



Day or night, summer or winter – the view from The Strand in Williamstown never fails to impress

Photo: Kate Tapping

# Melbourne's Western Gems

Forget a break in Queensland, a quick trip over to the US or a weekend down on the Peninsula. If you haven't headed over the West Gate Bridge recently, you'll find you have all the ingredients for a great getaway right here on your own doorstep – and still have plenty of cash left over for a cab ride home.

By **Kate Tapping**

## The Golf Course

Set within acres of native grey box forest, and located only a thirty minute drive from Melbourne, Eynesbury Golf Course is a haven for those seeking a great day of golf. Ranked in Australia's Top 100 Golf Courses by both *Australian Golf Digest* and *Golf Australia*, a day at Eynesbury makes you feel like you've really escaped from the city. Follow up your 18 holes on the championship course, with a meal in the café, a drink in front of one of the open fires in the historic homestead, or even unwind with a game of billiards in the homestead's study – if only all days could be so civilised.

## The Spa

A holiday isn't complete without a little pampering. Head out to the historic Mansion Hotel and Spa at Werribee Park for pampering in luxurious surroundings. Prices are charged according to the treatment duration – if you're on a budget plan, go Monday to Thursday for a significant discount. If you have any energy left after your treatment there are loads of other attractions nearby including Werribee Park Mansion, Victoria State Rose Garden and Shadowfax Winery.

## The Beach

Head down to Williamstown Beach in the summer for a dose of sand and sun – don't forget the sunscreen. With a surf life-saving club and ice-cream kiosk up one end, and the more sophisticated Sirens Restaurant at the other, this is a beach with something for everyone. And of course, the beach is a great option for these winter months too – rug up, enjoy a walk along the Williamstown foreshore and wetlands, and then drop into The Rotunda for a hot chocolate to warm you up when you're done.

## The Foodies' Restaurant

Lauded consistently for their quality food – especially steaks – The Station Hotel in Footscray, has become a regular haunt for foodies

of the west. The creation of Sean Donovan, and winner of 3AW's "Pub of the Year", the Station is often booked out, so make sure you call to reserve. If you miss out on a table at the Station, other nearby options include Yarraville stalwart Café Fidama and new funky tapas bar Dig A Pony.

## The Travellers' Food

If you prefer your holiday food a little less mainstream, head to Footscray. Get in the mood with a walk through the Footscray market and surrounding speciality Asian food stores. Once you've worked up your appetite there are plenty of Vietnamese restaurants to choose from along Hopkins Street – go for one that has plenty of locals already enjoying the food.

## The Shopping

Forget DFO and Highpoint, for quality shopping in the west you want to hit the area's villages. Spend a morning browsing the quirky clothes, homewares and gifts shops in Yarraville Village or head further south to Williamstown for more options along Douglas Parade, Ferguson Street and Nelson Place. Four truly fabulous independent bookshops – The Sun Bookshop, The Younger Sun Bookshop, Book and Paper, and Enchanted by Books – are just one of the shopping attractions of the region.

## The Movies

When you've finished browsing Yarraville Village you may want to take in a movie at the iconic Sun Theatre, a fully renovated gem dating back to the thirties, now with six boutique art deco cinemas. Generally there is a selection of mainstream and niche movies to choose from – buy a drink at the bar and enjoy it while you watch your chosen flick.



Rug up for a walk along Williamstown beach in winter, or wait for summer to get your dose of sand and sun

Photo: Kate Tapping



Scienceworks is one of Melbourne's most economical, fun, and educational days out

Photo: James Geer, Source: Museum Victoria

## The Wildlife

For those hoping for something more adventurous than the movies, head further west and get a little wild at Werribee Zoo. Pretend you're on safari in Africa – safari bus and all – with plenty of lions, giraffes, hippos and rhinos, to keep the experience authentic. You can even stay overnight for a "Slumber Safari". Visit on summer weekends and stay late to picnic to the sounds of the African Rhythms band.

## The Culture

If your break out west needs a little culture, the Newport Substation is the place for you. Opened in 2009, the Substation is a community-based arts centre, housed in the renovated historic Newport substation. Offering an eclectic range of events including music, theatre, dance, circus and visual arts, upcoming events include the Substation Contemporary Art Prize 2011. Visit on the first Saturday of each month for the Substation Artists' Market where over forty local and regional artists sell and demonstrate their work.

## The Attractions

Come back from your trip smarter than you started with a visit to Scienceworks, Melbourne's science and technology museum, where hands-on participation is encouraged. Learn about dinosaurs, chemistry, weather, astronomy and more. With tickets only \$8 for adults, and children up to 16 years old free, this has to be one of Melbourne's cheapest, most interesting – and educational – options for a family day out.

So next time you're looking for a way to escape the city, maybe look a little closer to home and ask yourself: is there anything more you would need in a day, a weekend, or a week away? There is really only one answer, my friends – go west.

## More of the best of the west

For those with champagne tastes... Catch the seaplane from Williamstown for a breath-taking aerial view of Melbourne and the coastline. Find out more at [www.seaplane.com.au](http://www.seaplane.com.au)

... but without the budget to match... Bring a picnic rug from home, grab some fish and chips, and snare your vantage point on Nelson Place or The Strand in Williamstown. Winter or summer – daylight, twilight or night time – the million dollar views of Melbourne's city skyline are unparalleled... and free.



Follow up 18 holes of golf on Eynesbury's championship golf course, with a drink or a meal at the heritage homestead

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