

# Herald Sun

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## Taking a shine to us

- by: Paul Gilder
- From: Herald Sun
- January 07, 2015 12:00AM

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<p><b>Until March 29:</b> Moonlight Cinema Melbourne</p> <p><b>January 31-Feb 1:</b> Ride the Night</p> <p><b>February 7-28:</b> Australia's Biggest Sustainable Living Festival</p> <p><b>February 19-22:</b> Chinese New Year celebrations</p> <p><b>February 21-22:</b> White Night</p> <p><b>February 27-March 15:</b> Melbourne International Food and Wine Festival</p>	<p><b>January 9-31:</b> Asian Cup soccer</p> <p><b>January 19-February 1:</b> Australian Open tennis</p> <p><b>January 31-February 1:</b> Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race</p> <p><b>February 14-March 29:</b> ICC Cricket World Cup</p> <p><b>February 20-22:</b> Superbike World Championship</p>
	TRADE
	<p><b>February 24-March 1:</b> Avalon International Airshow</p>

Melbourne events

Source: HeraldSun

**WALKING around Melbourne, it's hard to imagine it used to be known as the doughnut — the city with an empty centre.**

After all, it's the city that made kitsch sculptures cool — think *Vault* and Docklands' *Cow Up A Tree*.

World-class eateries have made street names synonymous with their offerings: Degraives St for coffee; Hardware Lane for lunch; Flinders Lane is drinks after five.

And it's the nation's sporting mecca, with the MCG and Melbourne Park precinct within walking distance of the CBD.

Retaining its title for a fourth year running as the world's most liveable city, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, Melbourne hasn't found itself at the top of the pile by accident, say those in the know.

And it's during the summer months that it really shines, with the business community taking a lead role, Victorian Tourism Industry Council chief Dianne Smith said.

"There's been a lot of innovation behind how businesses complement Victoria's major events. For example, P&O Cruises last year did an Australian Open tennis cruise and sailed 1800 tennis fans into Melbourne."

According to a recent study by Ernst and Young, the state's major events pour about \$1.8 billion into the Victorian economy and attract about 300,000 interstate and international visitors a year.

Complementing this is the 80 Days of Melbourne campaign, with events between Friday and March 29. The campaign is designed to showcase some of the city's finest offerings to visitors in fields as diverse as sports, arts, trade and fine dining.

Such initiatives provide the platform from which businesses can benefit, but they still needed to remain true to their core beliefs, Ms Smith said.



Victorian Tourism Industry Council chief Di Smith. Picture: Mike Dugdale

Hidden Secrets, which provides walking tours of the CBD, is one such success story. Last month it took 120 bookings — an amazing effort for a small company, Ms Smith said.

"They're popular with locals and visitors because they capitalise on the buzz around being in the city. Now that they're getting more international visitors, they're now doing tours in French," Ms Smith said.

She said that with people increasingly time-poor but ever willing to be active in the warmer months, transport operators had to make it really easy for families to get around.

“Public transport should be part of a great visitor experience; the concept of a myki visitor pack is something we’re constantly talking to Public Transport Victoria about.

“Make a myki part of the Skybus ticket so that visitors get one ... at the airport.”

Ms Smith said that beyond the CBD, the Victorian tourism industry made a vital contribution to the state’s workforce, with more than 200,000 people employed.

Regional centres were finding ways to play to their strengths as well, she said.

For example, the Bahrain soccer team has been tuning up for the Asian Cup in Ballarat.

All regional operators worked hard, Ms Smith said, but the challenge remained to get visitors to travel more than 2½ hours beyond Melbourne.



A view of Flinders Street Station during the White Night Festival.

“The Grampians, the Goldfields, the Great Ocean Road — to get people there you really have to try to slow them down so these places don’t miss out. This is where restaurants with a high quality food experience come in.”

In the Grampians for example, efforts are underway to create the Grampians Peaks Trail, a long-distance walk billed at more than \$20 million linking Mt Zero to the township of Dunkeld. The first stage, including a three-day walk, is set to be completed early this year and Dunkeld’s gourmet foodie offerings are being perfected for the expected influx of hikers.

In terms of big-ticket items, Ms Smith said, the Australian Open tennis tournament was right up there, putting Melbourne on the international stage for two glittering weeks. Canny marketers would do well to focus not just on the fans, but the list of early-round losers or big name players looking for a release on their down days.

“The tennis players are all given a list of what they can do in Melbourne. Naturally the buzz around these players is attractive for Melbourne’s tourism profile and the economy.”

Sometimes they are inspired to give something back, she said.

“(Former French Open champion) Michael Chang was interested in Sumatran tigers and always had a general interest in the (Melbourne) zoo. One year he donated his tennis shoes to the zoo to go towards research into

endangered tiger species.”

Committee for Melbourne chief executive Kate Roffey said the state’s bigger events provided opportunities for companies to host overseas guests for at least a few days.

Next month’s Avalon Airshow attracts 300,000 visitors but incorporates the aviation industry’s biggest trade show in the Asia-Pacific.

“You have got military personnel from all sorts of countries, top-line government executives, people from the corporate sector in the aviation and technology space ... and the biggest industries in the world,” Ms Roffey said.

“You’ve got Lockheed Martin and Airbus and all sorts of groups showing their wares out there, there is an enormous amount of trade taking place behind the scenes.”

The summer schedule also requires a lot of casual labour in an otherwise quiet period for many companies.

“Imagine if we didn’t have the tennis or the grand prix, our sons and daughters at university wouldn’t be working in casual jobs over the summer because there would be nothing happening,” Ms Roffey said.

To get from the Open’s “live site” at Federation Square to the tennis precinct at Melbourne Park, spectators have to walk through Birrarung Marr alongside the Yarra. While it was recently home to the Asian night market stalls, it could be used much more, she said.

“There’s no reason why that can’t be something that involves retail or a corporate sort of display in return for sponsorship. From there you can still hear the cheers from Rod Laver Arena when people are playing so it’s still got the atmosphere and it would make the city more connected.”

Other areas such as Docklands also had space but lacked the foot traffic, with many visitors not compelled to migrate past the city centre.

“There’s a lot more you could do at Docklands. It’s a time thing, in terms of actually establishing a community and a feeling of a sense of place.”

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