

DESTINATION ♦ AUSTRALIA

The experts naming the world's most liveable city didn't consider the new travel experiences on offer when they put Melbourne at the top of the prestigious list for the seventh time in a row back in August.

But if the folks at *The Economist*, which compiles the index, studied the slew of new things to do between Bass Strait and the border, the judges surely would have awarded the Victorian capital a flawless century rather than the 97.5 allocated after taking into account crime rates, healthcare and infrastructure.

Here are just 15 new reasons to visit Victoria in 2018 with this lot sure to encourage a perfect score from travellers.

1 URBNSURF Melbourne will open a stone's throw from the airport in suburban Tullamarine with Australia's first surf park set to feature a vast lagoon providing a place for novices and experts alike to catch a wave all year round.

URBNSURF.CO

2 Melbourne Museum's *Vikings: Beyond the Legend* – the largest exhibition of Viking artefacts to visit Australia – is from March 23 to August 26. More than 500 pieces, from swords and ships, will be on loan from the Swedish History Museum.

MUSEUMSVICTORIA.COM.AU

3 Nagambie's Mitchelton Wines is the place to find Victoria's newest boutique hotel. The designer Goulburn Valley digs, which opened in December, a 90-minute drive from Melbourne, has 58 rooms enjoying tranquil vineyard or river views and the new Muse Restaurant.

MITCHELTON.COM.AU

4 Ballarat's historic Peter Lalor Hotel has been transformed into a creative hub called The Pub With Two Names by husband-and-wife team Yuge and David Bromley from Bromley & Co with the address now a bar, restaurant and gallery space.

FACEBOOK.COM/THEPWITN

5 Glamping has come to Victoria's Goldfields with Balgownie Estate Bendigo placing 15 luxury safari-style tents around the winery's picturesque grounds. Each canvas structure features modern conveniences, including an ensuite and private deck.

BALGOWNIEESTATEBENDIGO.COM

6 Point Leo Estate welcomed its first guests in October with the land, on the Mornington Peninsula's southern coast affording views across Western Port Bay to Phillip Island, home to a cellar door and informal eatery. Seasonal fare is on offer and there's a sculpture park filled with Australian and international pieces.

PTLEOESTATE.COM.AU

7 Localing – a tour company that offers unscripted day trips “for people who don't like tours” – has a new two-day itinerary from Melbourne to Wilsons Promontory and Phillip Island that's perfect for travellers set on seeing the state's wild coastline.

LOCALING.COM.AU

8 MoVida's Hosier Lane kingdom grew with the opening of Bar Tini in a funky bluestone laneway in December and the venue, named after Spain's version of the martini, is modelled after the Spanish neighbourhood bodegas that supply informal food and wine to locals.

BARTINI.COM

9 Novotel Melbourne South Wharf will open in March beside the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre while Novotel and ibis Little Lonsdale Street will see the two brands occupying one building in the CBD from late 2018.

ACCORHOTELS.COM

10 Melbourne's dining scene became even more dynamic in February when HWKR opened on the ground floor in A'Beckett Street's EQ Tower. The slick food market, described as a modern take on traditional Asian eating, guarantees a rotating roster of tenants every three months.

HWKR.COM.AU



WILSONS PROMONTORY

QUEEN VICTORIA

Melbourne and the regions are adding 15 new gems to their tourism crown

SARAH NICHOLSON

Explore Victoria's crown jewels including the wonderful, windswept Wilsons Promontory with dramatic sea views, forests and wildlife.

PICTURE: VISIT VICTORIA

11 Ocean Grove Chalet is pencilled in for a spring 2018 unveiling with those in the know claiming the 15-room hotel in strolling distance of shops and cafes will be one of the most luxurious places to stay on the state's coast.

OCEANGROVECHALET.COM.AU

12 Peninsula Hot Springs will reveal seven new pools in 2018, an amphitheatre designed to host concerts and wellness activities, and a fire-and-ice experience that lets guests benefit from hot and cold therapies in two large saunas and an ice cave.

PENINSULAHOTSPRINGS.COM

13 The National Gallery of Victoria's Winter Masterpieces is a Melbourne institution. This year, *MoMA at NGV: 130 Years of Modern and Contemporary Art* is bringing about 200 key works by Paul Cezanne, Salvador Dali, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Vincent van Gogh and others to the St Kilda Road gallery from June 9 to October 7.

NGVIC.GOV.AU

14 Marnong Estate is a working cattle farm, 35 minutes' drive from Melbourne's CBD, that dates back to the 1840s. When renovations wrap in April, guests will stay in elegant suites inside the historic homestead and dine at the restaurant which is open seven days for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

MARNONGESTATE.COM.AU

15 Lorne will be home to Live Wire Park with this powered-up, elevated adventure compound 800m from the Great Ocean Road boasting ropes courses for adults and kids, a treetop walkway suspended in the canopy, and 500m “zip-line rollercoaster”.

LIVEWIREPARK.COM.AU

CONTINUED PAGE 32 >

DESTINATION ♦ AUSTRALIA

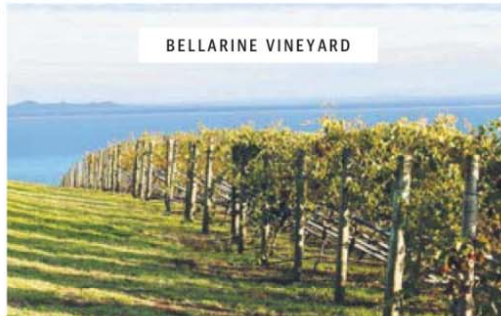
LOCAL TIPS

SEVEN
VICTORIANS
SHARE THE
SECRETS OF
THEIR REGION**THE GRAMPIANS**
ROBIN WICKENS
(EXECUTIVE CHEF,
ROYAL MAIL HOTEL)

Make time for walking in the national park. You don't have to be an expert hiker to take on a trail like The Piccaninny, which offers unbeatable views of my hometown Dunkeld and the southern Grampians. It's also a great way to work up an appetite before dining in our new restaurant, Wickens at Royal Mail Hotel.

RUTHERGLENROWLY MILHINCH
(WINEMAKER, SCION WINE)

There's a palpable energy in Rutherglen with new wine styles, produce and ideas emerging around the historic region. The Brown siblings from All Saints have breathed new life into Mt Ophir Estate and reopened it as luxury accommodation – including an impressive French provincial tower – and for events. Wine and art converge at the Rutherglen Estates' complex,



BELLARINE VINEYARD

now home to a new cellar door and Aboriginal exhibitions gallery in collaboration with art collector Hans Sip.

BALLARATCRAIG MITCHELL
(OWNER, MITCHELL HARRIS WINES)

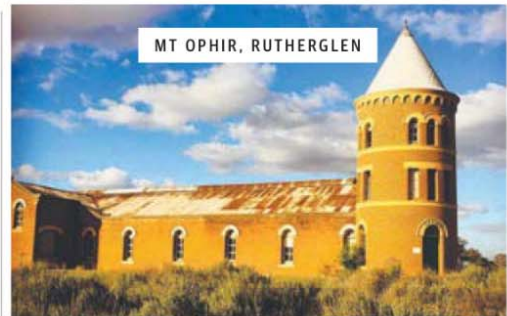
The food and wine scene celebrates local producers and seasonal climate with local drinking at Hop Temple, Athletic Club Brewery and Mitchell Harris Wines. For dinner The Forge, Meigas and vegetarian Chat for Tea offer casual options while Catfish and Underbar are fine-dining ambassadors. After a lap of Lake Wendouree – by foot, bike or boat – caffeinate at L'Espresso, Fika or Webster's and delight in our Arts Precinct with major exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Ballarat or edgy art at Backspace or Lost Ones galleries.

THE BELLARINELYNSAY SHARP
(GENERAL MANAGER,
JACK RABBIT VINEYARD)

The Bellarine is a pocket rocket with history, beaches, food, wine, scenery and style. Passion abounds at the 20-plus wineries – all family owned and operated – crafting award-winning wine while gourmards can immerse in fresh produce along the Bellarine Taste Trail from the famous Portarlington mussels to the impressive array of cheese, honey and herbs. There's golf, Segway tours or meander around coastal villages.

WILSONS PROMONTORYREBECCA BINGHAM
(OWNER, REFUGE COVE CRUISES)

Wilson's Prom is a must-see location.



MT OPHIR, RUTHERGLEN

This hidden jewel is surrounded by sea on three sides and renowned for rugged granite mountains, lush rainforests, and pristine beaches. The Prom's best features can be seen on board the new Refuge Cove Cruises vessel which sails to mainland Australia's southernmost point to view seals at Kanowna Seal Colony and Skull Rock, as well as previously inaccessible parts of the national park.

MORNINGTON PENINSULADANIELLE FIELD
(OWNER, MP EXPERIENCE)

The Mornington Peninsula is built by locals passionate about what they produce, and while we're only an hour from Melbourne, it feels a world away from the busy city. For something new,

visit St Andrews Beach Brewery which offers tastings in the original horse stables, Alatonero is a Greek restaurant on the McCrae beachfront, Jackalope is an amazing five-star hotel at Willow Creek Vineyard, and during winter MP Experience is running truffle hunts matched with cooking classes or degustation dinners.

MARYSVILLEKIM RYECROFT
(OWNER, SALADIN LODGE)

Seasonal activities keep the region vibrant and those seeking adventure can make the downhill mountain bike run from Lake Mountain to Marysville. New things happening at Saladin Lodge include regular music events, art expeditions, and fly-fishing courses in this area known for trout and salmon.