



One of the fastest-growing cities in the world, Melbourne's population is booming. We asked some of our newest arrivals what they really think of their new home town.

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**M**elbourne may no longer be the 'World's Most Liveable City' – Vienna seized the title in 2018 – but the word well and truly got out during our seven-year reign. Right now, our city's population grows by 327 people a day, and around two-thirds of these newcomers are from overseas. Asia is Australia's largest source of migrants, with India, China and the Philippines all featuring in the top-five birth countries of our newest residents, along with New Zealand and the UK.

Migration to Melbourne is a hot political topic – as it has been for the past 100 years – and not everyone is happy about the current rate of growth. The federal government is working to woo international migrants and students towards less-congested regional areas. But a long history of welcoming migrants has shaped Melbourne and will help define its future.

Melburnians are fiercely passionate about their city, but how do all these newcomers feel about it? We spoke to five new arrivals to find out what delights, surprises and confuses them about their new home town.

# FIRST impressions



## **Ankur Sharma, from Delhi, India**

In Melbourne  
for one month

"A friend in Melbourne convinced me to apply for jobs here," says Ankur, who is working as a software developer in Southbank. "They told me Melbourne was good – nice air, nice people and nice weather.

"My wife and son are excited to arrive in a couple of months. Right now, I'm staying in a flat-share in Southbank. It's close to work and I didn't want the hassle of a commute straight away. But public transport here is very nice to use. It's not crowded like India and it's so civilised. People let you get off before they get on. In India, people don't wait for anyone.

"There are not many people in Melbourne. Only at Flinders Street – that's like any street in Delhi. Pollution in India is terrible. Here, I feel good about breathing and I actually take pleasure in it. I'm glad

my son will be able to grow up breathing this air.

"So far, Melbourne's weather has been very confusing. Sometimes you need a jumper and then later you're hot. I have been carrying a jacket and an umbrella in my office bag. My colleague thought this was funny.

"Around 70 per cent of my colleagues are Australian, and I am trying to get used to Aussie words. The other day, my boss emailed me to say, 'I'm off this arvo.' I thought, 'What is this?' I had to Google it.

"I've noticed Aussies don't like to eat so many cooked foods with oils and spices as we do in India. Australians like to eat leafy things, but always with a glass of wine or beer. I'm an occasional drinker – twice or thrice a year – and since moving here I have been for a drink five times with colleagues. You don't want to feel out of place.

"Everyone talks about the league of football but I'm not really interested in this. I can't wait for the cricket to start." >

## Leslie Goldman, from Washington DC, US

In Melbourne one month

**A**rtist and paper restorer Leslie moved to Melbourne for husband Steve's work. "He came home one day and said, 'I've been offered a role, but you wouldn't be interested'. We thought, 'You only live once!'"

"I felt at home straight away, everyone was so friendly. I thought, 'Is there anything wrong with Melbourne?' Now I know about the heat and the spiders. Coburg seemed really interesting – multicultural with a hardcore edge, and it's not too hipstered out. We're loving Turkish and Lebanese food and the coffee is phenomenal. The lifestyle here is more balanced and people seem fit. Washington has so many Type A personalities and people work – or drink – all the time.

"I want to become part of Melbourne's arts community and its Jewish community. We have looked at a couple of synagogues but we haven't quite decided on one yet. I've learnt that if you're part of a community you can make friendships and connections. I've rented a studio in Brunswick and I'd love to sell my paintings at markets here.

"I love the trams, but the trains are confusing. What is with the loops? And the stations. You land at Flinders Street and think, 'Where am I going?' It's not on the board or you need to know the end point of the train. It would be great if every station had 'to the city' and 'from the city' signs.

"I'm getting used to the different sounds of birds, but to me, magpies sound like they're sick. I'm really interested in finding out more about Aboriginal art and culture. Also, I want to go to an AFL game but I need someone to explain it. And I just had to do the toilet video thing for my friends at home. You know, 'Does the water flush the other way in Australia?' But I couldn't remember which way it goes at home!"





**'I thought, is anything wrong with Melbourne? Now I know about the heat and the spiders.'**

## **Angela Paynter, from Hobart, Australia**

In Melbourne three months

**W**hile Bass Strait may be the only thing separating us, Tassie to Melbourne is still a big jump. Angela Paynter's husband David moved from a role with Cricket Tasmania to work with Cricket Australia in Melbourne, and they've settled in Glen Iris with their two sons.

"The constant noise is probably the biggest difference I've noticed," says Angela. "Wherever you are in Melbourne, it's never completely quiet.

Despite the city's hum, Angela has been pleasantly surprised by life in her new city. "I didn't expect it to be so green. There are so many parks and paths for riding. Everyone has been so friendly and welcoming here, and really helpful too. Melburnians seem to be

quite open to making new friends – maybe it's because more people move in and out.

"I do miss access to food straight from the farms. We have great farmer's markets all over Hobart and I do think our fruit and veg are better, as well as our specialty foods. It's a lot more expensive here to go out, and for kids' activities like swimming lessons. The clothes shopping here is amazing though – plenty of Tasmanian people pop over to Melbourne to shop.

"I'm still getting used to sharing the road with trams. The driving rules around tram tracks are quite confusing and I'm surprised there aren't more accidents. Getting around on public transport has been great though. People have been so polite, offering seats or help with the pram. I haven't travelled during peak time though, and my husband says it's hell.

"I didn't realise how hot it would get in Melbourne in summer. We have the odd 30-degree day in Hobart, but not days and days of extreme heat. I found it really hard to cope with.

"Melbourne's museums and galleries are fantastic, and so wonderful for kids, especially Melbourne Museum's children's area. I'm really excited about getting out to the theatre and to some of the big shows that you'd never get in Hobart, as well as AFL games." >



**'The driving rules around tram tracks are quite confusing.'**



**Victoria Schmidt,  
from Pforzheim (near  
Stuttgart), Germany**

In Melbourne two months

**‘Melbourne  
people are open-  
minded and not  
as judgemental as  
Germans.’**

## Tiago Nogueira, from Maceio, Brazil

In Melbourne 10 months

A hometown romance beckoned Tiago to Melbourne. He followed Brazilian fiancée Elayne when she came to study here. He now works in digital marketing in the CBD.

"We live in Collingwood. I like the architecture of the area, and it's close to some really cool suburbs like Fitzroy and not far from the CBD.

"I love walking to work, as there are amazing parks along the way like Fitzroy Gardens. I love the trams too, the way they're integrated with the city is great. You can go almost anywhere quickly and comfortably.

"Melbourne has a much more urban culture than Brazil. For Brazilians, it's more about the beach.

A student exchange program at Gold Coast University in 2016 sparked Victoria's love of Australia. "When I got home, all I could think about was getting back. Now I'm here with a friend from home. We're sharing a room in a share house in St Kilda. I'm working in a bar on Acland Street.

The first day in Melbourne, I had no idea where to go. After a few days, I started to really, really love it. It's the best city I've ever been to in my life, and I've been to big cities like New York. It's the vibe. It's artistic, there's so much live music and the gardens are beautiful. The street art is so cool.

"It took me a couple of weeks to get used to the Australian accent but I've really adapted. At work, I try to sound like a local for fun. I say 'G'day', and I use the word 'heaps' a lot!

"Melbourne people are open-minded and not as judgemental as Germans. I can wear what I want, look how I want. Stuttgart is so conservative and you have to dress up to get into clubs. Here, you can go out in sneakers and wear little makeup. The city feels welcoming and accepting of different cultures and beliefs – there's a nice energy. Stuttgart has big problems with racism and it makes me sad.

"The hardest thing I've found is getting to know Melbourne people well. They have their own lives here, their own friends and families and it's hard to reach out. It's much easier to get to know travellers.

"In Pforzheim it's very hard to be vegan, but here every restaurant seems to have vegetarian or vegan options or they'll change dishes for you.

"I find it hard to get around Melbourne. Places are so far apart. It takes a long time to get into the city on the tram. The price for a daily ticket is okay if you're going a long way, but if I'm just doing short trips I try to walk."



"Melburnians are easy-going. It's not hard to start a conversation – Aussies and Brazilians are similar in this way – and people make an effort to know you. I was surprised to find people from all around the globe here. Melbourne is probably one of the most progressive cities in the world and its multicultural face is part of this.

"Apart from my family and friends, I miss food the most. Melbourne has some of the best restaurants in the world, but I still miss Brazilian food. It has made me a very inventive amateur chef! I am enjoying food from Thailand, Spain, China and Italy, just to name a few. It's been interesting to see the cafe culture here. Brazilians head to cafes after work, for dinner, but here people tend to go for lunch or brekky.

"I'm trying to visit the best wineries in Victoria, but there are so many. Melbourne is all about eating amazing food in amazing places. If you wanted to eat in a different restaurant every day, you'd spend years and wouldn't discover the whole city.

"Driving on the other side of the road was frustrating at first. Also Aussie slang is tricky. And I still can't call AFL real football – maybe one day." ■

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