



yarra river *precinct* *arts walk*





YARRA RIVER PRECINCT ARTS WALK

Melbourne is a city crammed full of art: traditional and contemporary; static and living. The Yarra River Precinct is the hub of Melbourne's artistic and cultural scene. Probably nowhere in the world is there such a concentration of high quality visual and performing arts venues, quite apart from a very generous sprinkling of public art and exciting architecture on display.

The short walk can take anything from 90 minutes to a whole day, depending on how much time you want to spend at each venue. In fact, for the arts lover, it could provide an entire week of enjoyment and stimulation.

The time indicators on the map page show the approximate walking distance between each section of the route.

SOUTHGATE

Start at Southgate, the dining and retail complex on the banks of the Yarra in Southbank. Opened in 1992, this three-level dining and retail venue was designed from the outset to feature local artists' interpretation of Melbourne.

Southgate is currently undergoing a \$26 million redevelopment which will provide enhanced areas for visitors to dine, shop and explore the centre while taking in its breathtaking city views.

During the period of works, some artworks may be relocated to other areas of the centre, or taken into storage while construction works take place. The following details are therefore subject to change. For further information on the location of artworks at the time of your visit, please contact Southgate on 03 9686 1000.





SOUTHGATE CONTINUED

At the main entrance to Southgate, be greeted by 'Ophelia', a sculpture consisting of mosaic tiles, by celebrated artist Deborah Halpern. Deborah usually begins her mosaic work with sketches, although not all pieces are planned. Next, the figure is created from steel mesh and sprayed with expanding foam. Deborah then carves the shape of her piece and covers it with a fibro-glass skin. Finally, ceramic tiles are adhered to the skin to create the mosaic sculpture. All Deborah's pieces are decorated with a "big face." This is her signature and it gives her artworks life and emotion.

Also on the River Level of Southgate is Des Norman's 'Victorian Melbourne', a representation of the decorative features on Victorian terrace houses affixed to a wall next to the public lifts.



SOUTHGATE CONTINUED

Take a lift up to the mid and upper levels of Southgate to view the corresponding walls that are home to Elizabeth Gower's 'Just Looking' and Margarita Krivitsky's 'Unexpected Harmony', also acrylic paintings on board.

On the upper level mall, visit 'Maggie', a sculpture made from ciment findu – a type of calcium aluminate cement – by acclaimed artist Peter Corlett. Another well known piece by Peter Corlett is the 'Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop' statue in St Kilda Road, opposite the Arts Centre.

Proceeding down the stairs from the upper to mid-levels, look out for the sculptural gates 'Forbidden Areas' by Maurice Hughes.

Looking left towards the Yarra River and sitting upon her own balcony is Loretta Quinn's sculpture, 'Crossing the First Threshold'.





SOUTHGATE CONTINUED

There is a sense of 'folk religion' in much of her art, and whether the symbols derive from the mystery of a Latin mass or the animist universe, a Celtic myth or a Japanese garden, she says they are 'visual references to which others will relate'.

At the eastern end of the Southgate complex, on the river promenade, is the imposing tubular sculpture 'Dervish 1981' by acclaimed Australian-American artist Clement Meadmore (1925-2005).

Immediately behind the Southgate complex is **St John's Lutheran Church**, a beautiful modern structure with Byzantine overtones, designed by David Cole and built in 1991. It's open during office hours for inspection and contemplation. A regular series of classical concerts are held throughout the year in the church.



ARTS PRECINCT

Stay on the top level of Southgate and head east towards Princes Bridge to enter the hub of Melbourne's arts precinct, comprising the Arts Centre's **Hamer Hall** (1982) and the lattice-spired **Theatres** (1984), and the **National Gallery of Victoria International** (1968). Fittingly, they were built on the site of Melbourne's early circus and entertainment site. Some of the construction called upon feats of engineering to enable the buildings to withstand the notoriously unstable and corrosive silt of the ancient river bed.

Hamer Hall is a premier concert venue (currently undergoing extensive refurbishment). The Theatres houses the State Theatre and the smaller Playhouse and Fairfax Studio, as well as Gallery 1. There is free entry to the public areas of the Arts Centre buildings and the foyers of





ARTS PRECINCT CONTINUED

the Theatres building include an extensive array of visual art, sculpture and tapestries. Guided tours (fees apply) are held Monday to Saturday at 11am, and a back stage facilities tour can be undertaken at 12.15pm on Sundays. The public spaces around the Arts Centre buildings include several significant sculptures. For Arts Centre programming, visit www.theartscentre.com.au.

Sitting on the lawn between Hamer Hall and the Theatres building is Berlin-born, Melbourne artist Inge King's 'Forward Surge'. She creates innovative, beautiful and exciting sculptures in bronze, steel and stainless steel. This welded 6.35mm steel sculpture was installed in 1981.

The National Gallery of Victoria on St Kilda Road (NGV International) is the home of the



ARTS PRECINCT CONTINUED

Gallery's International collection, which is regarded as one of the finest in the country.

NGV International is open 10am-5pm, but closed on Tuesdays. There is free admission, although charges apply to some temporary exhibitions.

The third component of the Arts Centre, the [Sidney Myer Music Bowl](#), can be found across St Kilda Road in the Kings Domain. Melbourne's beloved 'Bowl' was built in 1959 as an elegant outdoor concert venue and was extensively refurbished in 2001.

SOUTHBANK

Cross at the lights on St Kilda Road – just beyond the National Gallery of Victoria – and you will encounter the [Victorian College of the Arts](#).





SOUTHBANK

VCA is a faculty of the University of Melbourne. Established in 1972, it is one of Australia's major education and training grounds for our future performing and visual artists, as well as arts industry technicians.

The VCA provides a wonderful opportunity to see exhibitions, drama, dance, puppetry and music performances by Melbourne's emerging artists. They study in this veritable village of buildings, theatres and gallery spaces, spread over a full city block.

Most of the complex is not open to the public for casual wandering, but the [Margaret Lawrence Gallery](#) in Grant Street is a free gallery space open most days. You can also access details of the many low cost concerts and plays staged at the VCA by visiting www.vca.unimelb.edu.au.



SOUTHBANK CONTINUED

Southbank Boulevard runs between the National Gallery and the VCA. It's the location for Melbourne's newest arts venues: the Melbourne Theatre Company's [Sumner Theatre](#) and the Melbourne Recital Centre which are enclosed within a distinctive lattice of white tubular steel.

The [Melbourne Recital Centre](#) features a wide range of concerts, held in both its showpiece [Elizabeth Murdoch Hall](#) and in its smaller Studio. Details can be found at www.melbournerecital.com.au. The Sumner Theatre program can be found at www.mtc.com.au.

Across the road from the Recital Centre, on the corner of Southbank Boulevard and Sturt Street, is the ABC Southbank studios and nearby on the corner of Sturt and Kavanagh Streets is the [The Australian Ballet Centre](#) (both are not open to the general public).





SOUTHBANK CONTINUED

Turn left into Sturt Street and walk about 500 metres to visit the [Australian Centre for Contemporary Art \(ACCA\)](#) (free entry) and, next door to it, the [CUB Malthouse Theatre](#). The CUB Malthouse building was built in 1892 as a brewery and malting house. Its program details can be found at www.malthousetheatre.com.au. The distinctive exterior and interiors of ACCA is a past major winner in the Australian Architectural Awards. The forecourt features 'The Vault' by Ron Robertson-Swan, which, after several locations and controversy, has found an appropriate permanent home at ACCA.

YARRA PROMENADE

Retrace your steps back along Sturt Street and Southbank Boulevard to rejoin the Yarra's Southbank Promenade at the [Eureka Tower](#).



YARRA PROMENADE CONTINUED

The 24 carat gold-capped tower represents the wealth of the 19th century goldfields, upon which Melbourne's prosperity was first based. The slash of red on the gold signifies the blood let at the 1854 Eureka uprising on the Ballarat goldfields. The [giant golden bees](#) adorning the river side of the building's lower floors depict the enterprise and human energy inside the landmark building. In the forecourt of Eureka Tower you will see a rock sculpture 'No One Man's Land' by David Long (2009). It represents mankind struggling to support and grapple with a challenging eco system.

Now, walk to the river and you will pass the metal sculpture next to the Esso building, 'Shearwater' by Inge King. It reflects the Australian landscape, with shifting patterns of light and shade thrown by natural vegetation.



YARRA PROMENADE CONTINUED

Walk westwards along the Promenade. The polished flat stone sculpture on the grass is titled *'World Within, World Without'*. Created by Helen Bodycomb in 2010, it depicts the constellations above Victoria at 11am on 16 November 2009, when the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, issued his national apology to the 'Forgotten Australians'. Spanning the river from Queensbridge Square to Northbank is the 1888 *Sandridge Bridge*, which was converted in 2008 to a pedestrian thoroughfare. The aluminium sculptures on the bridge titled *'The Travellers'* were designed by Lebanese artist Nadim Karam and represent the waves of immigration to Victoria since the 1830s. The only sculpture that doesn't move is located in Queensbridge Square, because it represents the ancient culture of Indigenous Australians, whose roots go back



YARRA PROMENADE CONTINUED

40-60,000 years; the oldest continuous culture in the world. The story of Victoria's immigration is recounted in 128 glass panels on Sandridge Bridge and in the beautiful Immigration Museum (former Customs House), just across the road in Flinders Street.

Continue west along Southbank Promenade, crossing Queensbridge Street to inspect *'The Guardians'* outside the eastern end of Crown Entertainment Complex. These two large sculptures carved from Italian statuary marble and clad with ceramic tiles were created by, a then, local artist Simon Rigg. The square based mounting of the larger statue depicts the four elements. The smaller Guardian reveals a woman's head looking through the hole of the larger sculpture, and hints at the source of all the images, beyond our plane of vision.





NORTHBANK

Cross the river from Crown to the Melbourne Aquarium, using the footbridge, and head back towards the city centre along Northbank. Immediately after the aquarium you enter Enterprize Park, the site of the 1834 European landing in Melbourne. It was also the place where sailing ships were able to turn around in the river during the early days of the colony.

At the rear of Enterprize Park, next to the railway overpass, a 30 pole installation called 'Scar – A Stolen Vision' was created by eight Indigenous artists. The painted, carved and decorated wooden poles are poignant reminders of the thousands of years that this land has been occupied by Aboriginal people.

The reconstructed wharf at the east end of the park features five carved wooden and metal



NORTHBANK CONTINUED

figureheads, collectively known as 'Constellation'. Depicting a dragon, a woman, a bird, a man and a lion, they are the work of Bruce Armstrong and Geoffrey Bartlett and evoke the spirit of the early sailing ships.

Now, take a leisurely ten minute walk along the Northbank of the river, across Queensbridge Street, and onto Flinders Walk. As you wander under Sandridge Bridge, look to the right to view 'Ecophene' by Karen Abernethy and Kiko Gianocca. The water installation under the bridge re-inhabits a place where the destruction of the Yarra River's waterfall near this point in 1883 had irreversible consequences for the river's ecology.

Pass under Princes Bridge and enter Birrarung Marr, Melbourne's newest parkland.





NORTHBANK

FEDERATION SQUARE

NORTHBANK CONTINUED

On the gravelled upper level of the walk in Birrarung Marr you will come across **Birrarung Wilam** (River Camp), a work by Indigenous artists Vicki Couzens, Lee Darroch, and Treahna Hamm that interprets stories from local Indigenous communities. Two tall, intricately carved message sticks mark the site that features a textured, twisting pathway representing the eel, a traditional food of groups camped by the river. Large rocks incised with animal drawings enclose a performance space, while metal shields represent the five clans of the Kulin Nation.

On your left in the old redbrick railway building is **Art Play**. It offers a range of creative workshops, where children aged between 2 and 13 years can work alongside professional artists in a unique environment, encouraging play, creativity and collaboration (fees apply).



NORTHBANK CONTINUED

Keep walking along the path to reach two interesting art features: Deborah Halpern's imposing 'Angel' tiled sculpture and the **Sea Wall** viewing area located on the bend in the river.

Head up the grassy knoll to the top of Birrarung Marr and stand among the **Federation Field of Bells**, installed in 2001 to commemorate the Centenary of the Federation of Australia. The 43 bells ring at pre-programmed times.

FEDERATION SQUARE

To finish your arts journey of the Yarra River Precinct, retrace your steps to Melbourne's meeting place, **Federation Square**. An Australian award-winning piece of contemporary architecture and you can discover the story of how it was designed and built in a guided tour of the Square, offered Mondays to Saturdays at 2.30pm (fees apply).





FEDERATION SQUARE CONTINUED

Don't leave without visiting the National Gallery of Victoria at Federation Square ([The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia](#)). NGV Australia is open 10am-5pm, closed Mondays. Like NGV International, admission is free but charges may apply to some temporary exhibitions. Also take a look at [Kirra Gallery](#) in The Atrium, which features a stunning commercial collection of Australian glass art and glassware (free entry).

Finally, to complete your art journey, visit the [Australian Centre for the Moving Image \(ACMI\)](#) on the north edge of Federation Square. It depicts the development of Australian film as an art form, and includes some exciting contemporary digital art exhibitions to bring you right into the 21st century (free entry; some fees may apply to exhibitions).



Above image by David Simmonds

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