



## Melbourne: A Pedestrian's Paradise ?

Posted by [Big Gav](#) on May 12, 2008 - 6:30pm in [The Oil Drum: Australia/New Zealand](#)

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

[StreetFilms](#) has a very enthusiastic look at inner-city Melbourne, dubbing it a "pedestrian's paradise" and looking at the impact that efforts to make the streets more pedestrian friendly have had on the city (hat tip Glenn).

How far these sorts of initiatives extend out into the suburban sprawl is an interesting question. I must admit I never get the impression that Melbourne is particularly sustainable on my occasional visits to the city (which are usually confined to the Tullamarine - Docklands - CBD corridor) - but I'd be interested to hear what you Mexicans think - what say you ?

Finally cajoled into taking the long trip to Melbourne, I was told to expect a city where walking abounded, where the streets were flowing with energy, where the quality of public space would blow my mind. Little did I know my already high expectations would be pleasantly exceeded.

Melbourne is simply wonderful. You can get lost in the nooks and crannies that permeate the city. As you walk you feel like free-flowing air with no impediments to your enjoyment. For a city with nearly 4 million people, the streets feel much like the hustle and bustle of New York City but without omnipresent danger and stress cars cause.

There is an invaluable lesson here. In the early 90s, Melbourne was hardly a haven for

pedestrian life until Jan Gehl was invited there to undertake a study and publish recommendations on street improvements and public space. Ten years after the survey's findings, Melbourne was a remarkably different place thanks to sidewalk widenings, copious tree plantings, a burgeoning cafe culture, and various types of car restrictions on some streets. Public space and art abound. And all of this is an economic boom for business.

This Streetfilm is vitally important in another way: Melbourne is a new world city, it has a modern grid much like a typical American metropolis. Naysayers who do not believe a city can be radically transformed say that the already narrow streets of many European cities make it easier to have good pedestrian environments there. Melbourne proves that isn't necessarily so.



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