

# MELBO

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# URNES

## SPA SANCTUARIES

The Economist voted Melbourne the second most liveable city in the world in 2010 and it's not difficult to see why. It is a city within Victoria which is often referred to as Australia's garden state, surrounded by greenery from its magnificent parks to its tree-lined suburbs it is loved and labelled as being the best at, or the hub for most passions like sport, food, nightlife, coffee, shopping, art and design. Although Melbourne's reputation for having 'four seasons in one day' precedes it, it can also be said that this has led to the creation of culturally rich diversions in order to forget an unpredictable forecast. In any case, a Melbourne survival pack should include sunglasses, an umbrella and a jumper whilst wearing summer shorts.

It is a melting pot of cultures and the fact that Melbourne residents speak over 180 languages and dialects is testimony to this. The diversity and authenticity of available cuisine also speaks volumes of its proud migrant population. You'll not find fresher and tastier Vietnamese food outside (or in Vietnam) as an example and the Italians can be thanked for bringing what has become a serious coffee culture over the years. If you want the best of Melbourne, walk. Walk through its infamous laneways to discover hidden bars, café strips, local designer shops and vivid street art, take in an AFL (football) game or time your visit with the Australian Open or Grand Prix, catch a rumbling tram to the Queen Victoria Markets to absorb local life and eat your way through this capital of gastronomy.

Unsurprisingly, the best spas in Melbourne have adopted either strong Asian influences or are showcasing indigenous, natural therapies that tie in Australian Aboriginal ingredients and philosophies. Spa-going may still be considered a luxury rather than a necessity in Australia but what is on offer here in Melbourne is sophisticated, technical, luxurious and deeply holistic in some instances.



## STAY THE NIGHT

### ISIKA URBAN RETREAT AT CROWN METROPOLE

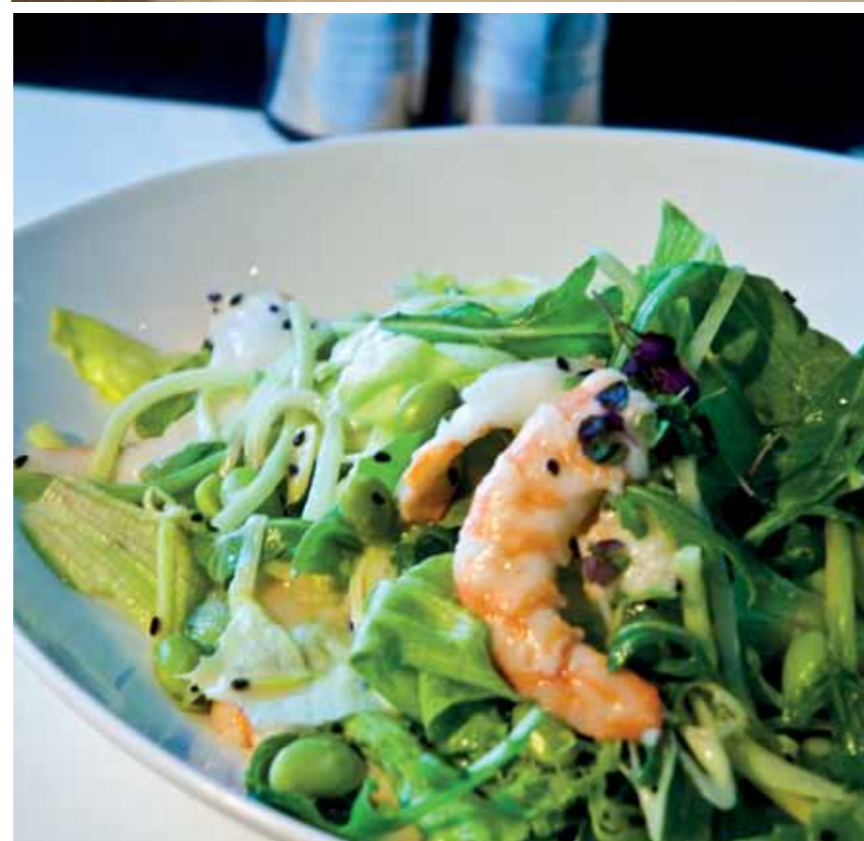
In the heart of Melbourne lies a retreat that's full of heart. The spa décor is calming organic prints meets savvy New York without the pretension, an urban haven that blocks out the city madness just below. Pampering facials and deeply relaxing body therapies by Aromatherapy Associates (AsiaSpa's Best Product of the Year 2010) and [comfort zone] are the perfect detox to pair with a nourishing prawn and miso salad or exotic fruit salad with passionfruit sorbet. All of which can be enjoyed in the quiet of your spa room.

ISIKA's jewel is the slightly mysterious and intriguing Intuitive Massage by Gisele. The outcome is dependent on the individual and without giving too much away – for those who are looking to be re-aligned, centred or slightly changed for the better – expect a healing touch on a cellular level using tapping and vibrations, massage and a dash of clairvoyance, should your therapist intuitively feel your need or openness to it.

Outside of the spa, Crown Metropol offers easy access to high-end shopping, internationally renowned cuisine and the excitement of a high roller life at Crown Casino, in what is fast becoming a "Crown Village." Close by is Crown Towers and sister hotel Crown Promenade, all just a short walk from the winding Yarra River and cultural city centre.

To truly escape, book in for a multiple day retreat package which includes accommodation in a peaceful spa suite with a private stairway to ISIKA, access to an extensive spa menu care of famous chef Gordon Ramsay and VIP guest entry to breathtaking views at the exclusive "28," Crown Metropol's top floor. In addition, nutritional consultation, yoga, kinesiology and even lifestyle coaching can be arranged.

[www.crownmetropol.com.au](http://www.crownmetropol.com.au)



THIS PAGE: ISIKA Urban Retreat couple's suite; spa details; and swimming pool, all photographed by Min Siah. OPPOSITE PAGE: The bedroom and spa cuisine by chef Gordon Ramsay at ISIKA Urban Retreat at Crown Metropol all photographed by Min Siah. OPENING PAGES: Sunrise surfing at Melbourne ©inmagine.com



**CHUAN SPA AT THE LANGHAM**

The Langham by the Yarra River's edge in Southbank is just a stone's throw from Melbourne's best restaurants and sights. This grand hotel's sparkling and marbled entrance works in direct contrast to Chuan Spa's cosy, labyrinthine interiors and its adjacent poolside views are breathtaking day or night.

Consistent with the Chuan Spa philosophy around flowing water, guests are encouraged to partake in a luxuriating Tri-Bathing Ritual to calm mind, body and soul. This includes access to a Jacuzzi, sauna and a river stone snail shower with 12 shower heads for each muscle group and an overhead rain shower and steam to guarantee relaxation overload. This is all before your treatment even begins.

Though The Langham is steeped in luxury, Chuan Spa's various treatments retain a holistic approach incorporating the five Chinese elements. Whether you choose *Tui Na*, a traditional Chinese deep tissue massage, or a Phyt's 100 percent certified organic facial, the spa menu offers a myriad of tempting add-ons to better customise your experience. Try the deeply nourishing Hot Oil Hair Treatment and Scalp Massage or if you don't have an event to attend, the TCM Body Cupping add-on for a deeper detox and cleanse.

[www.chuanspa.com.au/en/Melbourne](http://www.chuanspa.com.au/en/Melbourne)  
[www.melbourne.langhamhotels.com.au](http://www.melbourne.langhamhotels.com.au)

**PARK CLUB HEALTH & DAY SPA AT PARK HYATT**

Located on the city's edge amidst Melbourne's luscious parklands, Park Hyatt's grand driveway and entrance is a fairytale lead up to a positively holistic and surprisingly cosy spa. Arrive early to take advantage of the Grecian style 25-metre edgeless pool or steam and sauna facilities to help loosen those aching muscles pre-treatment.

The spa's most unique (and expensive) treatment is the Park Club Diamond Experience, it includes an anti-ageing facial using products from the Diamond Collection, an Ice-Lift mask and frozen plant DNA to repair and protect mature skin. This invigorating facial is then followed by a magnetic scrub again using diamond and gemstone particles then complimented with a stretching massage to clear energy paths and realign the body. Included is a healthy spa cuisine meal.

[www.melbourne.park.hyatt.com](http://www.melbourne.park.hyatt.com)

**THE LYALL HOTEL & SPA**

The Lyall Hotel provides a local five-star home away from home in the well-heeled inner city suburb of South Yarra. Here, visitors can feel less like a tourist and more like a 'Melbournian.' The hotel and spa is located close to Melbourne's magnificent botanical gardens and is just around the corner from Chapel Street, one of Melbourne's many shopping Meccas.

The hotel's spa spans three levels, the upper floor is light and minimalist with a sunny outdoor deck while the lowest floor is a wet area with steam and spray tanning rooms. There isn't a vast difference in time zones if flying from Asia, but jetlag is a good excuse to try the Time Zone Recovery which includes an invigorating body brushing and application of a Sodashi purifying mask and recovery tonic, then to save from dryness, a plant rich Sodashi facial is performed.

Once recovered from jetlag or "jetlag," take a leisurely stroll along the nearby river and meander your way to Kanteen Café – a local favourite – for a sublime cup of coffee by the Yarra.

[www.thelyall.com](http://www.thelyall.com)

THIS PAGE: A massage at Park Club Health & Day Spa at Park Hyatt. OPPOSITE PAGE: Steam room in Chuan Spa at The Langham Hotel; the spa reception desk and sun lounge at The Lyall Hotel & Spa; and the pool at The Langham Hotel.



## BOUTIQUE RETREATS

### AURORA RETREAT AT THE PRINCE HOTEL

The Prince Hotel in seaside St Kilda is an unassuming art deco building that houses a sleek designer interior. Awaiting inside is a gem of a spa retreat that attracts A-listers and loyal locals alike. Aurora Retreat offers two to five day programmes along with an interesting spa menu, incorporating Aboriginal healing methodologies with indigenous treatment names like Moora Moora, Wangarie and Yoongoo. Delicious smelling local and natural ingredients such as wattleseed and jellybush honey are sourced for the Aurora Spa branded products.

For total head to toe detoxification and nourishment, try the award winning Kinta Karnu, a beautifying process that requires no effort, on your part. The treatment takes place in a steam room and lasts one hour. The body is nourished with a chosen oil then exfoliated using remineralising salts followed by a wattleseed and crushed walnut shell resurfacing treatment. The application of chilled river stones along the meridians helps to realign and is a cool relief from the inevitable increase of body temperature. The ritual is completed with a deeply moisturising hair treatment and facial. Finally, float back to the minimalist chic rooms at The Prince or head downstairs to Mink Bar for an infused vodka drink to re-tox. It's too tempting.

[www.theprince.com.au](http://www.theprince.com.au), [www.aurorasparetreat.com](http://www.aurorasparetreat.com)

### SPA DREAMTIME – ST KILDA SEA BATHS

Being on St Kilda's beach front, it's no surprise Spa Dreamtime incorporates water healing therapies into its menu and also boasts the only Thalassotherapy Spa in Australia. To secure the best views across Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay book the couple's suite. In keeping with the seaside theme, try the Oceanic Dream Spa Ritual which begins with an invigorating salt and algae body scrub, followed by an uplifting, effervescent seaweed petal thalassotherapy spa and rhythmic massage, then finish with an unusual self heating foam body mask and rich moisturiser. Spa Dreamtime uses both French marine based Thalgo and 100 percent natural Sodashi; Australian and chemical free.

After treatment, breathe in some fresh air and take a walk through St Kilda Seabaths and explore its beachfront restaurants and long stretch of boardwalk starting from the well-loved St Kilda Pier ending at the historical Luna Park.

[www.spadreamtime.com.au](http://www.spadreamtime.com.au)

### EAST DAY SPA

East Day Spa is tucked between InterContinental Hotel and Rialto Towers in the city centre, this modern and minimalist oasis has a tranquil east meets west feel. Be transported to an exotic place when you step through billowy curtains and passed the Buddha statues lining the hallway toward the colourfully designed treatment rooms, each one unique.

East Day Spa carries Elemis and traditional Indian essential oils in keeping with the spa's ethos. Each treatment represents an eastern spa influence such as the Baliatsu, Sakura, Kady Vasty and Thai. In keeping with rituals from Asia, sumptuous add-ons like the East Foot Ritual uses raw sugar as an exfoliant and warmed oil for silken feet.

[www.eastdayspa.com](http://www.eastdayspa.com)

THIS PAGE: East Day Spa treatment room. OPPOSITE PAGE: (Top left, and middle) Statue at St Paul's Cathedral; Kanteen Café by the Yarra; (clockwise from middle left) St Kilda Beach; the tram; Federation Square; Hoisery Lane street art; Crown Towers in the city at dusk; and block arcade, all photographed by Min Siah. (top right) Aurora Retreat hand and foot room at the Prince Hotel.



## ESCAPING THE CITY

### JAPANESE MOUNTAIN RETREAT

A quick 45-minute drive from Melbourne's CBD will find you in an enchanted part of the Dandenong Ranges and an otherworldly setting when you reach Japanese Mountain Retreat. From the moment you roll down its driveway, all stress and worry is replaced by a sense of calm that's in natural sync with the well kept gardens and still quietness.

Three exclusive luxury villas are fitted out with traditional rice paper screens, tatami mat flooring, futon and low seating whilst not leaving out the modern necessities like air-conditioning and an unobtrusive entertainment unit. The *pièce de résistance* is the romantic sunken bathtub for two – so deep it fills to the shoulders – with a private outlook to a small and serene Japanese garden beyond. Hidden away within the main gardens is a heated onsen and it's a surreal east meets west experience to soak buck naked whilst star gazing, having soft Japanese flute music in the background blending in with kookaburra calls and a visiting possum.

A delicious Japanese feast is provided by both your host and a sushi chef and is served in the privacy of your room or on the front deck overlooking the bamboo and eucalyptus trees. Treatments are performed in-room. The spa carries Aromatherapy Associates, however, they are also the sole distributor of Red Flower Japan, a special product that practises soothing rituals using flower oils,

fruit essences and Japanese inspired ingredients like bamboo, plum wine and cherry blossom. After a Vitalising Flow Ritual, muscles feel relaxed and toned, and skin is silken to the touch.

[www.japanesemountainretreat.com.au](http://www.japanesemountainretreat.com.au)

### PENINSULA HOT SPRINGS

Natural mineral springs in Australia may not be the first obvious thing that comes to mind but a scenic one hour and 20-minute drive south will find you in a peaceful wonderland of thermal pools. 20 pools to be exact, and a Spa Dreaming centre, hammam, reflexology walk, hydrotherapy pools and restaurant.

Peninsula Hot Springs keeps late hours so guests can enjoy the Moonviewing Pool in the bathing valley, and if the names of the various thermal pools aren't romantic enough, try the Marta Kodo massage to set the mood. Marta Kodo (big melody) is an energy aligning and toning 90-minute massage inspired by Aboriginal techniques of pressure point and spiralling movements, with the addition of aromatic native bush oils by Li'Tya.

This is a truly therapeutic Aussie experience, with water rich in minerals from an aquifer 637 metres underground from the surrounding Eucalyptus and stars above, and the indigenous treatments and local food in between to complement.

[www.peninsulahotsprings.com.au](http://www.peninsulahotsprings.com.au)

### MINERAL SPA AT PEPPERS SPRINGS RETREAT & SPA

Built in 1935, Peppers Springs stands strong as a grand art deco manor and is a lovely blend of modern and old world. Besides the traditional, superior and terrace rooms the serious spa goer can choose between a modern upper floor spa room or a country garden spa room. The enveloping gardens are a lush maze of manicured greenery.

Mineral Spa offers both Pevonia and Li'Tya treatments, the former using natural source ingredients mixed with luxurious caviar in some treatments and the latter from ancient plant wisdom and holistic healing elements. The third 'product' used is the Hepburn region's rich mineral water through water therapy. Spend time in the unique basalt stone sauna and infrared detox box as a prelude to a choice of Mineral Rituals.

The spa also offers oncology massage by specially trained therapists using techniques born from research and tactile therapies to ease pain, anxiety and stimulate the immune system to fight cancer cells and minimise the side effects of medical treatment.

The hotel and spa in Hepburn Springs, Daylesford is one hour north of Melbourne and a recognised holistic healing spa destination in itself. Its springs contribute to 80 percent of Australia's mineral water and Mineral Spa at Peppers Springs Retreat is one of the best among several stand out spas and retreats in the area.

[www.mineralspa.com.au](http://www.mineralspa.com.au)

### a local eye's top 5:

#### Dining

Movida Tapas [www.movida.com.au](http://www.movida.com.au)

Cumulus Inc [www.cumulusinc.com.au](http://www.cumulusinc.com.au)

Cutler & Co. [www.cutlerandco.com.au](http://www.cutlerandco.com.au)

Tram Car Restaurant [www.tramrestaurant.com.au](http://www.tramrestaurant.com.au)

Pellegrini's Espresso Bar – 66 Bourke St, City

#### Drink

Rooftop Cinema Bar [www.rooftopcinema.com.au](http://www.rooftopcinema.com.au)

The Seamstress [www.seamstress.com.au](http://www.seamstress.com.au)

Supper Club – Level 1/161 Spring St, City

Little Creatures Dining Hall [www.littlecreatures.com.au](http://www.littlecreatures.com.au)

Comme [www.comme.com.au](http://www.comme.com.au)

#### Shopping

Chapel Street, South Yarra – Street Fashion

Flinders Lane, Lt Collins St and Block Arcade, CBD – Designer Labels

Brunswick St, Fitzroy – Independent Designers

Bridge Rd, Richmond – Warehouse and Sales

Collins St, City – High-end International Labels

THIS PAGE: Peninsula Hot Springs bath house bathing gully and the rich mineral water pool at Mineral Spa, Peppers Springs Retreat & Spa. OPPOSITE PAGE: Sun lounge at Japanese Mountain Retreat photographed by Min Siah.