

# TRAVEL INSIDER.



Celia Topping

Microbreweries occupy railway arches on the Bermondsey Beer Mile, London



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
COLIN DUTTON

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Along the southern banks of the Arno, **Lee Marshall** strolls the Gothic streets of San Niccolò, a medieval Florentine pocket that casts an enchanting spell.

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**Florence.**

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# San Niccolò

San Niccolò is made for wandering (above); Villa Bardini offers views of Florence's rooftops (opposite)







Ramble up to the Belvedere Terrace in the gardens of Villa Bardini (above); shop for road-sign-inspired works by French artist Clet Abraham

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THERE'S A lovely image in the Florence section of *The Portrait of a Lady*, Henry James's poignant novel about a life on hold. The protagonist, Isabel, goes to stay with her aunt, who lives in a "historic building in a narrow street whose very name recalled the strife of medieval factions". For Isabel, to inhabit this old palazzo, with its hidden garden, was "to hold to her ear all day a shell of the sea of the past".

We never find out exactly where Mrs Touchett's Florentine residence is located but I like to think James had San Niccolò in mind – a district that unfurls in a long, uneven strip along the south bank of the Arno on either side of the Ponte alle Grazie, defined and limited to the south by the heights of Forte di Belvedere and Piazzale Michelangelo. We can imagine his crinolined heroine walking across picturesque Ponte Vecchio – dodging portrait painters rather than today's selfie sticks – and turning left into winding Via de' Bardi, suddenly alone in a quiet lane lined with medieval palazzi.

In its country curves, in the wildly unkempt gardens that mock the severe Gothic façades across the road, Via de' Bardi

captures something essential and unique about one of the city's largely undiscovered *quartieri*. Few other places in Florence are so deeply resonant with the music of the sea of the past; few are so adept at hiding in plain sight within arrowshot of some of the Tuscan capital's top 10 tourist-checklist attractions, including Palazzo Pitti and the Boboli Gardens.

There are still many other parts of San Niccolò where you can find blissful refuge from the crowds, such as Costa San Giorgio, another rural lane in the heart of the city. Walk up its steep flagstones, past a house that belonged to Galileo, to find recently restored Villa Bardini ([bardinipeyron.it](http://bardinipeyron.it)), where a terraced garden with roses, fruit trees and wisteria pergolas gives







Alberto Navari and his mother, Giuseppina, serve signature dishes such as cappellacci with grated truffle at their restaurant, Zeb



hacked road signs; a turn-left arrow sprouts as Pinocchio's nose and the white bar of a no-entry sign becomes the bone of a tiny dog that can't believe its luck. In the 11 years since Abraham set up shop in San Niccolò, he's seen it become increasingly popular with "clued-in foreign visitors who want to get away from the obvious".

The heart of the new San Niccolò scene is a piazza that doesn't even have a name – it's simply the junction between Via San Niccolò and Via San Miniato al Monte, the steep paved lane that leads up to the magnificent Romanesque church and monastery of the same name. Dotted around this bulge in the road are at least eight places dedicated to liquid or solid refreshment. Tellingly, there's also a luxury real-estate company; this once *popolare* (working-class) eastern end of San Niccolò is now in the midst of full-scale gentrification.

The best of those dining spots at the San Miniato junction is Zeb ([zebgastronomia.com](http://zebgastronomia.com)), an acronym of "zuppa e bollito", or soup and boiled meat. Owner Alberto Navari and his mother, Giuseppina, opened a *gastronomia* here in 1985, one of those classic Italian delis where you can buy groceries, cheese and salami. In 2008, they transformed it into what you see today: a compact, suavely designed shrine to market-fresh Tuscan cuisine.

In essence, though, this is still a neighbourhood restaurant. Diners sit on stools around a central aisle and choose from trays of mains or side dishes displayed behind a glass counter. These might include a traditional dish such as *peposo*, a slow-cooked beef stew once baked in the kilns of the ceramics town Impruneta. Pasta, like the Zeb classic *cappellacci* (ravioli filled with pear, ricotta and pecorino), is made to order in the kitchen by Mamma, who comes and goes as her son reels off the day's menu *a voce*. "Written menus are cold," he says, "and we're all about socialising."

After a satisfying lunch, walk through the 14th-century town gate, Porta San Miniato, and take the second street on the right to find La Beppa Fioraia ([labepaffioraia.it](http://labepaffioraia.it)), a long shed of a place that comes on like an elongated cricket pavilion but is, in fact, dedicated to the national sport of eating and drinking. Friendly and artsy, with colourful

wide-screen views of Florence's red-roofed Centro Storico (Old Town) laid out at the feet of Brunelleschi's cathedral dome.

And yet there's something new in the air in this ancient ward. Walk on along Via de' Bardi and its continuation, Via San Niccolò, past tall palazzi made even more dark and Gothic by the horse-harness *ferr*i (irons) that protrude from their façades. You'll pass by the cave of wonders that is the jewellery workshop of Alessandro Dari ([alessandrodari.com](http://alessandrodari.com)), a modern-day alchemist whose mad, intricate creations

in gold, silver and precious stones wouldn't feel out of place in *The Lord of the Rings*. Press on and, all of a sudden, the dim canyon of a street opens out and you're in a bustling urban village that has become a dining and cultural hub at night.

It seems appropriate that right on the corner where the grand townhouses of Via de' Bardi and Via San Niccolò end and the "village" part of the district begins is the workshop of Clet Abraham (Via dell'Olmo 8; +39 340 771 0105), a playful French artist whose principal medium is



Explore the district's cobblestoned streets and visit jeweller Alessandro Dari's workshop (top left) on Via San Niccolò

Van Gogh chairs and wooden tables that spill out into a rustic garden in summer, this bustling trattoria is popular with locals. Prominent on the menu are taglieri boards, each one an invitingly shareable selection of cold meats, cheeses, grilled and roasted vegetables, pâté, relishes and tapas-sized portions of classic Tuscan dishes such as the bread-and-tomato pappà al pomodoro soup.

San Niccolò's most upscale dining option is not in its village core but on the Lungarno, the elegant riverside avenue and promenade that was only laid out in its present form in the 1870s (the land was previously taken up by private gardens). La Bottega del Buon Caffè ([borgointhecity.com](http://borgointhecity.com)) pays homage to

the area's heritage in its exposed-brick walls and ceiling arches. But that's it for shabby; the rest is chic and sophisticated, in keeping with chef Antonello Sardi's farm-to-table cuisine in this Michelin-starred restaurant. Order à la carte or spoil yourself with an eight-course dégustation with matching wines for €245 (about \$380).

Just across the road is San Niccolò's biggest surprise: a beach. From May to September, as part of the Estate Fiorentina program of summer events, the sandy riverbank becomes a beach of sorts by day; by evening, it's a nightspot called Easy Living ([easylivingfirenze.it](http://easylivingfirenze.it)) that features a bar chalet at the water's edge and an elevated garden terrace with a restaurant, cocktail den and panoramic views.

Beach rugby in the shadow of a medieval tower before Negronis at nine? Welcome to Florence's coolest urban village, which unites the charms of the city, the country and the seaside in one very seductive package. ●

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## Stay.

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Unlike many hotels in the city of Michelangelo that opt for a faux-Renaissance look – all heavy brocade and dark antique furniture – the Continentale ([hotel.qantas.com.au/continentaleflorence](http://hotel.qantas.com.au/continentaleflorence)) is a stylish bolthole overlooking the Ponte Vecchio. Architect Michele Bönan has fitted out its 43 rooms and suites in a light, airy idiom that unites 1950s chic and Mediterranean minimalism. The cherry on the torta is La Terrazza, a rooftop bar that feels like a Chianti-shire villa balcony airlifted to Florence.

Another fine terrace – this one with a view of Giardino Torrigiani, Florence's most extensive private garden – runs along two sides of AdAstra ([adastrafirenze.it](http://adastrafirenze.it)). Currently the city's most desirable boutique hotel, it was opened in 2015 with creative input from the husband-and-wife team behind upscale B&B SoprArno. With 14 rooms (up from nine after five were added in September), AdAstra is a glorious meld of stately and bohemian.

San Niccolò is still waiting for an accommodation option that channels its new hipster status but until one comes along, traditional three-star Hotel Silla ([hotel.qantas.com.au/hotelsillaflorence](http://hotel.qantas.com.au/hotelsillaflorence)) is a good-value, comfortable base from which to explore.

## Flight path

# FLR

Qantas offers flights to Rome, via Dubai, where connections to Florence are available. [qantas.com](http://qantas.com)



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
CELIA TOPPING

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With its laid-back vibe, craft beer culture and rich history as a trading post on the Thames, Bermondsey is one of London's buzziest quarters, writes **Sally Robinson**.

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London.

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# Bermondsey

IT'S ONLY a short walk from Tower Bridge but Bermondsey feels like London's best-kept secret. Once a slum area immortalised in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, its wharves, warehouses and railway arches have been regenerated into hip bars, cafés and galleries.

Topnotch restaurants, a thriving street food market and a flourishing craft beer industry have combined to create a culinary hotspot with a fiercely independent spirit.

The heart of the area is Bermondsey Street, with its buzzing village atmosphere and streetscape of Victorian shopfronts and old warehouses. "What's special about this area is that it has rejuvenated itself without losing its character," says Dale Gibson of Bermondsey Street Bees ([bermondseystreetbees.co.uk](http://bermondseystreetbees.co.uk)), which produces honey.

Norman Ackroyd, one of Britain's best landscape artists, was an early convert to the district's charms, buying an old Victorian leather factory here in 1983. Back then, Bermondsey was a no-go area – the parks were dumps and the streets run-down – but Ackroyd was happy. "I liked the architecture, the history and how central it was," he says. He's seen warehouses turned into apartments, and shops and restaurants move in. "I have fantastic French and Spanish restaurants 50 yards from my house."

Evocative street names – Tanner, Morocco, Leathermarket – recall the area's leather-trade past. "It has such heart," says Laura Sullivan, who is co-founder of gin producer Little Bird and runs a speakeasy-style bar. "You can sense its dense and dark history."

It's not the easiest area to navigate and many of the bars and cafés are tucked away through viaducts and down cobblestoned alleyways, Little Bird included. But the sense of discovery only adds to the experience. "Bermondsey's like that," says Sullivan, "as if you've discovered something secret."





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## Morning.

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Kickstart your day at The Watch House ([thewatchhouse.com](http://thewatchhouse.com)) on Bermondsey Street – a café in a whitewashed 19th-century guard house originally used by watchmen protecting the graveyard next door from body-snatchers. The building has been beautifully renovated with oak counters and Victorian floor tiles, while the exposed-brick walls and blazing fire mean it's the cosiest spot around for a caffeine fix. If the weather is favourable, take a seat at one of the outdoor tables overlooking the pretty churchyard of St Mary Magdalen, where parts of the tower date back to the 13th century, making it the oldest building in Bermondsey.

Suitably fortified, go for a walk along the banks of the River Thames between London Bridge and Tower Bridge. Head towards Hay's Galleria (1 Battle Bridge Lane), a restored 19th-century warehouse and wharf where tea clippers from China and India once docked. Turn right on the riverside boulevard and enjoy panoramic views across to the city on the north bank of the Thames. A clutch of dramatic, contemporary high-rise buildings dominates the skyline, including Norman Foster's Gherkin and 20 Fenchurch Street, known as the Walkie-Talkie, designed by Uruguayan architect Rafael Viñoly in 2004. Somewhat more low-rise but still impressive, the sprawling white Georgian building that is Custom House is the hub for tax collection in the United Kingdom.

On your way to Tower Bridge, you'll pass HMS *Belfast* ([iwm.org.uk](http://iwm.org.uk)) moored on the river. This decommissioned Royal Navy ship is open to the public and is great fun to look around.



A little further on is the Bridge Theatre, London's first new theatre of scale for about 80 years. At Tower Bridge itself ([towerbridge.org.uk](http://towerbridge.org.uk)), pop in to the exhibition to marvel at the huge Victorian engines once used to power the lifting of the bridge.

When it's time for lunch, loop away from the river. On the weekend, there's no better place to eat and shop than at the delectable Maltby Street Market ([maltby.st](http://maltby.st)), hidden away on Ropewalk, a narrow lane fronted by rows of industrial Victorian railway arches. The space is packed with stalls selling an impeccable selection of London's most delicious street food and local produce.



(Clockwise from top left) Maltby Street Market; bulkhead lights at LASSCO; one of the area's many spots for a caffeine hit; the Walkie-Talkie building looms over Custom House

For a grab-and-go lunch, graze the 20 or so street food stalls at the market, such as The Gyoza Guys (delicious doughy dumplings), African Volcano (towering burgers with Mozambique-style hot sauce) and The Cheese Truck (toasted sandwiches oozing with artisanal cheeses; the Cropwell Bishop stilton with bacon and pear chutney is a favourite). Top it off with a sweet fudgy treat from the beloved Bad Brownie stall.

Prefer to sit down? There are several brilliant options in the arches for a relaxed lunch, including 40 Maltby Street ([40maltbystreet.com](http://40maltbystreet.com)), a chic little wine bar with a distressed, industrial look – think exposed-brick walls, polished concrete floors and pallets as tables. It's run by a wine importer so the back half of the arch is piled high with crates awaiting delivery. The small yet lovingly prepared menu changes daily but will often include a flavoursome fish stew with tomato, fennel and aioli.

Don't leave Maltby Street without having a decent poke around the LASSCO warehouse ([lassco.co.uk](http://lassco.co.uk)) in arch 37 at the top of the street. It's a treasure-trove of vintage furniture, artworks and collectables with a quirky café and restaurant.







## Afternoon.

It's back to Bermondsey Street for a relaxed adventure, browsing the unique shops and galleries. First stop is the uber-minimalist White Cube ([whitecube.com](http://whitecube.com)), one of the world's most influential contemporary art galleries representing modern luminaries such as Tracey Emin, Damien Hirst and Gilbert & George. The vast space occupies a stark 1970s warehouse and is worth a look for its sheer, gleaming scale.

Walk a little further to the Fashion and Textile Museum ([ftmlondon.org](http://ftmlondon.org)) with its striking orange and hot-pink exterior designed by Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta. Founded by fashion designer Zandra Rhodes, the museum hosts excellent exhibitions; coming up is an exploration of the history and culture of the T-shirt, followed by an exhibition devoted to the work of Irish designer Orla Kiely.



(From top) Purchase designer clothing for a good cause at Mary's Living & Giving Shop; buy gourmet produce at Giddy Grocer; do a pub crawl along the Bermondsey Beer Mile

Now for some retail therapy. Don't miss Mary's Living & Giving Shop ([maryportas.com](http://maryportas.com)), a charity store selling gorgeous designer pieces, or London Glassblowing ([londonglassblowing.co.uk](http://londonglassblowing.co.uk)), where you can see contemporary glass artists in action. Lovely and British (132a Bermondsey Street) has a fun mix of UK-made jewellery, gifts and homewares, while 167 Bermondsey (167bermondsey.com) sells beautiful men's shirts designed by shop co-owner and former Burberry designer Michael McGrath.

If you're feeling hungry, Giddy Grocer ([giddygrocer.co.uk](http://giddygrocer.co.uk)) is a traditional grocery store with an enticing selection of fine local produce. It offers a weekday lunch box of ham, roasted meat or cheese with a hunk of sourdough and chutney for £6.50 (about \$11.50).

Late afternoon is the perfect time for a palate cleanser so it's over to Bermondsey's thriving microbrewery district. Start on atmospheric Druid Street, where boutique breweries have taken over many of the Victorian brick railway arches. Most have basic taprooms (with trestle tables and benches) and are open for tastings in the latter part of the week. Known as the Bermondsey Beer Mile, the 2.4-kilometre path weaves down the lanes and alleys of the neighbourhood and takes in Southwark Brewing Co. ([southwarkbrewing.co.uk](http://southwarkbrewing.co.uk)), Anspach & Hobday ([anspachandhobday.com](http://anspachandhobday.com)), Brew by Numbers ([brewbynumbers.com](http://brewbynumbers.com)) and Partizan Brewing ([partizanbrewing.co.uk](http://partizanbrewing.co.uk)), finishing at Fourpure Brewing Co. ([fourpure.com](http://fourpure.com)) next to South Bermondsey Station.







## Evening.

Time for cocktails. Head to Ropewalk for an aperitif at Little Bird ([littlebirdgin.com](http://littlebirdgin.com)), Laura Sullivan's darling gin bar. Cocooned in a cosy railway arch, it's all vintage chic with deep-red table lamps, mismatched timber furniture and fresh flowers spilling from cut-glass vases. The cocktails are made using small-batch

Little Bird London Dry Gin and served with a signature slice of grapefruit.

Choosing a restaurant for dinner on Bermondsey Street is a difficult business. The tiny and much-loved Casse-Croûte ([cassecroute.co.uk](http://cassecroute.co.uk)) serves authentic Gallic fare in a bijou bistro setting. The tables are closely packed, the tablecloths are regulation French red check and the blackboard menu (posted online) changes daily.

Down the road is José ([josepizarro.com](http://josepizarro.com)), a convivial tapas and sherry bar set up by acclaimed Spanish chef José Pizarro. Diners cram into the tiny corner shopfront to feast on authentic jamón Ibérico, Padrón peppers, croquetas

and daily specials. It's standing room only when busy but that just adds to the fun.

If you're up for a nightcap, head to The Woolpack pub ([woolpackbar.com](http://woolpackbar.com)). Once a colourful local for dock workers, it has been gentrified but still retains a charming "old Bermondsey" feel with its tiled frontage and leather banquettes. If the night is clear, there's a lovely garden with fairy lights out the back. ●

(Clockwise from far left) Casse-Croûte is a French-style bistro; The Woolpack pub has old-world appeal; gin cocktail hour at Little Bird

## Flight path

# LHR

From 24 March, Qantas will offer direct flights between Perth and London, as well as flights from most Australian cities to London via Singapore. [qantas.com](http://qantas.com)





3<sup>e</sup> Arr.  
RUE DU  
PARC ROYAL

3<sup>e</sup> Arr.  
RUE  
ELZÉVIR

81

MÉERT  
MAISON FONDÉE  
EN 1761



MAISON FONDÉE  
EN 1761

MÉERT

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SES  
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PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
JOANN PAI

With time portals at every turn, this district encompasses the Upper Marais and has a restaurant that was once the home of the king's mistress, writes **Katrina Lawrence**.

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**Paris.**

# 3<sup>rd</sup> arrondissement

ON THE second day of a recent Parisian holiday, my smartwatch stopped working. Paris is a place where you must be philosophical about such things so I decided it was a sign to enjoy the moment, to stop counting steps and seconds. I turned off my phone data, too, ignoring my map in favour of wandering aimlessly, led by the lure of a quaint cobblestoned lane here or a whimsical roofline there. Then, suddenly, I felt something new in this city where time can seem to stand still: a jolt of vibrantly modern energy.

"It's not a place that changes enormously," fashion designer Martin Grant told me when I next returned to Paris, keen to further explore the 3<sup>rd</sup> arrondissement that encompasses the North Marais. Grant has lived and worked in the 3<sup>rd</sup> for 15 years. "But in the past five years, I've really sensed an area in transition."

The buildings may be ancient (Baron Haussmann, who made over much of Paris in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, barely made inroads here) but they house cutting-edge design, wi-fi-friendly cafés that brew great coffee and Parisians plugged into a world of possibilities. It feels happening and you can't help but want to be a part of it. Here's how to spend a day getting in on the action.



Charming architecture characterises the Marais, from confectioner Méert's shopfront (opposite) to the ivy-covered Hôtel Duret de Chevry (above)





#### FRENCH CONNECTION

The inspiring mood is set at Place des Vosges, on the south-east edge of the 3rd. Dating back to 1605, it was the city's first urban square and is still a vision of loveliness – think jaunty brick-and-stone townhouses and a garden of clipped linden trees – as much as one of civic optimism. Place des Vosges brought high society to the Marais. Paris was entering an age of globalisation, as explorers trekked back with stories and flavours from exotic continents; tea, chocolate and coffee were embraced by the day's taste-makers.

Speaking of which, it's breakfast time. At Fragments (76 rue des Tournelles), the cappuccinos are as good as you'll find in Italy – and the Australian-inspired avocado on toast is up there, too. Incidentally, the famed 17th-century courtesan Ninon de l'Enclos lived on this street, where she held a salon for her many admirers. With cafés yet to exist, salons allowed Parisians to socially connect and inhale intoxicating new ideas along with energising brews.

A popular salon guest was sparkling epistolary star Madame de Sévigné. Born on Place des Vosges, she later lived in what is now the Musée Carnavalet ([carnavalet.paris.fr](http://carnavalet.paris.fr)). The charming museum of Parisian history is closed until 2019 but walk around this block and those to the west, north of rue des Francs Bourgeois (the dividing line between Lower and Upper Marais), to admire the mansions of the French Renaissance. Many of these buildings, ransacked during the Revolution, are now museums, such as the exquisite Musée Cognacq-Jay ([museecognacqjay.paris.fr](http://museecognacqjay.paris.fr)) devoted to the 18th century. Just north is Musée Picasso Paris ([museepicasso.paris.fr](http://museepicasso.paris.fr)), worth a visit for the magnificent staircase alone.

#### BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

By the industrial 1800s, the district had reformed itself as a working-class enclave with manufacturing workshops crowding courtyards and artisanal ateliers lining the skinny streets. Despite its dilapidated state, the Marais was saved from demolition



in the 1960s. By the setting of the century, the wealthy had moved back, albeit in a less showy way – these are the bobos (bourgeois-bohemians), after all. The Upper Marais remains an area of transformation where old-school artisans rub shoulders with avant-garde artists; where old townhouses are being renovated, the ornate coach doors often painted optimistic pops of colour.

Stroll over to boulevard Beaumarchais, where bobos shop for groceries at Maison Plisson ([lamaisonplisson.com](http://lamaisonplisson.com)), fashion at Leon & Harper

([leonandharper.com](http://leonandharper.com)) and everything else at Merci ([merci-merci.com](http://merci-merci.com)), a converted wallpaper factory where the wideranging merchandise is dizzyingly good (fortify yourself in the basement juice bar). “Merci was the game changer,” says Lindsey Tramuta, author of *The New Paris*. “It represents the modern mood of Paris: energetic, dynamic, entrepreneurial.” Tramuta cites Boot Café (19 rue du Pont aux Choux; +33 6 26 41 10 66), the highly Instagrammable eatery behind a vintage cobbler's façade, as another turning point.

(Clockwise from top left) Avocado on toast at Fragments; Place des Vosges; the curated collection at Empreintes







“It helped make the 3rd a hub where people want to hang out. And social media has been huge for attracting a new audience.”

Boot Café, around the corner from Merci, is on a street studded with independent designers. “Artisanal fashion is a great fit for this area, which has traditionally been one of manufacturing and supplying details like buttons and zippers,” says journalist and handbag designer Kasia Dietz, who leads shopping tours of the area she has lived in for eight years. “Many designers have set up shop here because the cheap rent lets them have their atelier in the basement. This is exciting because how else can you meet the actual designer?” Stop in at Anika Lena Skärström ([anika.lena.com](http://anika.lena.com)) and Koshka Mashka ([koshkamashkaeshop.com](http://koshkamashkaeshop.com)).

#### SWEET DREAMS

The world has discovered the 3rd, which has returned the favour in the form of varied dining. “It’s not hard to find something different,” says Tramuta, “which is not the case in every district.” Take lunch at the bustling market Marché des Enfants Rouges on rue de Bretagne, choosing between Lebanese, Japanese, Moroccan and vegetarian. Also consider



Carbón's grilled mackerel (left); Boot Café's original cobbler's façade on rue du Pont aux Choux



Argentine-inspired Carbón ([carbonparis.com](http://carbonparis.com)), Mexican at Candelaria (52 rue de Saintonge; +33 1 42 74 41 28) and Californian fare at Wild & The Moon ([wildandthemoon.fr](http://wildandthemoon.fr)).

Tradition isn't totally off the menu, though; afternoon tea options are as Gallic as they come here. Buy rose-and-raspberry cream puffs at Popelini ([popelini.com](http://popelini.com)), salted-caramel macarons at Pierre Hermé ([pierreherme.com](http://pierreherme.com)) and shortbread biscuits at Poilâne ([poilane.com](http://poilane.com)). Jacques Genin ([jacquesgenin.fr](http://jacquesgenin.fr)) is the go-to for luscious hot chocolate and delicate pastries, while Grand Café Tortoni (45 rue de Saintonge; +33 1 42 72 28 92), a glorious reimagining of the famed Belle Époque café, serves steaming pots of tea accompanied by melt-in-the-mouth madeleines.

#### GRAND DESIGNS

Spend the afternoon in aesthetic mode, shopping at Empreintes ([empreintes-paris.com](http://empreintes-paris.com)) for local arts and crafts, Alix D. Reynis ([alixdreynis.com](http://alixdreynis.com)) for delicate porcelain and jewellery pieces, Ofr. Bookshop (20 rue Dupetit-Thouars) for artistic tomes and Papier Tigre ([papiertigre.fr](http://papiertigre.fr)) for witty stationery.

Next, stop by Le Carreau du Temple ([carreaudutemple.eu](http://carreaudutemple.eu)), a 19th-century market that is



Grand Café Tortoni





Hit up Little Red Door for a cocktail (left); the Ami menswear store on boulevard Beaumarchais



a marvel of glass and iron, to check out the latest pop-up exhibition. You're standing on the old grounds of the Knights Templar, master builders who drained the Marais (Old French for marsh) in the 12th century and nurtured a community of craftsmen. So it's fitting that the Musée des Arts et Métiers ([arts-et-metiers.net](http://arts-et-metiers.net)), a gem of a museum dedicated to technological innovation, is nearby. Devote at least an hour here, admiring Foucault's pendulum and some of the earliest planes, which hang spectacularly from the vaulted ceilings of a medieval church.

As the sun sets, zigzag the winding streets to the south, noting the eclectic patchwork of buildings. Some are sturdy in old stone, others caked in plaster; some slope precariously; others reveal old shop signs proclaiming former lives; all smell dank and musty with the infusion of past dreams. They tell the story of a district with a history of ups and downs. The oldest house in Paris is at 51 rue de Montmorency. Suitably, it was built by an alchemist, who turned base metals into magic.

#### APRÈS DARK

Order a spritz and Venetian-style tapas in the front bar of Hôtel National des Arts et Métiers ([hotel.qantas.com.au/](http://hotel.qantas.com.au/)

[hotelnationalparis.com](http://hotelnationalparis.com)), with its modern melange of textures contrasting with the view of a blackened Gothic church.

It's this clash of history that is the essence of the 3rd, as is nearby restaurant *Derrière* ([derriere-resto.com](http://derriere-resto.com)), the perfect dinner destination. Nestled behind a coach door and leafy courtyard, some of the structure dates from the district's 16th-century heyday. The building crumbled during the Revolution, after which it was turned into a sweatshop then redesigned as a rabbit hole of a restaurant. Diners eat among bookshelves and beds, and the private-club-like smoking room is accessed via a vintage armoire. It's an astonishing new life for the mansion in which King Henri IV's mistress and fiancée, Gabrielle d'Estreés, once lived.

You can't help but muse on what might have been if she hadn't died before their wedding: no line of Louis kings, no Marie Antoinette, arguably no Revolution. The Marais would have remained an aristocratic playground, with fewer nooks to explore. It would be more beautiful but far less interesting.

With that in mind, you could weave your way into the wee hours by venturing into quirky bars such as speakeasy-style Little Red Door ([lrdparis.com](http://lrdparis.com)). But the ultimate way to cap off the day is with a nightcap at Les Bains ([lesbains-paris.com](http://lesbains-paris.com)), the Belle Époque bathhouse turned iconic '80s nightclub turned glamorous hotel. Mingling with the spirits of Marcel Proust, Mick Jagger and history's hottest supermodels? Only in the cocktail of the 3rd. ●

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## 5 of the best cafés du jour

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Paris might have invented the café but it was never just about the coffee (despite the two sharing the same French word). Caffeine was primarily an energiser: philosophers and writers found inspiration in its inkiness; workers started the day with a jolt of black. It was not a matter of taste, which has bemused many a visitor to Paris, the home of *bon goût*. "Like most expats, I started off dumping a load of sugar into a bitter espresso and drinking it while holding my nose," says London-born Channa Galhenage, who went on to open Café Loustic, a star of the emerging specialty-café scene. Adds author Lindsey Tramuta: "You still get people who just want a quick coffee or a palate cleanser at the end of the meal but there's definitely a significant change happening here in coffee culture." Relieved tourists should check out:

**Café Loustic** 40 rue Chapon; [cafeloustic.com](http://cafeloustic.com)

**Le Peloton Café** 17 rue du Pont Louis-Philippe; +33 6 24 58 02 15

**Shakespeare and Company** 37 rue de la Bûcherie; [shakespeareandcompany.com](http://shakespeareandcompany.com)

**Boot Café** 26 rue des Grands-Augustins; +33 6 26 41 10 66

**Honor** 54 rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré; [honor-cafe.com](http://honor-cafe.com)

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### Flight path

# CDG

Qantas flies to Dubai from Sydney and Melbourne, with connections to Paris via partner airlines. [qantas.com](http://qantas.com)



Just minutes from the bustling streets of downtown Singapore is a quietly different neighbourhood full of great food, culture and delightful surprises. By **Chris Wright**.

## Singapore.

# Tiong Bahru

A FEW metres back from one of Singapore's teeming highways, a less frantic mood descends. The buildings, no more than a few storeys high, are 1930s Art Deco, all graceful curves and streamlined edges recalling steamships and aircraft, while the twisting staircases at the rear of the dwellings are shapely and smooth.

Beneath the residences, in shopfronts and ground-floor conversions, the coolest – and calmest – cafés and restaurants in town are interspersed with yoga studios and independent bookshops. For all its elegance and history, this is as hipster as Singapore gets – home to bohemian French expats and KTV (karaoke) hostesses, a haven for the LGBTQI community before the abbreviation was even coined – and today creativity seeps through in the venues.

But it's still peaceful and restrained: no neon, no Hooters and no forcing out of generations-old noodle stalls or the wet market, where people queue for half an hour for secret-recipe bean curd. In Tiong Bahru's few blocks of public housing bordering the mania of Chinatown and tourist hangouts near the Singapore River, the perfect balance has been struck between cool new arrivals and the serene environment that attracted them in the first place.



Tuul and Bruno Morandi



## DOUBLE LIFE

For 70 years, Bincho ([bincho.com.sg](http://bincho.com.sg)) was a classic *kopitiam* (coffee shop) called Hua Bee. Then new owners wanted to open a Japanese yakitori restaurant and bar. But, mindful of its history, they decided to create a venue with a double life: by day, it's a traditional coffee shop with rickety wooden chairs and mee pok noodles; by night, a cool little Japanese eatery with a bar accessed via a metal door at the back of the building. Hip yet historic – Tiong Bahru in a nutshell.

## OFF THE WALL

Take a close look at the mural on the house where Tiong Poh Road meets Eu Chin Street. The artwork, which shows a man reading a newspaper in his living room, is one of the most evocative depictions of local life and history you'll find anywhere. A calendar on the wall says it's 12 January 1979 and on the front page of the paper is a young Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's founder. Everything in the image – the 555 cigarettes tin on the table, the deity statues on top of the Telefunken TV showing a local 1970s comedy duo – is guaranteed to make any Singaporean of a certain age smile. The best bit? The mural – and others in a nearby alleyway portraying nostalgic scenes of daily life – was painted by local accountant Yip Yew Chong (aka YC). He was attracted to Tiong Bahru's clean white walls.

## MARKET BUZZ

Get to the Tiong Bahru Market ([tiongbahru.market](http://tiongbahru.market)) early and behold the sights and smells of the wet market selling meat, fish and vegetables. Prince Charles dropped by late last year, which was quite a thing – Ah Chuen Fishmonger doesn't host a lot of royalty. One of Singapore's better food courts is on the upper floor. There are two Michelin-recognised stalls here – Hong Heng Fried Sotong Prawn Mee and Tiong Bahru Hainanese Boneless Chicken Rice – but the longest lines are often at Teck Seng Soya Bean Milk, famed for its homemade bean curd. And do try the steamed rice cake, chwee kueh, at Jian Bo Shui Kueh.



## CROISSANT HEAVEN

Behind the pushbike-mounted sign "Paris of the Yeast" is Tiong Bahru Bakery ([tiongbahrubakery.com](http://tiongbahrubakery.com)), which may be where the hipster gentrification of the area began. It excels on two counts: the magnificence of its pastries and the friendly service. And where to go for the best coffee? Probably Forty Hands ([40handscoffee.com](http://40handscoffee.com)), an Australian-style brunch and barista place where you can settle in with a find from a nearby bookshop.

## THE INDEPENDENTS

Let's go on a shopping tour. From Plain Vanilla Bakery ([plainvanillabakery.com](http://plainvanillabakery.com)), down the hill the sequence goes: Nana & Bird boutique ([nanaandbird.com](http://nanaandbird.com)), Woods in the Books ([woodsinthebooks.sg](http://woodsinthebooks.sg)), Ikyu ([ikyuu.com.sg](http://ikyuu.com.sg)), BooksActually ([booksactually.shop.com](http://booksactually.shop.com)) then several yoga studios and ArtBlue Studio gallery ([artbluestudio.com](http://artbluestudio.com)). All take pride in doing what they want (Nana & Bird's tagline is "Only curating what we love"). BooksActually has

Art Deco buildings grace the historic public housing estate (above); YC's *Bird Singing Corner* on Seng Poh Lane (opposite)

an imprint, Math Paper Press, to encourage local writers into print. Woods in the Books is Singapore's best children's bookshop, Ikyu is a fab Japanese restaurant and the yoga studios are wildly popular. And when you go around the corner, you'll see a sign hanging from a living-room window offering to resole your shoes. You don't get that on Orchard Road.

## HOME-STYLE COOKING

Many Tiong Bahru restaurants started out on the ground floor of local homes. More often than not, the owners still live upstairs. That cosy feeling is particularly striking at House of Peranakan Petit ([houseofperanakan.com.sg](http://houseofperanakan.com.sg)), where Chinese and Malay influences meet. Dishes include otak otak (grilled fish cake) and garam assam fish.

## PETIT, INDEED

Don't be alarmed when your order from PS.Cafe Petit's fine gin bar ([pscafe.com](http://pscafe.com)) comes in a plastic cup. It's just the way it goes in a venue so damned small that it's physically impossible for patrons not to spill out onto the street. Its diminutive size doesn't deter customers, though – the burnished timber décor and crisp takeaway pizzas are magnets for locals, despite the fact that if you walk six steps into the place, you're in the kitchen.

## ART DECO HUB

Your first impression of Tiong Bahru, built in the 1930s as a new standard for public housing, will always be the architecture. The estate's principal architect, Alfred G. Church, loved the Streamline Moderne school of Art Deco and it informed everything he built. You see it in the curves of the street-corner buildings and the bold vertical lines that characterise the apartments on Tiong Poh Road, as well as in the occasional porthole window. As a style for a whole district, it's arguably unique in all of South-East Asia.

## MONKEY MAGIC

The brave and resourceful Monkey God is a distinctively Singaporean deity drawn from Chinese classical literature. Nobody is quite sure why he is more revered in Singapore than anywhere else in Asia. He has a crowded, colourful temple called Qi Tian Gong ([qitiangong.com](http://qitiangong.com)) in Tiong Bahru, which is increasingly incongruous among the hipster cafés but no less captivating because of it. Try to time your visit to coincide with the celebrations featuring lion dances and processions in the middle of the first and eighth lunar months. ●

## Flight path

# SIN

Qantas flies to Singapore from most Australian capital cities. [qantas.com](http://qantas.com)



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
CHRIS SORENSEN

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Harlem has always had a rhythm of its own, blending multiple styles and cultures into one intoxicating beat. **Lance Richardson** walks us through the place he calls home.

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New York City.

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# Harlem





Marcus Garvey Park hosts basketball games (opposite); jazz musicians have long had a home at Bill's Place (above)

# I

IT'S A warm Friday evening in autumn when I arrive at Bill's Place ([billsplaceharlem.com](http://billsplaceharlem.com)) on West 133rd Street. The building – a New York brownstone – is unremarkable but there are fairy lights and a red marquee above the entrance. As I step up to press the buzzer, I notice a plaque on the wall announcing that Billie Holiday was “discovered” here in 1933 during the days of Prohibition, when the basement was a speakeasy where people could dance and drink with impunity.

These days, Bill's Place is a jazz club, though not like you imagine – with waitresses carrying Martinis on silver trays, say, or a lounge singer crooning from behind a grand piano. This is Harlem. Things work a little differently here.

A man opens the door and steps into the street. A small crowd has gathered behind me, people clutching bottles of wine or beer (Bill's is BYO), and from each person the man accepts a \$20 “donation”. Then he ushers us inside to a room so narrow the stage is sideways and the seats are pressed against the walls. When I take my place, I'm that close to the drums, I could reach out and flick a cymbal.

A sleepy-looking gent wanders onto the stage, clutching a saxophone. Behind him are portraits of John Coltrane, Dizzy Gillespie – and himself. “Hi everyone,” he says, as the band takes their places around him. “Welcome to

Bill's Place. This is Bill.” He laughs a slow wheeze.

And then suddenly, out of nowhere, the tiny space is filled with a very big sound – sax, drums, piano, double bass – everything combining and separating in a hyperactive tempo, manic and yet strangely sublime. I wonder what the neighbours think, hearing this multiple times a week. They're probably used to it, like they're used to the rumble of subway trains beneath the street. Bill's Place is just another layer of the urban soundscape. Harlem is loud and shameless, low-fi and improvised, the kind of place where you can find a jazz concert in a stranger's apartment. Which is exactly what makes it so wonderful.





I first moved to Harlem in 2013. My single city block, on West 124th Street between Fifth and Madison Avenue, is more or less representative of this neighbourhood's surreal charms. For example, just around the corner is a medieval sword-fighting school, where grown men dress up like Arthurian knights and attack each other *Game of Thrones*-style. Not far away, a family sells steamed crabs from a street stall. Four doors down is a building where police discovered an eight-foot python in a man's apartment. The house next to that was just rented by a family for more than \$20,000 a month; rich and poor live side by side here. Meanwhile, across the road, in Marcus Garvey Park, old mens sit at tables, wrangling over chessboards, Black Hebrew Israelites whisper to each other on walkie-talkies – I've never worked out what they're saying – and a devious hawk nests somewhere in the trees. It once swooped down on me while I was carrying clothes to the local laundromat, forcing me to make a mad dash for cover.

Most residents of Manhattan will tell you that the city has changed in the past few decades, becoming increasingly gentrified, the mom-and-pop stores replaced with luxury boutiques and upmarket eateries. There is no question that some of this change has come to Harlem. La Diagonal ([ladiagonalnyc.com](http://ladiagonalnyc.com)), for example, offers zucchini-blossom empanadas in a dining room filled with fancy cacti. At Clay ([claynyc.com](http://claynyc.com)), a farm-to-table menu is presented on handmade dinnerware from Brooklyn and is accompanied by a "curated" soundtrack by DJ Javier Peral.



(Clockwise from top left)  
A portrait of locals by Raúl Ayala at Sugar Hill Creamery; Cazuelita cocktail at La Diagonal; locals playing chess in Marcus Garvey Park



The dapper range on offer at Flamekeepers Hat Club (below), a store owned by Marc Williamson (right); brownstones in Harlem



But the spirit of Harlem is not so easily overcome by an influx of capital. Harlem demands respect and there is an effort by many new businesses to be, as Clay enthuses on its website, “community-minded”.

A few years ago, an unusual establishment, called Chéri ([cheriharlem.com](http://cheriharlem.com)), opened on Lenox Avenue. Its owner, a Frenchman named Alain Eoche, had previously run a successful bistro in Paris before pursuing his dream of moving to New York. “I chose Harlem to establish my new life because of its very specific character,” Eoche tells me. “Everyone talks to one another here.” This was something he embraced in setting up Chéri, which, with its eclectic furniture, faux fireplace and cosy garden, is more like an open house than a French restaurant. “Chéri is considered by many to be their second home,” he says. “It makes me so happy.”

Just across the street from Chéri is Sugar Hill Creamery ([sugarhillcreamery.com](http://sugarhillcreamery.com)), which bills itself as the neighbourhood’s first family-owned ice-cream parlour since 1983. Nick Larsen and Petrushka Bazin Larsen, who used Kickstarter to raise funds for the store, were acutely aware that they might be viewed as a gentrifying force. “For us, gentrification is really about obliterating the culture that was there before,” explains Bazin Larsen. To emphasise that this wasn’t their intention – that they love Harlem just as it is – they hired muralist Raúl Ayala to paint portraits of locals straight onto the walls, advertising the parlour as open to everyone.

Of course, to talk about gentrification in New York is to talk about race. The bedrock of Harlem is African American, as it has been since the early 20th century. Though it’s true that there are increasing numbers of





## The sounds of Harlem

### 1.

One of the most famous music halls in New York, the Apollo Theater ([apollotheater.org](http://apollotheater.org)) opened in 1914 and has played host to everyone from Sarah Vaughan to Aretha Franklin. For something special, grab a ticket to the Amateur Night and see the stars of tomorrow.

### 2.

Red Rooster ([redroosterharlem.com](http://redroosterharlem.com)) may be famous for its upmarket comfort food by chef Marcus Samuelsson but the live music in the front bar is the real standout. In the basement below, Ginny's Supper Club ([ginnysupperclub.com](http://ginnysupperclub.com)) features big bands and soul musicians and is a great place for Friday late-night dancing.

### 3.

Minton's Playhouse ([mintonsharlem.com](http://mintonsharlem.com)), "birthplace of bebop", was the neighbourhood hotspot in the 1940s frequented by Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk. It then shuttered until 2013, when it reopened to take back the title of most stylish establishment. Dress nice, as they say, and try the steak.

### 4.

Is Shrine World Music Venue ([shrinenyc.com](http://shrinenyc.com)) one of the most underrated clubs in all of Manhattan? No cover, no fuss. Just excellent tunes from far-flung Africa or Europe. The crowd can get loud and rowdy but everyone is friendly. The restaurant next door is good for a bite.

### 5.

Another mainstay – in fact, Harlem's longest-running jazz establishment – is Showman's Jazz Club (375 West 125th Street; +1 212 864 8941), which feels like a throwback to an earlier era. As does Paris Blues ([parisbluesharlem.webs.com](http://parisbluesharlem.webs.com)), which is not flash – almost a dive bar – but loved by passionate performers. Both places should be on the list of any jazz aficionado.



Soak up the history of the Apollo Theater (above); grab a drink and comfort food at Red Rooster

## Flight path

# JFK

Qantas flies to Los Angeles from Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne then onwards to New York. [qantas.com](http://qantas.com)

white residents – myself included – the neighbourhood remains very much “the capital of black America”, as it is sometimes described.

Visitors to Harlem interested in this black America, but unsure of how to access it, will walk through the curio stalls at Malcolm Shabazz Harlem Market (52 West 116th Street; +1 212 987 8131) or meekly sit in the back pews of a church, listening to gospel singers belt out hymns. Both are worthy activities but they can only scratch the surface.

A more interesting picture can be glimpsed by adding a late-night stop at Harlem Shake ([harlemshakenyc.com](http://harlemshakenyc.com)), where teenagers slouch over sweet yam fries in a retro-looking diner, or by walking the length of West 125th Street on virtually any afternoon, pausing to chat to the young men selling their music demos, hoping to hit the big time like Jay-Z or Sean Combs.

If you want to see the best of black Harlem, go to Harlem Haberdashery ([harlemhaberdashery.com](http://harlemhaberdashery.com)), a family-owned fashion house where hip-hop bigwigs drop by to pick up shirts stencilled “Swag Hustle Boss” or get measured up for custom outfits. “This is from when I styled Aaliyah for Tommy Hilfinger,” the owner tells me, pawing a particularly striking red-and-white top.

My favourite place, though, is Flamekeepers Hat Club ([flamekeepershatclub.com](http://flamekeepershatclub.com)), which is the kind of store that doesn't seem to exist anywhere else. “I've been in the business for more than 20 years,” says Marc Williamson, a debonair gentleman in a rabbit-fur top hat. “I chose Harlem to express my vision. I'd looked at the Lower East Side, Brooklyn. But I wanted to be part of the scene.”

I ask him who shops here. Who buys Panama hats from Ecuador, straw boaters from Venice? “You can get someone who works in a post office or a king of a country.” And he's correct. Harlem contains that full spectrum; it's as wide and varied as a universe.

As I write this, a thousand felt fedoras are bobbing through the streets as smartly dressed couples return home from church. It's Sunday afternoon. Spanish music floats through my window and I can see a Puerto Rican family having a barbecue in the park. Somewhere drums are being played and the elevated train is rumbling down Park Avenue. I've lived here for four years and yet, when I step out my front door to listen to live music tonight, I will still be surprised. Something always happens. That is the Harlem promise. ●



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
CHARLIE KINROSS

We asked three local experts to choose the hottest neighbourhood in Melbourne for eating, drinking and hanging out. They nominated a working-class suburb with a multicultural soul.

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Melbourne.

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# Footscray

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STORY BY KENDALL HILL

THE FILM *Romper Stomper*, circa 1992, isn't the best advertisement for Footscray circa 2018. Although the movie is set in the same inner-western Melbourne suburb, its stale vision of a roaming gang of Neo-Nazi warring with Vietnamese immigrants bears no resemblance to the thriving cultural and social hub the neighbourhood is today.

Footscray has always been the beating heart of "the west". But it's true it was not always somewhere you'd recommend to visitors to Melbourne.

The suburb came to prominence during the 19th-century gold rush when hopeful diggers flocked across the Maribyrnong River (also known as the Nong) en route to the goldfields. A pub, The Punt, sprang up and the rest is very colourful but mostly hardscrabble history.

That same river became the lifeblood of a thriving Victorian capital. The bluestone that built Melbourne was quarried from its banks. Industries sprang up along its length – chemicals and munitions, sugar

refineries and slaughterhouses, tanneries, woolstores and glue factories – all dumping their toxic waste into the Nong. Footscray was soon known as Stinkopolis for its foul industrial pong.

As the industries died off, the original British immigrants moved out in search of greener pastures and new immigrants moved in. Footscray has always welcomed outsiders – hundreds and thousands of them.

At first they came from Southern Europe, from Greece, Italy and Yugoslavia. In the 1970s, the Vietnamese and Lebanese arrived from their war-torn homes. Lately, its broad tree-lined streets and Victorian workers' cottages have provided refuge for exiles from the Horn of Africa and Anglo-Australians seeking affordable housing and a vibrant community.

Few suburbs are more vibrant than Footscray. Just five kilometres from the CBD, it's home to a university campus, a water polo club, a leading hospital, an African choir and Australia's largest Chinese temple, the Heavenly Queen.

The suburb's industrial infrastructure is being reimaged as hidden bars, chic apartments, microbreweries and creative hubs. At the former Drill Hall, an anarchic theatre company called Snuff Puppets has

reinvented marionettes as outsize body parts that have just toured Hong Kong and Europe. The old riverside meatworks is now the Footscray Community Arts Centre ([footscrayarts.com](http://footscrayarts.com)). And tucked in among the fishmongers on Whitehall Street is Hop Nation ([hopnation.com.au](http://hopnation.com.au)), a brewery and taproom where you're welcome to BYO food. Nowhere else in Australia does the post-industrial vibe like Footscray.

The soul of the suburb is the market ([footscraymarketvictoria.com.au](http://footscraymarketvictoria.com.au)), directly opposite the railway station, which is still mostly Vietnamese-run but also has Pinoy kiosks and a Calabrian poultry and egg shop called Chooks' n' Googs (03 9687 1037). Leading chefs and local gastronomes shop here for the cheapest Thai sweet mangoes and pips for just \$17 a kilo.

The Little India precinct in Barkly Street lights up for Diwali each year. Little Saigon on Hopkins and Leeds streets has the best pho this side of Ho Chi Minh City. And Little Africa on Nicholson Street, with its shop signs in Amharic and Arabic, is Melbourne's go-to spot for injera (a sour flatbread) and tibs meat stew.

It's still gritty, sure, but Footscray has so many diamonds in the rough that it really pays to have a fossick.



Hee500  
2015



Australia is a proudly multicultural nation made stronger by the dedication of people who come & contribution as its

Australia Australia





## Eat & drink.

STORY BY LARISSA DUBECKI

### A MEAN BEAN

Get your caffeine fix at **Dumbo** in WeFo (that's West Footscray), a cute rehabilitated milk bar. The beans from nearby Rosso Roasting Co. are served espresso, filter or cold brew and the kids can opt for a raspberry spider.

📍 11 Argyle Street, West Footscray  
☎️ (03) 9078 2645  
🌐 [dumbomelbourne.com.au](http://dumbomelbourne.com.au)

### SHIP TO SHORE

Every self-respecting Melbourne suburb deserves a shipping-container café. In Footscray, it's quite literally **Rudimentary**. Four shipping containers, which have had the wand of architectural know-how waved over them, form the crux of this local favourite spot. The multicultural menu swings from harissa scrambled eggs to a fish-finger brioche sandwich.

📍 16-20 Leeds Street, Footscray  
☎️ 0497 058 173 🌐 [rudimentary.com.au](http://rudimentary.com.au)

### PUB GRUB

Established in 1868 and given a comprehensive spruce-up in 2013, the **Plough Hotel** has injected gastropub elan into the 'hood. Just don't be fooled by its updated industrial good looks – the Plough doesn't mess with the standard local-pub script. Gentrification doesn't have to hurt when you have excellent beer-battered fish and chips, and chicken parmigiana mixing it with tequila-cured kingfish and lamb ribs glazed with pomegranate molasses.

📍 333 Barkly Street, Footscray  
☎️ (03) 9687 2878  
🌐 [ploughhotel.com.au](http://ploughhotel.com.au)

### BAR-A-RAMA

You know a neighbourhood has arrived when it gets a bar like **Mr West**, which is equal parts bar, bottle shop and den of cocktail-

fueled iniquity. Twenty-plus beer taps deliver hoppy joy in the form of micro-batch saisons, lambics and lagers, while the spirits skew artisanal (but aren't above the good old Espresso Martini).

📍 106 Nicholson Street, Footscray  
🌐 [mrwest.com.au](http://mrwest.com.au)

### BURGER BONANZA

Does Melbourne's best burger live in the west? After its successful Footscray original spawned two CBD outposts, **8bit** is mounting a good case for the affirmative. It's little wonder, given creations such as the After Burner (a beef burger finished with jalapeños, chilli sauce, mustard and chipotle mayo) and the vegetarian Zelda (think haloumi and chickpeas), plus sides like crisp onion rings, beer-battered fries and potato gems.

📍 8 Droop Street, Footscray  
☎️ (03) 9687 8838 🌐 [eat8bit.com.au](http://eat8bit.com.au)

### SPEAKING OUT

In a clever example of real-estate upcycling, **Back Alley Sally's** was, until recently, an abandoned T-shirt factory on a Footscray backstreet. Rescued from ignominy by professional trend-spotter Jerome Borazio (of St Jerome's Laneway Festival), it's now the ultimate hipster-magnet watering hole, with downstairs pizza parlour Slice Girls West the respectable front for the sprawling, no-frills, all-fun upstairs bar.

📍 4 Yewers Street, Footscray ☎️ (03) 9689 6260 🌐 [backalleysallys.com.au](http://backalleysallys.com.au)

### SMOKIN' HOT

The svengalis behind 8bit burgers have doubled down on Footscray with **Up in Smoke**, a barbecue joint owing its edible charms to its mighty Yoder Frontiersman offset smoker. A full-throttled taste of Americana will take you from fried mozzarella sticks and nacho-crumbed chicken balls to burnt-end brisket poutine and hotter-than-Hades chicken wings. Or bring a bunch of friends and get stuck into a rack of pork ribs from the smoker, served with milk buns and pickles.

📍 28 Hopkins Street, Footscray  
☎️ (03) 9689 8188 🌐 [upinsmoke.net.au](http://upinsmoke.net.au)



(Clockwise from left) Back Alley Sally's; Plough Hotel; smoked salmon with smashed peas at Rudimentary; Dumbo; Rudimentary's light-filled dining space







(From top) Footscray Community Arts Centre; Pod café at Post Industrial Design; Princess Leia and Ziggy Stardust meld in a street-art tribute; the Heavenly Queen Temple complex



### Flight path

## MEL

Qantas flies to Melbourne from all Australian capital cities. [qantas.com](http://qantas.com)



## Explore.

STORY BY  
CARRIE HUTCHINSON

### WONDER WALL

It serves an important community function but it's the outer walls of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre ([asrc.org.au](http://asrc.org.au)) that entice art-lovers. It's where *Journeys of Courage*, a 150-metre-long, 11-metre-high mural, was painted by street artists Heesco, Dvate, Conrad Bizjak, Mike Makatron and Duke. The impressive work, which portrays former prime minister Malcolm Fraser, is one of Maribyrnong Council's StreetWorks projects in Footscray; another is Chuck Mayfield and Júlia Both's mural in the Coral Avenue car park. Also venture to Maddern Square to admire one of Baby Guerrilla's epic paste-ups.

### ART AND ABOUT

Sparking conversations and creating change are just a couple of the aims of Footscray Community Arts Centre ([footscrayarts.com](http://footscrayarts.com)). The multidisciplinary venue hosts everything from visual arts to film festivals and theatre. It's a diverse program but there's something to check out regardless of what time of day you happen to be exploring.

### GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Many a train traveller heading west has been startled by the 16-metre-tall gold statue of Mazu, the Chinese goddess of the sea, overlooking Maribyrnong River. She was erected in 2008. Then, for the next six years, commuters watched on as a red and gold building grew from the reclaimed industrial site. Heavenly Queen Temple ([heavenlyqueentemple.com.au](http://heavenlyqueentemple.com.au)) is still in the midst of transformation but the two-storey temple, ornate gates and memorial hall have been open to the public since 2014. The complex will include a drum tower, tea house and Chinese gardens.

### SHOP 'TIL YOU BOP

While it's nowhere near Fitzroy in terms of its retail offerings – yet – Footscray shows promise. Sisters Annabelle and Alana Kingston opened Perfect Splash ([perfectsplash.store](http://perfectsplash.store)) to uncover locally produced and often handmade fashion, jewellery, publications, music and ceramics. Sustainable creations are on offer at Post Industrial Design ([postindustrialdesign.com.au](http://postindustrialdesign.com.au)), where Mary Long and Jos Van Hulslen deal in unique homewares, fashion and upcycled gifts. The store does triple duty as a gallery and an independently owned café called Pod. The Footscray Finds market ([footscrayfinds.com.au](http://footscrayfinds.com.au)), held in the Footscray Library car park on the third Sunday of the month, is a new attraction where you can hunt among the stalls for the perfect vintage denim jacket or favourite album on vinyl and buy a freshly baked loaf of bread. Food trucks and live music are also on the scene.

### THE SOUND OF MUSIC

As night falls, Footscray becomes Melbourne's newest hotspot. While hip restaurants and bars attract a crowd, live-music stalwarts will find their own fix here. The Reverence Hotel ([reverencehotel.com](http://reverencehotel.com)), built in the 1800s and turned into a venue in 2012, serves its mixed bag of constituents well. There's a beer garden, a band room and a public bar with pool and foosball tables. Punk and rock tend to get top billing but you can also come here for trivia, comedy and, on Thursday nights, a taste of the '60s with dance lessons from Anna's Go-Go Academy. Dancing Dog Cafe ([dancingdog.com.au](http://dancingdog.com.au)), which has been plying its quirky trade for more than a decade as a café, bar and gallery, also hosts live music on Friday and Saturday nights. ●



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
**HIRO GOTO**

Loved by writers, artists and even cats,  
this highly livable Japanese district with  
its eccentric mix of old and new is the  
perfect place to get lost. By **Kirsty Munro**.

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**Tokyo.**



# *Yanese*n



NORTH-EAST OF the busy streets of central Tokyo, three small neighbourhoods – Yanaka, Nezu and Sendagi – collectively known as Yanesen, offer an insight into local life: the stories, small rituals and ordinary vignettes. Wind through the narrow laneways that cascade down the hill from Yanaka Cemetery and time unwinds: a weaver sets out his baskets on the pavement, novice monks sweep up fallen blossoms in a stone courtyard and the hiss of steam from an espresso machine summons the faithful to a tiny corner café.

Originally a temple district, Yanesen is a rare part of Tokyo that escaped the WWII bombings. Close to the city's premier art university, the area has always attracted artisans, bohemians and writers. Literary greats from Natsume Sōseki to Banana Yoshimoto have lived here, inspired by the charmingly ramshackle streets.

Starting at Nippori Station, choose any path to wend your way through the cemetery, which is far from morbid. In spring, revellers gather to picnic between the gravestones under drifts of cherry blossom petals, the living and the dead celebrating the fleeting beauty of life together. The scent of hot rice crackers doused in soy sauce leads you to Yanaka Ginza, the main shopping street. You'll see cats everywhere – real ones basking in the sun and quirky, handcrafted ones perched in shop windows. It makes sense that Sōseki wrote his satirical novel, *I Am a Cat*, while living here.

Once, you could see Mount Fuji from the Yuyake Dandan (Sunset Stairs) at the top of Yanaka Ginza but the view is now crowded with apartment buildings and a web of powerlines. Shopkeepers call out their wares as you pass: cream buns, cabbage and pork rissoles, fresh fish and warm bentos. It's a feast for the eyes and the stomach. The narrow backstreets around Nezu and Sendagi reveal second-hand kimono shops, family-run inns and unique art galleries. Tiny cafés serve slabs of homemade matcha cake on Scandinavian ceramics against a David Bowie soundtrack. Like the cats, the locals here do their own thing.

Tradition is celebrated but new ideas are welcomed. An old sake shop now houses bicycle maker Tokyobike; run-down share houses become galleries; graceful old homes are transformed into hip hotels. Architect Kengo Kuma has restored several of the historic buildings in the area with his signature mix of modern simplicity and respect for traditional design. It's worth walking around the whole block to see the seamless blend of Taisho and contemporary styles in his restored Hantei restaurant (2-12-15 Nezu, Bunkyo-ku). You might be tempted inside to try their famous kushikatsu – deliciously more-ish little sticks of crumbed, fried vegetables, seafood and meat – the perfect fuel for further ramblings.

Hantei restaurant (far left) serves bite-size skewers in a restored timber building; the tranquil grounds of Nezu Shrine

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## Don't miss...

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### NEZU SHRINE

Tucked down a backstreet, a short walk from Nezu Station, the grand red lacquered torii gate of Nezu Shrine (1-28-9 Nezu, Bunkyo-ku), built in 1706, is impossible to miss. On sunny days, turtles bask by the pond and children trawl the nearby stream for crayfish. Every April, the hills surrounding the shrine are aflame with about 3000 blooming azalea plants. In winter, queues form quickly outside nearby Nezu-no-Taiyaki (1-23-9-104 Nezu, Bunkyo-ku), a hole-in-the-wall shop selling perfectly crisp cakes shaped like sea bream and filled with hot, sweet bean paste.

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### KAMACHIKU

While the area has many notable restaurants, including Nanohana (1-10-26 Uenosakuragi, Taito-ku), which received a Bib Gourmand from the Michelin Guide for its kaiseki meals, you can't go past Kamachiku (kamachiku.com), which specialises in udon noodles. Set amid the beautiful gardens of a former merchant's house, the restaurant is inside a restored 1910 brick storehouse. Sit beneath the vaulted ceiling while you enjoy the thick wheat noodles in a delicate dashi broth with a side of tempura. If you're not a fan of noodles, there are also dishes such as simmered beef and fluffy tofu. Don't miss the excellent sake selection.

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### BAR HASEGAWA

The streets from Nezu to Sendagi are dotted with small wine bars, from 76 Vin (2-13-8 Nezu, Bunkyo-ku), with its French atmosphere, to a friendly New Zealand wine specialist, fittingly called NZ Bar (nzbar.net). Whisky fans should seek out Bar Hasegawa (1-22-16 Nezu, Bunkyo-ku), whose owner, Morito Hasegawa, left the bright lights of Ginza for the laid-back

vibe here. Sit at the long wooden bar flanked by a curved glass wall to watch Hasegawa, in his crisp white shirt and black bow tie, cutting ice cubes by hand and mixing highballs with flair.

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### SCAI THE BATHHOUSE

While there seems to be a gallery on every street corner in Yanaka, the best is SCAI The Bathhouse (scaithebathhouse.com). The minimalist 200-year-old former bathhouse is the perfect backdrop for the gallery's roster of contemporary local and international artists, from Tatsuo Miyajima to Jenny Holzer. Each exhibition has accompanying notes in English. If you need sustenance after deep contemplation, head around the corner to the charmingly retro Kayaba Coffee (6-1-29 Yanaka, Taito-ku), a mix of Taisho-era architecture and '70s-style interiors, for soft-egg sandwiches and strong coffee.

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### ISETATSU

It's hard to miss Isetatsu (2-18-9 Yanaka, Taito-ku), as the windows of the tiny paper shop are a riot of patterns and colour. The family has been block-printing *chiyogami* paper – a decorative style made popular in the Edo period – since 1864, yet the intricate prints, with their bold colours and humorous designs, are surprisingly contemporary. Cats in kimonos fight and drink sake, stylised plum blossoms dance across geometric backgrounds and umbrellas float through graphic rainstorms. It still takes up to two weeks to hand-print a set of 200 sheets, which can have up to 20 colours. The designs range across rolls of wrapping paper, writing sets, scarves and table linen. ●

### Flight path

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# HND

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