Our Guide to Summer Holidaying in Castlemaine



Swimming. Swimming and summer go hand in hand. That's why we're so lucky to have Castlemaine's 50-metre outdoor pool right at our entrance. Open through the summer months, it's perfect for cooling off after a day's sightseeing. There are also outdoor pools at nearby Chewton, Newstead, Harcourt and Maldon. And for a true Castlemaine summer experience, head to "The Res" (Expedition Pass Reservoir) on Golden Point Road, just past Chewton. Surrounded by native bush, it's a classic local spot for a refreshing swim and picnic.

The Mill. This extraordinary foodie and artisan precinct in a reimagined 1870s woollen mill is a three-minute stroll from BIG4 Castlemaine, just across the road. A big part of Castlemaine's creative heart, you'll find great meals, coffee, local wines, craft beers, gourmet produce, vintage shopping, art, music, events and happenings thrown in for good measure. Everything you want and need for holiday and fun feasting is right here.

Gardens. The beautiful, historic Castlemaine Botanical Gardens and adjoining Flora and Fauna Reserve are right next door to us. Explore 23 hectares of shady trees, flower beds, open lawns and walking paths, admire the ornamental lake and birdlife, and let the kids loose in the award-winning play space.

Jirrahlinga Wildlife Sanctuary. This special not-for-profit sanctuary in the Chewton bushlands, on the outskirts of Castlemaine, is home to dingoes and a wonderful variety of Australian native animals. Get up close to koalas, wombats, reptiles and, of course, the

dingoes. See Jirrahlinga's website for visiting times. (BIG4 Perks+ members enjoy free entry for one child; all park guests enjoy an entry discount).

Woop Woop. If you've always wanted to find yourself out the back of Woop Woop, now you can! Quirky and fun, Woop Woop is a five-acre wonderland packed more than 100 playful Aussie sculptures, bushland paths, gardens, a tearoom, and a 9-hole mini golf course. You'll find it on Blackjack Road, near Harcourt, 10 minutes from Castlemaine. (BIG4 Perks+ members enjoy a 10%discount on a game of mini golf).



Theatre Royal. This Castlemaine legend was built on 1855 and is the longest continuously operating theatre on mainland Australia. Catch some live music, enjoy an arthouse film, take the kids to the family summer blockbuster, or settle in with a delicious pizza and a glass of first-rate local wine. The beer garden is a particularly popular spot on a balmy summer evening.

Castlemaine Market Building. Drop into this historic building on Mostyn Street in the centre of town and pick up a wealth of information at the Visitor Centre about local attractions and events. You'll also find the award-winning Boorp Boorp Boondyil exhibition, a fascinating introduction to Djaara Country, along with changing exhibitions showcasing local creativity.

Victorian Goldfields Railway. Ride a beautifully restored steam train between the historic goldmining towns of Castlemaine and Maldon, along a railway line dating back to 1884. For something extra special, choose a first-class carriage complete with a fully stocked bar. (BIG4 Perks+ members enjoy discounted tickets – just book with us).

Buda Historic Home and Garden. Step back in time at this beautifully preserved, Museums Australia accredited 1850s goldfields villa. The property houses furnishings, décor and personal belongings of the creative Leviny family, who lived here for almost 120 years.

There are also three acres of gorgeous heritage gardens to explore, along with a lovely gift shop.

Victorian Miniature Railway. More trains and family fun! Now open in Harcourt, just ten minutes from Castlemaine, the Victorian Miniature Railway offers rides behind miniature steam and diesel locomotives on a 2.7-kilometre track. Check the website for current running days.

Castlemaine Art Museum (CAM). This gallery and museum on Lyttleton Street in the heart of Castlemaine is well worth a visit for an hour or two. Explore contemporary exhibitions and a fascinating collection of art and artefacts reflecting the history and social life of Castlemaine and the surrounding region. (Note: the museum section closes temporarily from January 1 2027 for redevelopment).

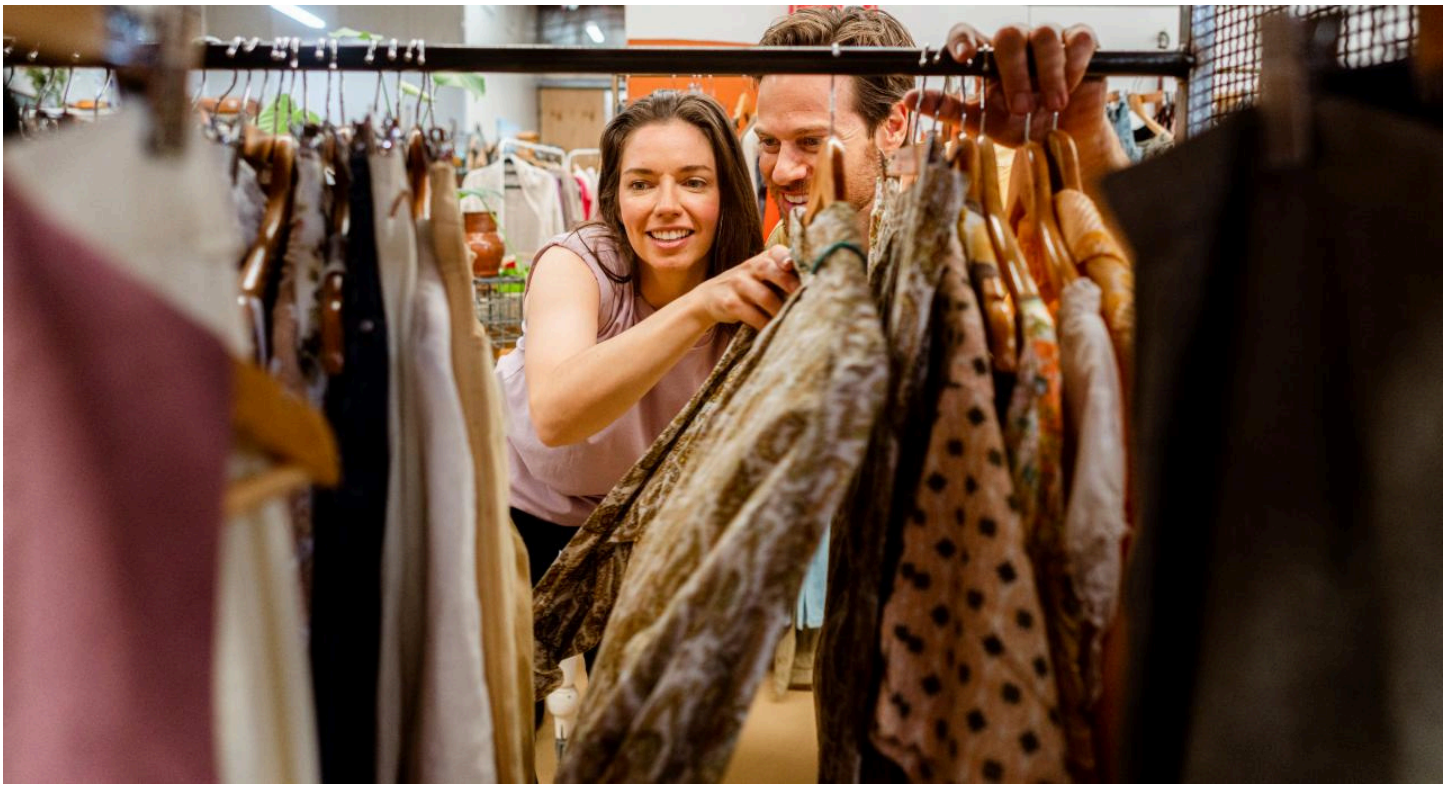
Mt Alexander Regional Park. Just ten minutes from Castlemaine, this 1,400-hectare park in North Harcourt offers stunning lookouts (Dogs Rocks is a must), bushwalking tracks, picnic spots and the chance to spot kangaroos, wallabies and native birds. Start early on a summer morning, bring plenty of water and enjoy the views before the day heats up.

Maldon Adventures. Historic Maldon (the first "notable town" listed with the National Trust) is a picture-perfect summer day trip. Climb Anzac Hill or drive up to Mt Tarrengower lookout for glorious views. Explore the town's heritage streetscapes and refuel in a classic country café or pub. And be sure to stop at the famous Maldon Lolly Shop, where every old-fashioned sweet treat is waiting for you.

Forest Creek Historic Gold Diggings, Chewton. This is an ideal starting point for exploring the fascinating history of the Central Goldfields. A 400-metre track circles an old alluvial goldfield, with signs revealing the story of the ancient Forest Creek riverbed, the gold rush of the 1850s and 1860s, and the relics of a very different way of life. It's a gentle walk with plenty to discover for all ages.

Ice Cream Republic. For a cooling and seriously delicious afternoon treat, head to this artisan ice cream window at The Mill. Open Thursday to Sunday afternoons and every day during Victorian school holidays (apart from some public holidays), it serves handmade ice cream and gelato that's very hard to resist. One scoop or two? We won't judge.

Castlemaine to Maldon Trail. This 17.7-kilometre walking and cycling track runs alongside the historic Victorian Goldfields Railway, through scenic farmland, bushland and goldfields sites. The vehicle-free shared trail is well signposted, with plenty to see along the way. There are some hilly sections, so choose a cooler morning, pack water and take it at your own pace. If a one-way adventure appeals, you can plan to return to Castlemaine on the steam train. Check the timetable first.



Markets. Buy farm-fresh produce and gourmet delights at farmers' markets in Castlemaine (every Wednesday afternoon and the first Sunday of the month), Bendigo (second Saturday of the month), Maldon (second Sunday of the month) and Malmsbury (third Sunday of the month). There's also the very local Wesley Hill Community Market every Saturday morning, with produce, plants, great coffee, bric-a-brac, snacks, baked goods and plenty of smiles. Bring a basket. You'll probably fill it.

Further Afield. Castlemaine is ideally placed as your base for exploring more of Central Victoria. Head 30 minutes up the highway to Bendigo for a day of gold-rush architecture, the Golden Dragon Museum, Central Deborah Gold Mine and Bendigo Pottery, all great family fun. Or visit Daylesford and Hepburn Springs for a relaxing mineral bath, a spa treatment and a long, lazy lunch. Kyneton and its famous Piper Street shopping and eating strip are also an easy drive away.

There's a lot more to see and do: wineries to visit, farmers' and artisan markets to explore, boutiques to browse and small towns to discover. And don't forget the fun right here at BIG4 Castlemaine, with school holiday activities for the kids, giant games, our lovely Sensory Garden, visits now and then from food trucks and a cocktail van, and plenty of room to simply unwind. Take your time, stay a little longer and enjoy the best of a Castlemaine summer. We're looking forward to welcoming you soon!