

» BATTLE OF THE BETTER CITY

The long-standing rivalry between Melbourne and Sydney continues to be intense as Australia develops. When it comes down to being the best city for a holiday, which one wins?

By **Anu Venugopal**



Image :
Opera House and Harbour Bridge are two famous landmark in Sydney

► **Australia is a top destination for Malaysians, whether it is for business of leisure. The biggest island on earth with a population of 23 million is known for its kangaroos, BBQ's and their chilled out attitudes. Not many realise that there exists a competition between Australia's cities, none as intense as the great Sydney-Melbourne rivalry.**

The debate between the two cities dates back to the late nineteenth century, with the battle for the location of the new Federation's national Parliament. The first whites that settled in Melbourne in 1835 were discontented at the restrictions imposed on them by the colonial government in Sydney. Fast forward to 2014, the rivalry has only escalated and provided many Melburnians and Sydneysiders friendly debates over which city is better amidst Australian beers and barbeques.

Between the two city dwellers, Melburnians are stereotypically known to be the more hipster of the two, with an interest in fashion and the arts. Sydneysiders on the other hand are the more laid back type, just like their weather. A typical Melburnian looks coffee, artsy activities and anything quirky while the typecast from Sydney is likely to be the outdoors type with love of surfing, swimming and the beach. Of course with the growing population in both cities, these labels are just a fraction of what reality is like.

Although living and visiting are two different perspectives of the same city, the fact is as a tourist or traveller, it is essentially a smooth ride to finding out what makes the cities tick. Sydney, also known as Harbour City, has the privilege of have a unique landscape as well as history. The World's Best city according to Conde Nest has always

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been known to embrace individuality and eccentricity. Melbourne too has her own stories to tell and has historical buildings to add to its already glowing resume, thanks to attaining the Most Livable City three times in a row in The Economist.

When it comes to holidaying, which city has what it takes to win this competition?

Sunny Sydney

► The biggest and most populous city in Australia, Sydney was founded as a penal colony in 1788 and was home to many aboriginal people. As at June 2012, the estimated resident population of the city was 187,561 people, with almost 40 percent born outside Australia, it is no surprise that is recognised as one of the most diverse and multicultural cities in the world.

The breathtaking views of Sydney begin as the plane descends into Sydney Airport. Also known as Harbour City, its famous Opera House and Harbour Bridge are

selling points in many tourist advertisements around the world. Darling Harbour and Circular Quay is located just minutes from the Sydney Central Business District (CBD) and offer fun, picturesque views. The capital of New South Wales is also a city of contrasts - with beaches, national parks, harbour and a cosmopolitan city all in one.

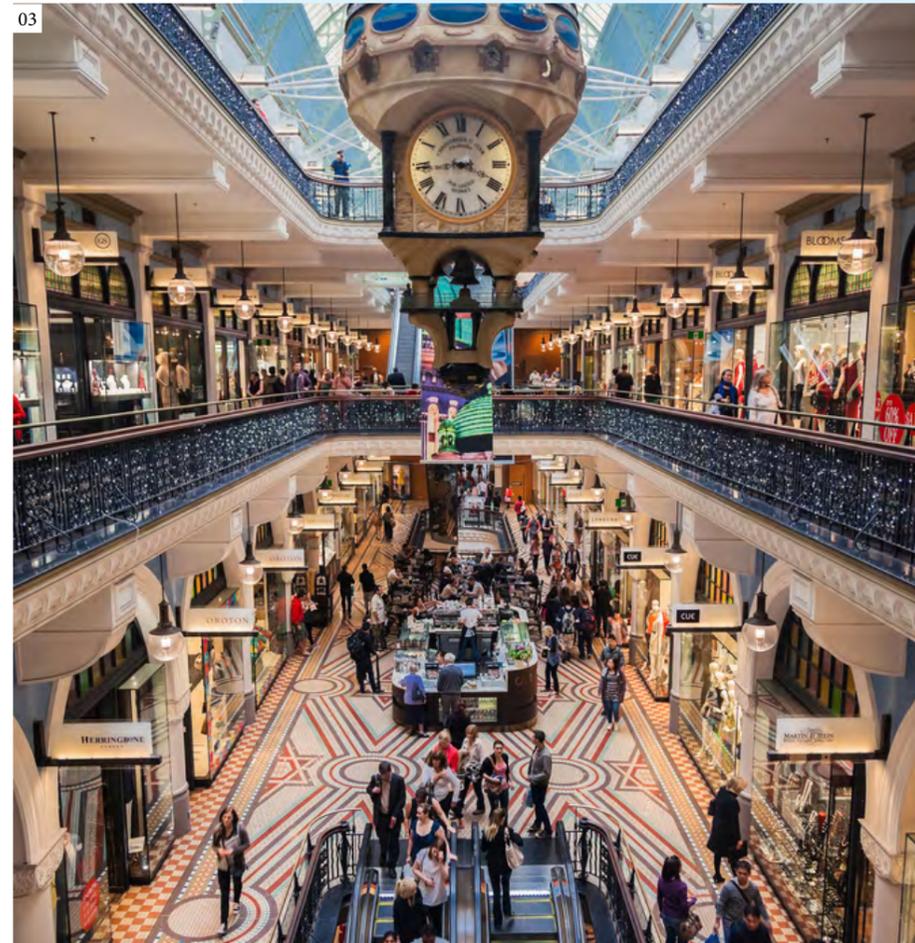
There are many ways to experience these views - from water taxis at Kings Street Harbour, Hop On Hop Off buses and scenic air flights across the city. One of the best ways of experiencing these sights though is going on a walking tour across the stunning sights, with plenty of photo opportunities along the way. For the best ways to enjoy Sydney find more information at city hosts information kiosks at the Town Hall, George Street, Pitt and Alfred Street, Circular Quay.

Mesmerising Melbourne

Melbourne, Victoria's capital has its cultural charm that offers visitors many beautiful compositions in

Image :

- 1) Laneways are a great place for food.
- 2) Crown Casino Complex is a popular spot for local and international visitors.
- 3) Queen Victoria Building, shopaholic's dream comes true.



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its own fashion. The first stop would have to the majestic Flinders Street Railway Station. Built in 1910, it continues to be the busiest station in the southern hemisphere. If you are looking to meet a friend in the city, the best spot would be “under the clocks”, a reference to the clocks above the main entrance.

Running parallel to Flinders Street Station is the Yarra River, an icon in its own right. A focal point for events such as the famous Moomba and Melbourne Festivals, the banks of the river are popular as barbecue, picnic and fishing spots. Although the river may not be as captivating as its rival harbour in Sydney, it is an equally ideal spot to unwind after a long day and watch active Melburnians walk and cycle through trails and practice kayaking on the river too.

► While Melbourne city, home to more than 100,611 (as of 2011) mostly consist of modern buildings architecture buffs may find it worth their while to check out neo-Gothic transitional style architecture of St Paul’s Cathedral on Flinders Street before heading to Old Melbourne Goal in Russell St, Melbourne Parliament House on Spring Street both accessible via tram and Royal Exhibition Building in nearby suburb Carlton, Como House in South Yarra. It is also time worth spend looking at the intricate interiors of ol’ style Melbourne at Collins Street Block Arcade and the Royal Arcade, Bourke Street Mall.

Getting Around

Comprising of 10 village groups, the city of Sydney, covering almost 1,120 square kilometres is an easy city to move around, thanks to the various modes of public transportation including train, bus and ferry services. While roads can get congested during peak hours, it is generally a pleasant and smooth experience to travel in the city.

Walking around the city is highly recommended as it is the ideal way of taking in the sights and sounds of Sydney while understanding the psyche of a Sydneysider. Most tourist attractions are located in and around the CBD including - Harbour views, Opera House and The Harbour Bridge aka The Coathanger. If you only have a few days (or hours), it is best to spend time



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taking a walk around the wider CBD area, visiting The Rocks or spending time on the harbour – perfect on a warm and sunny day.

Square often hosts many artistic ventures – from art exhibitions, health demonstrations, book markets and multicultural festivals.

► For those looking for an alternative to harbour views, there are more beautiful sights to feast the eyes on – from its famous Hyde Park, must see Bondi Beach, Manly Beach and lesser known but beautiful beaches located in the fridges like Coogee. The largest city in Australia is home to many high rise, sophisticated looking buildings but the ones with the most votes go to the elaborate Romanesque architecture Queen Victoria Building (QVB), the shopping haven on George Street.

Lively and bustling on most days, the CBD boasts a variety of retail outlets and restaurants to cater to the city’s multiethnic community and its share of international visitors. Once called Batmania, today’s modern city is best experienced through walking on its streets. This will certainly be the best way to explore Hosier Lane, Melbourne’s most iconic Street Art lane way, one of the city’s popular tourist attractions.

For those with a good sense of direction, Melbourne’s CBD is easy to navigate once you get your bearings right. For visitors who are prone to getting lost, the visitors centre at Federation Square has maps for reference. Opened in 2002, the unique architecture is a reflection of the idea of ‘Federation’, with a series of interlocking and cascading spaces. Fed

Or for those who prefer to check out the scenery inside the warm exteriors of a tram, this option is viable just as long as you have got your MyKi visitor pack or card from 7-11 and other convenient outlets. If you’d like to get a look and feel of how Melbourne’s trams used to be, hop on the City Circle tram, which provides visitors a quick tour around the CBD for free.

Image :
1) Magnificent Flinders Station in Melbourne
2) Melbourne Street Art
3) City Skyline of Melbourne.

Whether you're on the tram or decide to walk, the scenery is one of diversity, with high rise buildings and distinctive 19th century architecture - Gothic-style churches, neoclassical public buildings, and terraced houses decorated with cast iron. Watch out for the horse drawn carriage, an alternative way to check out the city if you desire.

Shopping Galore

Shopping and dining are two features that are equally exciting and promising in both the contenders of the better city. In Sydney, there are many shopping arcades and malls and factory outlets catered to fashion fanatics and bargain hunters. Sydney's The Strand Arcade and QVB are popular and old spots for shopping.

► Sydney's main shopping street is located in Pitt Street Mall, where Westfield Sydney has designer brands, high street trends and European labels. Check out two flagship Australian stores – Myer and David Jones or stretch your dollar at Paddy's Market in Haymarket. If you're willing to

take a little time and take a bus or train to factory outlets spread across the suburbs. For those into vintage and unique collections, Newtown is a good place to find good deals for clothes and accessories.

Melbourne's fashions are as updated if not even more than Sydney. Although you could spend more time and money going to shopping centres such as Chadstone or one of the Direct Factory Outlets in the suburbs, the city itself has a variety of shops that caters to all sorts of fashion sense and personalities for each season.

Swanson Street, just north of the famous Flinders Street station is a good start to your shopping needs. Bargain hunters should explore the basement shops where bargains and designs are aplenty. The street is also a good spot to get souvenir items besides Queen Victoria Market, where tourists and locals find clothes, accessories and fresh vegetables and fruit. Melbourne's shopping strip at Bourke Street is where you will find many shoppers while those looking for deals should

head to the South Wharf or Spencer Street. Melbourne's largest shopping centre project, Emporium Melbourne, on Lonsdale Street is poised to open in early April, just in time for Easter.

Dining Delights

Food lovers are probably more likely to argue over which city has the best eats. Thanks to immigrants from countries across the world including China, Greece, Italy, India the city's cuisine offerings have diversified over the years. Food courts have a wide range of choices but may not be the most authentic, as they cater to variety of palates.

One thing to remember when you are Down Under is that Australian food does not exist, as many Australians enjoy food from various countries and cultures. You could however try a few delicacies including Lamingtons, Pavlova, Chicko Rolls, Meat Pies and the famous Vegemite – available in many places both in Melbourne and Sydney. For those looking to experience a slice of

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Australian life, it is best to head over to one of the local pubs and check out the specials there.

Whether in Sydney or Melbourne, often the best bites are the small takeaways. From burgers, tapas souvlaki and an assortment of noodles, there are certainly cheaper choices located in the between the lanes. Just don't be disappointed if Malaysian food doesn't taste the same. If you are in the mood to experiment, try the many fusion restaurants and cafes. How about a sushi burger?

The one scent that permeates in the air in Melbourne no matter the season is coffee. Thanks to the large population of Greek and Italian immigrants, the city has its share of great coffee. Coffee lovers should not hesitate to try out petite cafes spread across the city including Degraeves Street – perfect with delicious pastries. Besides the usual chain cafes such as Max Brenner, Hudson and Gloria Jeans, all you need to find the best spot is let your nose to the discovery.

Out And About

There are times when it feels like Sydney is on a quest to be the 'The Most Fun Place in the World' is right on track. Its temperate climate with warm summers and mild winters make it ideal for Sydneysiders and visitors to enjoy outdoor activities – be it surfing, swimming, tandem skydiving and climbing up the Sydney Bridge for an amazing view of the harbour. It's not all about physically challenging activities in this fine city.

There is an array of entertainment one can indulge in, from live concerts by international artists, local theatre productions to jazz clubs in suburbs and after hour activities at the State Library of NSW.

► The host of the 2000 Olympics has its share of exciting festivals and memorable events. Sydney is most famous for its Mardi Gras parade, Sydney Film Festival and Darling Harbour Fiesta, besides other fringe festivals. With its acknowledgment of being UNESCO's City of Film in 2010, Sydney has plenty of activities for the family and busy professionals alike.

Unfortunately for Melbourne, its unpredictable weather makes it outdoor activities harder to plan.

Image :

- 1) Spectacular Sydney's Skyline
- 2) Archibald Fountain at Hyde Park, Sydney.
- 3) Bondi Beach, Sydney
- 4) Sydney's City Manly Ferry.

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While it is known for a temperate climate with warm to hot summers, mild springs and cool winters, visitors should be prepared to experience four seasons in a day – every 20 minutes. While out and about, an umbrella is a must, and wear clothes with layers, to be worn or removed as needed.

An ideal location to see a change of seasons, many Melburnians spend their days at the beach, the closest to the city being St Kilda, a tram ride away with many attractions of its own. Autumn is fabulous for walking around Botanical Gardens and other parks in the fringes of CBD while winter is the best time to enjoy warmth of cosy cafes in the city. The best time however, is in spring when the weather is often cool but sunny and perfect for exploring gardens, city activities and gardens.

Recognised as UNESCO's City of Literature in 2008, Melbourne also has its share of concerts and live performances, art exhibitions at the National Gallery of Victoria and a variety of festivals including the Moomba Festival, Melbourne Food & Wine Festival and Melbourne International Comedy Festival. The sporting capital of Australia, Melbourne plays host to major sporting events like the Australian Open and are well known for horse races on Melbourne Cup Day. Sports fans may want to have a glimpse of the Melbourne Cricket Ground or the Rod Laver Arena, all located between the perimeters of the city and accessible via public transport.

As far as nightlife is concerned, Sydney may not have the best reputation for being a safe place to party, but if you stick to the more popular areas such as Darling Harbour, The Rocks, the Potts Point or on Oxford Street, you will be fine. The epitome of "bright lights, big city", Sydney is more focused on dance and clubbing scenes than Melbourne's more intimate entertainment scene in the city and nearby.

► The artistic side of Melbourne looks to be more mature, with an abundance of live music performances in various bars. You will be spoilt for choice when it comes to live music venues that can be found within Melbourne and nearby suburbs. Ultimately, your choice of venues is often best determined by basing it on your favourite genre of music. Also, fans of casinos will love the Melbourne's Crown Casino in Southbank, one of Australia's best casinos.

The Verdict

While the two cities continue to debate on which one is better, the fact lies there are only marginal differences between Sydney and Melbourne. Between rich history, multicultural population, variety of cosmopolitan cuisine and holiday activities to indulge in, both cities are on par. At the end of it all, it depends on your personality, interests and passions. No matter which ever city you choose, chances are you just might end up cheering for Australia with Oz, Oz, Oz... Oi, Oi, Oi. 🇦🇺

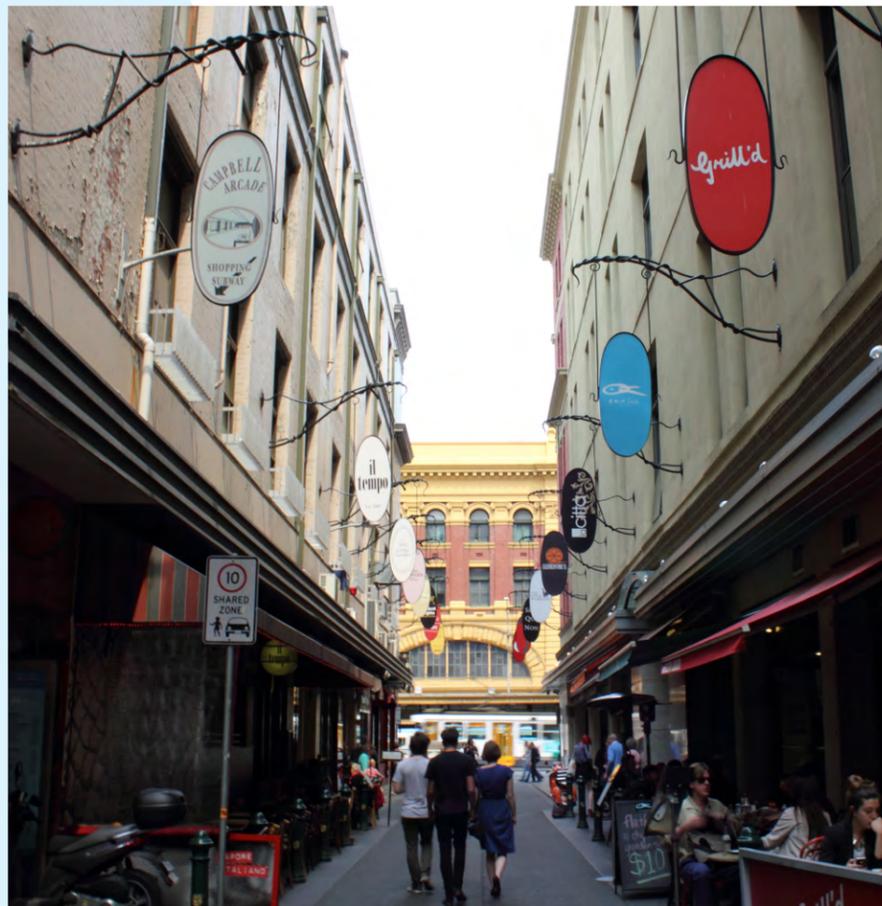


Image :
1) Degraves Street at
Melbourne's CBD.

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