

YARRA VALLEY ITINERARY: MELBOURNE'S GOURMET BACKYARD

Where:

Just 50km north-east of Melbourne, you'll find a region filled with sprawling rows of vines, gourmet foods and world-class wines.

What to expect:

An unforgettable premium food and wine experience, right on Melbourne's doorstep. You'll be immersed in the region's history and its continued innovation in food and wine, all set against rolling, vine-covered hills and tree-laden mountains.

DAY ONE

9:00AM After a leisurely breakfast in one of Melbourne's world-famous cafés head out of town and into the hills.

10:00AM Arrive at **COLDSTREAM HILLS** at Gruyere. Australia's most revered wine critic James Halliday established this winery in 1985. Look out for the Yarra Valley's hero varietals, chardonnay and pinot noir. The cellar door overlooks the vines that run down through the expansive valley.

If your visit is over the weekend, you can book a guided walking tour of the vineyard and winery, including the exciting opportunity to sample wines straight from the barrel.

11:00AM Just next door is the award-winning **YARRA YERING**. The 50-year-old estate is one of the region's oldest producers, but it remains a progressive winery. Try the latest release of Light Dry Red, an unusual blend of shiraz and pinot noir. Treasure hunters will be thrilled by the rotating selection of museum stock available for tasting too.

12:30PM Stop for a leisurely lunch and a wine tasting at **SEVILLE ESTATE**, the 2019 Halliday Winery of the Year. It has tranquil vistas of the upper Yarra Valley and the surrounding mountains. The tasting room and restaurant feature an ever-changing menu that champions local and estate-grown produce.

3:00PM Next up is **DOMINIQUE PORTET** for a unique combination of French winemaking and unmistakable Yarra Valley terroir. If the weather is fine, consider taking a glass to the courtyard and marvel at the vine-covered rolling hillside. Or pay tribute to the place's French heritage by partaking in a game of Pétanque.

DAY ONE – CONT'D

4:00PM Gin, anyone? It's time to learn the art of distilling and sipping at **FOUR PILLARS GIN** in Healesville. Try a tasting paddle or a cocktail but make sure you try the distillery's famous shiraz gin, a combination of rare dry gin and locally grown shiraz grapes.

5:00PM Time to check into your accommodation. Set on a 48-hectare private nature reserve where bushland intersects the Yarra River, **YERING GORGE COTTAGES** has several cottage options. Relax on your balcony with a pre-dinner drop and watch the kangaroos graze nearby.

7:00PM The iconic **HEALESVILLE HOTEL** is a mix of old-world charm and modern amenity. It serves local grass-fed beef and free-range chickens alongside vegetables from nearby Timbarra farm. As you might expect from a pub in the centre of a world-class wine region, the drinks list is impressive.

DAY TWO

8:00AM Complimentary breakfast hamper? Thank you, Yering Gorge Cottages. Enjoy on the deck with the Christmas Hills and Dividing Ranges as backdrop.

10:00AM It's a short drive to **HEALESVILLE SANCTUARY**, where it's easy to while away a morning meandering tranquil tracks set among the natural bushlands. It's home to native wildlife such as koalas, kangaroos, wombats and more than 200 bird species.

12:30PM Lunch at Coldstream's **OAKRIDGE**. This is one of Australia's hottest winery restaurants, where the team led by executive chef Arron Brodie has won a host of awards. Oakridge's sustainable menu relies on produce that is handpicked daily from a 120m² kitchen garden, with bread, cheese and smallgoods (including emu pastrami) made in-house.

2:00PM Next up it's **SOUMAH**, again featuring the Yarra Valley staple of incredible views of the vineyard. Look out for its Equilibrio Chardonnay, which received Best-in-Show at the 2020 Decanter World Wine Awards with a staggering 97 points.

3:00PM Take the spectacular Black Spur drive through the Yarra Ranges to **STEAVENTSON FALLS**, near Marysville. It's only a 700-metre (return) stroll from the carpark to the viewing platform, which overlooks one of Victoria's highest waterfalls (122 metres). Keep an eye (and ear) out for Australian wildlife.

7:00PM The café at **MELETOS**, in Coldstream, is great for a low-key dinner. The team's dedication to bringing the best out of regional ingredients shines through. Choose from a range of wood-fired pizzas or chargrilled porterhouse, confit duck or lemon and rosemary quail.

9:00PM It's back to Yering Gorge Cottages for the night – for an (optional) early start in the morning.

DAY THREE

4:00AM If you want to get out of bed two hours before sunrise, there's breathtaking views of the Yarra Valley's spectacular natural amphitheatre on offer. The champagne breakfast isn't bad, either. A hot air balloon ride with **GLOBAL BALLOONING** over the valley takes about an hour once you're up in the air.

9:30AM Head back to Yering Gorge Cottages to collect your luggage and check out.

10:00AM If you haven't already filled your car with fresh produce from roadside stalls, it's time to pick up seasonal fruit, vegetables and local arts and crafts from **THE PROVIDORE AT MELETOS** the one-stop shop for regional produce.

Cheese lovers could head to **YARRA VALLEY DAIRY** at Yering. The cheese shop and tasting room are located in the original 100-year-old milking shed on the farm, right besides the cheese factory – you might even meet a friendly goat angling for a pat.

11:00AM Pop into **DE BORTOLI'S** award-winning, internationally renowned cellar door at Dixons Creek to sample new-release wines from one of the region's most innovative wineries. The sweeping views of vineyard plots that run towards the Great Dividing Range are pretty great, too. Behind-the-scenes winery tours are available in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.

12:30PM Pause for lunch at **TARRAWARRA ESTATE** followed by an exhibition at the onsite TarraWarra Museum of Art. The restaurant menu varies each day, depending on what the chef selects from the property's half-acre kitchen garden that morning. The gallery has hosted collections such as Tracey Moffatt's widely acclaimed 57th Venice Biennale exhibition.

2:00PM Thirty-seat **GRACEBURN WINE ROOM**, run by boundary-pushing natural winemaker Mac Forbes, is an urban bistro/wine bar in Healesville. Stop here for one last tasting. Graceburn's staff will take you through special-release wines from the core range alongside selected producers from the wider Yarra Valley and abroad.

3:30PM Head back to Melbourne – you should be back before 5pm, in time to enjoy an evening in the city.

ALWAYS BE SURE TO ENJOY VICTORIA'S WINE REGIONS SAFELY WITH A DESIGNATED DRIVER.