A GUIDE TO MELBOURNE’S
FOOD AND CAFES
BOOKISH HANGOUTS
ACTIVITIES, SHOPS, INSPIRATIONS
PUBS, BARS AND PLACES TO NATTER
ALL NEAR RMIT’S BUILDING 94

WRITTEN BY STUDENTS FOR STUDENTS
A GUIDE WRITTEN BY STUDENTS FOR STUDENTS
The reviews in this booklet are written by students for students and do not reflect the views of RMIT University.
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Dear student

You are about to embark on the course of your life! This guidebook won’t help you to become the next great novelist or editor, but it will point you in the direction of the nearest toasted cheese sandwich.

Written, compiled and edited by PWE students who know the local terrain, this advice is tailored for penny-pinching students. Drafting the next Miles Franklin winner will be all-consuming and the last thing you need to worry about is where you’re going to find the nearest pork bun or long soy macchiato. To take out the guesswork (or the legwork), the majority of the recommendations in this guide are close to Building 94 or within striking distance by public transport.

In order to successfully complete your first step toward literary brilliance, you’ll need to Refuel (food and cafés close by), Edify (all things bookish), Abscond (activities, shops and inspirations), and Debrief (pubs, bars and places to natter). That spells READ, word-nerds.

Research this book and keep it close.
Who am I?
I ask myself this
as I walk through your doors
the final day of my course

I wasn’t allowed to do this
When I was younger
I wasn’t encouraged to do this
Instead I conformed to
business, marriage and the rest
didn’t ever try and test
the boundaries
of my existence,
art on the side
it was an easy place to hide
from myself

Four years ago a naïve, dreamy girl
who was married, and a mother
walked in, sat at the admissions table of life
The RMIT teachers asked her
what her five-year goals were

I arrived with drafts of my novel, *Misplaced*
said I’d have it published by then
According to the plan I’d be
making the movie by now
But it turns out *Misplaced*
has indeed been misplaced
and I’m wondering where that girl’s got to
Four years of navigating around corridors
not sure what room to sit in, where I fit in
Oh, my RMIT Building 94
how I’ve climbed your stairs
again and again and again
trying to get to the top
lugged myself up and up
till I realised the stairs are endless
instead nestled myself in a side room
halfway between literary excellence and
my imagination

The room was named poetry
and I shut the door
took to writing on the walls
Incoherent rambling
Wrote over the top of words
on the walls, ceiling, everywhere
till the white was out of sight
till I had extinguished all the light
drowning in words
they drenched my skin
seeped right in
till I had no idea who was within
millions and millions of words

I closed my eyes and died

The teachers reached in
grabbed at my limbs
shook me to consciousness
and when I woke up
the room was clear
and the words had
rearranged themselves
were sitting on a table
in the form of
a book

I have fallen here
I have loved here
I have died here

I have felt safe here
I have cried here
I have been reborn here

Found myself in class
on the top shelf of poetry

one married, shrouded girl walked in
not sure who is coming out now,
a slightly wiser, slightly older
divorced, single mum
version of happiness

I even got the book proudly displayed in the cabinet
in my roundabout-outside-the-box sort of way.
to think this course is now inaccessible
to other versions of four-years-ago me,
that I might be sitting in my living room
with my art on the side
still hiding, from me

It’s a terrifying thought
About Koraly

Koraly is a widely published Cypriot-Australian writer and performer. She is the author of the controversial *Love and F**k Poems*. Koraly received an Australia Council ArtStart grant. She presents on 3CR radio and has a residency at Brunswick Street Bookstore. In 2013 she presented the highly successful ‘Exonerating The Body’ at La Mama Theatre. She completed the Diploma of Professional Writing and Editing at RMIT in 2012.
REFUEL
A short walk to some serious coffee

Coffee nerds rejoice! Your campus beverage breaks no longer need to be a case of just getting that caffeine hit through clenched teeth, as there is now a serious hipster coffee shop right next to RMIT city campus.

Located on Little La Trobe St, A Little Bird Told Me is a collaboration between Kiwi couple Caleb Heaney and Rebecca Notley, and both have brought some handy skills to their first café venture. Notley is a designer by trade, and she has employed her talents to create a bright, airy space with a vaguely Scandinavian feel: think white walls, pale timber fittings and bespoke stools by local design shop Every Inch.

Healey meanwhile is the coffee mastermind. A one-time barista and head roaster at Seven Seeds, he boasts 12 years’ experience in the coffee biz, and serves up lovingly crafted brews using the Seven Seeds seasonal house blend.

The only piece of the puzzle missing is food—as of mid-2013 the only eats available are cakes and pastries—but there are plans to expand the menu in due course. In the meantime, though, Little Bird is serving up some of the best coffee in the area, and is well worth the short wander down the hill from Building 94.

READ: MATESHIP WITH BIRDS, CARRIE TIFFANY
ATOMICA CAFFÉ

268 Brunswick St
Fitzroy
MON–FRI 7:30am–5:30pm
SAT–SUN 8:30am–5:30pm
www.atomicacoffee.com.au

*Strong, smooth, sweet and not too hot*

Both an iconic staple and a ‘go-to’ cafe for Fitzroyalty and out-of-towners, Atomica rates high among the incredible selection of coffee options in Melbourne. The delicious Atomica coffee can be found at many cafes around town, but it tastes best when drunk at its source, Atomica Caffé on Brunswick Street.

As well as a great coffee (strong, smooth, sweet and not too hot), Atomica has a selection of single origins from around the world, local blends and weekly specials, such as the Nicaraguan chocolate/cherry/cinnamon espresso roast. But coffee is only half the equation when it comes to a brilliant café, and Atomica also has one of the best menus in the area. It’s huge and has both unique items, like the harissa scrambled eggs, and old favourites, like the good old big breakfast of bacon and eggs with all the trimmings. This, combined with the attentive service is why people keep coming back to Atomica.

If you’re looking to impress your friends with your knowledge of Melbourne’s famous café culture, or you just want a warm and friendly place to prop up your laptop, then this is the place for you. Enjoy!

READ: MADMAN ATOMICA, MIKE ALLRED
BULLRUN

107 Flinders Lane
Melbourne
MON–SAT breakfast and lunch

*The personal touch goes a long way at this CBD food spot*

Bullrun is one of the liveliest and friendliest coffee shops in the CBD, and attracts a loyal following among inner-city latte hunters. A lot of this is down to the service, which is fast and efficient, with the funky team making a point of knowing their regulars’ names and orders.

For coffee on the run, you can line up at the outdoor coffee station on Flinders Lane. Queues in the run-up to 9am can be daunting, but the Ducale coffee is worth the wait.

If you have more time, the deep interior has plenty of long tables, with a large collection of magazines and newspapers at the door for your perusal. For those with work to do (or selfies to upload), laptops are serviced with a strong wi-fi signal. The large space looks like a mess hall and has that vibe during busy lunchtimes. There is another coffee machine inside for sit-down patrons.

Breakfasts range from takeaway muffins and toasties to a plateful of poached eggs, mushrooms, and feta with avocado on toasted brioche. For lunchtime fare, there are some enormous salads on offer, along with daily meat, vegetable and pasta specials. With most plates priced around the ten-dollar mark, it’s definitely worth a detour.

**READ: DEATH IN THE AFTERNOON, ERNEST HEMINGWAY**
DON DON

198 Little Lonsdale St
Melbourne
MON–SUN 11am–9pm

‘Zuu-zuu, paku-paku, pan-pan’ (slurp, munch, full stomach)

In Japanese, don don is an onomatopoeia representing the beating of a drum, and in the case of this remarkably speedy yet delicious eatery, that drum plays a very fast and friendly beat.

Don Don is an incredibly cheap and somewhat legendary Japanese fast food restaurant located a mere hop, skip and stumble from Building 94. This place is packed out every day with students and local office workers, and those who come once invariably return for more.

A model of Japanese efficiency, Don Don skilfully ticks off all the requirements for the cash-strapped, protein hungry, time-poor student. But don’t for a second think that quick plus cheap equals bland, because the meals are both scrumptious and hearty. The menu includes a variety of donburi (rice bowls) with a choice of chicken, beef, curry, fish or tofu, as well as a traditional bento set including pickles. The cheapest meal is the tofu donburi for $5.90 but nothing on the menu is over ten bucks, so if you’re really hungry you can affordably go for seconds. All the meals are also available as takeaways.

There’s plenty of seating and with the high turnover it won’t take long to find somewhere to plant your hungry self and hoe into a bowl of Don Don deliciousness.

READ: GOSPEL NOBLE TRUTHS, ALLEN GINSBERG
ECLIPSE SPECIALTY COFFEE

7A/495 Collins St
Melbourne
MON-FRI 6am–5pm
www.eclipsecoffee.com.au

A hidden coffee spot that shines afar

What sets a shadowy, plain-looking espresso joint apart from the billion other inner-city places you can get your caffeine fix? Excellent coffee for starters. Eclipse offers just that and they serve it quickly, reliably and cheerfully.

The crowd of thirsty patrons awaiting their takeaways may be a little unsettling, but fear not, you’re rarely in line for more than a few minutes and your cuppa will be worth the wait.

Eclipse is easy to miss—with the dark glass door set into an unassuming redbrick facade and no bright signage to point the way—but inside it is stylish and inviting. And, if Melbourne’s turned on the sun, you can muscle your way through the sea of suits to the great rear courtyard, perfect for a spot of reading.

Most customers grab their coffee on the run, but the seating is cosy both at the bar and the larger communal tables. The staff are friendly and efficient and they know their rotating blends of single-origin beans.

If you’re up for a feed, main meals are priced between $15 and $20. Portions are fresh and generous. A mountain of avocado and feta, topped with a poached egg, will set you up for the day, and there are plenty of pastries on offer if you’re after a treat to go.

READ: ECLIPSE, JOHN BANVILLE
Roaring burners and clattering woks in the shadow of RMIT

Right around the corner from Building 94, this family-run eatery is a top spot if you’re after something cheap and tasty. They serve Chinese-Malay and many Nonya classics: mee goreng, char kuay teow and laksa. All dishes come in under $15, with the $5 nasi lemak pack a real bargain. The Haianese chicken rice—velvety poached chicken in a soy marinade—is a winner. A light chicken broth and mild chilli-vinegar dipping sauce are served on the side. Have this if you’re feeling fragile.

If you’re feeling sturdy go for the rendang. The meat is fork-tender and coated in sticky, spicy, coconut gravy. It’s served with rice, dried fish, pickles and a boiled egg, which all help offset the richness of the meat.

Service is friendly and efficient. If you come during the lunchtime peak you may have to wait for a table. But don’t worry, the turnover is fast, and lots of tables are crammed into the small space. It can be difficult to hear your friends over the roaring burners and clattering woks in the open kitchen—best go somewhere else if you want to read the last chapter of your novel in peace.

READ: THE CASUARINA TREE, W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM
SHANGHAI VILLAGE DUMPLING HOUSE

112-114 Little Bourke St
Melbourne
MON–SUN 10:30am–10pm
www.dumpling.net.au

All the hot dumplings you can handle

Known by regulars simply as Shanghai Village, this Chinatown restaurant is three levels of dumpling heaven and a great place for a cheap bite between classes.

The decor of the first two levels is reminiscent of a traditional Chinese tavern and looks like something out of a period kung fu movie. No stranger to drunken masters, it’s a place well loved by everyone from overseas students to working plebs to the ubiquitous cool kids of Melbourne’s creative communities. The third level, best avoided, has no personality at all, and is seemingly modelled on a 1980s primary school canteen.

Regardless of where you sit, however, the headline act at Shanghai Village is the abundance of fresh cheap dumplings. They are available steamed or fried, with both meat and vegie options, and are so reasonably priced you could feed a table of ten for under 100 bucks. And though the service could be better, once you’ve ordered the dishes come out thick and fast.

If you like a sideshow with your main act, there are plenty of other options on the menu. The salt and pepper squid is particularly good.

Centrally located with bars, clubs and cinemas nearby, it’s a great place to start or end an evening.

READ: DOWN AND OUT IN PARIS AND LONDON, GEORGE ORWELL
SNAG STAND

Melbourne Central, cnr La Trobe and Swanston streets
Melbourne
Lunch and dinner every day
snagstand.com.au

Welcome to sausage heaven—vegetarians welcome

If you haven’t seen or heard of Snag Stand, the home of heavenly ‘haute dogs’, then imagine a place where you can access any sausage with any kind of topping for lunch or dinner every day.

Imagine all the sausages, sizzling on the grill: the Greek lamb, the classic American hotdog, the Vietnamese pork, the vegetarian, the Spanish chorizo, the Mexican, the bratwurst, the classic Aussie snag, and more. All gluten-free, no artificial colours or flavours, and sourced from artisan butchers.

Imagine sausages snug in their bread rolls—gluten-free options available—smothered in feta cheese, or mustard and ketchup, or sauteed mushrooms, or sundried tomatoes and feta. Imagine being able to eat one of these sausages with a serving of chilli fries dripping with cheese.

In short, imagine there’s a heaven. (It’s easy if you try.) And though it may not bring about world peace or the brotherhood of man, it is a damn fine place to grab a snack between classes (or even during). And since the stand at Melbourne Central is within a sausage toss of campus, you can pop out for a snarler and be back in class before your seat gets cold.

READ: A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES, JOHN KENNEDY TOOLE
Wide Open Road
274 Barkly St
Brunswick
Every day 7.30am–5pm
www.wideopenroad.com.au

Streets ahead of the rest

Located opposite the unsightly backside of Barkly Square shopping village in a squat building that was formerly a Not Quite Right outlet, Wide Open Road does not offer the most inspiring face to the world. However, you only have to step inside this café and roastery to see that there’s something very right going on here indeed. The interior is stylish and spacious, with a sweeping wood-panel roof and windows into the roasting room and full-service kitchen. Seating for 80 is a careful mix of the communal and intimate, with large and small tables, cosy booths and bar seating.

Great coffee is at the heart of this operation, and owners Hootan and Jono roast their own house blend, along with a rotating menu of single origins and pour-overs. However, excellent coffee is almost a given for cafes at this end of Brunswick, and the real surprise here is the food, which must rate among the best café fare anywhere in Melbourne. Try the thick-cut bacon with Gruyere potato cake, poached eggs and beetroot relish and you won’t quickly forget it.

Throw in friendly service, an alcohol licence and an always tasteful mix of music (the place is named after a Triffids song, let’s not forget), and you have a package that is very hard to fault.

Read: On the Road, Jack Kerouac
Wonderbao may be small, but it is a mighty culinary operation. Inside its walls, located just down the hill from RMIT, you will find a veritable production line of bamboo steamers, stacked four-deep and filled to bursting with delicious buns.

Bao are steamed breads with a sweet or savoury filling. The key to their appeal lies in the textural magic that occurs when you combine two degrees of softness: white pillowy dough giving way to an unctuous meaty filling. Bao is the new ‘it’ fast food of Melbourne, or so the trendsetters tell us.

The Da Pork Bao, a cricket ball-sized bun filled with pork, egg, shitake mushroom and Chinese sausage, has a more savoury flavour as opposed to some of the others, which can be cloyingly sweet. Another popular item is the Gua Bao. While the regular bao are pre-formed and ready to go, the Gua Bao is assembled to order: soft bread pockets are filled with melting, slow-cooked pork belly, pickled vegetables, hoisin and topped with crushed peanuts.

There’s not a lot of room to sit here, but if you’re lucky enough to get a stool in the window, dig in and go bao crazy.

Read: The Joy Luck Club, Amy Tan
EDIFY
BOOK GROCER

Shop 1, 413-415 Elizabeth St
Melbourne
MON–FRI 9.30am–7pm
SAT 10am–7pm
SUN 10am–6pm
bookgrocer.libro.com.au

Quality books at bargain prices
Set text alert! Check your nearest Book Grocer for your uni texts before you pay full price elsewhere. Just about every book in this chain is priced at $10 (unless you shop online, where clearance items begin at $3). The discount bookshop that looks like a ‘real’ bookshop is proud of sourcing quality books at bargain prices from around the globe.

A quick search among its shelves reveals a decent selection of esteemed authors such as Cormac McCarthy, Jonathan Franzen and Elizabeth Gilbert. You might even find a Bukowski if you’re lucky.

The Book Grocer is less than a ten-minute walk from Building 94, so it’s a great place to loiter between classes. It offers the usual categories and a few you might not expect, including children’s books, health, crime, gardening, cooking, memoir, biography, war, plays, poetry, vintage classics and of course fiction. If you’re looking for a gift, the friendly staff are happy to help out. You could buy a $10 book, a $6.50 sheet of giftwrap and a $6 card and be all sorted in no time.

Since its inception in 2000, the Book Grocer now has eight stores in Victoria, two in new South Wales and one in the ACT, proving it’s here to stay.

READ: JONATHAN FRANZEN, THE CORRECTIONS
READINGS CARLTON

309 Lygon St, Carlton
MON–SAT 9am–11am
SUN 10am–9pm

A local icon and literary landmark

An easy stroll up Lygon Street from uni, Readings Carlton is a one-stop shop for your literary, musical, DVD and stationery needs. You’ll find all the indie lit journals (*Meanjin*, *Voiceworks*, *Kill Your Darlings*, etc) just inside the front window next to magazines like *The New Yorker* and *Australian Book Review*. New release fiction, non-fiction and cookbooks fill the front half of the store, the middle section stocks biography, history and the like, and at the back you’ll find all the travel, crime, YA and children’s titles.

A cornerstone of the Australian literary landscape, Readings hosts an inspiring calendar of events including author signings, book launches, panel discussions and author conversations. Ten per cent of the company’s annual profits go to The Readings Foundation, which supports the development of literacy, community and the arts.

Make sure you check out their flyer stand for writing opportunities, and grab a copy of the free *Readings Monthly* magazine from the front counter. While not a cheap bookshop, there’s always the ‘famous bargain table’ and the dedicated discount store ‘Readings Bargains’ situated just across the road in Lygon Court. Plus, buying from Readings means you’re supporting the local independent bookselling and publishing scenes.

READ: REUNION, ANDREA GOLDSMITH
The littlest Readings but still packed with delights

After escaping the crowds at Melbourne Central and dodging the trams along Swanston Street, it’s a welcome relief to walk up the steps leading to the main entrance of the State Library. A left turn in the foyer will take you to the Readings State Library shop.

It’s a small shop but you could easily spend hours browsing the range of fiction and non-fiction. There’s the full range of non-fiction—cookbooks and self help at the front then life writing, history, travel and crime. This Readings is special because there are also books published in partnership with The State Library. In fact, many of the books and other items complement the exhibitions at the library.

There’s plenty of cool merchandise to be had, including pressed-flower bookmarks, wax-seal cards, mugs, stamps, glasses and wrapping paper. If you’ve always secretly hankered for a T-shirt with the Very Hungry Caterpillar on the front, you can walk out of the shop wearing it!

Why not also take a peek at the magnificent State Library and dome, which celebrated its centenary in 2013. Mr Tulk is right next door, so you can buy a book, grab a bagel and sit in the sun enjoying them both.

READ: MELBOURNE BY MENU, RITA ERLICH
A hot-bed of literary activity

Just around the corner from Building 94 is the Wheeler Centre, a literary hub for 'books, writing and ideas'. Programs run throughout the year and include many free events. The rest are affordable, even if you’re a miser.

The best thing to do is sign up for the free Wheeler newsletter. It will be sent to you via email with a list of everything that’s going on. Make sure you book straight away, especially for the free events, because there’s a horde of literary peeps all hungry for a slice of Wheeler action and events often book out.

There’s something for every literary taste, from panels on Erotic Fan Fiction to talks by journalists such as Kate Adie. There’s also Debut Mondays where newly emerged writers do a reading at The Moat next door (you might end up reading your own work there one day!), as well as Breakfast Club on a Wednesday morning at eight, where you can be part of a discussion that interrogates how the world and art collide.

Grab your favourite book and head down to the centre for a little bit of literary loving.

READ: THE EMERGING WRITER: AN INSIDER’S GUIDE TO GROWING YOUR WRITING, ANDRE DAO
ABSCOND
ABBOTSFORD CONVENT
1 St Heliers St
Abbotsford
MON–SUN 7.30am–10pm
www.abbotsfordconvent.com.au

Get into the habit of visiting this secret sanctuary

This majestic river refuge is just 4km east of Building 94, though it feels worlds away from the traffic-crammed streets of the inner city. The former Convent of the Good Shepherd is best known for its spectacular architecture, superb location and unique arts community.

The Abbotsford Convent is home to eleven historic buildings, lush convent grounds and the Collingwood Children’s Farm, which hosts a farmers market once a fortnight. There is also a menagerie of barnyard animals, a school, a radio station, artists’ studios, writing rooms, cafés, a bakery and the student institution Lentil as Anything—a not-for-profit, pay-what-you-feel vegetarian eatery, which uses only local organic ingredients and employs staff from all around the world in need of hospitality experience.

Like the sound of learning how to make your own sourdough bread? Want to stock your pantry with local goodies? Need an inspiring space to write the next classic? Then ride your pushie, follow the Yarra or beat the traffic to the Abbotsford Convent, a veritable sanctuary where you can refill your belly and nourish your soul.

READ: THE CONVENT, MAUREEN MCCARTHY
CITY BATHS
420 Swanston St
Melbourne
MON–THURS 6am–10pm
FRI 6am–8pm
SAT–SUN 8am–6pm

*Lap up an iconic piece of Melbourne history*

As a writer, it can be easy to forgo exercise chasing the perfect sentence, but with the Melbourne City Baths just around the corner from Building 94, there’s little excuse not to get some laps in.

Better yet, you’ll also be lapping up an iconic piece of Melbourne history. The baths were first opened in 1860 to cater to the great unwashed (who continued to bathe in the Yarra despite a typhoid epidemic), and the current building was constructed in 1901. The building has been lovingly restored and now boasts state-of-the-art facilities.

The sky lit 30-metre indoor pool is heated to 30 degrees with four lanes available for lap swimming at most times. The pool does get busy during peak hours, so try to come outside these times. A student swim costs around $4.80 and locker hire is around $2.50. There’s also a spa and sauna, modern gymnasium, group fitness classes and squash courts for hire. Massage and clinical Pilates are also on site.

READ: BARRACUDA, CHRISTOS TSIOLKAS
DAISO

Shop 204, Midtown Plaza, 246 Bourke St
Melbourne
MON–SAT 9am–9pm
SUN 11am–7pm
www.daisostore.com.au

Japanese trinkets for those on a tight budget

Cheapskates and Japanophiles rejoice—Daiso’s come to town! This Japanese franchise, which began as a 100-yen store (similar to our $2 shops), offers a huge range of items all at a low price: everything is $2.80. Seriously.

The first time you walk into the Bourke Street store and are confronted by a wall of false eyelashes, don’t be put off. By the time you find the Tupperware section you’ll be sold on the place.

Those with a penchant for all things kawaii will love Daiso, but there are also shelves upon shelves of practical items. Daiso’s stock includes kitchenware, cleaning solutions, beauty products, fashion accessories, gardening tools, pet accessories and Japanese snacks. Sure, buying cheap things can be a little hit and miss, but you’d be silly to buy a boring toilet brush from Woolies when you could get a futuristic mermaid one from Daiso instead. The fact that they come in so many fun colours doesn’t hurt, either.

It might take you a little while to get around the store, and your eyes may get a bit sore from all the shiny things, but it’s certainly worth a look-in. Heck, at that price you may as well get those fuzzy earmuffs you’ve always wanted.

READ: HARD-BOILED WONDERLAND AND THE END OF THE WORLD,
HARUKI MURAKAMI
DEJOUR JEANS

542 Sydney Rd
Brunswick
MON–FRI 9.30am–5.15pm
SAT 10am–4.30pm
tinyurl.com/dejourjeans

A pair of personally tailored jeans for under $50? Only at Dejour

Gone are the days of trawling through jeans shops for the perfect fit. This little denim-only store, open since 1989, is owned and run by Nam Huynh who learnt to tailor jeans at fourteen years of age. Twenty-something years later he is hailed by Brunswick hipsters and students on a budget as the answer to all their high-rise, low-cut, skinny leg and coloured denim needs.

With a slogan of ‘Good jeans. From $40. We make them fit for free. You go on hot date’, it’s hard to resist poking your head through the door. The walls are lined with cubbies organised into ‘high’, ‘medium’ or ‘low’ cut, and then divided into sizes. Originally only stocking black denim (how very Melbourne), the store now offers a rainbow of colours as well as your light or dark blue denim.

Nam is the jeans-whisperer. He won’t let you leave the store with an ill-fitting or unflattering pair of jeans, and will quickly chalk up where your pants need to be taken in or out, up or down. He’ll even recommend different styles based on your body shape.

Depending on the day, your new jeans might be ready by the time you’ve changed into your old clothes. If not, grab a coffee and have a wander through Savers before you return.

READ: BLUE JEANS AND COFFEE BEANS, JOANNE DEMAIO
FITZROY MARKET

Fitzroy Primary School, cnr Napier and Chapel streets
Fitzroy
3rd SAT of the month, 10am–3pm
fitzroymarket.com

Clothes, books and weird junk for a handful of coins

‘May would love this shit,’ mumbles one bearded hipster to another as they stop to check out a suitcase stuffed with vintage vinyl.

Further along a girl in a short-waisted brown leather jacket twists to check herself out in a mirror. ‘The shoulders aren’t as puffy as most 80s jackets,’ she says hopefully to her boyfriend. He looks unconvinced.

Held on the grounds of Fitzroy Primary School, the Fitzroy Market may look like the place where garage sale leftovers go to die, but there are great bargains to be found. Second-hand clothes and records your parents loved jostle for attention with galvanised bicycle wheels, pot plants, bottles of worm wee, preloved books, jams made by the ladies from St Marks Church and funky bric-a-brac.

While you browse, grab a coffee from local roasters Four Rascals, chow down a hotdog from the Fitzroy Primary sausage sizzle (classic meat $3, vegetarian $3.50) or, if it’s one of those mornings, revive yourself with a bacon and egg roll ($6). And when the Melbourne Ukelele Kollective starts pumping out ‘Psycho Killer’, feel free to sing along.

Entry is via a gold coin donation, with proceeds shared between Fitzroy Primary, Fitzroy Learning Network and Livewires.

READ: HE DIED WITH A FELAFEL IN HIS HAND, JOHN BIRMINGHAM
GARDINERS CREEK TRAIL/MAIN YARRA TRAIL

From East Malvern Station to Southbank, 14km
www.bicyclenetwork.com.au

Take a ride through the leafy inner east

The Main Yarra Trail is one of Melbourne’s best-loved cycle paths, following the city’s main waterway from Southbank all the way out into the burbs. The Gardiners Creek Trail is one of the many paths that shares sections with the Yarra Trail, and combining the two is a great way to explore Melbourne’s inner east.

Starting at the eastern end, the beginning of the cycle path is steep, up and over the East Malvern railway line. Head north, past sports fields, schools and a golf course. The path meanders alongside Gardiners Creek and you’ll cross it four times on dainty Japanese-style bridges. After 7km, the path crosses Glenferrie Road and becomes an elevated wooden causeway below the Monash Freeway.

Eventually you descend off the causeway and Gardiners Creek meets the Yarra. On the far bank are multi-million-dollar mansions with private jetties. Trackside, there are patches of grass where you can sit peacefully under the trees and listen to the birdlife. It’s hard to believe you’re only ten minutes from town.

Back on the path, you’ll cross the Yarra after 2km and merge with the Main Yarra Trail. Follow this towards the city for 5km, past Como Park and the Botanical Gardens, and soon the city will come into view. Exit at Princess Bridge.

READ: THE THIRD POLICEMAN, FLANN O’BRIEN
SOMETIMES, BEING STUCK BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE IS A GOOD THING

Got an hour or two to kill between classes? The Hardrock Climbing Company is located just opposite RMIT and the City Baths on the corner of Franklin Street.

Rock-climbing is an exciting and challenging sport, which relies more on balance and flexibility than on pure strength. It also helps if you’ve got a head for heights. This gym is situated in an apartment building two storeys above the street, and with glass walls, the view from the top of the 17m walls can be dizzying.

If you’re a beginner, you’ll need to hire a harness and climbing shoes and be shown through a safety instruction. Bring a partner, because while one person is climbing, the other will be ‘belaying’ (holding the ropes).

For advanced climbers, the routes in this gym are graded up to level 27 (Ewbank) and lead climbing is available. Routes are changed every couple of months. BYO gear and a locking karabiner.

While not cheap ($28 for a uni student including gear hire) the entry fee gets you all-day climbing so you can come and go. The cheapest way to do it is to make a group booking (ten people minimum), which gets you a two-hour climbing session and gear for $18 a head.

READ: BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE, ARON RALSTON
TAN TRACK

Between Linlithgow, Birdswood and Alexandra avenues and Anderson St
South Yarra
tinyurl.com/tantrack

Get your jog on at Melbourne’s Botanic Gardens

Apparently if you hang out long enough on the gravel path that surrounds Melbourne’s Botanic Gardens and King’s Domain, everyone you have ever known will eventually jog past. Until then, you might as well take a spin around ‘The Tan’ yourself.

This 3.8km circuit is the most popular running track in Melbourne. You can jump on anywhere, but the commonest spot is the Pillars of Wisdom, opposite the Swan Street bridge. Most people run in a clockwise direction. This allows you a 800m warm up along the Yarra River before the short but steep hill at Anderson St. After that comes a gentle downhill section and then a flat 2km to the finish.

Serious runners will appreciate the two new digital clocks that let you check your pace. There are also free time trials from 7.30am on the first Saturday of every month and many of Melbourne’s fun runs use the Tan Track as part of their course.

Of course, there’s no law that says you have to run. Many people choose to stroll around the tree-lined path, often stopping at the Observatory Café or the Shrine of Remembrance along the way.

READ: THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG DISTANCE RUNNER, ALAN SILLITOE
Zen on two wheels

Tokyobike was founded in Yanaka, Tokyo in 2002, and has since spread its brand of stylish yet functional treadlies all over the world. Designed specifically for the city commuter, tokyobikes come in geared, single-speed and step-through versions, and a range of colours from sky blue all the way round to forest green.

The Melbourne store is located right in the heart of hipsterville, just a short stroll from the famed Smith Street and Gertrude Street cafés and eateries.

The shopfront itself is stunning, with a simple Japanese aesthetic, but it’s got nothing on the beauty of the products you’ll discover inside. Be sure to take the time to look at the different model bikes and peruse the tables of finely crafted bike accessories, including saddles, bells, helmets and fenders. There is even a leather wine carrier that hangs off your crossbar—perfect for an afternoon picnic in the park.

Once you’ve salivated over the clean design lines, you can take a test ride. Make sure to chat to the in-house mechanics, who will talk you through your options and help you find your perfect set of wheels. Before you know it, you’ll be riding high with the rest of the skinny jeans brigade.

READ: NUMBER9DREAM, DAVID MITCHELL
Weird and wonderful things you never knew you wanted

The gentleman behind the counter at Wunderkammer likes to tell customers how his father used to visit the shop back when it was a small dusty concern in Carlton. He would go there two or three times a week and come home with some new oddity, and have to confess to his family that he’d blown a chunk of his pay on a badger skeleton, or a stuffed tarantula, or a field amputation kit circa the American Civil War. Each night he’d come home and his wife would demand, ‘What did you buy at Wunderkammer?’ One night he replied, ‘Darling, I bought the shop.’

The story goes a long way to explaining the appeal of Wunderkammer (‘Cabinet of Curiosities’ in German). It’s so chock-full of strange and wonderful stuff that has no apparent use, other than to be strange and wonderful, that the impulse is to want all of it—the whole damned shop—just so you can walk around and gawk at the giant stuffed antlered thing, or the chunk of meteorite, or the hypodermic needle the size of your leg.

Wunderkammer now occupies a sizeable store in the city. Go get yourself a badger skeleton, today.

READ: FRANKENSTEIN, MARY SHELLEY
DEBRIEF
Anywhere with a 68-page cocktail menu has got to be taken seriously

Stepping into 1806 is like being transported to another era. Behind the closed front door is a cosy, converted theatre space with an upstairs gallery, red velvet curtains and plush leather couches. This inner-city bar is assuredly all about the cocktails—1806 is the year the word ‘cocktail’ was first defined in print—and the bar is the stage where you can watch the staff do their thing. With a menu of over 68 pages of alcoholic creations divided by era, it can be overwhelming at first. But fear not, the bar staff are well informed and can advise you based on your personal tastes.

Downstairs is the Understudy. Accessed through a wardrobe door, the Understudy is anything but ordinary, with creepy mannequins lining the walls and an Alice in Wonderland vibe. The Understudy is only open Thursday to Saturday from 7pm so make a reservation if you’re keen to take a journey beyond the looking glass.

While not the cheapest venue—cocktails average $20 a pop—1806 is more than just a bar, it’s an experience in itself and a taste of opulence you won’t soon forget.

READ: HANGOVER SQUARE, PATRICK HAMILTON
Asian Beer Café

Level 3, Melbourne Central/211 La Trobe St
Melbourne
MON–SAT 11am–1am
SUN 11am–1am
www.asianbeercafe.com.au

Join the crowds in this buzzing after-work hangout

Formerly known as Cho Gao, the Asian Beer Café is a quirky bar and eatery on the third level of the Melbourne Central complex. It’s a popular spot with students and post-work drinkers and is always crowded of an evening, but if you arrive early you can usually snag one of the cushioned couches inside or a table outside. The music is loud and the atmosphere cheerful, with old kung fu films and animé playing on large wall-mounted television screens.

Despite the Asian theme, some of the most popular menu items are the cheap pizzas, but there is also a range of delicious Asian-inspired nibbles such as chicken san choy bao and shredded honey beef. There is a nice variety of cocktails on offer too—try the signature Whorenicopia, with vodka, lychee liqueur and fresh watermelon, for only $9—and if you want to share, the cocktail jugs are only $20.

With its central location and reasonable prices, Asian Beer Café is a great spot for after-class drinks or pre-party celebrations. Check it out.

Read: Bright Lights, Big City, Jay McInerney
BELLA UNION

Level 1, Trades Hall, cnr Victoria and Lygon streets
Carlton South
WED–THU 5.30pm–12am
FRI 5.30pm–3am
SAT 6pm–3am
www.bellaunion.com.au

The spirit of the speakeasy lives on in Carlton

Chances are that if you haven’t already been to a launch at the Bella Union, you soon will. The Bella Union is a favourite location of the Melbourne arts community, and plays host to an eclectic array of events from music gigs and album launches to spoken word and poetry nights, comedy shows, dance parties, film screenings and fundraisers. Radio stations Triple R and PBS are also known to set-up mic under the famous flag ceiling.

The Bella Union Bar (named after the Irish-Australian educator and agitator Bella Guerin who died, somewhat awkwardly, from cirrhosis of the liver in 1923) was established in 2006 for the city’s comedy festival. Producer Catherine Woodfield decided that it was about time that all available nooks and crannies in this historic building were filled with a diverse mix of emerging and established artists. And since then Bella Union has grown into the role of an arts hub.

Located behind the grand columns of Trades Hall (enter from Lygon Street), Bella Union is spitting distance from Building 94 and conveniently close to the student-friendly John Curtin Hotel. Event prices generally range between $5 and $25, but there are regular free events too. Check out the website or Twitter feed for more information.

READ: VISIBLE INK, RMIT’S STUDENT-RUN ANTHOLOGY
The first of Melbourne’s laneway bars and still one of the best

At the end of a long, dark and windy alleyway lurks the Croft Institute. In any other city it would seem unusual and dangerous to venture so far off the beaten track just to get a drink. But Melbourne is famed for such bars. In fact, the Croft Institute was Melbourne’s first laneway bar, the one that started the trend.

It’s a three-storey affair designed around a medical, science-y theme. The first level is a bar dressed up like a science lab, with Bunsen burners, beakers and various odd-looking gadgets and bottles lined up on shelves, and lab-style benches and stools. Delicious custom-made cocktails are served with syringes by the friendly staff—the Bloody Mary is particularly tasty. The second level houses the toilets (‘the departments of male and female hygiene’) and a cool/creepy waiting room where you can have a quiet chat over a drink.

Open on Fridays and Saturdays only, the third floor is designed to look like a high-school gymnasium. There’s a turf bar with real grass growing on the bar top and a dance floor where you can groove the night away to consistently awesome DJs. Croft is open every day except Sunday and is great for everything from a romantic drink to a big night out with a group.

READ: STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
GASOMETER HOTEL

484 Smith St
Collingwood
TUE–FRI 4pm till late
SAT–SUN 2pm till late
www.gasometerhotel.com

A slightly dishevelled friend in a world of gastro pubs

Straddling the corner of Smith Street and Alexandra Parade, the Gaso is the sort of place you go when you need to leave the house and be sociable, but can’t bear the thought of getting tarted up.

With a large and medium-sized band room, the Collingwood pub regularly plays host to local and international musicians, as well as events such as Anna’s Go Go Dance Academy and Cherchez la Femme. The front bar is open till late, and is well stocked with boutique bottled and draught beers as well as a decent wine selection. In summer the rum and vodka slushies are just the thing you’re looking for.

The kitchen offers hearty pub fare, with vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options and food served until 10pm. If you’ve had a bad day or don’t care about your cholesterol levels, go for the poutine. It’s an exquisite mess of chips and gravy. Service can get slow during busy times, but you’ll be rewarded by the epic portion sizes.

Bucking the trend of turning a good filthy pub into a (s)wanky ‘dining experience’, the Gaso is more like a friend’s house. You could get lavishly drunk and put your stockinged legs in the air, and no one would side-eye you.

READ: JESUS’ SON, DENIS JOHNSON
A side of history with your after-class drinks

New students take note: this is your closest pub! While it’s not the cheapest bar in town, you’re getting so much more than just a low-cost bevvie.

Hotel Lincoln is actually one of Melbourne’s oldest watering holes, so when you pull up a stool and order a pint here you are following in the 160-year-old footsteps of leading Australian politicians, business leaders, unionists and academics. She’s a bit of a looker too, having been recently renovated back to all her art deco glory.

The Lincoln is a gastro pub at heart, and thanks to new owners and a new head chef, the menu here is seasonal, contemporary and delicious. The bar offers around six counter meals that can change as often as daily and range in price from $14 to $18 for lighter meals like the grilled vegetable, pomegranate and couscous salad or the ham and cheddar croquettes. Larger plates like the 21-day dry-aged prime beef burger or the crumbed fishcakes, chips and tartare sauce range from $18 to $24.

A separate menu operates in the restaurant, but be warned: the restaurant’s recent recognition in The Age Good Food Guide with a prestigious ‘one hat’ rating is reflected in their pricing.

READ: WHEN WE THINK ABOUT MELBOURNE, JENNY SINCLAIR
JOHN CURTIN HOTEL

29 Lygon St
Carlton
Every day till late
www.johncurtinhotel.com

Thanks to the Curtin, a well-earned drink is only a skip and a hop away

Looking for a place to unwind and socialise after class? Then look no further than the John Curtin. This pub, with its thick brick facade and broken couches, isn’t the prettiest place in the world, but for a beer or two on a student’s income it’s not bad at all.

The staff here are friendly and many a night you can enjoy a DJ, a band or a round of trivia. Afternoons at the Curtin tend to be quiet, but it’s still a great place for a leisurely drink and maybe some hot chips. Don’t have enough cash for chips? Never fear, there’s an ATM sitting right inside.

The John Curtin has a certain level of, if not charm, then comfiness to it. Maybe it’s all the booths with squishy seats, maybe it’s the laidback barmen with their flowing beards and lack of attitude. Whatever the case, the Curtin is a big ball of cosiness and calm.

Probably the best feature of the Curtin, however, is its location. The Curtin is close. Really close. Even for the most bandy-legged boozer it’ll take less than a minute to walk from Building 94 to the Curtin. Just take our advice and avoid the men’s room. Seriously, it needs work.

READ: JOHN CURTIN: A LIFE, DAVID DAY
**Madame Brussels**

Level 3, 59–63 Bourke St
Melbourne
MON–SUN 12pm–1am
madamebrussels.com

*An old-fashioned good time*

Madame Brussels is the ideal location for an old-fashioned rooftop garden party. Best known for its cocktails, this eclectic bar enjoys great popularity among the mid-twenties crowd, and it’s best to arrive early if you’d like a seat. Waiters rush about in white vintage polo shirts, tending to the indoor garden tables while deftly balancing jugs of cocktails. The outdoor patio is packed with guests, all vying for a seat at one of the picnic tables while admiring the uninterrupted city views.

Despite the crowds, service is consistently excellent, with bar staff checking on tables at regular intervals. The staff also offer excellent advice on the numerous cocktail options and can readily identify which drinks are likely to be too sour, too sugary, or too weak to individual taste. The sangria is a popular pick and packs a bright, fruity punch. Another favourite is the gin-lovers pitcher, stuffed with mint leaves and plenty of lime. Cocktail pitchers start at $20.

To accompany such delights is a small but satisfying menu filled with sweet baked goods and delectable savouries. At $5, the humble cupcake triumphs in popularity; however, the $12 chicken sandwiches are perfect for satisfying a midnight craving.

**READ: THE GREAT GATSBY, F. SCOTT FITZGERALD**
The chilled-out bar people will move postcodes for

‘Local’—the dreaded L-word. It’s a word that gets used far too often when describing homely, out-of-the-way bars, and is, frustratingly, the first word that comes to mind when you talk about Prudence. In fact, people have been known to move to the area just to claim this bar as their local. But for our purposes a more useful word might be intimate, or snug, or just plain classy.

It’s hard to put into words why people can’t get enough of Prudence, but in the words of Dennis Denuto, it’s the vibe of the thing. The décor is cluttered and kitschy, the music is chilled out and always vinyl, and there’s a good selection of booths and cosy nooks to tuck yourself into.

In winter, the place is cosier still, with mulled wine and an open fire to blast away the chills, while in summer there’s a beer garden to hang out in. And perhaps best of all, there’s an amazingly delicious (and affordable) African takeaway two doors down that delivers right to your table.

Ultimately, the charm of Prudence is that it doesn’t pretend to be anything other than what it is. It’s friendly, it’s cosy and it’s local. And in the dim, tequila-sunrise lighting everyone looks hip.

READ: JANE AND PRUDENCE, BARBARA PYM
WORKSHOP BAR

1/413 Elizabeth St
Melbourne
Every day till late
tinyurl.com/workshopbar

*Industrial-strength drinking in a former motorcycle workshop*

From the outside, you’d be forgiven for assuming the Workshop attracts a somewhat questionable clientele. A deep red light emanates from the upper floor, basking the concrete below in a scarlet haze, and flaking posters line the external walls, half rotten with damp and mould. Even the inner staircase leaves much to be desired, with the poster-plastered walls for bygone gigs almost entirely scrawled over with crude graffiti. But should you make it all the way upstairs to the landing area, you’ll be pleasantly surprised to find that the red light does not shine for Roxanne, but rather a pleasantly trendy and entirely mellow crowd.

Well known for its cocktails, Workshop is a great place to have a midweek drink or spend a quiet-ish evening with friends. The house specialties rely largely upon seasonal products, and patrons will be delighted by fresh summer concoctions such as lavender-honey and berry cocktails, or more wintry indulgences laced with whisky and gin. The food too is good and served till late.

If you’re not sure what to have, the best bet is to let the bartender tell you what you feel like—unless you don’t like spirits. Not once has a shot measure been spotted at Workshop, and the bar staff can be heavy-handed with the bottle.

READ: ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE, ROBERT M. PIRSIG
EXTRA READING SUGGESTIONS

CITY LIBRARY
It may lack the glamour of the State Library, but City Library has a vibrant life of its own
253 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

COLLECTED WORKS BOOKSHOP
Melbourne’s only dedicated poetry bookshop and a meeting place for writers of all descriptions
Nicholas Building, Level 1, 37 Swanston St, Melbourne
tinyurl.com/collectedworksbooks

EMBIGGEN BOOKS
A charming bookshop with a hand-picked selection of titles and an excellent events programme
197-203 Little Lonsdale St, Melbourne
www.embiggenbooks.com

METROPOLIS BOOKSHOP
A book browser’s paradise, specialising in art, design, photography, film, music and more
Level 3, Curtin House, 252 Swanston St, Melbourne
www.metropolisbookshop.com.au

POLYESTER BOOKS
Melbourne’s premier alternative bookshop, specialising in ‘the freakiest underground books, magazines, films and comix’
330 Brunswick St, Fitzroy
www.polyester.com.au
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