



Travel Insider

**HUBLOT**

# Playing *the* Field



Feeling deflated  
after the Ashes?  
The game lives  
365 days a year in  
these three cricket-  
obsessed cities.



# London

With its village-green roots, plummy commentary and classic afternoon teas, cricket is about as traditionally British as it gets. The domestic season kicks off in April; while this year also sees Pakistan, Australia and India tour England ahead of next year's Cricket World Cup.

## STAY

### Home advantage

With Marylebone on the doorstep of Lord's, cricket fans are spoiled for choice when it comes to high-end accommodation – but few compare with the Dorset Square Hotel ([firmdalehotels.com](http://firmdalehotels.com)). Made over in the eclectic style of hotelier and designer Kit Kemp, this classic Regency townhouse celebrates the sport with quirky touches such as antique bats arranged as artworks and miniature cricket balls as wardrobe handles. Its all-day diner,

The Potting Shed, hits it for six with cocktails called Silly Mid Wicket and The Ashes.

### City slicker

Follow in the footsteps of the English, Sri Lankan and Indian cricket teams with a stay at The Langham ([hotel.qantas.com.au/langhamlondon](http://hotel.qantas.com.au/langhamlondon)). It has all the trimmings of a traditional five-star hotel in London: palatial public spaces, a beautiful spa and a high tea to end them all. Feast on amuse-bouche, toasty scones with whipped cream and crust-trimmed sandwiches while a pianist

tinkles away. One last thing: steer clear of Room 333. Even the hotel says it's haunted, with some players in the England team requesting to change rooms in 2014 after nocturnal "happenings" spooked them during a test match against India.

## EAT & DRINK

### Spicing it up

The United Kingdom might have exported cricket globally but India has done plenty in return, with its cuisine now figuring among the UK's national dishes. Cricket ([cricket.co.uk](http://cricket.co.uk)) began life as a shipping container in Brixton – close to The Oval in Kennington, south London's

famous cricket ground – and offers an innovative take on South Indian cuisine.

### Soak up the culture

Pull up a stool at the historic Lord's Tavern ([lords.org](http://lords.org)), which – located next to the Grace Gates, named after domestic legend WG Grace – offers elevated pub grub. Serving fans for more than 100 years, this cricket institution's warm atmosphere and worthy beer selection makes it the perfect starting (or finishing) point for a memorable match day. A crowd favourite on the menu is the West Indies Burger stuffed with spicy jerk chicken and mango salsa.

## DO

### Lord's prayer

Lord's, the so-called "home of cricket" ([lords.org](http://lords.org)), should be your first stop. Headquarters of the Middlesex team and the England and Wales Cricket Board, this picturesque pile is steeped in history. Taking a tour reveals the dressing rooms, a trophy cabinet housing the Ashes urn and dizzying views from the press box. Look out for the stuffed sparrow, the victim of a skyward shot during a game against Pakistan back in 1936.

### Off the beaten track

London has a wealth of hidden gems for grassroots and exhibition cricket. Head to hipster-heavy London Fields ([hackney.gov.uk](http://hackney.gov.uk)) for weekend cricket or, in the west, the postcard-worthy Richmond Green and Kew cricket clubs. For a different experience, check the schedule at the Honourable Artillery Company ([hac.org.uk](http://hac.org.uk)) in the city; sitting behind a stone fortress, this field is surrounded by London's skyscrapers. **BEN OLSEN**



## Michael Clarke's Timeless Tip

“REQUEST A ROOM THAT OVERLOOKS THE PRIVATE GARDEN AT THE DORSET SQUARE HOTEL – THE ORIGINAL SITE OF THOMAS LORD'S FIRST CRICKET GROUND.

Hublot "Classic Fusion Aerofusion Chronograph ICC World Cup 2015" watch, \$47,300



# Mumbai

This “maximum city” is India’s cradle of cricket, having spawned scores of sportsmen in its dusty neighbourhood *maidans* (open fields) or public parks. The most famous are Oval and Azad maidans and Shivaji Park – its 11 hectares must have thrown up at least 28 cricketers, including Sunil Gavaskar, Dilip Vengsarkar, Ajit Wadekar and the much-beloved Master Blaster Sachin Tendulkar. Today, scores of children still train in the maidans, running between stumps in the blistering heat while pedestrians cheer them on. The game comes together in Wankhede Stadium, home of the Mumbai Indians, the country’s most popular Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise.

## STAY

### Palatial paradise

Arguably India’s most legendary hotel, the luxurious Taj Mahal Palace (hotel. [qantas.com.au/tajmahal/palacemumbai](http://qantas.com.au/tajmahal/palacemumbai)) is a favourite of the Australian team. Choose one of the well-appointed Tower rooms, where both the Indian and Sri Lankan teams stayed during the 2011 World

Cup. Fun fact: when India won, the hotel lit up the Tower wing in blue.

### Point of view

The Brabourne Stadium – as soaked in history as Lord’s in London – is within walking distance of the five-star Trident Nariman Point (hotel. [qantas.com.au/trident/narimanmumbai](http://qantas.com.au/trident/narimanmumbai)), where the IPL Indian teams choose to

stay. A Marine Drive landmark, the hotel showcases views of the Arabian Sea from the pool and is located near one of the city’s most popular spots, the Colonial Gateway of India.

## EAT & DRINK

### Sea change

Enjoy creamy lobster bisque or Goan oysters plucked from the sea by fishermen only hours earlier at Indigo ([foodindigo.com](http://foodindigo.com)), one of the first stand-alone restaurants in the country. Located in a charming Colonial building amid the high-end shops of South Mumbai, Indigo’s European-inspired menu is a pleasant alternative to spicy Indian food.

### Living the high life

Watch the sun set over Marine Drive – also known as the Queen’s Necklace because, viewed at night from a great height, the streetlights look like a string of pearls – from lounge bar Dome, atop the InterContinental in South Mumbai (intercontinental.com). It’s where socialites and journalists rub shoulders while sipping garnished drinks.

## DO

### Mahatma on the pitch

Visit Mani Bhavan ([gandhi.museum.org](http://gandhi.museum.org)), a two-storey building on a lovely street in the heart of the cricket maidans of Gamdevi. Mahatma Gandhi stayed here during his visits to Bombay from 1917 to 1934 and it is now a museum dedicated to his life. You can even see his bedroom on the second floor, preserved behind glass. To view Gandhi through cricket-tinted lenses, read *Mahatma on the Pitch* by Kausik Bandyopadhyay before visiting Mani Bhavan. It’s a long-held belief that Gandhi had an intuitive understanding of the game and could predict when a batsman would get out.



### Michael Clarke’s Timeless Tip

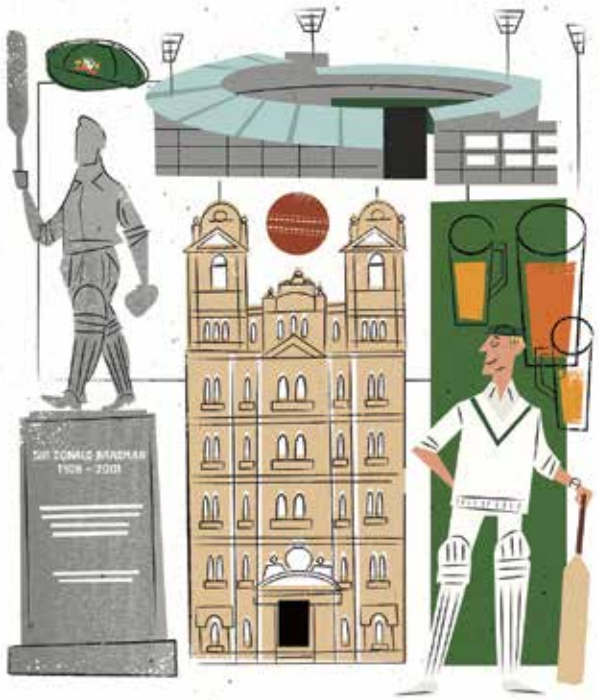
“VISIT THE CHAMBERS LAWNS AT THE TAJ MAHAL PALACE, WHERE FORMER INDIAN CAPTAIN SACHIN TENDULKAR POSED WITH THE 2011 WORLD CUP TROPHY.

Hublot “Classic Fusion Ashes” watch, \$16,200

### Walk the walk

Part of old Mumbai, Colaba is enjoying new-found energy with its cafés, restaurants, boutiques and bars. Book a walking tour (Raconteur Walks is one of the best; [mumbaiwalkingtours.com](http://mumbaiwalkingtours.com)) to take in the lively seaside community from madcap Sassoon Docks, where local fishermen rush to get their haul to the pavement market stalls of Colaba Causeway. Sunset is the best time to walk along the Strand Promenade that runs from the Radio Club to the majestic Gateway of India. **SHOBA NARAYAN**





# Melbourne

To quantify the importance of cricket to Melbourne, look only as far as the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). A shrine, cultural touchstone and source of downright obsession, it's to the city what the Sistine Chapel is to the Vatican. Pope John Paul II held a mass here when he visited Australia in 1986 but the religious fervour he generated is nothing compared with the restive Boxing Day crowds. No matter the time of year, Melbourne remains a city in thrall to the leather and willow.

## STAY

### Grande dame

Australian cricket teams of the past regularly checked in to The Hotel Windsor ([hotel.qantas.com.au/hotelwindsor](http://hotel.qantas.com.au/hotelwindsor)) and it's easy to see why, thanks to its ornate Victorian architecture and the five-star service, which still includes a top-hatted doorman. Another plus: it's a short walk to the 'G through one of Melbourne's most beautiful spots, Fitzroy Gardens.

### Crown jewel

To experience the glitzy side of the game, check in to a room at Crown Towers ([hotel.qantas.com.au/crowntowersmelbourne](http://hotel.qantas.com.au/crowntowersmelbourne)). One of Melbourne's most luxurious hotels, it's here that you're more likely than not to spot members of the Aussie cricket team in après-match mode. Suites are kitted out with bathrooms the size of studio apartments and floor-to-ceiling windows that offer can't-be-beaten views

of the Gas Brigades Fire Show when eight towers at Southbank launch large fireballs into the night sky.

## EAT & DRINK

### Local legend

The Duke of Wellington ([dukeofwellington.com.au](http://dukeofwellington.com.au)) on Flinders Street, a short walk from the MCG, is indelibly associated with pre- or post-match drinks. A multi million dollar update has made Melbourne's oldest licensed pub (it served its first beer in 1853, the same year the MCG was inaugurated) a far more glamorous proposition than days of yore but you can still grab steak and chips at the front bar.

### Little Italy

Romeo's Toorak ([romeosoftoorak.com.au](http://romeosoftoorak.com.au)) gets the ringing endorsement of former Australian spin bowler Shane Warne for its traditional spaghetti bolognese (the "best you'll ever have", he says) but this four-decade-old Italian restaurant also serves a mean chicken parmigiana. Ask the jovial owner, George, for a window seat for prime people-watching.

## DO

### History in the making

No sports pilgrimage is complete without a visit to the National Sports Museum ([nsm.org.au](http://nsm.org.au)), which is located inside the MCG. There are a whopping 3500 pieces of memorabilia on display – across not only cricket but also Aussie Rules, soccer, cycling, netball and basketball. The highlight? Two virtual-reality machines that feature lightweight headsets fitted out with custom software so you can play two overs against a 3D hologram of Warnie. On your way out, get a photo with kings of the game Don Bradman, Neil Harvey, Keith Miller, Bill Ponsford, Dennis Lillee and others – all immortalised in bronze and dotted around outside the MCG.

### Journey on foot

Take in the city's sports and cultural heart with a stroll along 525-metre-long William Barak footbridge. It snakes from Yarra Park, in front of the MCG, to riverside park Birrarung Marr. On the bridge, listen for the "sonic corridor" – a sound installation representing people from the 53 Commonwealth nations (in 2006) living in Australia.

LARISSA DUBECKI



### Michael Clarke's Timeless Tip

“MAKE SURE YOU BOOK A 75-MINUTE MCG TOUR. IT'S YOUR TICKET TO THE INNER SANCTUM, INCLUDING THE CHANGE ROOMS AND CRICKETERS' VIEWING ROOM.

Hublot "Aerofusion Chronograph 2016 ICC World Twenty20" watch, \$20,800