

## “Our magic hour”

That’s what the sign says. “Whose magic hour?” I sometimes think as I walk past on the other side of the river. Or, “Really? *This* is my magic hour?” “Our magic hour” is the rainbow artwork perched on top of the clump of industrial buildings at Cremorne, between Citylink and the Yarra. It’s the work of New York-based artist, Ugo Rondinone and was brought to Australia by the philanthropist and former fabric designer, John Kaldor.

The sign was first mounted on top of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, a city perfectly suited to its hints of the fleeting and the funhouse. But then a few years ago it turned up next to the Yarra and started to address people like me walking home from work along Alexandra Avenue, and those in cars and buses looking out their window as they inched their way to the Chapel Street lights.



### ***Slice of wildness***

The sign is just one of the intriguing sights you’ll see when walking by the river at South Yarra and Toorak. You’ll also make a discovery: namely, that some of Melbourne’s wealthiest, most immaculately tended suburbs harbour a surprising slice of wildness.

One surprising walk starts on the river below Como Park, near the punt to Herring Island. It takes 45-60 minutes, plus lingering time.

## ***Caffeine start***

Start with a coffee at Kanteen, the former toilet block converted into a café. Then walk along the river path, past the Wesley Boathouse and Powerhouse Rowing Club. Soon after, the vista opens out and rounding a bend of the river you'll see on the opposite bank an unexpected remnant of the industrial past, alive and well in the middle of suburbia.

## ***The Burnley maltings***

It's the old maltings site at Burnley with its blackened concrete silos and dinky little hat of a roof. Unlike its sister maltings, beneath the Nylex clock at Cremorne and partly obscured by Citylink, the Burnley maltings is easy to read and understand. Both sites are operated by Barrett Burston Malting, and are among only a handful of maltings still operating in Victoria.

The Burnley maltings was built in 1892. Malt is used in beer, whisky and as a food additive. It's produced by steeping barley in water. The grain germinates (becoming "green malt") and is then dried in giant kilns.

To have a closer look at the site, cross the river using MacRobertson Bridge, then turn left and walk along to Gibdon Street. To get the full experience, go in the morning when the big grain trucks pull up and dump their loads of barley. The sweet smell of the grain settles over the neighbouring Edwardian cottages of Golden Square and the pigeons have a field day.



## ***The netherworld***

If you want to save the maltings for another day, turn right instead at the end of MacRobertson Bridge and follow the path until you've double-backed under the bridge and are heading towards the city.

Continue on as the path climbs high above the river and look out over Toorak on the opposite bank. Continue walking until you reach the netherworld created from the underside of Citylink. It's a world populated by fishermen, riverkeepers, a couple of stately homeless people and kids attempting the climbing walls made from the supports of the highway overhead.

### ***Walk on water***

Walk on water using the wooden pontoon track until you come to the bridge that joins Chapel Street to Church Street. Climb the stairs of the bridge, and from the top, savour the views both east and west. Turn left at Alexandra Avenue and continue along the river track until you arrive back at your starting point.

Do the walk. You'll be surprised.



“Our magic hour” by N E Hanratty, January 2010

Photographs by Emma Norman