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LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

Drive like Lewis, fish like Rex and swing like a golf pro on these sporty holidays across the Tiger Airways network!

In the DRIVER'S SEAT

Get your motor running in time for the 2008 racing season, says Stewart Bell



Right now there is a very good chance that you're flying. Super-fast. Amongst your fellow flyers, there are those who love take-off and landings, and those who hate it. If you hate it, don't worry, we'll be cruising soon enough – sit back and relax. The lovers will try to recreate the thrill in other ways, but other than take off and landing, can you ever really experience speed?



Formula 1 rookie-sensation for Vodafone McLaren Mercedes, Lewis Hamilton is now in his second season, knows a thing or two about speed.

"First, you start the engine and then you get this buzz," says the 22-year-old. "You start smiling, your heart starts pounding as the adrenaline starts to pump around your body.

"All of a sudden, you feel in control of this beast, with 750bhp behind you," he says, with a grin. "You exit the pits and you're up the straight – and when you go through the gears, it's thrilling when you accelerate with all that power. It's like the fastest roller-coaster you could ever imagine."

Roller-coaster like experiences run in the motor-racing family. Australia's own fiexpert, Mark Webber has experienced all the twists and turns of racing, especially when he started out, says Ann Neal, Webber's manager and partner.



"It was a fantastic yet very tough journey, and there were certainly a number of times when we really weren't sure how we were going to make the next step," says Neal. "I think the real reason that Mark made it to Formula One when so many others fell by the wayside is simply due to his commitment and motivation which, even in extreme times, never faltered."

Webber's latest commitment, the Mark Webber Pure Tasmania Challenge, has put Tasmania on the motor-racing map and the 2006 event raised AUD500,000 (SGD629,103.50) for children's charities. Billed as a gruelling physical and mental

adventure race, Webber says, "I have moments on the Challenge when I'm tested physically and mentally. But it's fantastic to come through the other side of those tough times. My stamina in terms of endurance has never been better."

Celebrity Racers

A regular feature on the Australian motor sport scene is Aussie actor and thrill-seeker, Eric Bana. The 39-year-old star of *Munich* tackled the 2007 Targa Tasmania, a tarmac rally through the Apple



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Read Archives

Isle and the excitement of racing even outshines the Hollywood glitz.

"I don't think anything in life compares remotely to a tarmac rally; circuit-racing, performing live, doing stand-up comedy, being on the *Tonight Show*," says Bana. "I've been very privileged to experience a lot of high adrenaline stuff through work, but nothing compares to how much your heart pumps out of your chest during a tarmac rally stage," he says. "I'm quite addicted to them and unfortunately, my career gets in the way a little bit."



Another celebrity racer is Australia's top jazz musician, James Morrison. While his talent for pumping out the notes is world-renowned, Morrison is passionate about rallying.

"This is my favourite type of motor sport," says Morrison. "If you liken racing to music, then Formula 1 is a classical concerto and rallying is jazz improvisation," he laughs. "I've been lucky to enjoy many 'guest' spots racing. A definite highlight was driving a works car for Toyota in a round of the World Championship in Western Australia."

Unfortunately, Morrison didn't appear on the podium. "The race ended with a dented roof and a blown engine – but it's still the most fun I've ever had in a car!"

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Get to the Circuit

If you're ready to rocket out of the pit-lane, then it's time that you became acquainted with a racing school. You won't learn how to race like Hamilton or Webber, but you'll get a taste.

Fastlane Racing Driver's School

Circuit: Barbagallo Raceway – Wangara (via Perth), Western Australia

Bio: Brett Lupton, the owner of Fastlane, has an extensive knowledge of the motor sport industry, having spent the best part of his career on the World Stage. His training began in the highly competitive fields of British Formula 3, European Formula 3000 and Formula 1, working in teams such as Brabham's Yamaha and Leyton House March F1 and Eddie Jordan Racing.

Cost: The cost for a full day Fastlane Racing Drivers School course (including lunch, drinks and snacks, all required safety equipment and a photograph) is AUD650 (SGD817.85).



Peter Finlay's International Racing Drivers' School



Circuit: Wakefield Park Raceway – Tirranaville (via Canberra), New South Wales (NSW)

Bio: In 1986, the Confederation of Australian Motor Sport (CAMS) appointed PFIRDS to train and evaluate drivers for their initial racing licenses. This was the first school to be authorised in NSW and only the second in Australia. PFIRDS remains the only dedicated racing drivers' school in Australia.

Cost: Two-day course with intensive instruction. Includes CAMS C3 lecture and race/rally (R3/R5) CAMS observed license test. Cost: AUD750 (SGD943.95), including GST.

Taki Racing

Circuit: Bira Circuit – Banglamung, Chonburi, Thailand (147km from Bangkok)

Bio: Drawing on the long and successful experience of Taki Corporation in the fields of racing school management, motor sports event organisation and professional racing driver management in Europe, Japan and the USA. Taki Racing is now the first and only racing establishment in South-East Asia providing professional racing technique.



Cost: There are many packages to suit different budgets. The top one is the "Exclusive Individual Professional Drive" (two days), including a classroom session, braking and gear-changing exercises (Heel and Toe Technique) and Stop and Go lapping. Cost: THB85,000 (SGD3,899). Fee includes rental fee, helmet, face mask, shoes, glove and racing suit and soft drink.

Shift into seventh and floor it to these motor-racing events

Formula 1

13 to 16 March Albert Park, Melbourne (<http://www.grandprix.com.au/>) 21 to 23 March Sepang Circuit Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (<http://www.malaysiangp.com.my/>) 26 to 28 September Singapore Street Circuit (<http://www.singaporegp.sg/>)

V8 Supercars 7 to 9 June Sandown Raceway, Melbourne 4 to 6 July Hidden Valley, Darwin 23 to 26 October Gold Coast (US IndyCars) 21 to 23 November Tasmania Challenge, Launceston

International Formula 3 Guia Circuit, Macau 13 to 16 November

The Winning Formula?



Star of the hit Australian mockumentary, *Kenny*, and Network Ten's new travel documentary *Kenny's Toilet Tour*, Shane Jacobson offers his top tips to this year's Australian Grand Prix Celebrity Challenge (held on March 14) contenders. Jacobson came fifth in last year's Celebrity Challenge. He clearly doesn't know how to win, but being the nice bloke he is, he thought he'd offer his advice anyway.

"To be out on the same day – on that same black tarmac – as the Formula 1 cars, is like being asked to go for a ride on a donkey with Jesus!

My job was to find my place in the pack, and that eventually turned out to be fifth. Once I got there, I stayed there – I dropped back to seventh early in the race as I made a mistake, but then I regained that position by passing two drivers at the same corner.

"The skills you're taught in the 'training week' are second to none. It's all about how to brake right, how to keep the car under control and also how to turn correctly and pick the apex of a corner.

The only thing that can be a little embarrassing is when you see the Celebrity Challenge replay and see how slow those cars look on that track..."

Tip 1 Remember, nothing is worth your life!

Tip 2 Stay calm, have fun and try to relax!

Tip 3 In slow, out fast. Practice what you have been taught, not what you had dreamt the night before!

Tip 4 Always check your mirrors – you can't win a race with a bent car!

Tip 5 Always concentrate when practising getting your apex right.

Robert Kubica, Formula 1 Driver for the BMW-Sauber-F1 Team, on Melbourne's F1 circuit: "Albert Park is one of my favourite tracks, as it is partly a street circuit. There are also a few run-off areas, and that makes it slightly easier. There isn't much grip, but it is quite bumpy. Conditions improve enormously over the course of the weekend. You have to make changes to the car and understand how it is going to react. I like the circuit a lot, it's a challenge. Tight corners and full-throttle sections follow one after another." Albert Park, Melbourne – 13 to 16 March (<http://www.grandprix.com.au/>)



Jenson Button, Formula 1 Driver for the Honda Racing F1 Team, on Sepang Circuit, Kuala Lumpur: "Sepang has some great opportunities for overtaking. Turn one is a good chance, along with the right-hander at Langkawi and the left-hander at Berjaya Tioman. For a really quick lap, you need a car which is

aerodynamically sound but with the least drag possible. Too much front-end grip will lose you a lot of time in turns five and six". Sepang Circuit, Kuala Lumpur – 21 to 23 March (<http://www.malaysiangp.com.my/>)



Mark Webber, Formula 1 Driver for the Red Bull Racing Team on the inaugural 2008 Singaporean Grand Prix: "All the drivers are very keen to race on a new street circuit, which is definitely going to be the case in Singapore. It's a clean and beautiful city, and I think it's a real signature event. "I can totally see the enthusiasm and the excitement to have an international sporting event such as the Formula 1 World Championship in Singapore and it's something which looks exciting – there's no question about it." Singapore Street Circuit – 26 to 28 September (<http://www.singaporegp.sg/>)



Down to a TEE

Chris Canty takes a swing at the region's best golf courses



It is a game full of frustration, fleeting skill and immense beauty, which is why millions have devoted their life to hitting that little white ball as straight as they can.

Often surrounded by luxurious accommodation and fine dining restaurants, golf is much more an experience than a sport.

Hugging the Tasmanian coastline on the edge of bass straight, an hour north of Launceston, is Australia's top public golf course Barnbougle Dunes (<http://www.barnbougledunes.com.au/>). Despite only running for two years, the course has been pulling in the awards. It is rated 7th best public golf course in the world as well as the 35th best overall by the respected magazine, *US Golf Digest*.

Besides the great green, the boutique-style accommodation and Tasmanian restaurant also gets a thumbs-up. A 30-minute private lesson with resident professional Brett Partridge costs AUD50 (SGD64) for 30 minutes or AUD90 (SGD116) an hour.

Moonah Links (<http://www.moonahlinks.com.au/>) is in Rye, a seaside town on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula. The host of the 2003 and 2005 Australian Open Golf Championship, it's known for its enormous length and challenging design, while the location is perfect for the weekend visitor who wants to play a round of golf (or three) and squeeze in a tour of the Great Ocean Road. To soothe muscles after a day of golf (or just for fun!) head to the Peninsula Hot Springs (www.peninsulahotsprings.com) and take a dip in a 50 degree thermal pool, which is rich in healing minerals. Moonah Links' clinics and individual lessons operate on Wednesdays and weekends (daily in the Victorian school holidays), starting from AUD20 (SGD26) per hour. The 18-hole playing lesson, which costs AUD300 (SGD386) is a great way to see the course and develop your game at the same time.



Over in Western Australia, the Vines Resort and Country Club (<http://www.vines.com.au/>) is a championship 36-hole course 20 minutes away from Perth, and is considered one of Australia's best resort destinations. The courses were designed by leading architects Graham Marsh and Ross Watson and continually feature in the Top 20 Resort Courses every year.



Set in the Swan Valley, WA's oldest wine growing region, it's not uncommon to see scores of golfers

having a swing in the morning, then desert the green in the afternoon – they haven't gone far, you can find them sampling the award-winning drops at the wineries and breweries. The cellar doors are open all year round and make a great side trip. The Vines is home to the Mark Tibbles International Golf Academy. Private lessons (30 minutes) start from AUD60 (SGD77), or a personalised programme with 6 x 45-minute lessons, 50 range ball vouchers, nine-hole playing lessons and practice plan costs AUD895 (SGD1153).

If you want your golfing holiday to have a side order of sunshine, then head north. There are a few options, but worth a visit is the popular Capricorn Resort (<http://www.capricorngolf.com.au/>) in Yeppoon. Located half an hour away from Rockhampton in Queensland, this 36-hole layout boasts two highly rated courses, sure to test the weekend hacker to the seasoned professional.

While you're here, get up close and personal to Australia's native animals at Cooberrie Park (<http://www.cooberriepark.com.au/>); the kids will love hand feeding the kangaroos and wallabies. Improve your golf game with the "five-day golf school" which includes five nights deluxe accommodation, unlimited golf, 12 hours of tuition by professionals, and daily breakfast and lunch. The package costs AUD1,299 (SGD1,674).



Looking beyond Australia, the Sentosa Golf Club in Singapore (<http://www.sentosagolf.com/>) is located just 15 minutes from the city – and it isn't all about the golf here. Sentosa is Singapore's little island retreat and has a great range of trendy beach bars and restaurants, not to mention luxurious resorts and beaches. You'll also come across the who's who of Singapore wanting a little relaxation after a busy work week.

Sentosa boasts two championship standard courses complete with beautiful landscape scenery. The resort is also home to Asia's biggest National Golf Tournament – the Barclays Singapore Open, held every November. Skye Neal runs private lessons at Sentosa starting from SGD110 for one hour (non-members) and SGD85 for one hour (members).

A quick plane ride away from Singapore is Kuala Lumpur, home to Kota Permai (www.kotapermai.com.my). This championship 18-hole Ross Watson designed course is located in the financial hub Klang Valley, only a 45-minute drive from the airport where Australian PGA professional Andrew Kay conducts a highly respected golf academy using the latest technology. The opening hole offers golfers an easy introduction to the course where long hitters will love having a go as the fairway is wide.

For a challenge, try the par-four 2nd hole, which won the 'Most Beautiful Hole in Malaysia' title in 2001. There are also private tutorials starting at RM145 (SGD63) and course management classes RM490 (SGD214). Take a break from the golf and check out the Safari Lagoon (<http://www.safarilagoon.com/>), South East Asia's first rooftop water theme park.

A club fit for royalty is the best way to describe the Thai Country Club (<http://www.thaicountryclub.com>) in Bangkok. This multi-award winning course boasts an incredible attention to detail on and off the fairways, making the above-average green fees well worth the expense. The Thai caddies (who undergo a stringent training program) add an extra something to the golfing experience by keeping a close watch on your ball so it won't get lost, and some even carry a folding chair so you can take a break between holes. Resident PGA pro, Daniel Wyborn can help with a two-hour private lesson for THB4,000 (SGD192) or for better value, a 18-hole lesson for THB6,000 (SGD288) might be the better option.

Craig Parry is one of Australia's all-time great golfers and frequently plays in Asia. He has won 23 tournaments throughout the world, most recently the Australian Open in December.

What is your favourite tournament?

In Australia, the Cadbury Schweppes Australian PGA, Hyatt Coolum Resort, in Queensland, as the whole family can come to the tournament and not get bored! We stay at the hotel at the course. I can also walk to practice rather than having to drive there. As for the golf course, it's wonderful with plenty of birdie chances.



What is your favourite golf course?

Royal Melbourne Golf Club, composite course. It is able to be played by all levels of golfers. The weather has a large influence on the way to play the course. It's very natural, with many native grasses and gum trees. There are hard and quick greens, and it has the best layout.

What tip do you have for someone who is just starting out?

Play to your strengths. If you are not a very good driver of the ball, don't use the driver. Use a 3-metal or even give away the woods and just use an iron from the tee.

China's Golf Revolution

Barely 30 years after the Cultural Revolution ended, China is undergoing another revolution – a golf boom sparked by the rise of the Bling Dynasty, the country's fast-growing class of rich and super-rich. China's first golf course opened in Zhongshan, in Guangdong, in 1984 and since then, the sport has taken off. There are now more than 300 courses around the country and many more are planned.



Shenzhen is home to the world's biggest golf complex. Covering a vast stretch of land between Shenzhen and Dongguan, Mission Hills (<http://www.missionhillsgroup.com/>) comprises 12 courses. Shenzhen is known more as a business centre, rather than a cultural one, but there are still a couple of interesting attractions, including the Shenzhen Museum (tel: +86 0 (8)210 2993), which is home to over 20,000 artefacts, including ancient jade and bronze pieces.

Guangdong has well over 70 golf courses today, its sub-tropical climate ideal for year-round play. Among top facilities is picturesque Lotus Hill Golf Club (<http://www.lotushillgolf.com/>) in Panyu, a district of Guangzhou.

Designed by German star Bernhard Langer, the highlight is the signature par-3 17th hole, with a huge tree-covered rock surrounded by lakes as a backdrop. A pagoda on the hill above the clubhouse lends an unmistakable Chinese air to it. After a morning of golf, curb your adventure streak with a hike up one of the 30 peaks at the Dayu Ranges, an hour outside of the city centre.

Hainan Island capital, Haikou, has several courses, including The Haikou Meishi Mayflower International Golf Club (<http://www.meishigolf.com/>), which is just 10 minutes from the city and stands on a sandy stretch of coast. For a break from the green, get back to nature with a visit to Dongzhai Harbor Mangrove Reserve, China's biggest nature reserve.

Beach resort Xiamen also offers top-name golf with another course by Australia's Greg Norman, aka the Great White Shark. Opened some 15 years ago and about 15 minutes of downtown Xiamen, Kaikou is a treat for long hitters. Worth a visit is the island of Gulang Yu, only a 10 minute boat ride away from Xiamen. It's an architectural-lovers dream, with winding streets lined with colonial villas.

Macau's Orient Golf Club (<http://www.orientgolf.com/>) is the island's only semi-public golf course.

It is open to visitors and offers floodlit night play and Macau's only driving range. The other course on the island is the Macau Golf and Country Club (<http://www.macaugolfandcountryclub.com/>), a private club with a spectacular setting overlooking the South China Sea. You could easily spend a week touring Macau! For more ideas on what to see and do, read our Macau story on page 68. – Peter Ellegard

Get swinging to these events

Maybank Malaysian Open 6 to 9 March - Kota Permai, Kuala Lumpur

Philippine Open 13 to 16 March – Wack Wack GCC, Manila

Open Championship International Final Qualifying (Asia) 27 to 30 March – Sentosa, Singapore

Midea China Classic 16 to 19 October – Royal Orchid International, Guangzhou

Macau Open 23 to 26 October – Macau

Barclays Singapore Open 6 to 9 November – Sentosa, Singapore

Omega Mission Hills World Cup 27 to 30 November – Mission Hills, Shenzhen

Hana Bank Vietnam Masters 4 to 7 December – Hanoi Phoenix Golf Resort, Hanoi

Volvo Masters of Asia 18 to 21 Dec – Thai Country Club, Bangkok

NICE CATCH!

Rex Hunt, TV presenter, author and fishing expert tells us where to cast a line around the region

There is definitely more to fishing than catching fish. Sure, it is an important part of the activity, but fishing takes in many more things than the actual catching of the fish – it's more about the places you visit.



In Australia, we are fortunate to have abundant fishing spots, with an array of lovely waters to try. The Asia Pacific region is also beautiful and offers sensational fishing at times.

As a TV presenter, I have been fortunate to be able to travel around the world. The best part of my job is when I take a day off and just go fishing – it can work wonders for my mindset.

I consider myself to be very lucky – I am sure a motor mechanic does not fix motors on his day off and a garbage collector surely does not collect rubbish on his day off either!

My favourite fishing spots include:

Ho Chi Minh City

The fishing fleet in Ho Chi Minh is huge and there are some very good reefs offshore that provides an amazing amount of fish.

Further out to sea, the pelagic species like tuna take over and fast trolling with skirted lures will always bring results. There are a number of operators who offer various fishing packages. Set aside at least half a day for fishing.

Check out <http://www.passionasia.com/>

Phuket

Phuket is one of my all-time favourite sea fishing destinations. I visited a few years back with my TV programme. We fished with Captain John Pearce aboard Reel Hooker, a purpose-built 44 feet Riviera Sports Cruiser made in Australia.

We targeted the famous Sailfish of the Andaman Sea. Fishing near the Similan Islands was an amazing experience – just watching the sailfish explode through schools of baitfish was enough for me.

Back on dry land, Phuket is a wonderful place to get around and see fascinating facets of culture and local lifestyle. I also highly recommend a visit to the happening Patong Beach for its markets, eateries and nightlife.

For fishing day trips, check out charters with Dorado (<http://www.phuket-fishing.com/>). In November, see the best showing off their capabilities at the Phuket International Sportfishing Classic (date to be confirmed).

Darwin

Every year I travel to Darwin to indulge in my passion: barramundi fishing. Darwin offers a great base for the tourist angler. Non-fishing partners and kids won't be bored as there are various tours and activities available too.

Spots that are fun for all the family include the Daly River, Adelaide River for the must-see crocodiles, Mary River and Corrobaree Billabong for its magnificent scenery and Barramundi and Saratoga fishing.

Also on the must-see list is Kakadu National Park. It is most beautiful in the Australian winter, from June to August. The wild flowers and magnificent trees are marvellous and the array of wildlife is breathtaking. There are many fishing guides in town who will pick

you up from your hotel and take you fishing. A good place to start is <http://www.darwinbarrafishing.com.au>.

Gold Coast

A true jewel in Australian tourism. The Gold Coast offers a complete family holiday package; lots of fun water sports for the kids and plenty of fishing to keep dad happy! I have listed the area between Coolangatta and Southport as a significant fishing area in my book, *Rex Hunt Fishing Australia*, for good reason: there are so many places to fish, including some amazing estuarine systems.

Head to Tweed River and the Nerang River. Both have good populations of whiting, bream, jewfish, mangrove jack, dusky flathead and mullet. My best flathead here was taken opposite Seaworld and it weighed over seven kilogrammes.

The seaway at Southport leads to the ocean, so there are some fine charter operators based at the Marina Mirage and they offer trips to target species such as Marlin, Kingfish, Pearl Perch and Tuna. If you have a family, the Gold Coast will keep everyone happy; there are plenty of theme parks, beautiful beaches and great fishing.

Check out the great fishing tours on offer with <http://www.goldcoastfishingtours.com/>

Perth

This is the gateway to some of the best fishing I have experienced in the world. Areas like Esperance, Albany, Geraldton and Dirk Hartog Island are all worth a look.

However, Perth itself offers a myriad of activities for the fishing family. The climate here is wonderful and great to visit any time of the year.

The Swan River that runs through Perth provides boating and fishing on a large scale.

Black Bream is abundant, as are the famous blue swimmer crabs. Offshore is Rottnest Island, a terrific day trip for everyone and easy to reach by ferries running from Fremantle. There are some thumping King George Whiting here amongst the sand holes.

Deep water fishing is best on the southern tip of the island. There is a fish-attracting device here (FAD) where I have had some marvellous fishing for Dolphin Fish, one of the prettiest and tastiest fish.

Fremantle is also a seaport with some fine restaurants and fish and chipperies. It's a vibrant city with many attractions, and fishing is just one of them. Try <http://www.fishingwa.com/> for tours.

Go on, get hooked!

Everywhere I travel, I see people making hard work of fishing. The basics have been with me for over 50 years and they are still working for me today. My advice is to select a species of fish that you want to catch and fish where these fish abound, and above all, give the hungry fish a fresh bait or suitable lure for them to eat. And hopefully, that's all you need to be successful!

If dad didn't teach you to fish, all's not lost! In every area, angling clubs are around and welcome newcomers, especially kids. A basic fishing book is a necessity, along with the purchase of a basic outfit. But still by far the best way to learn is to head where people are fishing: watch, ask and copy. It's as simple as that.

Have a go, and above all, have fun!

Rex's tackle box essentials Sunscreen



Sunscreen

You need to cover up if you're out on the water. Waterproof sunscreen is ideal for fishing. The glare from the water can cause very bad damage to your eyes, so always wear a hat and sunscreen.

Sunglasses

The best protection against hooks, sinkers and lures. You can also see under the surface of the water with polarised lenses. It's a good idea to get a strap to ensure your glasses don't fall into water.

Selection of tackle

Carry spare hooks, floats and lures. I keep them handy if I need to change my rig quickly. I only take a few out with me in case I get them wet and they rust.

Small first-aid kit

Bring a basic kit – you never know when you'll have a headache, get seasick or cut yourself. A small bottle of antiseptic is essential with a few band-aids too.

Snack

Of utmost importance, especially if there are kids about! A few packets of raw nuts, some fruit (apples are good) and a muesli bar. All great to have for that emergency tummy craving!

FOLLOW THE BALL

From Melbourne to Hanoi, Chris Canty kicks the footy around and shows us where to head to catch the big game



Australian Rules Football (AFL) is the quintessential Aussie game – tough, semi-fair and extremely skilful. As Australians will tell you, there's nothing else quite like it. Still, you don't have to be an Aussie to grow up dreaming of playing it! Irishman Kevin Dyas, a star Gaelic football player for County Armagh, says he moved to Australia for the pure love of the sport. "I wanted to be a professional football player. Gaelic football is only amateur in Ireland, so you can't make a living from it."

Commentators believe that the 20-year-old, who was selected by Collingwood last year, could become an even better player than countryman Martin Clarke. Clarke made an impressive debut in 2007, picking up the game in under 12 months and earning the praise "remarkable" from coach Mick Malthouse. Dyas is determined to follow suit.

Catch a game

Melbourne is the home of Aussie Rules, and ever since the first teams were formed in the mid 19th century, Melburnians have had a passion for the game.

On any given weekend during footy season, the doors of the famous Melbourne Cricket Ground (<http://www.mcg.org.au/>) open to 30,000-plus screaming fans, but there's more to the Yarra Park precinct than footy. Before a game, join the free 'Yarra Park Adventure Tour,' which takes in the area's historical and footy-themed sites.

The other major Melbourne stadium is Telstra Dome (<http://www.telstradome.com.au/>), designed so its 50,000 seats overlook the ground, making you feel incredibly close to the weekly action. Located at the Docklands, there's plenty of post-game celebrations to be had at the many bars and restaurants in the area - all you have to do is present your valid Telstra Dome ticket. A top pick is the James Squire Brewhouse (<http://www.jamessquirebrewhouse.com.au/>) for the Footy Burger and a pint of James Squire for AUD15 (SGD19.25).

South Australians, however, have always maintained that they're the best at football – and with the success of the state's two teams, the Adelaide Crows and Port Adelaide Power, they could have a point. Weekly games are held at AAMI Stadium and post match, fans head to Henley Square (four kms away) for a bite to eat. Want to have a kick? Check <http://www.sanfl.com.au/> for information on local amateur clubs.

Perth is home to two teams, the powerhouse West Coast Eagles and the up-and-coming Fremantle Dockers. Western Australia is categorically football-mad, so stadiums are often full, much like the bars in Subiaco. West Coast Eagles fans should head to Social Subiaco (<http://www.socialsubiaco.com.au/>).

Regular games are also played in Brisbane at the Gabba, home of the Brisbane Lions, and you can catch the occasional game on the Gold Coast at Carrara Stadium, too – you won't have to move far from the beach!

Visit <http://www.afl.com.au/> for more information on recreational footy and footy clinics in Melbourne, Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia.

Aflin Asia

Just because it's called Aussie Rules Football doesn't mean it's only played in Australia: the oval ball is kicked around the capital cities of Asia.

The Singapore Wombats are regarded as the fittest of all the Asian teams, and will play host to the Annual Asian Afl Championships in September. (<http://www.singaporewombats.com/>)

The Bangkok-based **Thailand Tigers** brave the humidity for weekly training and the occasional intra-club game. (<http://www.thailand-tigers.com/>)

The Malaysian Warriors are one of the oldest expat teams; the Kuala Lumpur-based boys train on Saturdays. (<http://www.malaysianwarriors.com/>)

The Vietnam Swans are based in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. They wear the Sydney Swans colours (red and white), but have proven more successful off the field than on. (<http://www.vietnamswans.com>)

The first game of the season kicks off 8 March in Kuala Lumpur between the Malaysian Warriors and Vietnam Swans. Visit <http://www.malaysianwarriors.com> to join in!

A chat with Phil Johns, President of the Vietnam Swans

When did the Hanoi Swans start?

In 1998, with a membership of three.

What's the standard like?

Surprisingly good. We've had some sensational players playing for us. However, due to the transient nature of the people who come to Vietnam, stability is our major issue.



How often does the team play?

The one fixed event we have on the calendar is the Asian Championships. The other matches depend upon the availability of players, the finances ... and the interest of other countries in having a footy weekend in Vietnam.

Can anyone play?

Yes: we encourage just about anyone to come down to training and have a kick.

What do the locals think about the game?

The bottom line is that they think anyone not playing soccer is weird. Having said that, when we set up footy stalls at various events, the Vietnamese giggle their heads off when they try handballing or bouncing the footy.