



yarra river *precinct*

sports walk





YARRA RIVER SPORTS WALK

Melbourne is often referred to as one of the world's great sporting cities. There are so many world-class facilities within walking distance.

Melburnians love nothing more than rugging-up in winter, or slip-slop-slapping during summer, to enjoy this city's enviable reputation for hosting thrilling displays of sporting prowess.

The Yarra River Precinct is the home of Melbourne's major sporting venues and this 90 minute walk beside the quietly flowing watercourse provides an excellent introduction to them.



Start at the Southern end of Princes Bridge on St Kilda Road, where you get a bird's eye view of the rowing precinct.

ROWING

Rowing activity has been held on this stretch of the Yarra for more than 150 years. Three rowing sheds were featured on an 1864 plan of the city and this area now features seven boat sheds, the oldest of which is the Melbourne University Rowing Club, built in 1909.



Other rowing sheds are located further upstream in Como Park, South Yarra.

Most of Melbourne's major private schools row regularly on the Yarra and there are many well established rowing clubs for older athletes. Rowing practice happens early in the morning



ROWING CONTINUED

until about 10am, and then after 3pm. The sight of a rowing scull emerging through an early morning mist and the sounds of rowing coaches cycling along the banks with megaphones in hand is quintessentially Melbourne. Major rowing events held on the Yarra include February's 'Henley on Yarra' and the 'Head of the Yarra' in November.

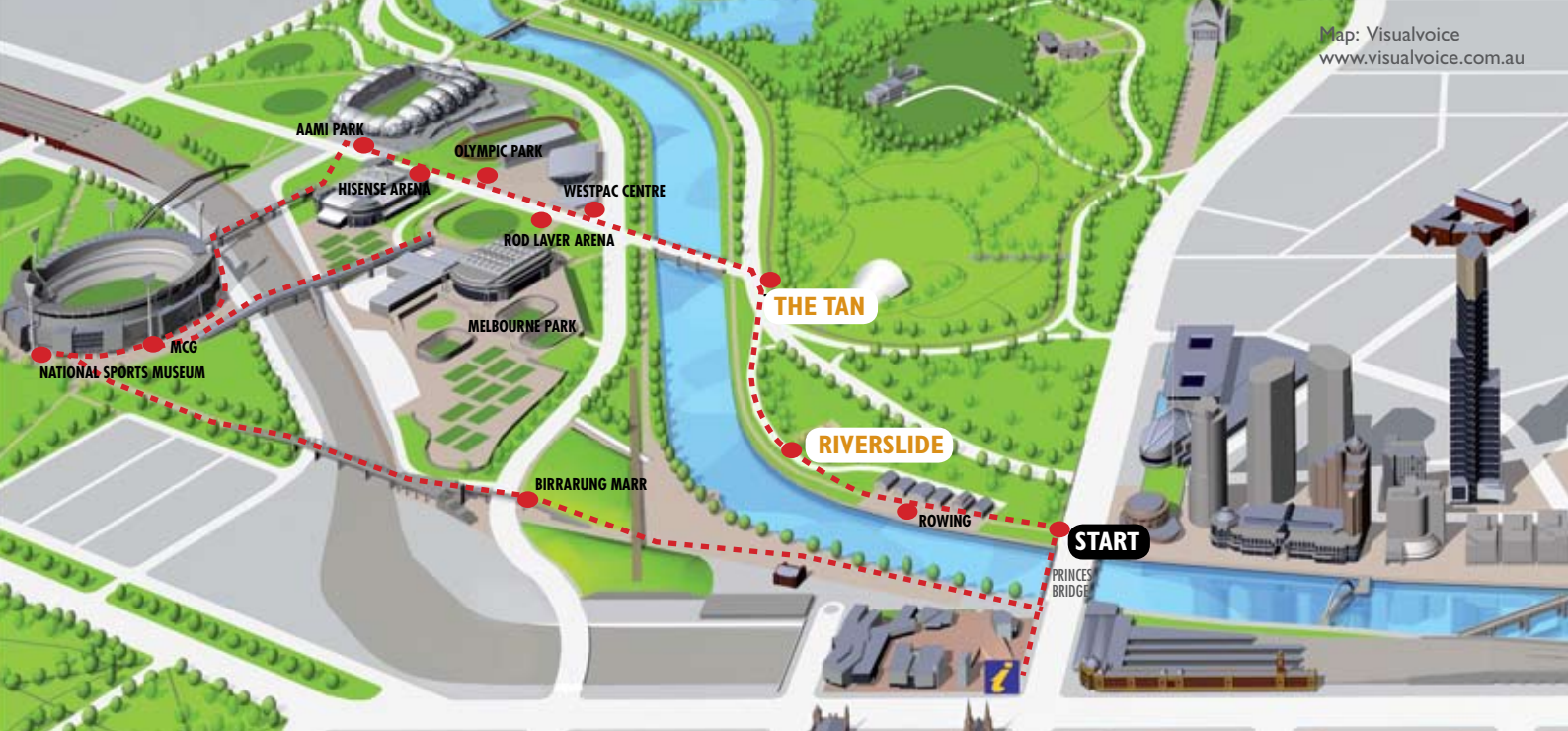
The first **Henley-on-Yarra Regatta** was held in 1904. It quickly became one of the biggest and most popular annual sporting, social and fashion events in Melbourne, regularly attracting half a million spectators. An interpretative panel on the path tells the story of the Henley. The art deco Judging Box, located near the finish line of the old Henley Regatta, was built in 1930 as a memorial to oarsmen killed in WWI.



The social aspect of Henley was taken-over in the mid 1950s by the Moomba Festival, which still continues every March as 'Melbourne Moomba Waterfest'. The biggest event of Moomba is the national waterskiing competition, held on this section of the river.

However, the river's greatest moment came in the **2006 Commonwealth Games**. For two weeks it was filled with spectacular floating replicas of fish, which represented the competing countries of the Games.

This section of the Yarra's southern bank, with the Canary Palms of the Alexander Gardens on the right, was created between 1896 and 1900 by widening and straightening work to alleviate flooding of the banks and to fill the lagoons created by a mid 1800s brickworks.



RIVERSLIDE

This expanse of fenced concrete was opened in 2001 by the City of Melbourne as a skating and extreme sports facility. Skateboarders travel from all over Greater Melbourne to test their skill and stamina. It makes for great action viewing.



'THE TAN' RUNNING TRACK

As you approach the Swan Street Bridge, you will see a running trail across Alexander Avenue.

This is Melbourne's famous 'Tan', so named because of its surface of tan-coloured stone aggregate. The 3.87 km running track, which runs parallel to the perimeter fence of the Botanic Gardens, was originally a horse track for Melbourne's well-heeled residents.

When running the The Tan you could bump into professional track athletes and AFL footballers. Running greats such as Hicham El Guerrouj, Steve Ovett, Cathy Freeman, Steve Moneghetti, Robert de Castella and Sonia O'Sullivan have all rubbed shoulders with the general public on The Tan. The Tan Time Trails is a major public event held every February to raise money for medical research. The current record is 10 minutes and 12 seconds, set by Craig Mottram in 2004.





WESTPAC CENTRE VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT COLLINGWOOD FOOTBALL CLUB

Cross to the Yarra's north bank via the Swan Street Bridge, and head eastwards along Olympic Boulevard (Swan Street).

Originally built to house the swimming pool for the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, the Westpac Centre is the only remaining major stadium structure from that time. It was the first Olympic pool to have a roof.

While the outside of the building still reflects its original and heritage-listed design, internally it has been re-modeled to become a sports administration and training centre, offering efficient operational and athlete services. The Victorian Institute of Sport and the Collingwood Football Club have based their business and athlete operations within the Centre.



MELBOURNE PARK

This complex of sport arenas is one of the world's great nuclei of sports activity: Rod Laver Arena, Hisense Arena, Olympic Park and AAMI Park.

ROD LAVER ARENA

Originally known just as 'Centre Court', it was completed in 1988 as part of the original National Tennis Centre and renamed Rod Laver Arena in 2000, to honour one of Australia's tennis greats and a winner of two Grand Slams. In 1988, the venue's moveable roof – formed by two rolling sections, each spanning the court with arched trusses – made it one of the most high-tech arenas in the world.

With seating for 15,000, it is the centrepiece of the Australian Open, but it also plays host to a



ROD LAVER ARENA CONTINUED

wide range of sports and entertainment events, from tennis matches to international rock stars and motorbike super-cross. Removable seating at the southern end of the arena converts the venue from a continuous seated bowl for sporting events to a three sided concert venue. Protective flooring is used to transform the venue from tennis to concert mode.

The high point each year at Rod Laver Arena is when it plays host to The Australian Open Tennis, which regularly attracts more than one million visitors during the two week tournament.

One hour guided tours of Rod Laver Arena are held Monday to Friday 11.30am, 1pm and 2.30pm, and on weekends at 11.30am and 1pm.



OLYMPIC PARK STADIUM

This venue was originally built as a warm-up track for the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games and it also featured a velodrome and a second sports ground.

Over the years it has played host to athletics, soccer, speedway, cycling, rugby league and even greyhound racing.

These days its premier event is the annual Telstra A-Series Athletics, as well as many school athletics carnivals. The stadium has a capacity of 18,500, including seating for 11,000.



HISENSE ARENA



This 13,100 m² venue was completed in 2000. It is an extremely versatile venue: 250 metre cycling track, a Plexicushion tennis court, concert quality acoustics, and innovative seating for up to 10,500 people – all designed to ensure excellent viewing of the action at all times. It can be readily changed for almost any event – from ice skating to opera. The state-of-the-art venue also has a retractable roof, which can open or close in less than 10 minutes.

AAMI PARK



AAMI PARK CONTINUED



Melbourne's latest and most distinctively styled sports facility was built at a cost of \$267.5 million and opened in May 2010. The 30,050 seat venue features a distinctive cutting-edge bioframe design with a geodesic dome roof, which substantially covers the seating area and enables spectators to enjoy unobstructed views, free from support structures.



The stadium is ideal for all rectangular sports and is the home ground of the Melbourne Victory, Melbourne Heart Football Club's (A-League), Melbourne Storm Rugby League Club (NRL) and the new Melbourne Rebels franchise set to play in the Super 15 Rugby Union competition. It also plays host to Rugby League internationals. The stadium's permanent tenants include the Melbourne Football Club, Tennis Victoria, the Victorian Olympic Council, and the Victorian Rugby Union.



XVI OLYMPIAD PLAQUE

This bronze plaque shows the layout of the major facilities of the 1956 Olympic Games, held in Melbourne.

SPORTING SCULPTURES

On the next section of our walk you will find fine sculptures depicting people and moments that have contributed to Melbourne's legendary sporting status. Most are located on the concourse of the M.C.G.



This beautiful piece immortalises an act of sportsmanship that took place during the Australian Mile Championship of 1956, when John Landy stopped to help a fallen Ron Clarke. Despite the major disruption to his race, Landy went on to win the race, and the act has become part of Australian sporting lore.

MELBOURNE CRICKET GROUND

Use any of the three air bridges located behind Hisense and Rod Laver arenas to continue. All lead to the concourse of the M.C.G. From the bridge located between these arenas you can see the outer courts and practice courts of Australia's leading tennis venue.



Melbourne's love affair with sport dates back to September 1853, when Governor Latrobe made a grant of the 'Police Paddock' to the Melbourne Cricket Club. Since then it has become the beloved 'G' to Melburnians and it is known throughout the sporting world.

The first recognised Australian Rules football match in 1858, between Scotch College and Melbourne Grammar, was played in the surrounding parkland, using gum trees as posts.



MELBOURNE CRICKET GROUND CONTINUED



Image: Airship Solutions



It hosted Australia's first international cricket match in 1862 and the first Australia-England cricket test match in 1877. The stadium also hosted the Olympic Games in 1956 and the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Its annual high points are the Boxing Day Test (December 26-30) cricket match and the Australian Football League Grand Final, traditionally held on the last Saturday in September.

After many refurbishments over the years, the 'G' has a total capacity of just over 100,000 people and membership of the famous Melbourne Cricket Club also stands at 100,000-plus, with another 200,000 people on the waiting list. [Website: www.mcg.org.au](http://www.mcg.org.au)

Guided tours of the MCG are conducted on all non-match days from Gate 3 between 10am-3pm, departing every 30 minutes.



NATIONAL SPORTS MUSEUM

Melbourne Cricket Ground Enter via Gate 3, concourse level of the Olympic Stand, between light towers 1 and 2

Melbourne's love of sport and adoration of the elite sportsman is no more evident than in the National Sports Museum. More than 2500 objects related to the greatest moments in Australia's sporting history are on display, including Olympic history, Australian Football, cricket and an array of other sports.

The collection embraces the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame, the MCC Museum and the Champions Thoroughbred Racing Gallery. It also honours those Australians who have been elevated to the Sport Australia Hall of Fame since its inception in 1985. 'Game On' is a fully interactive gallery, which allows you to participate in a range of sporting environments and activities.

Website: www.nsm.org.au



Open daily from 10am-5pm (last admission 4pm). Opening times and access arrangements vary when events are being held on weekends.

Return to the CBD via the William Barak pedestrian bridge and Birrarung Marr. We hope you have enjoyed your introduction to Melbourne's sporting reputation. Other brochures in this series include the 'Yarra River Arts Walk'. Ask for it at the Melbourne Visitors Centre or visit www.yarrariver.info





Gellings Photography

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