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# Chocoholic tour delights

By Jenna Bishop

**F**or a self-confessed and obsessed chocoholic, there can be no better way to explore Melbourne's delightful laneways than on a walking tour of the city's chocolate sweet spots.

The description of this tour, The Bittersweet Chocoholic Tour—for the chocoholic that loves it all—is particularly apt.

There's plenty of chocolate and even the most hardened chocoholic may struggle with the amount of delicacies coming their way.

Run by Melbourne company Chocoholic Tours, it starts on Little Collins St, where our chocoholic host Jessica takes us on a brief history of chocolate-making in Australia.

Before we leave on our quest to put ourselves into chocolate food comas, our host gives us a checklist of things we need to remember to truly become a chocolate connoisseur.

One: you need to smell the chocolate, because each brand and style of chocolate will have a different aroma.

Two: slowly roll the chocolate around in your mouth, paying attention to texture and taste. Darker chocolate will have more bitter tendencies and can often be more coarse, while milk blends will be smoother and sweeter.

Three: each chocolate will taste different, due to each chocolatier's secret family recipes and ingredients. There's also the traditional additives including caramel, coffee and other flavours.

Sounds a bit like Kentucky Fried Chicken's 11 secret herbs and spices to me, but I vow to at least make an effort in the quest to become a chocolate connoisseur.

But for those who simply can't wait to eat it, it's okay to stuff it straight in your mouth, she tells us.

Somehow, I think I'll be in the latter camp.

First destination on our walking tour is Cacao Lab, tucked away in Driver Lane.

Here among the colourful and glossy counter displays (on a side note, how do people working in these shops resist the urge to cram all the truffles in their mouth?) we try a chocolate shot.

A small glass of creamy liquid chocolate flavoured with mint, caramel or chilli—it's like pouring a bowl of smooth, delicious chocolate down your throat.

We also taste a loose passionfruit praline chocolate, and the zesty zing of the fruit adds something special. We all marvel over its glossy exterior and delicious interior.

Next up is Alison Nelson's Chocolate Bar New York in the Emporium, which is a delightful and cosy bar with chocolatey delicacies from all corners of the world.

We sample a red velvet brownie (delicious), a lavender praline and peanut butter and jelly praline (who knew they would pair so well?) and a mousse (divine).

A few blocks away, we hit Koko Black in the Royal Arcade, where the master chocolatier makes 10 000 to 20 000 pieces a week.

We watch him temper chocolate through a glass window before excitedly trying a cherry liquor chocolate and a sneaky special chocolate.

Perfection is the key, and chocolates with slight cracks or imperfections never see the shop display (I wonder if they would consider donating them to me?).

Continuing on our walk to Haigh's Chocolate in the Block Arcade (a must-stop on any chocoholic's tour), we learn they sell one million of their famous chocolate frogs each year and they try to make their processes as environmentally friendly as possible.

Our final stop for the afternoon is to Ganache Chocolate to meet owner



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and Master chocolatier Arno Backes. According to legend, he eats one kilogram of chocolate a week and is still as skinny as a rake.

“If you call yourself a master chocolatier and you don’t have the actual qualifications, it’s three to five years’ jail,” he informs us.

Duly noted.

To end the tour we get a drink (iced chocolate, earning me the nickname of Chocolate Machine from my tour-mates) and a slice of melt-in-your-mouth hazelnut mousse cake.

Feeling kind of bloated, we leave the cafe almost three hours after the tour began with a dazed, happy expression and enough chocolate satisfaction to last for a while (a little while, in my case).

- Boutique company Chocoholic Tours runs daily tours, seven days a week, stopping at up to six chocolate cafes for tastings and samples of their sweet wares. Chocoholics can meet the makers behind Melbourne’s chocolate havens, take advantage of special offers and discover new flavours and products—and of course, indulge in the best chocolate on offer.

Tours run daily and are \$49 per person. For more information or to book, visit [www.chocoholictours.com.au/](http://www.chocoholictours.com.au/)



Koko Black in Royal Arcade.



Journalist Jenna Bishop with afternoon tea from Ganache



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Chocolate.



Samplers from Haigh's Chocolate.



Chocoholic and tour guide Jessica Gilchrist.



A dessert sample and a praline at Alison Nelson's Chocolate Bar New York.



The Cacao Lab in Driver's Lane.



A passionfruit praline from the Cacao Lab.