

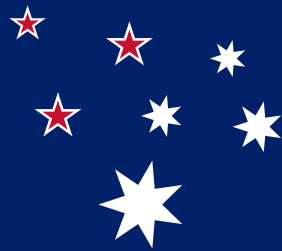
**LIB
ERO**



WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

**AUSTRALIA
NEW ZEALAND**

2023



**SYDNEY
AUCKLAND
DUNEDIN
ADELAIDE
PERTH
WELLINGTON
HAMILTON
BRISBANE**

MELBOURNE

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The digital travel guide for football fans, liberoguide.com is the most up-to-date resource, city-by-city, club-by-club, to the game across Europe and North America. Using only original photos and first-hand research, taken and undertaken over seven seasons, liberoguide.com has been put together to enhance every football weekend and Euro night experience. From airport to arena, downtown sports bar to hotel, liberoguide.com helps you get the best out of your visit to football's furthest corners and showcase stadiums.

The most ambitious **Women's World Cup** yet staged requires two countries to host it. Running over a month, from July 20 to August 20, this ninth edition involves a record 32 teams playing in nine cities across **Australia** and **New Zealand**.

The distances involved are staggering. Reigning European champions **England**, whose victorious exploits in 2022 changed the football attitudes of a nation, are headquartered by the Pacific at Terrigal, between Sydney and Newcastle. Two of their group games take place in **Brisbane** 850km away and **Adelaide** 1,450km south-west.

Over in New Zealand, Portugal must factor in a long hop between **Dunedin** and **Auckland**, a drive and ferry journey of 20 hours. To compensate, Portuguese base camp at Waipuna comprises a pool and four-star hotel – few slum it these days in the ladies' game, at least at this level.

The ten stadia are equally impressive, in contrast to the misguided decision by the English FA to stage games at the 2022 Euros at training grounds and sports villages. The 2023 final takes place at **Stadium Australia**, where the hosts play their opening game against Ireland, its 83,000 capacity and Olympic heritage providing the prestige to suit the occasion.

Eden Park in Auckland witnesses the curtain-raiser, the **Football Ferns** and their Norwegian counterparts probably attracting a crowd above 40,000 strong.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP 2023

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The only venue below 20,000 capacity is **Hindmarsh Stadium** in **Adelaide**, which makes up for in character what it might lack in size. The authorities in



South Australia have used the event to add a new roof and install bigger video screens.

A 32-team competition means a straightforward format from the group stages, an even 16 progressing to the knock-out phase. While the numbers at World Cup finals for men were kept to a modest 16 for more than half a century, the women's equivalent has come on

leaps and bounds since the 12-team inaugural event of 1991.

Debut in Venice

In echoes of Montevideo, the single city that staged the first men's World Cup in 1930, three decades ago Guangzhou and surrounding communities welcomed the best female players in the game. Golden Shoe winner Michelle Akers, second

in the all-time scorers' list for the **United States Women's National Team (USWNT)** behind her 1991 teammate Mia Hamm, duly made her mark on the world stage.

Akers had made her international debut in 1985. Remarkably, at a tiny ground in Jesolo by the Venice Lagoon, this was also the first occasion that USWNT had appeared at international level. ➔

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Hindmarsh Stadium/Eugene Price

This, the all-conquering America of four World Cups, including the last two in 2015 and 2019, and four Olympic golds. The occasion was the Mundialito, a four-team invitational tournament for women at pretty lakeside locations in Italy during occasional summers through the 1980s. England were ever-present, winning in 1985 and 1988.

This was not only before Women's World Cups, there was no women's football at

the Olympics until Atlanta 1996, Akers and Hamm again combining to earn gold for the US.

Back in 1985, Akers missed the very first game, a 1-0 defeat to hosts Italy at the 4,000-capacity Stadio Armando Picchi, but scored three days later against Denmark, kickstarting a stellar international career that would run until 2000 – although injury prevented her from appearing at the Olympics here in Australia.

Back in Jesolo, **Italy's** opposing XI that day featured Elisabetta Vignotto and goalscorer Carolina Morace, the pair way ahead in the all-time scoring records for their country at 97 and 95. According to FIFA records, Betty Vignotto's total could actually be 107, surpassed by Mia Hamm in 1999 and now towered over by **Canada's** Christine Sinclair, who captained her country to gold at the 2020 Olympics while edging towards the magic figure of 200 goals.



Melbourne Rectangular Stadium/Eugene Price

The Portland Thorns legend, now 40, is aiming to crown her career with a first World Cup, one of this summer's lovely backstories to look out for.

Vignotto can almost match her for longevity, however, as her first cap for Italy came in 1970, when she also won the first of six Serie A titles for five different clubs (though not, sadly, for another of her employers, Gorgonzola, Italian Cup winners in 1980). These details illustrate Italy's role as an outlier in the field of women's football. Their first (unofficial) international took place in Viareggio in 1968, two weeks before the national federation was founded. (Interestingly, their opponents were Czechoslovakia, whose players were permitted to travel to the West during these heady first weeks of the Prague Spring

uprising at home.) Italy also staged (and won) the first unofficial Euros in 1969 and first unofficial World Cup in 1970, losing the final to Denmark before 40,000 spectators at the famed Stadio Comunale in Turin. Seven teams took part – though invited, the Czechs were refused visas by their own authorities.

Back home

England featured at both these pioneering tournaments – early champion of the women's game Sue Lopez scored a hat-trick against Denmark yet still went home with a bronze at the Euros. Home was Southampton, dominant domestic side in the 1970s, formed by fans of the Saints' men's team, though there still wouldn't be a national league until 1991. Twenty years before, Lopez →

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had left the south coast for a season in Serie A, experiencing at Roma the regular connection of league football she couldn't in England. (In 2005, Southampton would jettison Lopez and her 40 years' experience in the women's game when they disbanded SWFC to save money.)

The Women's Football Association had been founded in 1969 – with founder members as disparate as Deal and Betteshanger, Rye and Yardley – and oversaw the national game until the FA took over in 1993. This, of course, was the same FA which had banned the ladies' game entirely in 1921 as it 'damaged women's bodies' – the same bodies all too recently used for tireless labour during World War I. Raising money for charity during and after the conflict by playing football matches, the women briefly circumvented the ban by forming their own association, ELFA, and organising the first and only Challenge Cup, won by Stoke Ladies.

Prohibition set back the ladies' game for decades. Even half a century after the ban, UEFA had to intercede to persuade the FA to lift restrictions on the women's game, still in place despite the active presence of the WFA. It's all a far cry from the Euros of 2022, of course, a packed Wembley Stadium cheering on Barcelona's Lucy Bronze and Bayern Munich's Georgia Stanway to extra-time victory over eight-time champions **Germany**.

Stars on show

While no match for the men's version financially (what is?), the Women's Champions League has also come a long way since Turbine Potsdam lifted the inaugural trophy in 2010. Dominated by Lyon and Barcelona since 2015, its main clubs provide the stars who will be on view this summer – though sadly not Dzsenerifer Marozsán, whose retirement must weaken Germany's chances.

As for **Brazil** – this is a World Cup, after all – a head-to-head in the group stage with **France**, revived under mercurial coach Hervé Renard of Saudi Arabia 2022 fame, should reveal their intentions. Certainly, this will be the last dance for the evergreen Marta, yet to win a World Cup despite more individual honours than anyone else in the game.

Australia's Sam Kerr should be in peak form after helping Chelsea clinch a third straight double, three-peat chasing USWNT can field teenage prodigy Alyssa Thompson alongside veterans Alex Morgan and Megan Rapinoe, while **Ireland** offer up another young talent in Abbie Larkin, who needed permission from school to travel for her first cap in 2022.

Spain will rely on Alexia Putellas to compensate for a squad demotivated by disputes – it's not all pools and five-hotels in the women's game. England,



Wellington Rectangular Stadium/Dave Jagger

meanwhile, look to Manchester United stars Ella Toone and Alessia Russo, and, most of all, Lauren James, to fill in gaps left by key retirees from 2022.

Tickets are available online <https://www.fifa.com/fifaplus/en/tournaments/womens/womensworldcup/australia-new-zealand2023/tickets> in three categories, with prices from **A\$20**. There are plenty of cheaper obstructed view seats, too, a common feature as few grounds are soccer-specific. See p4 for a full schedule.

Station to stadium

Major international airlines fly into Sydney, including Australian national carrier Qantas ([qantas.com](https://www.qantas.com)), its budget arm Jetstar ([jetstar.com](https://www.jetstar.com)), Virgin Australia ([virginaustralia.com](https://www.virginaustralia.com)) and national carrier Air New Zealand ([airnewzealand.co.nz](https://www.airnewzealand.co.nz)). All offer domestic flights, too, along with Rex ([rex.com.au](https://www.rex.com.au)). Each venue city has an airport.

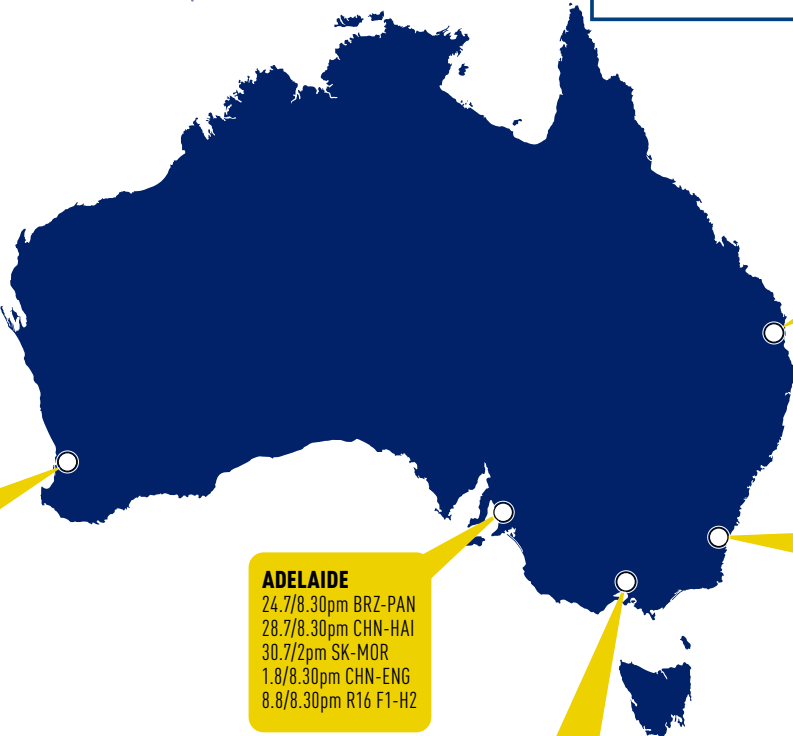
The rail network in Australia is state-based and disjointed – Australian Trains has a journey planner

(australian-trains.com/journey-planner.html) – while the interstate and intercity bus networks are equally sketchy. See getbybus.com/en/blog/bus-australia for details.

Commuter rail networks around major cities and public transport within them are excellent, however. Services are free to ticket holders on match days – see each individual city in the guide for details. In New Zealand, InterCity buses (intercity.co.nz) and **national rail** (railnewzealand.com) are handy options if flying isn't. **LG**

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Group A A1 New Zealand (NZ) A2 Norway (NOR) A3 Philippines (PHP) A4 Switzerland (SWZ)	Group B B1 Australia (AUS) B2 Ireland (IRE) B3 Nigeria (NIG) B4 Canada (CAN)	Group C C1 Spain (SPA) C2 Costa Rica (CR) C3 Zambia (ZAM) C4 Japan (JAP)	Group D D1 England (ENG) D2 Haiti (HAI) D3 Denmark (DEN) D4 China (CHN)
		Group E E1 United States (USA) E2 Vietnam (VIE) E3 Netherlands (NL) E4 Portugal (POR)	Group F F1 France (FRA) F2 Jamaica (JAM) F3 Brazil (BRZ) F4 Panama (PAN)
		Group G G1 Sweden (SWE) G2 South Africa (SA) G3 Italy (ITA) G4 Argentina (ARG)	Group H H1 Germany (GER) H2 Morocco (MOR) H3 Colombia (COL) H4 South Korea (SK)



PERTH
 22.7/8pm DEN-CHN
 26.7/8pm CAN-IRE
 29.7/8.30pm PAN-JAM
 1.8/7pm HAI-DEN
 3.8/6pm MOR-COL

ADELAIDE
 24.7/8.30pm BRZ-PAN
 28.7/8.30pm CHN-HAI
 30.7/2pm SK-MOR
 1.8/8.30pm CHN-ENG
 8.8/8.30pm R16 F1-H2

MELBOURNE
 21.7/12.30pm NIG-CAN
 24.7/6.30pm GER-MOR
 31.7/8pm CAN-AUS
 2.8/8pm JAM-BRZ
 6.8/7pm R16 G1-E2
 8.8/6pm R16 H1-F2

SYDNEY
Stadium Australia
 20.7/8pm AUS-IRE
 7.8/8.30pm R16 B1-D2
 12.8/8.30pm QF
 16.8/8pm SF
 20.8/8pm FINAL

Sydney Football Stadium
 23.7/8pm FRA-JAM
 25.7/noon COL-SK
 28.7/6.30pm ENG-DEN
 30.7/7.30pm GER-COL
 2.8/8pm PAN-FRA
 6.8/noon R16 E1-G2

BRISBANE
 22.7/7.30pm ENG-HAI
 27.7/8pm AUS-NIG
 29.7/8pm FRA-BRZ
 31.7/8pm IRE-NIG
 3.8/8pm SK-GER
 7.8/5.30pm R16 D1-B2
 12.8/5pm QF
 19.8/6pm 3/4 P/O

HAMILTON
 22.7/7pm ZAM-JAP
 25.7/8pm SWZ-NOR
 27.7/7.30pm POR-VIE
 31.7/7pm CR-ZAM
 2.8/7pm ARG-SWE

AUCKLAND
 20.7/7pm NZ-NOR
 22.7/1pm US-VIE
 24.7/6pm ITA-ARG
 26.7/7.30pm SPA-ZAM
 30.7/7pm NOR-PHP
 1.8/7pm POR-US
 5.8/5pm R16 A1-C2
 11.8/7.30pm QF
 15.8/8pm SF



DUNEDIN
 21.7/5pm PHP-SWZ
 23.7/7.30pm NL-POR
 26.7/5pm JAP-CR
 28.7/noon ARG-SA
 30.7/7pm SWZ-NZ
 1.8/7pm VIE-NL

WELLINGTON
 21.7/7.30pm SPA-CR
 23.7/5pm SWE-SA
 25.7/5.30pm NZ-PHP
 27.7/1pm US-NL
 29.7/7.30pm SWE-ITA
 31.7/7pm JAP-SPA
 2.8/7pm SA-ITA
 5.8/8pm R16 C1-A2
 11.8/1pm QF

All kick-off times are local. Perth is 1hr behind Adelaide and 2hrs behind Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney. New Zealand is 2hrs ahead of those 3 cities, 3hrs ahead of Adelaide and 4hrs ahead of Perth. An 8pm kick-off in Perth is 5am in Los Angeles, 8am in New York, 1pm in the UK, 2pm in Europe CET. An 8pm kick-off in Sydney is 7am in Los Angeles, 10am in New York, 3pm in the UK, 4pm in Europe CET. An 8pm kick-off in New Zealand is 9am in Los Angeles, noon in New York, 5pm in the UK and 6pm in Europe CET.



Andy Young



24/7 Sports Bar/Andy Young



Andy Young

Sydney

When it comes to putting on a show, it's hard to beat **Sydney**. The largest crowd in Olympic history, 114,714, witnessed the closing ceremony of the 2000 Games at what is now known as **Stadium Australia**, **Accor Stadium** to its sponsors. The **Sydney Olympic Stadium**, as it is also referred to, soon saw its capacity reduced to 83,500 but the atmosphere was no less fiery for the

final stages of the 2003 Rugby World Cup here.

The five games of the Women's World Cup, including the final, a semi-final and Australia's opener with Ireland, should push capacity to the limit once more, despite the Olympic Park being 15km west of central Sydney in Homebush Bay.

More group games are being staged at the **Sydney Football** (aka Allianz) **Stadium**, alongside the Sydney Cricket

Ground in the district of Moore Park south-east of town. Opened in 2022, the new home of **Sydney FC** replaced the previous Sydney Football Stadium where the record A-League champions were based until its closure for demolition in 2018.

For the football tournament of the 2000 Olympics, Norway picked up a surprising gold at the expense of holders USA in a dramatic final at the original Sydney Football Stadium – the crowd smaller

than the 29,400 who witnessed the Matildas' brave attempt to stop Brazil in the last match of the group stage. The men's final, meanwhile, drew 104,098 to the Olympic Stadium, an all-time record for the event, to see Xavi's Spain fall in an equally epic clash, Samuel Eto'o's Cameroon converting their five spot kicks to claim gold.

The most seminal moments in Australian soccer history have taken place in and around Sydney, in fact,

from the first ever match involving Wanderers FC out at Parramatta in 1880 to Mark Schwarzer's goalkeeping heroics to put the Socceroos into the 2006 World Cup 125 years later.

In between, the game took off in Australia's biggest city with the post-war migration from Europe. Expat Italians, Greeks, Hungarians and Yugoslavs formed clubs such Schwarzer's alma mater Marconi, Sydney Olympic (originally Hellenic), St George (originally Budapest) and Sydney United (originally Sydney Croatia) in the late 1950s. These clubs and their local rivals provided nearly all the Australia squad at the 1974 World Cup before initially dominating the National Soccer League it inspired.

When the A-League was formed in 2005 after the NSL's demise, it was on the principle of one city, one club. →

After a bitter battle, Sydney FC won the franchise here, although debate still raged over whether home should be the Sydney Football Stadium or the **Parramatta Stadium** some 15 miles west. The Sky Blues duly set up in town, winning the first A-League Grand Final there in March 2006. Parramatta, where Sydney Olympic played Marconi before a then record soccer crowd of 26,353 at the NSL Grand Final in 1990, mainly staged rugby league but Western Sydney remained hungry for its own soccer team.

When an A-League berth became free in 2012, a new club was formed in Parramatta, its name echoing soccer tradition. **Western Sydney Wanderers** moved into the Parramatta Stadium, in the same parkland where that first soccer game was played in 1880. Western Sydney may have been snubbed by SFC but the glamour side had failed to generate a substantial fan base across the city. After a season of average gates below 12,000, the Sky Blues broke the bank to sign Alessandro Del Piero before the 2012-13 campaign. In the first Sydney Derby at a packed Parramatta Stadium, the Italian superstar duly missed a penalty – but scored the game's only goal from the rebound. Wanderers then notched up ten straight wins to win the A-League Premiership in that debut season, qualifying for the AFC Champions League. Playing all their home games in Parramatta, including

the first leg of the final, WSW became the first, and so far only, Australian club to win Asia's premier trophy.

The SFC-WSW clash, meanwhile, was filling all 40,000 seats at the Sydney Football Stadium, outshining attendances for rugby fixtures. In 2016, an A-League record was set when 61,880 at the Stadium Australia witnessed Sydney FC swat away Wanderers 4-0 in the so-called Demolition Derby.

After the 2000 Olympics, the national arena replaced the Sydney Football Stadium as the stage for the Socceroos' major games, the most dramatic being the confederation play-off against Uruguay in 2005. A heartstopping penalty shoot-out earned goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer immortality as a full house of nearly 83,000 saw Australia qualify for a first World Cup in 32 years – while a full house of nearly 44,000 at the Sydney Football Stadium had witnessed the Aussies hold Maradona's Argentina to a 1-1 draw in a failed attempt to reach the finals in 1993.

Getting around

Sydney Airport is 8km (five miles) south of town. International and domestic terminals have separate stops served by the same **Airport Link** on **line T8** to main hub **Central station** (every 5-10mins, journey time 15mins) on the nine-line **Sydney Trains** network. Payment for travel across greater



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Sydney is by **Opal card**, free from transport centres and newsagencies, minimum initial top-up A\$20 (airport A\$35, single to Central A\$18). Opal and contactless credit/debit cards are also valid for the same fare, for all forms of transport. These comprise the **one-line Sydney Metro**, the three-line **Light Rail network** as well as the **Special Event service** to the Sydney Football Stadium at **Moore Park** from **Central Chalmers** alongside Central Station, **Sydney**

Trains, the regional **NSW TrainLink**, **buses** (including Major Event services to Sydney Olympic Park) and **ferries**.

Touch in and out at all-transport readers but not when transferring between Sydney Metro, Sydney Trains and NSW trains, considered one journey.

Fares are capped at A\$16.80 a day (A\$8.40 at weekends and on public

holidays) or A\$50 a week, plus there's a 30% off-peak discount outside working hours but not with an Opal single ticket (Light Rail/Bus A\$4, Metro A\$4.60, Ferry A\$7.70). Plan your journey with **TransportNSW** (transportnsw.info).

On match days, transport to the Sydney Football Stadium and Stadium Australia, via the **T7 line** to Olympic Park from Central Station, is included in the price of your match ticket. →



Andy Young

A taxi from the airport to the city centre should cost around A\$50, including the A\$5.45 airport toll.

13cabs (+61 13 2227) are as good as any.

The Sydney Fan Festival can be found at Tumbalong Park in Darling Harbour, with live music from Jessica Mauboy, Jack River, Mia Wray and Jacoténe,

as well as the first FIFA Museum in Australia.

Where to drink

The Sporting Globe nationwide franchise is hospitality on an industrial scale – two million-plus customer visits across Australia every year, nearly 1.5 million wings devoured, 240,000 hours of sport broadcast

– but there's no denying the pleasure of a pint overlooking Darling Harbour surrounded by match action from every screen – as is the case for the King Street Wharf branch, a prime choice for many a sports fan in Sydney.

Across the harbour, the 24/7 Sports Bar is pretty much in the same vein, only bigger – more than 50 LCD TVs fill



Sporting Globe/Andy Young



Mitchell Whiley

this huge, gleaming space, along with one with size of a studio flat, 34 square metres, all part of a casino within a twin-hotel and entertainment complex, The Star Sydney, tucked in behind Pyrmont Bay.

Sports bars and pubs dot Sydney CBD, the central business and retail quarter. One is The Flynn on Bligh Street, lined with screens and working from a long wine list, burgers a speciality. Where York Street meets King Street, upstairs

at Hotel CBD, York 75 combines sports bar with traditional pub, allowing you to sink into a Chesterfield, surrounded by mahogany as you take in the action beamed on 20 screens and sip your Hahn Super Dry or Kosciuszko Pale Ale.

Round the corner, PJ O'Brien's shows an exhausting schedule of matches in pub surroundings of Irish character, underscored by the range of whiskeys and live music four nights a week. Balter XPA, Stone & Wood Pacific Ale and Peroni complement Guinness and Kilkeny among the draught options.

By the Town Hall on Pitt Street, The Criterion Hotel is known for its street-level bar and The Snug downstairs, awash with big screens. Here, the Irish heritage is genuine, the hotel taken over by the grandson of JJ Gallagher, a third-generation descendant of Limerick newcomers.

On nearby George Street, the Cheers Sports Bar dates back over 25 years in its current form, a light and lively three-floor hostelry, with a terrace and screens aplenty, overseen by the Harvey family.

You can't leave Sydney without visiting the Opera Bar, waterfront home of the Sydney Sling, to be sipped on the long terrace in the iconic shadow of Sydney Opera House. It's not all cocktails – no-one will bat an eyelid if you order a pint and take in the view. LG

Stadium Australia

The largest Olympic stadium ever built set all kinds of attendance records at the Games for which it was constructed. Back in 2000, 104,098 watched the Olympic men's football final, in which Samuel Eto'o's Cameroon defeated Xavi's Spain after both players had converted their penalties in the shoot-out.

Today going by the name of **Stadium Australia** but still commonly known as the **Sydney Olympic Stadium**, the arena currently holds around 83,000 depending on whether it's being used in rectangular or oval fashion. This was after a configuration in 2003, although that wasn't the last of the rectangular/oval debate. In 2016, the then governor of New South Wales, which owns the stadium, announced that the venue would overhauled for rectangular use only, for soccer, Aussie rules and rugby, particularly the league variety – the NRL Grand Final packs the house every year.

The rebuild didn't happen, so the stadium continues to echo its 2000 heritage and be associated with golden moments in Australian soccer, the most gilded being the heroics of goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer in 2005 as his saves against Uruguay took the Socceroos to their first World Cup in 32 years.



The Locker Room

The Matildas, who kick off their bid to win the Women's World Cup here against Ireland, attracted a crowd of 36,109 here against USA in November 2021 – although this record will surely be broken should Australia reach the final or semi-final, scheduled to be staged in the nation's showcase arena.

Depending on numbers, fans from rival teams will be allocated sectors 117-121 and 140-144 behind each goal, at the north and south ends. The East Stand along Olympic Boulevard and West on Edwin Flack Avenue accommodate VIPs and the many hospitality areas.

Getting here

Olympic Park is 15km west of central Sydney in Homebush Bay. **Olympic Park station** is on the **T7 Olympic Park Line** of **NSW TrainLink**, with direct services to and from **Central Station** on match days. At other times, head to **Lidcombe** on the T1, T2 and T3 lines, then change



All pix: Andy Young

the one stop to Olympic Park, 5min journey time.

On match days during the Women's World Cup, transport is included in the price of your ticket.

Where to drink

The most suitable spot for a match-day drink at the Stadium Australia is **The Locker Room**, on Olympic Boulevard,

with pre-show entertainment before major concerts and a special event menu for the big sporting occasion.

You can also reserve a table – though it's fully booked for July 20, and the Matildas' home debut at the World Cup.

In the Novotel Hotel, **The Brewery** offers indoor and outdoor seating, though expect tables to be at a premium on big-match nights. It's also alongside

the stadium, where Olympic Boulevard meets Dawn Fraser Avenue.

A string of eateries lines the footpaths either side of Olympic Park station – **ribs and rumps** probably appeals most to sports fans though it's strictly carnivores only. Tap beers include Stone and Wood from Byron Bay and Koszuszko from Jindabyne, sold by the pint or schooner. **LE**

Sydney Football Stadium

The newest of the ten venues co-hosting the 2023 Women's World Cup, the **Sydney Football Stadium** (aka Allianz Stadium) was unveiled beside the Sydney Cricket Ground at Moore Park in 2022. The location is no coincidence. In its previous iteration on the same site, the home of rugby league in Sydney was opened in 1988 and closed 30 years later.

In 1993, the World Youth Cup and the Socceroos' qualifying game with Maradona's Argentina brought big soccer crowds. For the 2000 Olympics, Norway grabbed gold at the expense of holders USA in a dramatic final – though the gate was bigger for the Matildas' brave attempt to stop Brazil in the last match of the group stage.

This then became the home ground for A-League giants Sydney FC and Sydney FC Women, who also played at the Campbelltown Stadium, the Jubilee Oval in Carlton and the Leichhardt Oval in Lilyfield.

The teams moved into the new stadium after the New South Wales government had footed the construction cost of A\$828 million. With seats done out in the colours of soccer's Sky Blues, mingled with the



Andy Young

dark blue prominent on the shirts of rugby league tenants, the Sydney Roosters, the venue reopened with a concert by former Australian Idol winner Guy Sebastian.

The Roosters quickly set the attendance record of 41,906, in the same week that the Matildas took on Canada in a friendly match here.

For domestic fixtures, the most raucous followers of the men's side, The Cove, occupy Bay 23 of the North

or Paddington End. The East Stand contains the hospitality lounges. Capacity is 42,500.

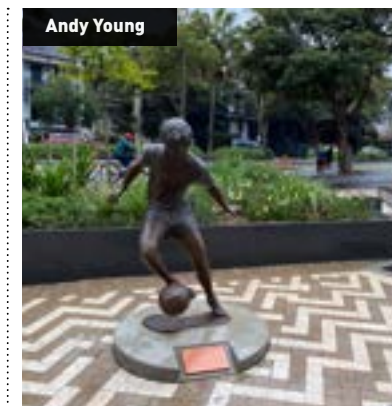
Getting here

Sydney transport includes the **Light Rail network**, and its **Special Event service** to the Sydney Football Stadium at **Moore Park** from **Central Chalmers** alongside Central Station. On match days, transfers are included in the price of your match ticket. Payment for public transport in Sydney is otherwise by **Opal card**, free

from transport centres, minimum initial top-up A\$20. Contactless credit/debit cards are also valid. Touch in and out at all-transport readers but not when transferring between Sydney Metro, Sydney Trains and NSW trains, considered one journey. Plan your journey with **TransportNSW** (transportnsw.info).

Where to drink

By the stadium, the traditional **Hotel Olympic** dates back to 1877, changing its name in 1956 to mark



Andy Young

Olympic year in Melbourne. Nearby on parallel Oxford Street, the **Light Brigade** comprises a bar, bistro, lounge and rooftop overlooking the Sydney skyline, all in a fin-de-siècle Art Deco pub.

Further along Moore Park Road, past the stadium at the junction of Flinders Street, the **Captain Cook Hotel** was built in 1914 and changed hands in 2022 – so expect plenty of changes at this four-floor backpacker hostel and sports bar.

Chain places fill the **Entertainment Quarter** the other side of Sydney Cricket Ground: **Mary's** for burgers, **The Bavarian** for Steins and schnitzels and **Fratelli Fresh** for Italian fare and a beer garden. Pub-like **Watson's** fires up the four-metre mega screen in its beer garden for big games. **LO**

Adelaide

In the pretty planned port city of **Adelaide**, the **Adelaide Oval** has been the picturesque showcase for sport in South Australia since its opening in 1871. Whenever touring football sides used to come over, prestigious fixtures were staged at the Adelaide Oval. Players would seek out Adelaide resident and cricketing legend, Don Bradman, whose memorabilia is displayed at the South Gate.

At local level, **Adelaide City** and rivals **West Adelaide**, representing the Italian and Greek communities, shared the **Hindmarsh Stadium** in the western district of the same name. Today the ground is done out in the signature red of its tenants since the formation of the A-League in 2003, **Adelaide United**.

With the Hindmarsh only holding 16,500 – 18,435 is the capacity for the Women's World Cup – major footballing events still take place at the Adelaide Oval. Liverpool's visit in 2015 attracted 53,000, similar to the attendance for Adelaide United's Grand Final win there a year later.

Getting around

Adelaide Airport, 6km (4 miles) west of town, is linked by **Adelaide Metro Buses J1** (from town) and **J2** (to town) to central **Grenfell Street** (journey time 35-40mins).



Eugene Price

Payment is by **metroCARD** or your own bank/credit card by tapping into the yellow machine. There are no cash payments. A **single trip** (A\$4.05 peak/A\$2.25 off-peak – Mon-Fri 9am-3pm, all day Sun) lasts 2hrs. **Adelaide Independent Taxis** (+61 132 211) should charge around A\$25 into town, A\$30 to the Hindmarsh Stadium.

Integral to the city's **free tram service**, the **BTANIC line** runs

from **Adelaide Railway Station** to **Adelaide Entertainment Centre** near Hindmarsh Stadium.

Adelaide's Fan Festival is on Festival Plaza, just over the River Torrens from the Adelaide Oval.

Where to drink

On bar-lined **Hindley Street**, **The Rosey** sits behind a historic façade (Est 1846), match action shown in its

refurbished Sports Bar. **The Little Pub** echoes the same era ('Pouring beer since 1851') but dons its party hat with cocktail jugs and drinks promotions. TV screens, music sessions and pool also feature. The bar and beer garden of the **Black Bull Hotel** at No.58 is another popular pitstop.

Daytime-only **Peter Rabbit** has becalmed many a hangover with its quality breakfasts served in a leafy



Eugene Price

garden – but isn't afraid to mix a mean cocktail (note the Adelaide Gin) if that's what it takes.

Several venues in one, with plentiful screens in the Sports Bar and prime panoramic views at **Sôl Rooftop**, **SkyCity Adelaide** on North Terrace has transformed a historic railway station into an entertainment complex.

Harry's Bar combines tradition with contemporary drinking habits in a spacious heritage building. Its terrace overlooks the bustle of Grenfell Street.

Keeping its heritage intact since 1849 – this historic, two-storey building isn't a film set – **The Archer** on a prominent corner of O'Connell Street has gone from hotel to, most recently, the library of a Lutheran church. It's now a top-notch pub comprising a beer garden area, a Gin Wall, 15 beer taps and a space for pool. Closed Sundays and Mondays. **LG**

Hindmarsh Stadium

With its pitch of lush green, open twin-tiered stands at either end and steep-banked stands along each long sideline, the **Hindmarsh Stadium** is perhaps the atmospheric soccer ground in Australia. Originally, this was a cricket ground, the Hindmarsh Oval, opened in 1857.

The surrounding district of Hindmarsh was named after the first governor of South Australia, honoured by Nelson in the Napoleonic Wars. Commandeered for Aussie rules football early on, the stadium evolved into the rectangular shape we know today.

Adapted for various codes of football in 1960, the Hindmarsh Stadium first welcomed West Adelaide, and then their local rivals Adelaide City, as the National Soccer League developed from 1977 onwards. Two NSL Grand Finals were staged here, one a cameo farewell by later Celtic star Mark Viduka in 1995.

To co-host the men's Olympic football tournament of 2000, the stadium was given a significant makeover, becoming an all-seater with new floodlights. Three years later, the Hindmarsh rebranded to the **Coopers Stadium** when A-League newcomers Adelaide United moved in, their bright red of the new tenants now the signature colour.

Eugene Price



This, pretty much, is how it still looks today, with one partly covered main stand, its two separated banks of seating overlooking two-thirds of the pitch either side of the halfway line. Topped with a scoreboard, the North Stand is the de facto home end, the South Stand in the same design. Both are open to the elements, while the low-level East Stand has been earmarked for a roof before the Women's World Cup.

Improved lighting and bigger information screens also await fans gathering for five matches, including England v China in group D and a Round of 16 knock-out game. Capacity is 18,435.

Getting here

Hindmarsh Stadium is a pleasant 20min walk from central Adelaide. **Buses 117 and 118** run every 15mins (Sat-Sun every 30mins) from central **Greenfell Street to Manton Street** by the stadium, journey time 12-15mins.



Eugene Price

Adelaide Metro Buses run on the **metroCARD** system – tap into the yellow machine on board. There are no cash payments. A **single trip** [A\$4.05 peak/A\$2.25 off-peak – Mon-Fri 9am-3pm, all day Sun] lasts 2hrs.

Public transport is free on match days for ticket holders.

The **BTANIC line** of Adelaide's **free tram service** runs every 10mins from **Adelaide Railway Station** to

Adelaide Entertainment Centre, the other side of Manton Street from the stadium, journey time 12mins.

Where to drink

Just across Manton Street from the stadium, **The Joiners** is ideal pre- and post-match, 'a pub not a restaurant' that serves quality food, top craft beers on tap and prides itself on its whiskeys. Television screens also feature throughout the bare-brick interior, with sport very much at the forefront.

Slightly further away, the **Lady Daly Hotel** near the Adelaide Entertainment Centre tram stop is a notch above with its impressive pub fare and beer garden.

Offering Balkan flavours Fridays through Sundays, the lively **Ravna Gora Serbian Social Club** at Mary Street/Orsmond Street sizzles up grilled favourites such as *ćevapčići*, washed down with local beer and chased with a strong rakija spirit. 



Felons/Mitchell Whitey



Mitchell Whitey

Brisbane

Preparing for the Olympics in 2032, the Queensland capital of **Brisbane** has hosted a Commonwealth Games, Rugby World Cups, Rugby League World Cups, a Cricket World Cup and an Olympic soccer tournament. Now it's the turn of the Women's World Cup.

Lang Park, due to stage eight games including the third-place play-off,

is west of town in the district of Milton. A-League team **Brisbane Roar** moved back here from distant Redcliffe in 2022.

Despite more than 30 soccer internationals under its belt, this century-old stadium is in thrall to rugby league. Six statues surround it, five depicting legends of the game played by teams of 13. Soccer stars such as Ronaldinho appearing at the 2000 Olympics did so at The Gabba, out in Woolloongabba. The revered cricket

ground will be out of commission from 2025 for the Olympics, expanding it to 50,000 capacity,

Brisbane Roar Women's side also relocated back to the city in 2022-23, setting up at the revamped Ballymore Stadium, home of Australia women's rugby union team, the Wallaroos.

Getting around

Brisbane Airport is 15km (nine miles) north-east of the city, connected every 15-30mins by **Airtrain** from platform 1

to **Brisbane Central station**. A **single ticket** is A\$20.90, reduced if **booked online**, which currently offers the return journey for free. Journey time is 20mins.

A taxi into town should cost around A\$50 – **Black & White Cabs** (+61 133 222) can look back on a century of service.

Brisbane Central is on the northern edge of the city centre. The network of **Translink buses** runs on a top-up **go card** (online or from retailers, refundable A\$10). Tap in when you board, tap out when you alight. **Paper tickets** are pre-paid from machines at stops and stations.

On match days for the Women's World Cup, ticket holders travel free on public transport. A **special shuttle bus service** runs from Ann Street (stop

7) opposite Central Station and Ann Street (stop 12) at City Hall.

The Brisbane Fan Festival is at South Bank Parklands near South Bank ferry terminal.

Where to drink

Waterfront **Felons** doubles up as a music venue, with big screens set up indoor and out for sporting occasions. Barrel-aged beers are the speciality. Choose a spot in the light, leafy interior or overlooking the fairylights of Story Bridge.

Round the waterfront by the Riverside ferry terminal, the **Pig 'N' Whistle** is one of six similar venues, this with big screens and heavy schedule of TV games. At weekends, 3am closing times keep the party swinging. Behind, the **Fat Angel** follows the American sports bar model, frozen margaritas and cocktail jugs the order of the day.

In similar vein, nearby **Winghaus** on Edward Street provides live sports action, plus its namesake wings and classichaus burgers.

Of the Irish pubs, **Gilhooleys** on Albert Street will soon celebrate 30 years of serving big breakfasts, pouring pints and showing sport. **Irish Murphy's** sits on the site of the city's oldest hotel, live music keeping the place hopping seven nights a week. **LB**

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP Lang Park

liberoguide.com



Mitchell Whiley

Lang Park

Also referred to as **Brisbane Football Stadium** and **Suncorp Stadium, Lang Park** was named after a Scottish-born supporter of Australian independence. Opened in 1914, Lang Park has witnessed the great stars of rugby league – this was where the first State of Origin game took place in 1980.

A sponsorship deal in 1994 with Queensland financiers Suncorp led to the subsequent redevelopment that allowed Lang Park – renamed Suncorp Stadium – to be reconfigured into a true home of rugby and soccer. The Socceroos enjoyed their AFC Asian Cup quarter-final against China here in 2015, while the Matildas welcomed Canada for a friendly in 2022.

England, Scotland and Australia attracted near 50,000 crowds for the Rugby World Cup in 2003, while six-time



Mitchell Whiley

Premiership winners, the Brisbane Broncos, and State of Origin team, the Queensland Maroons, are regular tenants.

So, until 2020, were A-League side Brisbane Roar, who won back-to-back A-League Grand Finals here in 2011 and 2012. Moving back in 2022, The Roar brought their fans who gather in the lower tiers of the North Stand, between sectors 330 and 334, aka The Den. Visiting supporters occupy sector 317, at the south end of the three-tier East Stand, with its strip of hospitality

boxes. More corporate boxes line the main West Stand alongside Castlemaine Street. Sightlines are superb and proximity to the pitch is a given.

Capacity is 52,500, making this the second-biggest arena hosting the Women's World Cup after Stadium Australia.

Getting here

Local **Translink buses** run on a top-up **go card** (online or from retailers, refundable A\$10). Tap in when you board, tap out when you alight.



Caxton Hotel/Bea Tóth

On match days for the Women's World Cup, ticket holders may travel free. A **special shuttle bus** runs from Ann Street (stop 7) opposite Central Station and from Ann Street (stop 12) at City Hall.

A **frequent train** goes from Brisbane Central to **Milton station** (5mins). The stadium is a 10min walk away, the other side of the brewery. **Bus 470** from **Ann Street stop 9** near Central Station goes to **Milton Road at Suncorp, stop 4** – buses **61** and **375** to **Caxton Street (near Chapel St, stop 4)** from **Roma Street Busway/Roma Street bus 121** bring you to the north end.

Where to drink

On Caxton Road, the bare-brick **Brewski Bar** offers customers 12 beers on tap, rotated every day, and 600 by the bottle.

Next door's award-winning **Caxton Hotel** has more than 150 years behind it, 25 in the capable hands of the current owners, the Farquhar family. Pre- and post-match, the Terrace Bar, The Press Box and The Cauldron fill with sports fans, while discerning diners convene at its top-notch Char Grill Restaurant.

Beyond on Given Terrace, tasteful **Darling & Co** offers a match-day menu of pizzas, burgers and vegetable shawarmas, along with high-end spirits, wines and cocktails.

Across Castlemaine Street from the West Stand, Brisbane craft brewers **Newstead** oversee a Brewhouse and Tasting Room, each with a full menu as well as beers brewed fresh on-site. **LB**

Melbourne

Australia's sporting capital, an Olympic city nearly half a century before Sydney, **Melbourne** is the home of the most supported club in the A-League whose name, navy blue colours and signature chevron V reflect the surrounding state of Victoria. **Melbourne Victory** attract 20,000+ for most home games, that home shared between the **Melbourne Rectangular Stadium**, officially known as **AAMI Park**, and, nearly twice bigger, the **Docklands Stadium**, officially known as **Marvel Stadium**, bastion of Aussie rules football.

Victory started out at the **Olympic Park Stadium**, built as a secondary venue for the 1956 Games, whose main events took place at the **Melbourne Cricket Ground**. The legendary MCG, the largest sporting arena in the southern hemisphere, its current capacity now 100,000 from the 120,000+ of yore, centrepieces the city's **Sports and Entertainment Precinct**, a three-park riverside complex whose pedigree can only be expressed by fantasy comparison. Imagine Wembley, Lord's and Wimbledon all in one place, walking distance from the centre.

Melbourne City also call AAMI Park home. The derby with Victory can be fiery, but in December



Eugene Price

2022, both sets of fans protested the controversial decision to host upcoming A-League Grand Finals for men and women in Sydney. The subsequent scenes forced the match to be abandoned.

City's former academy within La Trobe University at Bundoora is currently being adapted as the Home of the Matildas, a year-round hub for elite preparation – although for the World Cup, Australia's women's team are based in Brisbane.

Getting around

Melbourne 'Tullamarine' Airport is 23km (14 miles) north-west of the city centre, linked by **SkyBus** (A\$22, A\$36 return) to the city's **Southern Cross train station** in town. Services run every 15mins, taking 30mins. Buses then leave the station from Bay 75. **Maxi Cab Melbourne** (+61 483 027 583) should charge A\$60-A\$70 into town.

SkyBus also operates five services a day (A\$25, A\$47 return, journey

time 1hr) to Southern Cross station from **Avalon Airport**, 50km (30 miles) south-west of the city, used for **Jetstar** budget flights from Sydney.

Melbourne's **network of trams, buses and metropolitan trains** uses an integrated top-up ticket, **myki**. Within the Central Business District (CBD), trams are free.

Where to drink

Pubs and bars dot the Central Business District (CBD) behind



Eugene Price

Flinders Street station. The **Charles Dickens** at 290 Collins Street is a major destination for TV sport, two huge screens broadcasting action 'live and loud'. Nearby on Little Collins Street, the **Irish Times Pub** displays framed shirts of green and classic Guinness ads. On Queen Street, the **Turf Bar** touts itself as 'Melbourne's premier' place to watch sport – you can even book your own screen and sound.

Near Melbourne Central station, the **Central Lion Hotel** broadcasts action from 20 screens while pool balls clack on several tables. At the eastern end of the CBD, **The Crafty Squire** on Russell Street houses the only microbrewery in Melbourne's CBD.

Further east, by Parliament, the **Imperial Hotel** on Bourke Street is known for its rooftop bar and 24-hour licence for games to be shown below. **LG**

LIB WOMEN'S WORLD CUP Melbourne Rectangular Stadium

liberoguide.com

Melbourne Rectangular Stadium

Home of rival local clubs Melbourne Victory and City, the **Melbourne Rectangular Stadium** stands alongside the former Olympic Park Stadium it replaced in 2010.

Until then, this training venue for the 1956 Games that unfolded the nearby MCG was the main soccer ground in Victoria State.

Alongside today, statues capture great sporting moments: runner John Landy helping up a fallen Ron Clarke, and Peter Norman, silver medallist at the 200 metres race of 1968, standing in solidarity with US athletes John Carlos and Tommie Smith giving the Black Power salute.

Given the sponsor's name of the AAMI Park, this 30,000-capacity became instantly recognisable thanks to the see-through domes of its roof. On their outer cover, pin-prick LED lights create a memorable sight when set beneath the starlit sky.

Spectators enjoy perfect sightlines, close to the action to smell the turf and hear the players' shouts. Victory, their fans on the North Terrace, set the attendance record for a sporting event here, 29,843 for the (successful)



A-League Grand Final against great rivals Sydney FC in 2015. City occupy the Yarraside at the south end of the ground. In the twin-tiered sideline stands, the noise echoes beneath those geodesic domes that also provide shelter around the ground.

Ironically, the stadium cannot be expanded without significant change to the roof, perhaps even removing it altogether. Until then, marquee fixtures will be hosted at the MCG, Docklands Stadium or, worse, in Sydney. For the Women's World Cup, the MRS hosts two Round of 16 matches – but no quarter-final or semi.

Getting here

Melbourne's **network of trams, buses and metropolitan trains** runs on an integrated top-up ticket, **myki**. Within the Central Business District (CBD), trams are free. All 6 metropolitan train lines serve the main stations of Southern Cross and Flinders Street.



The next stop is **Richmond**, near the **Olympic Park complex**.

Regular **tram 70** interlinks Flinders Street, the nearby **Fan Festival** at **Federation Square** – both within the fare-free tram zone – and **Olympic Park** a short hop away, including **7C-John Cain Arena/Melbourne Park**, **7D-Olympic Boulevard** and **Richmond**.

To reach the stadium in style, a **water taxi** can be **sailed** down the Yarra to

the Southgate Landing by Flinders Street. For an extra A\$12 when there's a major event on, it runs to the landing platform by the Rod Laver Arena in the Olympic Park complex.

Where to drink

By the rail lines near Richmond station, the **Corner Hotel** at 57 Swan Street is a major live venue and popular bar/restaurant, beers such as 4 Pines Japanese Style Lager and Balter XPA best imbibed on the rooftop garden.

Across the tracks, the **Precinct Hotel** is more mainstream but more attuned to big-screen sport, also offering live acoustic shows and DJs at weekends. It shares its history with Richmond station opposite, the pub opening as the Greyhound, opening as the Greyhound in 1862, three years after the depot itself.

Back towards the MCG, the equally historic **Cricketer's Arms** at 327 Punt Road dedicates a whole upper floor to pool and TV sport. **LG**



Jonathan Williamson

Perth

Towards the south-western tip of Western Australia, the dynamic state capital of Perth contains the third-largest sports stadium in the country – one mainly dedicated to Aussie rules football.

The **Rectangular Stadium**, shared between A-League team **Perth Glory** and rugby outfit Western Force, is a

third of the size of Perth Stadium but close to the Central Business District. If you've just travelled 4,000km from Sydney to get here, you'd appreciate an easy hop to from hotel to stadium.

This was once **Perth Oval**, where A-League team **Perth Glory** have played since 1996. As elsewhere in Australia, the authorities here squared the circle, and in 2004, making the Oval the Perth Rectangular Stadium.



Bob's Bar/Jonathan Williamson

Despite a relatively modest capacity of 20,000, the venue has managed to woo the Socceroos and Matildas to Perth, the women taking on Thailand here in 2018. The five fixtures scheduled here for the Women's World Cup involve Ireland, China, Denmark and Jamaica, among others. Perth Glory women's team, three times Grand Finalists, play at **Macedonia Park** in Balcatta.

Getting around

Perth Airport is 12km (seven miles) east of town, connected by the **Airport Line** (every 12-15mins, journey time 20mins) to **Perth** station, and **Claisebrook** two stops before it, a short walk from the stadium. From Terminals 1 or 2, walk

over the skybridge to platform 1 at Airport Central – from Terminals 3 and 4, take the transfer bus (every 20mins, journey time 15mins).

Local transport, buses, ferries and local trains, is run by **Transperth** and operates on top-up **SmartRider** (initial upload A\$10) available from **Transperth InfoCentres** and outlets around town. Ticket machines at stop and stations accept cash and cards.

On match days for the Women's World Cup, transport is included in your match ticket.

Swan Taxis (+61 13 13 30) should charge around A\$50-A\$60 from the airport to town.

The Perth Fan Festival is at Forrester Place, outside Perth station in town.

Where to drink

Overlooking Perth's waterfront, the **Lucky Shag** has live music, TVs for sport inside and out, and a rooftop terrace for a sunset to go with your sundowner. As for the name, don't get your hopes up – before the pub first opened 25 years ago, a shag emerged with two fat fish flapping in its bill.

Another rooftop favourite sits atop the **Print Hall**, on St George's Terrace where venerable organ *The West Australian* was printed – its Gothic masthead runs along one side of neon-lit **Bob's Bar**, a popular DJ haunt and rendezvous spot where a pitcher of Pimm's may turn into another.

Of Perth's sports bars, 22-screen **Patriots** on William Street in Northbridge, halfway between town and the stadium, is usually lively, with yet another rooftop bar here atop the Brass Monkey Hotel. Close by on Lake Street, the **Mustang Bar** keeps the party going without forgetting to screen the match.

As for Irish pubs, **Fenians** on Adelaide Terrace has been serving Guinness, Kilkenney and pub grub favourites since 1986, **Durty Nelly's** on Murray Street since 1998. Both offer big-screen sport. **LE**

Perth Rectangular Stadium

Few major soccer grounds are as central in Australia as **Perth Rectangular Stadium**, home of A-League's Perth Glory and Super Rugby Pacific team Western Force. This was originally Perth Oval, which staged several sports from the early 1900s onwards, including soccer. While rugby and Aussie rules ruled the roost, touring European soccer sides would take on inexperienced Western Australia XIs here. The distances involved – it's 4,000km from Sydney – meant that local soccer players would rarely practise against their counterparts from elsewhere in Australia. By contrast, for Aussie rules, organisers could always count on bumper crowds. An 18-a-side game attracted the record attendance for a sports event here of 27,473, set nearly a century ago.

Even after 1996, when the newly founded Perth Glory moved in as a member of the National Soccer League, the 20,500 capacity was rarely challenged. What did change, however, was Perth Oval itself, on the eve of the franchise-based A-League in 2005.

The Glory already had a fiery following in The Shed, the fans who had roared the purples on to four Grand Finals



in the early 2000s. In order to cater better to its key tenants, and following a nationwide trend, the local authority invested in Perth Oval's complete reconfiguration as a rectangular stadium. The Shed End, behind the north goal accessed through Gate 1, carried the passion over from the NSL days, while sponsors were happy with the suites lining the West Stand and boxes the twin-tiered, roofed East

Stand. Away supporters – generally not particularly numerous given Perth's location – are allocated Bay S123, in the south-east corner of the ground, accessed through Gate 4.

Despite its relatively modest capacity, HBF Park did manage to woo back the Socceroos to Perth in 2015 after a long absence. The 19,495 who saw the easy demolition of Bangladesh

that day set the stadium record for a soccer game. The Matildas welcomed Thailand here for a friendly in 2018.

While size counted against it when it came to scheduling fixtures for the Women's World Cup, with no sudden-death fixtures, the five group games taking place here will bring fans of Ireland, China, Denmark and Jamaica, among others, to Western Australia.



Getting here

The local transport network of buses, ferries and local trains is run by **Transperth** and operates on top-up **SmartRider** (initial upload A\$10) available from Transperth outlets around town. Ticket machines at stop and stations accept cash and cards. On match days for the Women's World Cup, transport is included in your match ticket.

The stadium is 300 metres from **Claisebrook station** on the Airport Line – walk over the Claisebrook Suspension Bridge across the Freeway and you'll see the stadium ahead of you to the left.

Where to drink

Close to the stadium on Beaufort Street, the **Brisbane Hotel** features a large leafy beer garden, DJs and live music, in a distinctive building dating back to 1898. Further up Beaufort Street, the **Queens Tavern** shares a similar heritage, a bar and beer garden complementing its popular restaurant. 



The Fox



All pix: Noelia Gallardo Sánchez

Auckland

New Zealand's national stadium, **Eden Park**, due to host the curtain-raiser and semi-final of the Women's World Cup, is located in the country's biggest city, **Auckland**. As New Zealand's national game is rugby, Eden Park has witnessed some of the greatest moments in the history of the sport.

The first professional soccer game didn't take place at here until 2011, involving the team from rival city

Wellington, Phoenix, New Zealand's sole representatives in the A-League since 2007.

North Harbour Stadium in Albany on Auckland's northern fringes is used as a fallback if Eden Park isn't free or suitable. New Zealand's national women's team took on Argentina here in a warm-up match in February 2023. Through July, the Ferns will train for the tournament at **Keith Hay Park** in Mount Roskill, named after the district mayor who helped developed these sports facilities.

Getting around

Auckland Airport is 21km (13 miles) south of the city centre. **SkyDrive buses** run direct every 30mins to the **Sky City Bus Terminal** by Sky Tower at 102 Hobson Street, journey time around 40mins. **Tickets** (NZ\$18) can be purchased from the driver by card or **online**.

Part of **Auckland city transport**, an orange **AirportLink** bus goes every 10mins to **Manukau** and nearby **Puhinui station** (journey time 15-20mins) that connects with train

lines into the city centre (overall fee NZ\$5.80). Eden Park is beside **Kingsland station** on the **green Western line**, via **Newmarket** on the **red Southern line** from Puhinui. There are also buses and ferry services.

Public transport requires use of an **AT HOP charge card**. At Auckland Airport, you'll find a machine by Door 4 of the domestic terminal, minimum initial top-up NZ\$20 plus the NZ\$5 card fee. You can also buy **single tickets** (validity 2hrs) from machines by stops and at service centres. Note

that transport is **free** on match days for ticket holders during the Women's World Cup.

You'll find **taxis** at Auckland Airport from Door 8 (international) and Door 4 (domestic). Companies have fixed fares to the Central Business District (CBD) of between NZ\$65-NZ\$90. **Auckland Co-op Taxis** (+64 9 300 3000) are as good as any.

The Auckland Fan Festival is at The Cloud, a convention centre on the waterfront.

Where to drink

The waterfront should be your first port of call for any drinking tour of Auckland. You can hop between the rooftop of microbrewery **Dr Rudi's**, with TV sport and harbour views, the upper floor of 102-beer **Brew on Quay** and the sea-facing terrace of the sport-focused **Coops Corner Pub**. There's also Anglo ambience and match action at **The Brit**, and a party vibe and many screens at **Provedor**.

Tucked in behind on Customs Street West, **The Fox** goes by the alternative name of **A London Pub**, hence the 12 screens, Bulmer's cider and toad in the hole on the menu. Nearby on Fort Street, the **Right Track Sports Café** is screen city with bells on, while the **Munster Inn** by The Civic goes big on sport from the UK and Ireland. **LG**



Eden Park

England has Twickenham, Scotland Murrayfield and Wales the Millennium Stadium. New Zealand has **Eden Park**. The home of the world's most celebrated sporting XV has staged rugby matches since the early 1900s, and cricket not long afterwards.

International test matches were regular fixtures here in both sports, followed by World Cups in both codes of rugby and cricket. This is New Zealand's showcase arena near the centre of its largest city.

So where does soccer come into the picture? All too rarely is the answer, until the Women's World Cup of 2023, when nine games will be played here. These include the tournament's curtain-raiser as hosts New Zealand face Norway, America's opener against Vietnam and

closing group match with Portugal, a quarter-final and a semi-final.

The national side, nicknamed the Football Ferns, had a run-out at Eden Park in January 2023, a comprehensive 5-0 defeat by USA in front of 12,721. New Zealand's men's team used the stadium in September 2022 for their friendly against Australia, if such a thing exists, their trans-Tasman rivalry bringing nearly 35,000 to Eden Park but the All Whites seem more at home at North Harbour Stadium, Mount Smart Stadium or down in Wellington.

Capacity at Eden Park for the Women's World Cup is officially given as 40,536, although it can probably hold closer to 50,000. Prime seats are in the covered, three-tiered North and South Stands lining the long sidelines. Both the West and East Stands behind each goal are open to the elements.



All pix: Noelia Gallardo Sánchez

Getting here

Run by **Auckland city transport**, orange **AirportLink** buses go every 10mins to nearby **Puhinui station** (journey time 15-20mins) that connects with train lines into the city centre (overall fee NZ\$5.80). Eden Park is beside **Kingsland station** on the **green Western line**, via **Newmarket** on the **red Southern line** from Puhinui.

Kingsland is located near Walters Road parallel to the North Stand.

Public transport requires use of an **AT HOP charge card**. At Auckland Airport, you'll find a machine by the AirportLink

bus stop outside Door 4 of the domestic terminal, minimum initial top-up NZ\$20 plus the NZ\$5 card fee.

Note that travel on public transport is free for match-ticket holders on the day itself during the Women's World Cup.

For a cab, call **Auckland Co-op Taxis** (+64 9 300 3000).

Where to drink

Pubs and restaurants line main New North Road, close to Kingsland station and Walters Road behind Eden Park's North Stand. **Citizen Park**, an all-purpose establishment with a garden

bar, live sports, craft beer and healthy poke bowls.

Diagonally opposite, the **Portland Public House** Portland feels more local while offering superior platters and original cocktails. Live music is another feature.

Closest to the station and stadium, **The Kingslander** prioritises sport on big screens, offers specials from its capable kitchen seven days a week, plus DJs and live acts at weekends.

If you're here with the family, leave time to enjoy the fun in the **Fan Experience Area** behind the North Stand. **LG**

Wellington

New Zealand's soccer capital of **Wellington** is where real fan culture thrives at the **Sky Stadium**, aka the Ring of Fire or, for the purposes of the 2023 Women's World Cup, the **Wellington Regional Stadium**. This is the home of the men's and women's teams of Wellington Phoenix, New Zealand's only representatives in the A-League, though The Nix occasionally spread some of that fan culture to soccer-starved parts of New Zealand.

Their stadium is by the city's picturesque waterfront, near an urban buzz of bars, galleries and the lower station of the Wellington Cable Car – it's a great location to site a sports ground. Members of the lively Yellow Fever fan group welcomed a new women's team in 2021, a much-needed step for the ladies' game here.

Getting around

Wellington Airport is 7.5km (4.5 miles) south-east of town. An **Airport Express AX bus** runs every 10-20mins to **Wellington station** near the stadium, journey time 30mins. It calls at six stops through Wellington's Central Business District, CBD. From town, it leaves from Stop B at Lambton Quay/Bunny Street.

Payment is by **Snapper top-up card** (NZ\$10 immediate upload, AX bus



All pix: Dave Jagger

fare NZ\$4) cash or card (NZ\$5). Sales outlets show a red fish sign. Touch out before you alight otherwise the full fare will be charged. **Metlink public transport** mainly consists of buses and trains – payment is usually by Snapper or cash only. There are no ticket offices or machines. Ferries and the Cable Car have a different pricing system.

For the Women's World Cup, match-ticket holders can ride local buses and trains for free on the day itself.

From the airport, a **taxi** should be NZ\$50 into town – **Wellington Combined** (+64 4 384 4444) offers transfers. **Wellington's Fan Festival for the Women's World Cup is at Shed 6 on the waterfront.**

Where to drink

The **waterfront** and parallel **Willis Street** are ideal for barhopping, and popular stop-offs for the stadium. Overlooking the harbour, the **Foxglove**, within a pretty, two-floor building on Queen's Wharf, puts on comedy and

themed nights but most are here for the fine cuisine and fantastic views. Alongside, **Bin44** offers nearly two-dozen brews by the pint. **Mac's Bar at Shed 22**, shows sport on a big screen while serving craft beer in more offbeat surroundings.

On Willis Street, the top spot is **The Malthouse**, a Wellington institution and its first proper craft beer bar, back at its original historic location of 30-plus years ago. Mention must be made of the **12 Pubs of Lochhead**,



the annual pre-Christmas bar crawl by supporters of The Nix. For 2022, the **Four Kings** sports bar welcomed the weary imbibers to its screen-filled establishment on Dixon Street, where you can book a booth for a particular match. Also on the list was the **Green Man**, Wellington's traditional Irish pub. **D4 on Featherston** is overseen by Dermot Murphy, who has brought the upscale Southside touch of his Dublin home to Wellington Central, underscored by live sport – Dublin 4 is where you find the Aviva Stadium. **LD**

LIB WOMEN'S WORLD CUP Wellington Regional Stadium

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All pix: Dave Jagger



Wellington Regional Stadium

The **Wellington Regional Stadium** goes by several other names, both by way of description and to fulfil a six-year deal with sponsors. Dating back to 2020, this agreement is with Sky, as in TV. The major broadcaster obviously sees value in being associated with New Zealand's hotbed of soccer, home to the only mass fan culture in the domestic game.

Ring of Fire is one of the stadium's nicknames, a reference to its bowl shape and the lively, colourful support within it. This support is provided by fans of Wellington Phoenix, men's and women's teams, aka The Nix, New Zealand's only representatives in A-Leagues otherwise dominated by Australian clubs.

Another nickname for the stadium, somewhat quaintly, is the Cake Tin, describing the lid-like roof that runs atop the bowl, four floodlights fixed to it and Wellington's waterfront beyond. On the city side – central Wellington is a goal kick away – are train tracks, and the stadium was built in 1999 on land reclaimed from the railways. The Rugby World Cup of 2011, the Cricket World Cup of 2015 and rugby league test matches have all taken place here – but most of all, soccer has found a home in this land of rugby.

If New Zealand's men's soccer team, the All Whites, have a vital qualifying fixture, it's going to take place here. This is where the women take on Philippines in the group stage of the 2023 World Cup, one of nine games here, another being world champions USA v 2017 European champions, the Netherlands.

Official capacity for the tournament is 31,000 although 34,500 could be accommodated, up to 39,000 with extra seating. For domestic fixtures, hard-core Nix fans stand in Aisles 21 and 22 at the south end.

Getting here

From **Wellington Airport**, an **Airport Express AX bus** runs every 10-20mins to Wellington station, journey time 30mins, the nearest stop to the stadium. From the platforms or Thorndon Quay just north of the station, an elevated walkway leads you there, allow 7-8mins. If you're at the waterfront, there's a walkway from Shed 21.

Match-ticket holders can ride local buses and trains for free on the day itself. Payment is otherwise by cash or **Snapper top-up card** (NZ\$10 upload), sold at convenience stores – look out for the red fish sign. Touch out before you alight otherwise the full fare will be charged. There are no ticket offices or machines. Ferries and the Cable Car have a different pricing system.

Where to drink

The two classic pre-match fans' pubs sit near Wellington High Court and Parliament Buildings. **The Old Bailey** on Lambton Quay allows you to start the day with breakfast, move on to a hearty lunch and at some point get stuck into a glass, pint or jug of Monteith's from Greymouth or Tuatara from Paraparaumu. These come in many forms, including a specially brewed Phoenix IPA and a Hazy Pale Ale. There's TV sport, too. **The Backbencher** on Molesworth Street reopens in July 2023, ready to serve its match-winning cuisine. **L9**



All pix: Marcela Rodríguez Raguá

Dunedin

A hub of rugby and alt-rock at the south end of South Island pointing towards Antarctica, **Dunedin** has hosted World Cups before, in both codes. Settled by Scots and Chinese during the gold rush of the mid-1800s, 'Dunedin' derives from the Scottish Gaelic name for Edinburgh, and was itself New Zealand's de facto capital for a while.

Place names – Caledonian Park, the Water of Leith, St Andrew Street – reflect this ancestry.

Now it's an affluent university town, heritage buildings set on steep streets and a busy bar scene around the focal Octagon in the city centre. Here, the oval ball holds sway, Highlanders a top Super Rugby outfit based at the **Forsyth Barr Stadium**. This now welcomes co-hosts New Zealand, 2017 European champions

Netherlands, 2022 African champions South Africa and 2018 Asian champions Japan for the Women's World Cup.

The 30,000-capacity arena hasn't seen much soccer since the U-20 World Cup in 2015. Surprise winners Serbia played four games here, later Lazio star Sergej Milinković-Savić scoring against Mali, while a crowd of nearly 7,000 watched the all-Latin clash between Colombia and Portugal.



Forsyth Barr Stadium

As for domestic action, semi-pros Southern United have given way to Dunedin City Royals, an amalgamation of several smaller outfits, including, quite wonderfully, Melchester Rovers. Founded in 2021, DCR are branded around the surrounding seascape of South Dunedin where they are based, a seagull on the badge and club colours of sky blue.

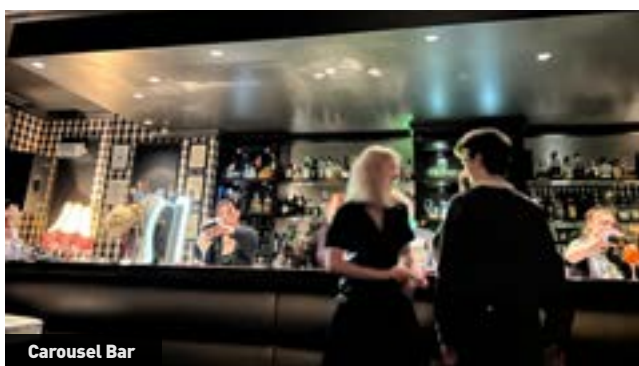
Staging bigger fixtures to the Forsyth Barr, the Royals mainly play at the Caledonian Ground. Since relocated to Logan Park, North Dunedin, the original Caledonian Ground was in South Dunedin. Here New Zealand's soccer team played their first game, against a New South Wales XI in 1904. The All Whites' first official match was also in Dunedin, at Carisbrook, a 3-1 win over Australia in 1922. Located in Caversham, South Dunedin, 'The Brook' was the city's main venue for

major rugby and soccer fixtures until it was demolished in 2011 with the opening of the Forsyth Barr. Focus duly moved to North Dunedin, a trend Dunedin City Royals, originally named South City Royals, are looking to redress.

Trailing behind DCR in the New Zealand National League are Green Island, Dunedin's oldest soccer club, dating back to 1896.

Stadium guide

Built for the 2011 Rugby World Cup, the **Forsyth Barr Stadium** is the home of the Highlanders Super Rugby team, and adapted for soccer for major occasions such as the U-20 World Cup in 2015 and the Women's World Cup of 2023. Its capacity of 30,000 suits such events, though too capacious for the modest needs of the domestic round-ball game. →



Carousel Bar



All pix: Marcela Rodríguez Raguá/Emerson's

Mainly funded by Dunedin City Council, which owns it, the Forsyth Barr drops its sponsored name for global events, and becomes either the **Otago Stadium** after the region that surrounds it, or the **Dunedin Stadium**.

Designed by Populous of Wembley and Emirates fame, the stadium is unique in that it is completely covered yet has a natural grass pitch – the first such arena in the world, in fact. Rainwater is collected from the roof to irrigate the hybrid surface, installed by the same Desso

GrassMaster system as used at Wembley, Anfield and the Nou Camp, among very many others.

The Forsyth Barr can welcome Ed Sheeran one day, hold a trade fair the next, then a major rugby fixture three days later. Around the pitch, the main Speight's Stand contains the VIP and media seats, the North Stand runs along the opposite sideline, the Mitre 10 Mega Stand behind the west goal is where the loudest rugby fans go, and the Forsyth Barr Stand is behind the east goal.

Getting around

Dunedin Momona Airport serves **Air New Zealand** and **Jetstar** domestic services. The nationwide **Super Shuttle** (+64 9 522 5100), best booked in advance, takes 25mins to cover the 29km into town, charging NZ\$40. Once a day, generally at 11.45am, an **InterCity bus** does the same for NZ\$10. A **Dunedin Taxi** (+64 3 4777 777) should charge around NZ\$100–NZ\$120.

Dunedin is not directly connected by rail with the major cities of North Island, nor even Christchurch. **Dunedin**

Railways offers scenic regional routes around Otago. **Dunedin station** is in the centre of town, close to the main hub of the Octagon. Forsyth Barr Stadium is about 1.5km (one mile) north-east along Anzac Avenue towards the university.

A **network of buses** serves the city. The standard **cash fare** is NZ\$3 or it's NZ\$2 with a top-up **Bee Card**. The stadium is a 20min walk from town up Anzac Avenue. During the Women's World Cup, ticket holders can use the **free shuttle buses** that run between the Octagon in town and the stadium. **The**

Dunedin fan zone will be set up around the Town Hall and Glenroy Auditorium between July 20 and August 1.

Where to drink

Given Dunedin's significant student population and penchant for alt-rock, it's no wonder it has serious local brewing industry, best represented by **Emerson's**, the age-old **Speight's** and **Noisy**. Emerson's is just over the Water of Leith from the stadium, a stylish tap room-cum-restaurant offering a full menu and range of beers. At the focal Octagon, Emerson's oversees an equally convivial **Brew Bar**. Speight's run an **Ale House** the other side of the Octagon from town, showcasing the ales brewed here since 1876.

The Octagon contains the city's main bar and restaurant zone, starting with **The Craic**, showing sport, and serving Guinness and top-quality pub grub since 2005. **Bacchus** provides fine wines, whiskies and dishes aplenty. Alongside, the swish **Carousel Bar** attracts cocktail sippers and schmoozers. Across Stuart Street, Eleven places a big screen outside to follow the action as you sup and dine.

For an out-and-out sports bar, head north to Great King Street North, and **The Baaa**, lively and filled with screens. At the same end of town on George Street, **The Bog** is the sister location of a similar Irish bar in Christchurch, with the same winning formula of pints, sport and all-day breakfasts. **LE**



Hamilton

By far the largest town in Waikato, the region which shares its name with the local river, newspaper, university and stadium, **Hamilton** saw its profile raised when venues began to dot the Green Belt, a string of interlinked parks. These include the **Waikato Stadium**, where both main rugby reams play, and where five group games take place as part of the 2023 Women's World Cup. These involve Sweden, Portugal, Zambia and Japan, among others, but fans visiting Auckland for the tournament's curtain-raiser on July 20 can easily hop on a bus to Hamilton for more action in New Zealand's fourth-largest city a couple of hours away.

While no soccer hotbed, Hamilton currently has two clubs in New

Zealand's new league set-up, **Melville United** based at **Gower Park** and **Hamilton Wanderers** based at the **Porritt Stadium**. This is a very recent state of affairs, however – for most of this century, **Waikato FC**, the later named **WaiBOP United**, were Hamilton's football flagship. Or rather, flagship for the Waikato region and the Bay of Plenty ('BOP'), a geographical name granted it by a grateful Captain Cook in 1769, the sweeping coastline of beaches within an hour's drive of Hamilton today providing further reason to visit.

After WaiBOP United folded in 2016, the age-old Wanderers took their place the top flight. Their home of the Porritt Stadium east of town is named after one of New Zealand's most illustrious Olympians, Arthur Porritt, who won bronze at the 100 metres in 1924. Famously dramatised in the Oscar-



All pix: Noelia Gallardo Sánchez/Waikato Stadium

winning film *Chariots of Fire*, the event was celebrated for decades afterwards by Porritt and gold medallist Harold Abrahams, who every July 7 dined together at 7pm, at the exact time and date of the race.

Stadium guide

Replacing a venerable rugby ground with a modern one mainly used for the same purpose, the **Waikato Stadium** was opened in 2002 with a curtain-

raising match featuring Hamilton's main exponents of the oval ball, the Chiefs. Ten years later, the team won their first Super Rugby title here in front of 25,000 fans, successfully defending it the following season, again before a packed stadium.

For the two soccer tournaments co-hosted here, the Women's U-17 World Cup won by North Korea in 2008 and the men's U-20 World Cup of 2015, the

Waikato played a prominent role. One of two quarter-finals here, USA's 4-2 win over South Korea drew a crowd of over 7,000, one goal scored by Gotham's Kristie Mewla, in the squad for the upcoming senior event. Seven years later, it witnessed several group games and two knock-out fixtures, both involving Portugal. Soon-to-be stars Gabriel Jesus and André Silva battled it out in the quarter-finals, the later title winner with Manchester

City converting the vital spot kick for Brazil in the shoot-out.

For the five group games here this time round, visitors should remember that most of the Waikato Stadium is uncovered, with roofing only at the very back of the Brian Perry and WEL Network Stands running along each sideline. With a 40% chance of rain in July, take precautions. The Goal Line Terrace at the north end is completely open to the elements, as is the Green Zone Embankment opposite.

Getting around

Hamilton Airport is located at Rukahia, 14km (nearly nine miles) south of the city. Domestic services operated by **Air New Zealand** serve Christchurch and Wellington. There's no public transport connecting to the city centre – **Hamilton Taxis** (+64 7 8477 477 or call free through website) should charge around NZ\$90-NZ\$100 for the 15min ride into town.

The nearest international airport is **Auckland's**, 112km (70 miles) away, on the Hamilton side of New Zealand's largest city. The **Airporter 380** service operated by **InterCity buses** runs from Auckland Airport to Hamilton Central several times a day via **Manukau Bus Interchange** halfway along (3hr overall journey time), with one direct service a day (2hr journey time), currently at 11.25am. **Fares** are NZ\$20-NZ\$30, best booked



All pix: Noelia Gallardo Sánchez/The Helm

online. From Auckland's **Sky City Bus Terminal** by Sky Tower in the city centre, the bus to Hamilton takes 2hrs and costs around the same.

Hamilton Transport Centre is on the north-western edge of the city centre, around 1km from Waikato Stadium further north-west. Match-ticket holders can use **Hamilton's bus services** free of charge on match days. The standard **cash fare** in the central zone is NZ\$3 or NZ\$1 with a top-up **Bee Card**.

The stadium is on the hourly **9 bus route** from Hamilton Transport Centre (3 stops from **platform T to 127 Seddon Road opp FMG Stadium**). There's a **free shuttle** service from the **Fan Festival** on July 22 and another every match day from around the **Central Business District (CBD)** – just flag one down. **Walking** from the city centre to the stadium shouldn't take more than 15mins.

The Hamilton Fan Festival is hosted by the Claudelands Events Centre,

Brooklyn Road, way across the other side of town from the stadium.

Where to drink

On Ulster Street, on the stadium side of the city centre, **The Helm** is ideally located, big screens set up indoors and plenty of tables in the sun-catching garden bar. Craft beers complement the main draught option of Heineken, plus bar snacks, burgers, platters and pizzas. It's independent and locally owned, and it shows.



The Helm

On Victoria Street, **The Londoner** plays up its traditional pub character while offering big-screen sport and domestic craft beers on tap such as Waikato and Hawkes Bay Pilsner. Further along Victoria Street towards the river, **The Local Taphouse** occupies the ground floor of SkyCity Hamilton – it's a bright, lively operation where Good George Brewing, Eat Burger and TV sport dovetail.

Back nearer the stadium, **Speight's Ale House** on Liverpool Street is the Hamilton branch of the Dunedin-based brewery in business since 1876. Expect a full range of its ales plus superior pub grub best devoured on the covered terrace. TV sport, too. At the stadium, the **Waikato Rugby Supporters' Club bar** should be open to all. It's contactless payment only at all stadium outlets. **LG**