

It's as Australian as a meat pie at the footy and a great way to get to know your neighbours. Buy the paper the day before, put a dollar on a horse, divide the pot between first, second and third place - and don't forget a little something for the 'wooden spoon' horse of the day.



How about a walk through the Dandenong ranges? Not a horse in sight!

### Footy fever

Missing the footy already? Next season too far away? Invite some like-minded friends over for the afternoon, slip in a DVD of the Grand Final, and pretend it's still September. Racing? What racing?

### Happy trails

If you're more action orientated than a voyeur, head ninety minutes east of Melbourne to Noojee Horse Safaris, and ride your own horse. Trail rides vary

from beginner to advanced, two hours to two days. Check out the full day ride, it has fantastic views, great riding and a home cooked lunch thrown in for good measure.

### Victoria's unofficial long weekend

OK so it's not officially a long weekend, but hands up if you're taking the Monday off work too. Well then, make the most of the long weekend and get away from the city. Barwon Heads has cute shops and cafés,

enough pottering to pleasurably wile away a relaxed extra long weekend.

### Charity begins at home

How much would you have spent - new clothes, headwear, champers, betting and taxis - if you'd gone to the races? Take the lot and give it to charity. Now how much better do we feel?

Kate Tapping is a Melbourne writer. Follow Kate at [simplicityandthecity.com](http://simplicityandthecity.com)