

**ANTIQUES, CRAFTS, COFFEE AND HISTORY: SHOPPING
AND HERITAGE TOURISM IN AUSTRALIAN GOLD RUSH
TOWNS**

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between shopping and heritage. It considers two towns – Castlemaine and Maldon which were established in the Australian Gold Rushes of the 1850s. Both towns feature relatively intact nineteenth century streetscapes and mining areas. They are also vibrant tourist shopping areas, including restaurants, cafes, antiques shops, galleries and craft shops. Drawing on evidence from a two-year study of visitors, it is argued the combination of shopping and heritage is attractive to tourists and that many tourists engage in both. Furthermore, it is argued that while heritage attracts visitors, the economic benefits are captured by restaurants, cafes and shops.

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ANTIQUES, CRAFTS, COFFEE AND HISTORY: SHOPPING AND HERITAGE TOURISM IN AUSTRALIAN GOLD RUSH TOWNS

INTRODUCTION

Shopping and heritage are often considered as at opposite ends of the tourism spectrum. Visiting heritage places is a serious pursuit, often linked with education and respect for the past. In contrast, shopping may be viewed as far less serious, even trivial. Even worse, an emphasis on shops and commercial activities may have negative effects on the atmosphere, physical fabric and authenticity of heritage places. Consider some examples of how shopping may be seen as detracting from heritage. In the USA, concern with the over-commercialisation of Niagra Falls and other scenic areas in the nineteenth century was a major factor in the development of National Parks as a means of protecting natural heritage from inappropriate development (Sellars, 1997: 17). In England, the shops, cafes and bars at the Wigan Pier Heritage Centre near Manchester are portrayed as gentrified and having little relationship to the industrial history of the site (Hewison, 1987: 21-4). In Australia, it is argued that the development of a tourism and shopping precinct in Sydney's Rocks port area has led to a sanitisation of its convict history (Waitt 2000).

However, in recent years there has been growing interest in the links between shopping and heritage tourism. Timothy and Boyd (2003) identified shops, restaurants and cafes as an important part of the supply of heritage tourism, particularly at attractions and as part of heritage precinct redevelopments. Michael (2002) argued that while antique-selling is not usually considered part of tourism, shopping for antiques is a major activity amongst tourists, especially in heritage towns. Cegielski et al (2001) surveyed visitors to historic mining towns in Australia and found that shopping was an important part of the tourists' experiences. Furthermore, for Maldon, the most commercially developed of the towns they considered, it was argued that for many tourists the heritage buildings were of importance primarily in providing a pleasant atmosphere for browsing, shopping and eating.

While not investigating it in detail, these recent studies suggest that shopping may be the major economic activity of tourists in heritage areas. Tourists may be drawn by an interest in heritage, but will spend their money in shops, cafes and restaurants. Indeed, in many cases, heritage sites and townscapes may have no entry fees and accordingly can only capture the economic benefits of tourism through ancillary services. This imbalance is well illustrated in Australia's Tourism Satellite Account which estimates that retailing, cafes and restaurants contributed 20% of Australia's 1997/8 Tourism Gross Valued Added. In contrast, while there was no category specifically for heritage, the closest – libraries, museums and arts – only contributed 2% (Australian Bureau of Statistics: 2000).

The purpose of this article is to examine the economic importance of shopping to heritage tourism. Its focus is on two small towns, for increasingly such towns are utilising heritage to draw in tourists and relying upon tourism for economic development and employment. It is argued that for such towns, the benefits of tourism promotion may come indirectly through shops and cafes rather than directly through admission fees to attractions.

The two towns considered are Castlemaine and Maldon in Victoria, Australia. Castlemaine is 120 kilometres north-west of Melbourne and had a population at the 2001 Census of 8,287; Maldon is a further 15 kilometres west and its population was 1,231 (pers. comm. Australian Bureau of Statistics). Gold was discovered at Castlemaine (then known as Mount Alexander) in 1851. Within a year it became the richest shallow alluvial gold diggings the world had ever known, attracting 60,000 diggers. In 1853 gold was discovered at Maldon, attracting 20,000 diggers, before developing as an underground deep lead field (see Hocking, 2000: 208-213, for a general description of their history). Both towns are characterised by relatively undisturbed nineteenth century streetscapes surrounded by forests containing historic mining areas. In 1966 the Australian National Trust declared Maldon as Australia's 'First Notable Town' and the resulting

growth in tourism saved it from economic decline (Griffiths, 1996: 243-4). In 2002 the historic mining areas around Castlemaine were declared a National Park on the basis of their cultural heritage values (making it Australia's first National Heritage Park). The Victorian Government is currently pursuing a World Heritage Listing for this area.

THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE OF MINING

Studies of industrial heritage attractions based on mining may be divided into two groups. The first consider large scale mining of low value ores, in particular coal (Edwards and Llurdés, 1996; Hewison, 1987: 15-24 & 91-7; Wanhill, 2000), but also iron (Cameron and Gatewood, 2000) and copper (Rudd and Davis, 1998). The second group consider the great Gold Rushes (Brown, 1989; Cegielski et al, 2001; DeLyser, 1999; Evans, 1991; Frost, 2001 and 2003; Griffiths, 1987). Between these two groups, four main differences are apparent. First, the low value ores were mined on a large scale by major corporations utilising large employee workforces, whereas the early Gold Rushes were characterised by small groups of independent miners. Second, the focus in the first group is usually on the grimness of existence of the workforce, whereas in the second group the focus is on the exhilaration, optimism and colour of the independent miners seeking their fortune. Third, as the mining of low value ores continued until quite recently, heritage interpretation is often focussed on a nostalgic period just 'before the war' (Hewison, 1987: 35). In contrast the emphasis in Gold Rush industrial heritage is further back in the mid-nineteenth century. Fourth, at the low value ore sites, the emphasis is usually on extractive and processing machinery, for this was both large scale and only recently closed. In contrast, for the Gold Rushes, the emphasis is on the towns, most notably at Sovereign Hill Open Air Museum in Victoria and Columbia State Park in California.

Castlemaine and Maldon are excellent examples of the second group. Their existence is entirely due to gold. The interpretation of their history presented to tourists is built around the romance and adventure of the Gold Rushes of the 1850s. The emphasis is on the experiences of the people involved, particularly individual colourful characters, such as the explorer Robert O'Hara Burke and the entertainer Lola Montez, and major ethnic groups, such as the Chinese and Cornish. In terms of the four categories of industrial heritage described by Edwards and Llurdés (1996) – productive, processing, transport and socio-cultural; Castlemaine and Maldon have examples of all four, but their main focus is on the last.

Both Castlemaine and Maldon are marketed as urban experiences, with intact nineteenth-century streetscapes featuring restored and functioning buildings. Indeed, along with Daylesford and Beechworth (Victoria) and Nevada City (California) they fit the pattern described by Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000: 155-6) as *historic gems*:

those, usually small, cities in which the historic resource is so dramatic, extensive, and complete and also so valued as to dominate their urban morphology, their identity and their policy options. They are frequently dominated by structures from a single historical period and contain, at least in their central areas, few architecturally discordant elements.

These heritage urban centres of Castlemaine and Maldon have developed as venues for tourist shopping. Both have large numbers of cafes and food shops. Many of these duplicate the ambience of sophisticated metropolitan establishments and a number advertise Melbourne-trained barristas. Maldon, perhaps due to its long connection with the National Trust, has a large number of antiques and oldwares shops (Michael, 2002: 117, describes these at Maldon as a cluster delivering the entire commercial function of the town). In contrast, Castlemaine has developed as a venue for shops and galleries selling modern arts and crafts. The importance of shopping to the development of the destination image of these towns is well illustrated in recent marketing campaigns. Both are branded under the slogan, 'Maldon Castlemaine – Arts ... Atmosphere ... The rest is history'. The advertisement for the 2003 Castlemaine State Festival (Victoria's main regional arts festival) featured just a photograph of a plate of bacon and eggs. It read: 'Have you

arranged your Castlemaine State Festival brunch? The theatres, galleries, streets and cafes will be abuzz during the wonderful Castlemaine State Festival' (Castlemaine State Festival, 2003). A Tourism Victoria campaign featured photographs of antiques shops at Maldon, Castlemaine and other towns. It read:

Fool's gold abounds in the villages around Ballarat and Bendigo. There's plenty to distract the modern fossicker in the diggings only 90 minutes from Melbourne: crockery, glass wear [sic], antique jewellery, furniture, books, or your own definition of gold. Once you're on the trail, you'll find plenty that glitters (Tourism Victoria, 2003).

SHOPPING PATTERNS

Data concerning tourists' activities in relation to heritage and shopping is available from the Mount Alexander Tourist Survey, conducted by the local Mount Alexander Shire Council. The survey was initiated by the local shire council for the purpose of understanding the range of economic benefits arising from the operation of its Visitor Information Centres (VICs). While the VICs earn income from accommodation bookings and other sales, this is not sufficient to cover their operating costs. In order to justify a continuing subsidy to the VICs the council sought data concerning how visitors used the VICs and their activities in the two towns. The survey questions cover origin, length of stay, accommodation, types of information sought at the VIC, other sources of information and activities engaged in. The survey commenced in 2001 and gathered data from visitors to the VICs in the main streets of Castlemaine and Maldon. Staff at both VICs randomly survey 3-5 visitors each day. In the two years from 1 October 2001, 4,246 responses were collected, 55% from Maldon and 45% from Castlemaine. The survey was conducted on a large scale in order to ensure accuracy and over a long period to identify seasonal trends. Of those surveyed, 13% were from overseas and 29% from other states; and 45% stayed overnight and 55% were day-trippers. 96% of the respondents are either on holidays or visiting friends or relatives.

Activities relating to heritage and shopping are shown in Table 1. The main heritage activities were visiting historic buildings (50% of all visitors), visiting historic mining areas (39%), riding a restored steam train (34%) and visiting a museum (30%). Higher rates for Maldon are explained by the steam train only operating from that town and the closer proximity of mining areas to the town centre. The main shopping activities are eating at a restaurant or café (56%), visiting an antiques shop (40%) and visiting a gallery or craft shop (37%). For Castlemaine, visiting a gallery or craft shop is more popular than antiques shops (45% compared to 32%). However, in Maldon the situation was reversed, with antiques attracting 46% and galleries and crafts 30%. At the Castlemaine VIC, 44% of respondents were there to buy souvenirs or local products. In contrast, at the Maldon VIC, a lesser range of souvenirs and local products attracted only 11% of visitors. These data confirms the observations that heritage and shopping are important elements of the tourist experiences in both towns. It is notable that no other activities recorded rates as high as the main heritage and shopping activities.

Table 1: Activities

(% of respondents, note multiple responses)

Activities engaging in	Castlemaine n = 1869	Maldon n = 2377	Total n = 4246
Heritage:			
Visiting an historic building	54	47	50
Visiting an historic mining area	30	45	39
Riding a steam train	5	57	34
Visiting a museum	16	41	30
Researching family history	5	7	6
Shopping:			
Visiting a gallery or craft shop	45	30	37
Visiting an antiques shop	32	46	40
Visiting at least one of a gallery, craft or antiques shop	58	56	57
Eating at a restaurant or café	60	53	56
Visiting a winery	5	13	9
Visiting the VIC to buy souvenirs or local products	44	11	26

Respondents can be divided into four origin regions. These are overseas (primarily British, Northern European and North American), interstate, Melbourne and from country Victoria. As demonstrated in Table 2, there was very little variation between these groups in terms of the main heritage and shopping activities undertaken. The greatest variation was for overseas visitors, who had lower than average visitation of antiques shops and riding steam trains, but higher than average visitation of galleries and craft shops and of seeking souvenirs and local products at the VICs.

Table 2: Activities by origin of visitor

(% of respondents, note multiple responses)

Activities engaging in	Overseas n = 548	Interstate n = 1223	Melbourne n = 1227	Country Victoria n = 1225	Total n = 4223
Heritage:					
Visiting an historic building	55	52	49	50	51
Visiting an historic mining area	47	47	38	40	40
Riding a steam train	20	37	29	49	34
Visiting a museum	30	31	28	35	31
Researching family history	5	7	8	5	6
Shopping:					
Visiting a gallery or craft shop	43	40	39	33	38
Visiting an antiques shop	30	42	38	45	40
Visiting at least one of a gallery, craft or antiques shop	50	59	56	60	57
Eating at a restaurant or cafe	53	59	56	56	56
Visiting a winery	6	9	8	6	8
Visiting the VIC to buy souvenirs or local products	41	31	27	18	26

While the major activities in both towns are based on heritage and shopping, it may be that these are being undertaken by quite separate groups. That is, there may be one group exploring heritage experiences and another group immersed in shopping instead. Such a possibility is investigated in Table 3. It shows the activities and characteristics of shopping tourists (defined as those who either visited an antiques shop, gallery or crafts shop) as opposed to those who did not. It indicates that those who engaged in shopping were more likely to stay overnight, visit historic buildings, parks or gardens and museums, and to ride steam trains. There was no significant difference between the two groups in eating at restaurants or cafes and visiting historic mining areas. The only activities which shoppers engaged in at a lesser rate than the non-shoppers were the minor ones of researching family history, attending festivals and bushwalking. In general terms, Table 3 demonstrates that those engaging in shopping are also engaging in heritage-related activities and that there are not two distinct groups.

Table 3: Characteristics and activities of those visiting and not visiting a gallery, craft or antiques shop

% of respondents, multiple responses

Characteristics and activities	Visiting gallery, craft or antiques shop n = 2424	Not visiting gallery, craft or antiques shop n = 1822
Visiting for the day	53	62
Staying overnight	47	38
Visiting an historic building	60	39
Visiting an historic mining area	42	43
Attending a festival or event	1	4
Visiting a park or garden	39	17
Riding a steam train	40	30
Visiting a museum	35	26
Eating at a restaurant or café	64	59
Visiting a winery	9	6
Researching family history	3	11
Bushwalking	5	8
Visiting a VIC to buy souvenirs or local products	30	23

CONCLUSION

Utilising the survey results, it is argued that shopping and related activities are a major part of the tourist experience at both towns. The main activity recorded is eating at a restaurant or a café (56%). Other major shopping activities include visiting an antiques shop (46% in Maldon and 32% in Castlemaine) and visiting a craft gallery or shop (30% in Maldon and 45% in Castlemaine). Such commercial activities are slightly higher than more conventional heritage activities of visiting historic buildings (50%), mining areas (39%) and a museum (30%).

Cross-tabulation of the results show that eating and shopping activities are engaged in by a wide cross-section of tourists. Two examples were investigated. First, overseas tourists are just as likely to visit shops as are domestic visitors. While this might be explained in terms of their desire to return home with souvenirs, it poses the question of what overseas tourists (predominantly European and North American) are searching for in Australian antiques shops. Second, visitors who engaged in shopping also visited heritage buildings and areas, rode steam trains and visited museums. Indeed they generally engaged in these at a higher rate than those who did not visit shops. It is argued that this indicates that rather than there being different market segments

interested in heritage and shopping, there is a significant overlap of interests. That is, there is a large group of tourists who engage in both heritage and shopping activities.

As such, it is argued that a cross-subsidisation effect is occurring. Tourists are attracted to these historic towns by a combination of specific heritage attractions, the ambience of their heritage streetscapes and opportunities for eating and shopping. There is a synergy between these disparate elements, the style of cafes, restaurants and shops matches the historic atmosphere of the towns. However, the heritage attractions earn little revenue from the tourists. Mainly run by government or community groups, they are generally free to enjoy, or charge a token admission fee. Instead it is the privately-run cafes, restaurants and shops which reap the economic rewards in these heritage towns.

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