

THE FUTURE NORMAL OF MELBOURNE EXPERIENCES

Data & Insight Report

Co-created live with 89 ideas | Melbourne Experience Summit | Melbourne, 2026

Prompt: "Imagine an experience that could only happen in Melbourne."

Theme	% of Ideas	Strategic Significance
MCG & Live Sport	31.5%	The 'G isn't a stadium — it's the city's beating heart, and everyone wants in.
Coffee & Café Culture	28.1%	Coffee isn't a drink here — it's the format every other experience borrows.
Laneways & Underground	27.0%	The best of Melbourne is the bit you can't see from the street.
Gamified Discovery & Quests	25.8%	Don't show me the city — make me unlock it.
Trams as Mobile Venues	24.7%	The tram stops being transport and becomes the destination.
Culinary & Food Culture	20.2%	The table is where Melbourne's cultures actually meet.
Four Seasons & 24-Hour City	19.1%	Melbourne's weather bug, reframed as the killer feature.
Yarra & Waterfront	18.0%	The Birrarung as the spine the whole experience hangs off.
Walkable Festivals & Street Takeovers	15.7%	Close the road, and the whole city becomes the venue.
Street Art & Creative Culture	13.5%	The laneway wall as Melbourne's signature canvas.
First Nations & Heritage	11.2%	The oldest story in the city, finally made walkable.

Total coverage exceeds 100% — most ideas spanned multiple themes, reflecting the integrated, systems-level thinking of participants.

What the data is telling us

Everything orbits the 'G.

MCG & Live Sport was the single biggest cluster at **31.5%** — but look at what the room did with it. They didn't just want to watch the footy; they wanted to dine on the pitch (PitchPlate), suspend a tennis court above the stands (AeroCourt), cram four world championships into a single day (QuadArena). In Melbourne, the stadium isn't a venue you visit — it's the gravitational centre the rest of the city's experiences orbit.

Coffee is the operating system, not the order.

At **28.1%**, café culture came second — but it almost never showed up as 'a nice flat white'. It showed up as connective tissue: coffee windows punched into laneway walls (LanewayDrips), mystery coffee trams (EnigmaTram), 24/7 espresso-to-electronica venues. The signal is pure Melbourne — here, coffee isn't the experience, it's the format every other experience borrows.

The room wanted the city you have to unlock.

Three themes rhyme: Laneways & Underground (**27.0%**), Gamified Discovery (**25.8%**) and the recurring 'IYKYK' framing. Nobody sketched postcard Melbourne — they sketched the hidden one: subterranean second cities (DoubleCity), secret quests through forgotten tunnels (SubTerra), trails only a local can crack. The most Melbourne

thing you can design is a thing you have to be in the know to find.

The tram is the most Melbourne canvas there is.

Trams as Mobile Venues hit **24.7%** — and the tram was the single most-repeated object in the entire dataset. Bands on every carriage (RhythmRails), speed-dating between stops (TramSparks), theatrical dining on heritage W-class cars (TramMystère). Give this room a piece of civic infrastructure everyone already shares, and they'll turn it into a stage, a restaurant, a dating app and a festival — all before the next stop.

The weather bug became the killer feature.

Four Seasons & 24-Hour City (**19.1%**) took Melbourne's most-complained-about trait — four seasons in one day — and made it the premise. FourCast, MelbFour, SolisWheel, even a literal climate-simulation chamber. When a room turns its city's biggest liability into its signature experience, that isn't coping. That's positioning.

Tensions worth sitting with

The icon vs. the secret.

The two strongest instincts pull in opposite directions. MCG & Live Sport (**31.5%**) leans into globally famous Melbourne — the 'G, the Grand Prix, the spectacle. Laneways & Underground (**27.0%**) leans into the hidden, IYKYK Melbourne only locals know. Both are authentic; the question is whether your experience trades on fame or on insider access.

Move them, or make them linger.

Trams (**24.7%**), Gamified Discovery (**25.8%**) and Walkable Festivals (**15.7%**) all want people moving — questing, riding, roaming. Café (**28.1%**) and Culinary (**20.2%**) want people to stop and stay. The richest Melbourne experience probably choreographs both: the journey between, and the table at the end of it.

Curated vs. spontaneous.

Part of the room wanted everything orchestrated — premium, ticketed, concierge-curated (GrandPrestige, PitchPlate). Another part wanted agency-driven serendipity — branching, choose-your-own, 'put discovery back in the user's hands' (Aventur, IYKYK, Amble). Melbourne can be sold as a polished product, or as a city you're trusted to explore. Which version are you building?

For the room — provocations to take home

Anchor to a Melbourne icon, then subvert it.

The strongest ideas took something unmistakably Melbourne — the 'G, a tram, a laneway — and did the unexpected with it. What's the one piece of Melbourne your audience already knows by heart, and what's the last thing they'd expect you to do with it?

Design for 'if you know, you know'.

A quarter of the room reached for hidden, unlockable, insider experiences. Where could you build something that rewards the curious and the local — and makes everyone else want in?

Turn shared infrastructure into a stage.

Trams, bridges, tunnels, the river — the room kept reaching for civic infrastructure everyone already shares. What's the under-used piece of public Melbourne you could turn into a venue overnight?

Make the weather the point.

Four seasons in one day is the most Melbourne sentence there is. Instead of designing around the unpredictability, what would it look like to design *for* it — to make it the thing people come for?

Want to dive deeper? View & explore all 89 user-generated images and ideas.

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