If there is one thing that Melbourne is particularly well-known for, apart from its ever-changing weather, it would have to be its many locations for outdoor enthusiasts to go and hike.

Regardless of where you live in Melbourne, there is always a forest or area nearby that is full of great trails of varying distances and difficulties.

So, with that in mind, let's take a look at **five of the top hikes near Melbourne**.

1. A Walk Into History – Warburton

This 33km one-way trail from Warburton to Powelltown is a step back into history as you follow the old timber trails (you'll even see some remains!). Typically done over two days, the trail starts from Big Pats Creek and heads in a south-east direction passing through Starlings Gap campground. Hike another seven kilometres and you will come to a crossroad where you are able to take a number of side-trips to areas such as Federal Mill, New Ada Mill and the popular Ada Tree.

Heading back to the crossroad, the trail heads south towards Yarra Junction-Noojee road and the Highleads car park. Be warned – this section is quite steep and hiking poles are a must. Once you get down to the road, turn right and follow the signs all the way to the end.

Length: 33kms

Distance to trailhead from Melbourne: 77km

Crossing the tannin-stained waters of Little Ada Creek.

2. Steavensons Falls and Keppel Lookout Circuit – Marysville

Despite the fires that decimated the area in 2009, Marysville still remains a popular tourist destination, particularly for hikers and campers. The Steavensons Falls and Keppel Lookout circuit takes in two of the most popular attractions in the area. You can do this trail a number of ways, but an ideal way is to start at the Steavensons Falls carpark, head up to the top of the falls and then make your way up again following the trail to the lookout area. Here you can see into the town of Marysville as well as the Cathedral Ranges off in the distance. From here the trail is fairly straightforward where it gradually descends and takes you back to the falls car park.

Length: 13kms

Distance to trailhead from Melbourne: 101km

The spectacular Keppel Lookout, near Lake Mountain and Marysville.

3. Cathedral Range Northern/Southern Circuit – Buxton

This would have to be the best area near Melbourne for day hikes. You have two circuits to choose from the Northern and the Southern – and both are absolutely picturesque. Most hikers begin the Northern Circuit from Ned's Gully campground, and the Southern Circuit at Cooks Mill campground. Both circuits involve a few uphill sections, as well as some rock scrambling, with the Southern Circuit providing more of a challenge than the Northern Circuit. If you're an out-of-towner and ever find yourself in Melbourne, do yourself a favour and check out these hikes. You won't regret it!

Length: 11.6kms (Northern Circuit), 9kms (Southern Circuit)

Distance to trailhead from Melbourne: 117km

Above the clouds on the Northern Circuit in the Cathedral Range State Park.

4. Mount Macedon Walking Trail – Mt Macedon

Under an hours' drive north-west from the Melbourne CBD, lies the beautiful town of Mount Macedon and its famous 18km walking trail. The great thing about it is that it travels through different sections of the area from dense forest to steep, rocky descents. It really has it all! The official trail starts off with a steep uphill section that takes you to a memorial cross which looks out over the surrounding valley. From there it's a relatively easy walk with few ascents and descents. The view from the top of Mount Macedon is absolutely stunning, so be sure to bring your camera with you. Also, make sure you stop in at Days Picnic Ground for some lunch, and visit the Sanatorium Lake as well.

Length: 18km

Distance to trailhead from Melbourne: 64.5km

Dappled sunlight pierces the forest canopy on the Mount Macedon Walking Trail.

5. Olinda Falls and Valley Circuit – Olinda

Another popular tourist destination outside of Melbourne is Olinda, which is located in the famous Dandenong Ranges. One of the better-known hikes in the area is the Olinda Falls and Valley circuit. A 16km hike starting from Woolrich Lookout, the trail takes in foreign trees such as the Sequoia tree, as well as the Mountain Ash trees which are common to the area. The Olinda Falls is a fantastic place to stop and take in the peaceful sound of rushing water, whilst the Valley picnic ground is a wide open area with plenty of places to sit and enjoy a bite to eat before making your way back to the lookout. Quick tip – keep your eyes peeled for lyrebirds. While they are common in the area, they are sneaky birds and can often be hard to see.

Length: 16km

Distance to trailhead from Melbourne: 49km

Olinda Falls in flow. Image credit: DJMan255 via Wikimedia Commons.

Not in Melbourne? We also have a list of the top 5 hikes near Adelaide and Brisbane.

What hikes would you add to this list? Anything closer to Melbourne that we don't know about?

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