



# Coffee with a conscience

Coffee lovers are spoiled for choice in Melbourne, but a select few cafes will have you feeling warm and fuzzy even after your coffee buzz has faded, as Claire Henderson discovers

MAIN IMAGE: Kerekere Green cafe.

The scent of freshly brewed coffee that seems to waft through Melbourne is hard to beat. It's not just a sharp wake-up call that most of us are after with that cup of goodness, it's the full experience – the smell of the beans, the sight of the barista lovingly preparing your cup as if it's the most important job of his day, it's hearing the hiss and churn of the espresso machine, it's feeling the hot cup between your fingers, and finally tasting that first sip. There's never been so much good quality product out there, never mind impressive coffee art that makes you smile and then feel guilty for a nanosecond that you're about to ruin it.

As Melbourne's love affair with coffee deepens, an increasing number of cafes are sprouting up across the city to satisfy our caffeine cravings. But there are some places where your dollar goes further than the barista's pocket for his next beard trim. Pop into one of these charitable hot spots for a brew that is guaranteed to hit the mark, for both your taste buds and your conscience.

If you've been busy exploring the city and find yourself near Parliament House in need of a hot cuppa and a comfy place to rest your feet, Ways and Means ([waysandmeans.org.au](http://waysandmeans.org.au)) does a mean locally roasted coffee and mouth-wateringly delicious waffles, as well as home-baked goodies. The project is run by Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS), an organisation that provides support and opportunities for young people aged between 13 and 25 recovering from alcohol, drug and mental health issues by giving them work experience in the cafe, helping to build up their confidence and work skills. Not only that, all profits go directly back into YSAS. With a weekly rotation of single origins on offer for the more adventurous types, and balanced blends for easy drinking, there is something for everyone. Always accommodating barista Nathaniel Dobson's mantra is: "We want everyone to be happy, always."

Wandering around the lush Fitzroy Gardens can be hungry work, so make a beeline towards Kerekere Green opposite Cooks' Cottage ([kerekere.org](http://kerekere.org)). This light, airy space is entrepreneurial social worker James Murphy's second cafe (the first, Kerekere South, is at Boyd Community Hub in Southbank), with both "seeking to foster a culture of generosity and gift giving". Order a coffee made from Kerekere's own blend, and you can help choose the distribution of the cafe's \$500 monthly donation, which goes to four Cause Categories – Environmental, Cultural, Social or Health – each one with an accompanying list of charities chosen by staff. Voting is done by allocating the playing

card you are given with each purchase and customers can also benefit from the cafe's generosity – pick up an ace-of-hearts and you score a free coffee.

It might be slightly off the regular tourist track, but Wild Timor, in Coburg, ([wildtimorcoffee.com/cafe](http://wildtimorcoffee.com/cafe)) is worth the detour. Founded by four Australian soldiers who discovered old coffee plantations while on a peace-keeping mission in Timor, the Diggers support local farmers who nurture the coffee plants, resulting in the fair trade coffee used in the cafe which, in turn, supports the local Timorese community.

Co-director Shannon French explains: "The cafe uses Single Origin organic coffee direct from the Timor, which grows wild around the community. It's a hybrid bean resulting from freak of nature [that occurred] when Indonesia invaded and farmers couldn't tend their crops. But it produces an amazing creamy, smooth coffee with a deep caramel cocoa flavour."

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Customers can buy these special beans to take home – the more the cafe sells, the more community projects can be completed in Timor. This is also the only place in town where you can sample Timorese culinary delights.

Enclaved in the swanky suburb of South Yarra is cute espresso bar The Final Step ([thefinalstep.com.au](http://thefinalstep.com.au)), which is making its mark in the bigger picture of social consciousness. Benjamin Whitaker has created a business that donates 100 per cent of its profits to fund Food For Thought, a healthy food and activity program designed to feed underprivileged children in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Customers can buy a coffee and read the project wall to find out exactly where their money is going.

Owner Benjamin Whitaker says: "Food for Thought has provided more than 6,000 nutritious meals for children since it began in December 2013. Our weekly classes of art, music, drama, yoga and games are part of our education plan."

Choosing quality over quantity, the menu is limited to bagels and cakes. Don't go past the popular Seeded Savoury bagel, topped with avocado, goat's cheese and lime juice, the perfect accompaniment to one of their specialty coffees, created with beans from all over the globe. DV