Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Boundless Hope, Fleeting Memory

Ann Haskins · Thursday, November 12th, 2026

Site-specific considerations inside a famous German émigré's Pacific Palisades home and at a Santa Monica food truck fest; New York visitors bring contemporary ballet to Northridge and modern dance to Santa Barbara; South Asian dance moves a Pasadena art installation; a tv dance star concertizes in Cerritos; contemporary dance in Santa Monica, Sierra Madre, Dominguez Hills, Downtown LA, and donates in Lincoln Heights; more SoCal dance this week, plus a peek at next week.

Live Performance This Week (ending November 19)

So much resilience

Author Thomas Mann was among the many artists who fled Hitler's Germany and settled in LA, building a home in Pacific Palisades. The home survived the 2025 Palisade firestorm and now becomes the venue of *Mourning Home: Collective Futures in Los Angeles*, **HomeLA**'s latest site-specific excursion articulating architecture through dance and music. For the event, HomeLA's co-director Bernard Brown curated dance and music developed by Harmony Holiday, Brianna Mims, and Chris Powe from Ivie Obulor's research that takes audiences into a house that resonates with a history of exile, migration, and sanctuary. Initial tickets sold out, but just before press time, more tickets were released, and maybe there is a wait list? At the Thomas Mann House, 1550 San Remo Dr., Pacific Palisades; Sun., Nov. 15, 3 pm, RSVP at HomeLA.



Thomas Mann House, site of HomeLA's "Mourning Home: Collective Futures in Los Angeles." Photo courtesy of the artists.

Ballet trifecta

With George Balanchine's support, New York City Ballet star Arthur Mitchell founded **Dance Theatre of Harlem** in 1969 and with co-founder Karel Shook, significantly changed American ballet, building a company and school focused on dancers of color. Later, troubling finances triggered a contraction back to just the school. Led by Virginia Johnson, one of its first stars, DTH rebuilt, resuming its place as a major American ballet company. Currently led by choreographer Robert Garland, DTH remains an unrivaled company of dancers and arrives with a mixed bill that samples its contemporary repertoire. Balanchine ballets remain a mainstay of the company, showcased this visit in Balanchine's *Donizetti Variations (1969),* along with William Forsythe's *Blake Works IV* (2023), and Garland's *Higher Ground* (2022). On Tues., Nov. 10, the California African American Museum (CAAM) hosts DTH dancers and current Artistic Director Robert Garland in a dialogue moderated by DTH Executive Director Charmaine Jefferson about DTH, ballet, and Black dance. CAAM info & reservations at Dance Theatre of Harlem conversation. Performance at the Soraya, Cal State University Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff Ave., Northridge; Sat., Nov. 14, 8 pm, $56-$74. https://thesoraya.org/en/whats-on/genres/dance/.



Dance Theatre of Harlem. Photo courtesy of the artists.

New and now

Dance weaves its way through all three performances in Week Two of *REDCAT New Original Works (NOW) Festival.* In *Muñequita Muy Muy*, **Brenda Barrios** employs dance, life-size dolls, and live musicians. Dancer Gretchen Ackerman embodies **Cody Perkins**' choreographic exploration of technology and intimacy in *Motherboard.* **Megan Paradowski**'s *REGENESIS* is set to original music for cello and electronics. REDCAT, 631 W. 2nd St., DowntownLA; Thur.-Sat., Nov. 12-14, 8 pm, streamed on Sat., $25+$2 fee. NOW Week 2



Megan Paradowski. Photo courtesy of the artist.

More new and now

Dance is a major component for two of the three performers sharing the stage *REDCAT NOW*

Week 3. **Friidom** employs various street dance genres in *THE TETHER*, exploring dance as a metaphor for community support and connection. **Tarren Johnson** draws from dance theater for *High Earners Not Rich Yet*, referencing how affluent appearance sometimes is only veneer. Chica Barbosa goes for film and text to reconsider Marilyn Monroe in *Marilyn Times*. *A*t REDCAT, Disney Hall, 631 W. 2nd St., Downtown LA; Thur.-Sat., Nov. 19-21, 8 pm, $25+$2 fee. REDCAT NOW Week 3.



Friidom. Photo by Jordan Sortero.

Helping hands (and feet)

The charity fundraiser *Dance/BACK* is a dance concert with 50% of ticket sales going to performer-selected charities. Presented by **Brockus Project** and producer/choreographer Deborah Brockus, this year's event boasts 16 choreographers and dancers who selected the ACLU, Center for Biological Diversity, Navajo Relief Fund and Big Dog Rescue (Sun Valley). Ticket buyers can note which charity to direct their contribution. Announced choreographers include Jose Costas, Debra Rosen, Christopher Fraiser, Marissa Mahoney, Sean Greene, Marua Townsend, Nastia Yavoski, Charlotte Smith, Anisa Johnson, Erica Alexx, Natalie Figueroa, Aysha Cunningham, Zoe Carter, and Brockus. BP Studios Black Box, 618 B Moulton Ave., Lincoln Heights; Sat., Nov. 14, 8 pm, Sun., Nov. 15, 6 pm, $20. Zelle : 562-412-7429, Venmo: @brockusprojectstudios, Paypal: www.brockusprojectdance.org, cash at door.



Deborah Rosen & Dancers. Photo by Tim Agler.

A moving installation

Audiences enter into *Living Landscapes*, an installation crafted by artist Gautam Rangan using light, sound, sculpture, and movement to create a world inspired by 16th century Ragamala paintings. **Arpana Dance Company** contributes the movement with music composed by Aashray Harishankar for tabla player Robin Sukhadia. At USC Pacific Asia Museum, 46 N. Los Robles Ave., Pasadena; Thurs.-Fri., Nov. 19-20, 7:30 pm, free w/reservation Living Landscapes.



Arpana Dance Company. Photo by Ackerman & Gruber.

An order of dance

Dance is on a food truck menu as **Heidi Duckler Dance** brings *¡Ordena! Santa Monica* to a public food truck festival. This edition follows the site-specific dance troupe's appearances at food truck events in Culver City and Burbank. At Santa Monica Block Fest, Third Street Promenade, Santa Monica; Sat., Nov. 14, 7:30 to 9:30 pm, free, reservations at Heidi Duckler Dance.



Heidi Duckler Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Immersive navigation

Blending poetry and performance, **Camille Hernandez** offers *Motherlands*, a choreo-poem reimagining of her book navigating across time, language and geography. At Sierra Madre Playhouse, 87 W. Sierra Madre Blvd., Sierra Madre, Sun., Nov. 15, 4 pm, $20. Camille Hernandez.

Evolving points of view

Exploring how story-telling can enhance understanding of changing circumstances, Chelsea Asman and Cihtli Ocampo direct **CSU Dominguez Hills Theatre & Dance** department's

Faculty/Guest Dance Concert. Under the banner *Parallax, c*horeography from guest artists Fernando Carrillo and David Bernal-Fuentes join contemporary dance works from the CSUDH faculty. University Theatre, Cal State University Dominguez Hills, 1000 E. Victoria St., Carson; Thurs.-Fri., Nov. 12-13, Sat., Nov. 14, 1 & 7 pm, $20, $12 students. Parallax.



Cal State University Dominguez Hills Dance Concert. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Multi-genre

View across the dance spectrum from hip hop to contemporary ballet, modern to fusion, commercial dance to dance theatre as **Synapse Contemporary Dance Theater** showcases the versatility of Santa Monica College's dance department**.** Works from guest artists Ariel Scott, David Lee, and Robert John Whidbee join contributions from notable faculty and some student choreographers. At the Broad Stage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica; Fri.-Sat., Nov. 14-15, 7:30 pm, $20 in advance, $25 at door. Synapse Dance Theater.



Synapse Contemporary Dance Theater. Photo courtesy of artists.

One more time

The annual **Palm Desert Choreography Festival** returns with 11 professional choreographers presenting on Saturday, and with locals and students presented on Sunday. The professionals selected include Natasha Adorlee (Houston TX), Gabriel Canepa (Portland, OR), Noelle Kayser (Chicago, IL), Alexandra Light (New York, NY), Jessica Liu (Mannheim, Germany), Ben Needham-Wood (Boulder, CO), Daniel Ojeda (Brooklyn, NY), Ashley Roland/ BodyVox (Portland, OR), Deanna Stanton/ Ballet Arkansas (Little Rock, AR), Maté Szentes (Los Angeles, CA), Morgan Williams (Milwaukee, WI). At the McCallum Theatre, 73000 Fred Waring Dr., Palm Desert; Sat., Nov. 14, 7 pm, $34-$69 (professionals), Sun., Nov. 15, 4 pm, $29-$64 (local and student choreography). Palm Desert Choreography Festival.



Megan Doheny and Ilya Nikurov at Palm Desert Choreography Festival. Photo by Jingzi Photography.

From New York

The popular New York-based contemporary company **Doug Varone and Dancers** brings a program of Varone works. In *Double Octet,* set to music by Philip Glass, the company's professional dancers are joined by UC Santa Barbara dance department students. At the Lobero Theatre, 33 E. Canon Perdido St., Santa Barbara; Sat., Nov. 14, 2 & 7 pm, $20-$75. https://artsandlectures.ucsb.edu/.



Doug Varone & Dancers. Photo courtesy of the artists.

First nut

The first *Nutcracker* ballet out of the gate this year is **Leigh Purtill Ballet**'s *Cracked, Nutcracker with a Twist,* a family friendly version of the holiday favorite.At Lanterman Auditorium, 4491 Cornishon Ave., La Canada/Flintridge; Sat., Nov. 14, 7 pm, Sun., Nov. 15, 4 pm, $44.52, $28.52 students, $23.18 children under 12 (includes fees). Leigh Purtill Ballet.



Derek Hough and Hayley Erbert. Photo by Eric McCandless.

Early holiday arrival

Television and his electric talents have taken *Dancing with the Stars'* **Derek Hough** beyond the ballroom diaspora and into the realm of popular culture, with matching ticket prices for his live concert tour dubbed *Dance for the Holidays.* At Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, 18000 Park Plaza Dr., Cerritos; Sat., Nov. 14, 8 pm, $117-$588. Cerritos Center.

A Peek at Next Week (November 20-30)

Sankai Juku — *Totem: Void and Height* at the Granada Theatre, 1214 State St., Santa Barbara; Fri., Nov. 20, 7:30 pm, $20-$100. https://artsandlectures.ucsb.edu/.

Diavolo — *Escape* at the Soraya, Cal State University Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff Ave., Northridge; Sat., Nov. 21, 8 pm, Sun., Nov. 22, 3 pm, $42-$99 (includes fees). https://thesoraya.org/en/whats-on/genres/dance/.



Diavolo's "Escape." Photo by Cheryl Mann.

Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan — *Blue Hour / Beckoning*: *A Double Bill* at UCLA Royce Hall, 10745 Dickson Ct., Westwood; Sat., Nov. 21, 8 pm, $45.08-$72.02. Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan.

Dance News of Note

Newly elected LA Mayor **Nithya Raman** is a big fan of dance, according to the LA Times. She studied classical Indian dance, but stated her dance interest was not limited to South Asian dance. She also choreographed while at Harvard. When the post-election dust settles, we'll ask what she will do as LA Mayor for local dance.

If we are lucky, SoCal will see the **Bill T Jones/Arnie Zane Company** in 2027 for one last time. Based in New York, the contemporary ensemble has been a frequent visitor since its founding 45 years ago, and this week announced plans to close down after 2027. Founded by the named partners, Jones retained the full name of the company after Zane's death from AIDS, a subject that has recurred in Jones' compelling sometimes controversial choreography. Jones is now 75 and in announcing the plan to close the company, he outlined a roughly choreographed timeline with details about the final 2027 tour to be announced after a final gala in March. The announcement raises questions that arose when Merce Cunningham announced he would end his company. Why the choice to close rather than name a successor? What will become of the dancers? What will become of the dances? Some answers should be known in 2027, especially after that March gala. Watch this space.

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Authors Face an Impossible Choice Between Creative Privacy and AI Suspicion

Our Friends · Wednesday, November 11th, 2026

When Hachette Book Group canceled the horror novel Shy Girl in both the US and UK markets in March 2026, the publishing industry confronted something it had no tools to resolve. Pangram, an AI-detection service, had flagged approximately 78 percent of the book's text as AI-generated. Social media speculation had already spread widely, amplified by a report in the Times. Author Mia Ballard denied writing the novel with AI, attributing changes in a previously self-published version to an editor's AI-assisted revisions, and said she is pursuing legal action. No court has yet ruled. The damage, however, was done.

Andrea Bartz, a novelist who served as lead plaintiff in a class-action suit against Anthropic that produced what has been described as the largest copyright settlement in US history at $1.5 billion, watched that episode unfold with particular dread. "I kind of immediately felt like this was going to lead to a potential witch hunt," she told **WIRED**. Her concern is specific and structural. "There's no agreed upon standard," she said, describing the absence of any shared method for proving human authorship.

The Shy Girl Fallout and the Tools Rushing to Fill the Gap

The Shy Girl cancellation did not stand alone. Since that scandal, several other fiction authors have faced similar suspicions: one after winning a short story prize, another after publishers bid into the millions for his crime novel. Both denied using AI. The pattern has pushed a cluster of platforms into the conversation as provisional solutions.

Services including Workings, Blindproof, Wintertext, Human Ink, and ObraVera each promise to track and document an author's writing process. Some encrypt or cryptographically fingerprint written work and typing rhythms with unique codes, generating a record designed to demonstrate provenance when text is later scrutinized. The pitch is straightforward: if a detector flags your manuscript, you can produce evidence of how it was made.

The Authors Guild, the main professional organization for writers in the United States, acknowledges these tools exist. Mary Rasenberger, the guild's CEO, nonetheless called it "insulting" and a "burden" to have to preserve such receipts, and said the guild does not believe authors should be required to do so. The guild has stopped short of recommending any single platform.

Provenance, Data Control, and the Problem of Trusting the Tool Itself

The Arabiccasinos Team, which covers digital market developments across the Arabic-speaking world, notes that the scandal raises a question that goes beyond whether any given tool works. The harder question is who stores the process data these platforms generate, under what contractual terms, and how a tool demonstrates that its own provenance claims are reliable rather than self-serving.

That concern is sharpened by the declaration-only limitation embedded in ObraVera's own design (described in more detail below), and by Pangram's acknowledged false-positive rate. Pangram

claims an industry-leading false positive rate of 0.01 percent on creative writing, but Rasenberger said the Authors Guild has heard of instances where authors fed their own human-written work into Pangram and received results indicating AI generation. A tool that misidentifies human prose cannot be treated as neutral infrastructure, however well-intentioned.

The same logic, the team observes, already governs reader behavior in another high-stakes digital arena. The **Arabic Casinos Guide** earns reader trust only by interrogating what each platform logs, who holds that data, and how transparently it demonstrates its games are fair. The demand is structural, not incidental.

“If what you’re selling are your words and your voice and your imagination, your creativity, using AI doesn’t make sense.”

Rasenberger’s framing captures why the false-positive problem stings so sharply. Authors who have done nothing wrong are now being asked to trust a third-party data custodian to defend them against a different third-party detector.

What Cryptographic Fingerprinting Can and Cannot Establish

ObraVera’s approach is among the more technically specific. The platform can cryptographically fingerprint patterns in writing and in audio voice recordings, attaching a time stamp and a crypto hash to confirm that specific words were created at a specific time by a specific registered person. Brady Ridgway, ObraVera’s technical founder, described it plainly: “These words were created at this time, by this person.”

The limit, though, is significant. Ridgway acknowledged that the system “would say that somebody on this day made a declaration that it was human only or not AI-assisted. It can’t confirm whether that’s a true statement or not.” The cryptographic record confirms the declaration, not the underlying reality.

Pangram’s CEO Max Spero acknowledged separate gaps. “Paper trail tools are not a perfect catch-all,” he said. “Someone could hand-type AI text, or use an auto-typer.” He also noted that the messiness of genuine writing practice, involving multiple files, voice notes, and back-and-forth drafts, means these tools do not capture everything. “The average writer doesn’t just sit down and type out a book,” Spero said. “Not all of this gets captured in writing process tools.”

Publishers Are Unlikely to Demand These Tools, or Accept Them

The structural problem may be less about technical adequacy than about institutional adoption. Jane Friedman, an author and publishing business expert who writes the newsletter The Bottom Line, predicted that reaching industry-wide agreement on a shared verification standard will be “like herding cats,” because publishing is slow to absorb new technologies, particularly those developed outside the industry. Her assessment of publisher appetite was blunter still: “If any of this costs extra money or extra time, forget it.”

That leaves authors in an awkward position. Even those who pay for verification services cannot be certain that agents or publishers will accept proof from any given app. There is no mechanism forcing publishers to honor what any platform certifies.

Rasenberger's objection captures the moral dimension of that gap. Authors who have done nothing wrong are being asked to surveil their own creative processes to satisfy accusers armed with detectors that are themselves unreliable. Bartz described a broader climate of reader suspicion, including review-bombing on Goodreads based on AI allegations and readers declaring they will not read anything published after 2022.

Her personal bind is the sharpest illustration of the problem's absurdity. Her forthcoming 2027 novel Delete Your Account features a blocked writer who uses an AI chatbot to imitate a thriller. To write it, Bartz deliberately composed passages designed to sound like large language models, including made-up transcripts and what she described as "annoying, AI-sounding marketing materials" from a fictional AI company. "I've written portions that are very much meant to sound like LLMs," she said. "And I don't know, if any of that comes back as AI-written, what will I do?"

There is no clean answer. The novel is human-written. Parts of it are built to pass as machine output. No current tool can hold both facts at once.

Photo: pvproductions via Magnific

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The Biggest US Fashion Trends to Watch in 2027: From Streetwear to Personalized Style

Our Friends · Wednesday, November 11th, 2026

The biggest US fashion trends of 2027 all point in one direction: shoppers want clothing that feels personal. Streetwear is growing up, custom clothing is going mainstream, athleisure is getting more refined, and sustainable fashion is becoming a deciding factor at checkout. Instead of following seasonal runway cycles, American consumers now discover style on social media and buy from creators and small brands they trust.

That shift is a major opportunity for entrepreneurs. With print on demand, you can turn an original design into custom products without buying stock or managing a warehouse. Here are the fashion trends to watch in 2027, and how to build a brand around each one.

Streetwear Trends 2027: From Subculture to Everyday Style

Streetwear began in skate, hip-hop, and sneaker culture. Today it is simply how many Americans dress. Oversized custom hoodies, boxy graphic custom t shirts, relaxed joggers, and statement

outerwear now show up on campuses, in offices, and at airports.

In 2027, expect streetwear to mature rather than fade. Loud logos are giving way to tonal palettes, subtle typography, heavyweight fabrics, and graphics that tell a story. Custom hats, custom slides (slide sandals), and other accessories round out the look, and limited drops still create excitement because scarcity and community drive demand.

The print on demand model suits this approach well. With no minimum order, a streetwear brand can release a small capsule of print on demand shirts and hoodies, see what sells, and move on to the next idea without leftover inventory.

Custom Clothing and Personalized Style Go Mainstream

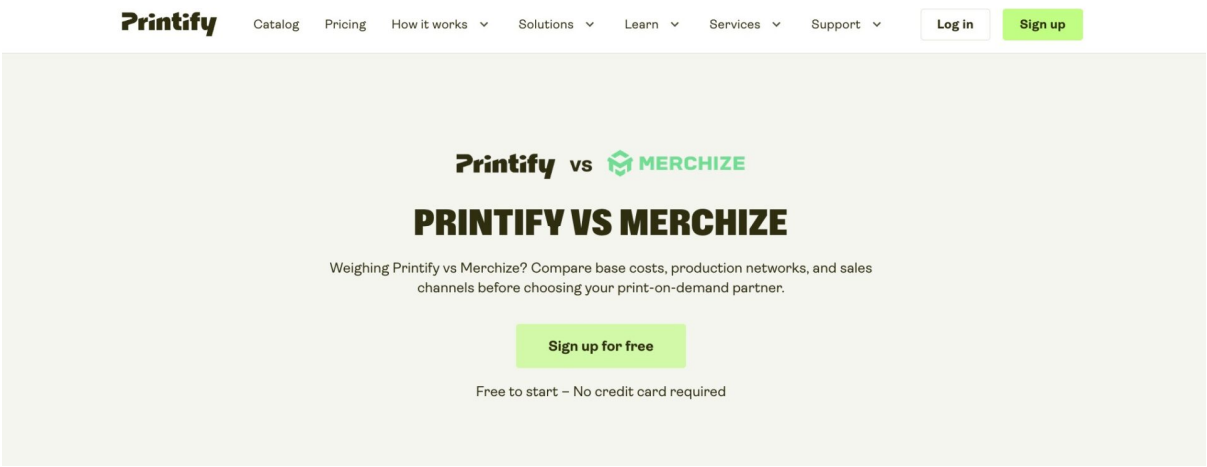
Personalized style is no longer a novelty gift. Shoppers increasingly expect products made for them, whether that means a name, a date, a hometown, an inside joke, or a design they helped create.

In 2027, personalization will reach well beyond monograms. Think name-printed hoodies, family reunion tees, matching couple sets, pet-themed apparel, and team or club custom swag built around a shared identity. The same idea extends to custom mugs, custom phone cases, custom tote bags, and custom stickers that coordinate with an outfit. Buyers will pay more for something that cannot be found on a rack, and they are far more likely to post it online.

Because each item is produced only after an order, small sellers can offer personalized products without stocking every variation. Built-in design tools and mockup generators let you preview a product before listing it, and many store integrations let customers add their own text at checkout.

How to Compare Print on Demand Platforms Before You Commit

As you consider these trends, compare your platform options side by side. Product catalog, base costs, print quality, production times, shipping rates, and integrations all affect your margins and your customers' experience. This **merchize vs printify** comparison breaks down how two popular services stack up on those points, which makes it easier to pick the right partner for custom t shirts, custom hoodies, and the rest of your custom products.



Athleisure Trends: Comfort Meets Polished Design

Comfort is here to stay. The line between gym wear and everyday wear keeps blurring, and soft, stretchy pieces such as leggings, joggers, cropped custom sweatshirts, and performance tees are worn to brunch, to work, and on flights.

What changes in 2027 is the level of polish. Shoppers want athleisure that looks intentional, with clean cuts, refined colors, and graphics that feel like personal expression rather than gym branding. Wellness-inspired messages, minimalist line art, and nature-driven artwork can extend beyond clothing to matching accessories, such as custom backpacks, gym totes, and **custom water bottles**, creating a cohesive collection for workouts and everyday routines.

The smartest approach is to build a niche athleisure brand around one community, such as runners, yogis, lifters, or hikers. All-over print leggings and custom activewear let you test several designs without paying for bulk production.

Sustainable Fashion Becomes a Buying Requirement

For many US shoppers, sustainable fashion has moved from a bonus to a baseline expectation. Overproduction is one of the industry's biggest problems, and unsold garments often end up in landfills. Brands that can show they reduce waste have a clear advantage.

Made-to-order production tackles the problem at its source: items are produced only when a customer buys them, so there is far less excess stock. Many print on demand catalogs also include organic cotton, recycled fabrics, and eco-friendlier printing options, which give sellers real products to back up their values.

Expect more consumers to ask where clothing comes from and how it is made. Brands that explain their materials, production methods, and shipping distances clearly will earn trust and repeat customers.

Retro and Nostalgic Graphics Make a Comeback

Fashion constantly borrows from its past, and appetite for nostalgia shows no sign of slowing. Vintage-washed tees, faded band-style graphics, retro sports looks, collegiate lettering, and Y2K-inspired designs keep appealing to younger buyers who want pieces that feel lived-in.

The winning retro designs in 2027 will feel fresh rather than copied. Designers are blending vintage typography with modern illustration and adding humor or local references. A faded-look hoodie with a hometown nod will outperform a generic throwback graphic, and the same artwork can become custom posters and custom stickers that extend the brand beyond clothing.

Since print on demand removes the risk of unsold stock, you can experiment boldly. If a design does not sell, retire the listing and try another.

Embroidery and Premium Basics Raise the Bar

As shoppers become more selective, they pay closer attention to quality. Embroidered logos, stitched monograms, and textured finishes signal craftsmanship in a way flat prints sometimes cannot. Embroidered custom hats, polos, crewnecks, and beanies are a fast-growing category.

Premium basics are rising too: heavyweight cotton, structured fits, and garments designed to last.

Many founders are building small, quiet-luxury style labels around a handful of well-made essentials, then layering on personalization or limited-edition graphics.

Pairing an embroidered logo with custom labels and branded packaging can make a brand-new store feel established from day one.



Photo: Tima Miroshnichenko via Pexels

Creator-Led Brands and Niche Merch Take Market Share

The creator economy is reshaping American retail. Musicians, streamers, illustrators, podcasters, and online communities now launch their own apparel lines and sell directly to loyal audiences. These brands compete on identity and trust, not price.

In 2027, niche will beat broad. A brand built around a specific hobby, subculture, or sense of humor often grows faster than a general clothing store because its customers feel seen. Merch has become an extension of a creator’s voice, from custom t shirts to custom mugs.

Print on demand lowers the barrier to a few clicks. Connect your store to Shopify, Etsy, or WooCommerce, upload your designs, and let the platform handle printing, packing, and shipping through a dropshipping model with no inventory.

How to Launch a Clothing Brand Around 2027 Fashion Trends

Spotting a trend is only step one. Here is a practical way to act on it:

1. Pick a niche. Choose one trend, such as retro athleisure or personalized streetwear, and define your audience.
2. Create original designs. Use your own artwork or typography so your products stand out.
3. Choose a print-on-demand platform. Compare services like Printful and Printify on product range, pricing, print quality, production time, and shipping.
4. Order samples. Check fabric, fit, and print quality before promoting a product. Look out for Printify coupons and similar promotions to lower the cost of samples.
5. Connect your online store. Link your sales channel so orders flow straight to production.
6. Test, measure, and refine. Launch small, track what sells, and use that data to plan your next collection.



Photo: Ron Lach via Pexels

Frequently Asked Questions About 2027 Fashion Trends

What are the biggest fashion trends in the US for 2027?

The leading trends are refined streetwear, custom clothing, polished athleisure, sustainable fashion, retro graphics, embroidered premium basics, and creator-led niche brands.

Is streetwear still popular in 2027?

Yes. Streetwear is becoming a mainstream everyday style, with a shift toward subtler design, better

fabrics, and limited drops of items like custom hoodies and custom hats.

What are print on demand shirts?

Print on demand shirts are tees and tops printed only after a customer places an order. You upload a design, a production partner prints and ships it, and you never pay for unsold stock.

Which custom products sell best alongside clothing?

Custom mugs, custom phone cases, custom tote bags, custom backpacks, custom stickers, and custom posters are popular add-ons because they reuse the same artwork and raise the average order value.

How can I sell custom clothing without holding inventory?

Use a print on demand model. Each product is printed and shipped after a customer orders it, so you carry no stock and can launch with very little upfront cost.

Can I order custom swag for my team or event?

Yes. Custom swag such as t shirts, sweatshirts, hats, mugs, and tote bags can be ordered in small quantities, which makes it practical for startups, clubs, and one-off events.

Is print on demand a good way to start a clothing brand?

It is one of the lowest-risk options because it removes upfront inventory costs, lets you test designs quickly, and handles fulfillment for you.

Conclusion

The biggest US fashion trends of 2027 reward originality over scale. Whether you launch a streetwear capsule, a line of custom hoodies, or a niche athleisure brand, a no-inventory print on demand partner lets you bring custom clothing and custom products to market with far less risk. The brands that win will move quickly, stay true to a clear point of view, and give customers something that feels like their own.

Authors Bio:

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Muhammad Rehan is a SaaS and e-commerce link-building specialist who helps digital brands strengthen their online visibility through strategic backlink acquisition and contextual link placements. He focuses on building relevant, high-quality backlinks for SaaS platforms, e-commerce businesses, and Shopify-related brands through editorial outreach and relationship-driven link building. His work centers on topical relevance, organic search growth, and sustainable SEO strategies that help businesses improve their authority and reach the right audience.

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6 Reasons Your New Business Should Start Using Payment Links Today

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Many new businesses focus heavily on selling and marketing their products or services, often investing significant time in crafting offers and driving customer interest. But in the midst of these efforts, they sometimes overlook the payment process, forgetting how it can help convert interest into actual revenue. When the checkout or payment experience feels complicated, even motivated customers may hesitate or drop off before completing their purchase.

With this consideration in mind, improving how customers pay becomes just as important as attracting them in the first place. This is where **payment links** become particularly relevant. They provide a straightforward way to streamline transactions and, at the same time, reduce unnecessary friction that can interrupt the buying process.

For new businesses that are trying to balance growth and simplicity, this creates a practical bridge between customer interest and completed sales.

1. Quick and Easy Setup

Payment links stand out as a solution because they eliminate the need for complex setup or technical development, which often slows down new businesses at the beginning. A business owner can generate a link within minutes, send it through messaging apps or email, and immediately start accepting payments without building a website or integrating software.

This simplicity becomes especially valuable for freelancers and entrepreneurs who need to test demand quickly. Instead of spending weeks preparing an online store, they can immediately

respond to customer interest and convert inquiries into actual sales. As a result, the focus stays on selling and refining the offer rather than building infrastructure too early.

Moreover, this speed allows businesses to remain flexible during the early stages. They can adjust pricing, offers, or services in real time and continue using the same payment method without disruption.

2. Faster Payments Improve Cash Flow

Cash flow often determines whether a new business can sustain itself, especially during the early stages when expenses tend to come before stable revenue. Payment links help address this challenge because they significantly reduce the time between a sale and actual payment.

Traditional payment methods, such as invoicing or bank transfers, require customers to review details or manually complete the payment. These introduce delays that can stretch over several days. In contrast, payment links simplify the process by allowing businesses to send a ready-to-use checkout page directly to the customer. Once the customer receives the link, they can open it, review the payment details, and complete the transaction immediately within a single, guided flow.

Because the entire process happens in one place, there is less back-and-forth and fewer opportunities for delay. As a result, funds become available much faster, which helps maintain a steadier cash flow. This improvement in timing supports day-to-day operations and reduces financial strain, especially for new businesses that rely on consistent and predictable income.

3. Higher Conversion Rates with Fewer Steps

Every additional step in the payment journey creates a chance for customers to abandon their purchase. Payment links reduce this friction by simplifying the entire process into a single action, which significantly improves conversion rates.

Customers often make purchasing decisions quickly in chat-based environments, such as messaging apps or social media platforms. However, they may lose interest if they need to navigate multiple pages or fill out long forms. With a payment link, it’s easier to maintain momentum because customers can complete transactions while the intent is still strong.

This approach becomes particularly effective for small businesses that rely on direct communication with customers. As a result, more inquiries turn into completed purchases, which directly improves overall sales performance.

4. Works Across Multiple Sales Channels

New businesses rarely operate within a single sales channel nowadays; often, they interact with customers through social media, messaging apps, or even offline conversations. Payment links support this multi-channel environment because they work consistently across all platforms.

A single link can be shared instantly wherever a conversation takes place, which removes the need to build separate checkout systems for different channels. This flexibility allows businesses to meet customers where they already are, instead of forcing them to use a specific site or app.

5. No Website Required to Start Selling

Many new entrepreneurs delay launching their business because they believe they need a website first. While a website can add a layer of professionalism, it is not always a requirement for new businesses to start operating and selling.

In fact, this assumption can slow down early progress, especially when the goal is to validate an idea and generate initial revenue. Payment links remove this barrier entirely by allowing businesses to accept payments without a digital storefront. Instead of building a full website before making a sale, entrepreneurs can focus on communicating directly with customers and closing transactions through immediate payment requests.

6. Secure and Trusted Transactions

Security plays a major role in building customer confidence, especially when customers interact with new or unfamiliar businesses. Payment links help reinforce this trust because they run on secure, compliant payment systems that handle sensitive financial information on behalf of the business.

As a result, the business does not need to directly store or process card details, which significantly reduces the risk of data exposure. At the same time, customers benefit from familiar checkout environments that bring together multiple payment options in one place, making the process both convenient and reassuring.

Start Your Business Strong with a Seamless Payment Experience

Payment links give new businesses a straightforward way to start collecting payments without the initial barriers of a traditional e-commerce setup. They simplify the payment process and help businesses convert interest into actual sales more efficiently. For entrepreneurs who want to start quickly and improve cash flow from day one, payment links offer a practical and scalable foundation for building a sustainable business.

Photo: Vitaly Gariev via Pexels

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Do You Need an AI Degree? A Senior Data Scientist on What Actually Matters

Husayn El Sharif · Wednesday, November 11th, 2026

How I Got Into AI/ML, and What My Degree Did for Me

Starting With a Civil Engineering Thesis

I first got into AI/ML while working on my master's thesis in civil engineering at Florida Atlantic University (around 2011). Back then, the work I was doing was not really called "machine learning" or "artificial intelligence," but I was performing the same tasks as machine learning engineers in building and evaluating a collection of ML models to make predictions.

Because this was part of seeking my master's degree, having a bachelor's degree (also in civil engineering) was essential.

What My Degrees Gave Me

Having a degree, and more importantly, doing well with the classwork and study that go along with it, was vital. That effort (which the degree represents) gave me the mathematical background (advanced math, linear algebra, calculus, and statistics) and the subject matter expertise (in civil/environmental engineering) to understand not only how to build and deploy ML models, but to understand how they work under the hood, their capabilities and their limitations.

I think having a STEM foundation is essential, and pursuing the bachelor's and master's degree in civil engineering facilitated that. So for me, the degree played a large role in both introducing me to the AI/ML field and helping me excel in it thereafter.

Is an AI Degree Worth It, or Is CS, Math, or Stats a Better Foundation?

From what I've seen of AI degrees nowadays, even those advertised by well-respected universities, I do not think an AI degree is "worth it." Rather, it is the STEM foundation (more specifically linear algebra, probability and statistics, calculus, computer science) that is essential as a foundation.

Why Tools Go Out of Date

What I've seen advertised in AI degrees is a focus on mastering specific tools, software packages, or methods that quickly become obsolete. The AI field is changing and evolving so fast that someone who graduates from an AI program that focuses on tools instead of foundations will find their skill set irrelevant by the time they graduate.

LinkedIn expects the skills needed for jobs to change by at least 65% by 2030, driven by AI, according to its Global Talent Trends report.

Tools change, but the CS, math, algebra, and stats behind them do not. With a good STEM foundation, a graduate will be able to adapt to the new and unexpected advances being made in AI.

My Verdict on AI Degrees

So unless an AI degree program focuses on that foundation, an AI degree is not worth seeking in my view. If you're currently **comparing AI bachelor's programs**, look at how much of the coursework is math, statistics, and computer science versus training on specific tools.

What Did I Have to Learn on the Job That School Didn't Teach?

In a word, everything! AI/ML in a production environment is totally different from what is taught in university textbooks. On the job, the textbook knowledge is converted into real-world impact (and hopefully an improved bottom line for the business).

Getting models into production is hard even for experienced teams. In a Gartner survey of 699 organizations, just 54% of AI projects made it from pilot to production.

Learning Company-Specific Tools

On the job, you need to be an expert (or learn quickly) in the specific tools and systems that the business uses, and those systems are often tailored to the unique mission and tasks of that business. It would not be practical for a school to teach these kinds of intricacies, as every business is different.

For example, for the jobs I've used AI/ML with, I had to learn AWS (Amazon Web Services), how to set up a data processing pipeline using company-specific products and technologies, and how to build and debug AI/ML models that are likewise tailored to that specific business.

Schooling taught me broad principles to apply, and structured learning also builds the discipline and focus needed to do well in any intense job setting. But it does not teach the details of how to use and implement AI/ML in a specific business to meet that business's specific goals.

Learning by Doing

Furthermore, I'm a big proponent of "learn by doing," so there have been cases where I may have learned something in school, only to forget it (because it wasn't put into regular practice) until I came across a new job that actually needed that skill. In those cases, the job would help me refresh what I learned in school and also help the skill stick with me, as opposed to forgetting it.

Photo: Artem Podrez via Pexels

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The Telenovela Gets its Theatrical Due

R. Daniel Foster · Wednesday, November 11th, 2026

Telenovelas, with their massive global viewership, are a cultural phenomenon. But the style is not relegated to Spanish-speaking audiences. Similar dramas glue eyeballs to screens in the Philippines, Thailand, the Arab world, Japan, South Korea, and Canada.

A stage production—especially one with Latin music—would seem in order. Enter Karen Zacarías' *Destiny of Desire,* playing in hyper-melodramatic style at the Mark Taper Forum, November 11 through December 20.



Destiny of Desire, playing at the Mark Taper Forum | Photo: Jamie Kraus

Growing Up With the Genre

The all-Latino cast is familiar with the escapist genre. When actor Zeus Mendoza, who plays Armando Castillo, was eight, evenings with his family in Phoenix revolved around telenovelas—*Mamá Campanita* and *La Fiera* were favorites. It was a nightly ritual of drama, laughs, and improbable plot lines.

In the play, Mendoza's character *o*wns the Castillo Casino and loves his status as much as his ex-beauty queen wife, Fabiola, played by Gabriela Carrillo. Fabiola secretly swaps their newborn daughter with another at the hospital and Armando raises the wrong child for 18 years without knowing.



Destiny of Desire, playing at the Mark Taper Forum | Photo: Jamie Kraus

The play has two layers. The first is a send-up of the ever-dramatic telenovela genre, served with music, dancing and outrageousness, “a nonstop roller coaster ride,” as Mendoza describes it. The play’s subversive edge comes from actors who break the fourth wall, stepping out of the story to share facts—some witty, some sobering—that raise questions about gender inequality, class divides, immigration, gun violence, healthcare disparities and other issues.

The meta message: perhaps all of life is a telenovela.



Destiny of Desire, playing at the Mark Taper Forum | Photo: Jamie Kraus

Mendoza credits director Marcela Lorca with expertly stitching the layers together into a seamless production. “I can’t imagine this show being directed by anybody else,” he says, adding that Lorca intimately understands the culture, the humor, and the pressures of growing up in it. Above that, he adds, she understands the dynamics of Latino families.

“We never intend to make fun of the genre; it’s one that billions of people around the world have grown up with,” says Mendoza. “We pay homage to it. Yes, there are a lot of shenanigans, a lot of fun as we embrace the music and dance of our culture. There’s a richness that comes through—it’s very infectious to the audience.”



Destiny of Desire, playing at the Mark Taper Forum | Photo: Jamie Kraus

Mendoza doesn’t see Armando as a straightforward villain, despite his pride, power, and capacity to irritate. “He’s also a victim of Fabiola’s manipulation,” he says. “I tried infusing him with heart as well. And he does a couple of things in the show that people will be shocked at.”

Zacarías’ play had its world premiere in 2015 at the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., directed by

José Luis Valenzuela. It went on to regional and national tours and landed at San Diego's Old Globe in 2023. As a co-production with the Center Theatre Group, the Denver Center Theatre Company performed the play in September and October 2026.



Destiny of Desire, playing at the Mark Taper Forum | Photo: Jamie Kraus

Will Non-Spanish Speakers Keep Up?

Mendoza says they will. Zacarías, who grew up in Mexico and the U.S., sprinkles in Spanish, but she crafted the script so English-only audiences can follow everything.

Mendoza arrives at the Mark Taper having played Armando Castillo in the Denver production that ran at the Wolf Theatre. Los Angeles will be a welcoming next stop, he says, given the city has a large Latino population with families who have lived here for generations. "In L.A., we have a built-in audience," he says. "The marketing team has set up student matinees to get young Latino people to have an opportunity to see something like this."



Destiny of Desire, playing at the Mark Taper Forum | Photo: Jamie Kraus

Mendoza was born in Chihuahua, Mexico; when he was four, his parents brought him and his brother to the U.S. He studied at Santa Clara University and worked as a Bay Area stage actor. In 2008, he received a Garland's Critics Choice Award nomination for his role as Slim in the Pasadena Playhouse production of *Of Mice and Men.* Mendoza, who also works in voice acting and gaming, has been a television series regular and guest star with roles in *Days of Our Lives, CSI, The Rookie, 9-1-1,* and others. In 2025, he performed as part of the ensemble in the Broadway musical adaptation of *Real Women Have Curves.* He's lived in Los Angeles since 1999.

For Mendoza, the Los Angeles run of the show is a homecoming; he says he doesn't take the all-Latino cast for granted. Opportunities to tell stories like this one "from beginning to end" with such a cast, he says, are rare.

Karen Zacarías' *Destiny of Desire* runs at the Mark Taper Forum, 135 N. Grand Ave., November 11 through December 20, 2026. Tickets: CenterTheatreGroup.org

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How Much Does Student Accommodation in Melbourne Cost?

Our Friends · Tuesday, November 10th, 2026

Melbourne is one of Australia's most popular student cities, offering accommodation options near

major universities and across different suburbs. Student accommodation in Melbourne typically costs AU$250–650 per week, depending on room type, location, and housing arrangement. This article compares Melbourne accommodation prices across room types, housing options, and popular student areas, as well as extra expenses and ways to save on rent.

How Much Does Each Type of Student Accommodation in Melbourne Cost?

Student accommodation in Melbourne typically costs AU$250–400 per week for shared rooms, AU$300–420 for non-ensuite rooms, AU$400–510 for en-suite rooms and AU$440–580 for studio apartments. Prices vary according to the property, suburb, and facilities.

Room Type	Average Weekly Cost
Shared Room	AU$250–400
Non-En-suite Room	AU$300–420
En-suite Room	AU$400–510
Studio Apartment	AU$440–580

- Shared Room: A shared room typically costs AU$250–400 per week in Melbourne. Students share a bedroom with one or more roommates, usually in purpose-built student accommodation or shared houses near universities. For Monash students, living in outer suburbs like Clayton provides affordable **student accommodation near Monash Clayton** within easy reach of lectures. University of Melbourne and La Trobe University students often seek shared options across Carlton or Bundoora to keep daily living costs manageable.
- Non-En-suite Room: A non-en-suite room generally costs AU$300–420 per week. Students have a private bedroom but share a bathroom and kitchen with other residents. This room type is common in Melbourne share houses and student apartments, particularly in Carlton, Brunswick and Clayton, where students can live near major university campuses while keeping rent relatively affordable.
- En-suite Room: An en-suite room in Melbourne usually costs AU$400–510 per week. It provides a private bedroom and attached bathroom, while kitchens and living areas are shared with other residents. Many student accommodation in Carlton and Melbourne CBD often offers this room type, giving students convenient access to the University of Melbourne, RMIT University, and central-city facilities.
- Studio Apartment: A studio apartment typically costs AU$440–580 per week in Melbourne. It combines a sleeping area, private bathroom and kitchenette in one self-contained space. Studios are widely available in Melbourne CBD and around the Parkville university precinct, making them a suitable choice for students at the University of Melbourne or RMIT who prefer more privacy and independent living.

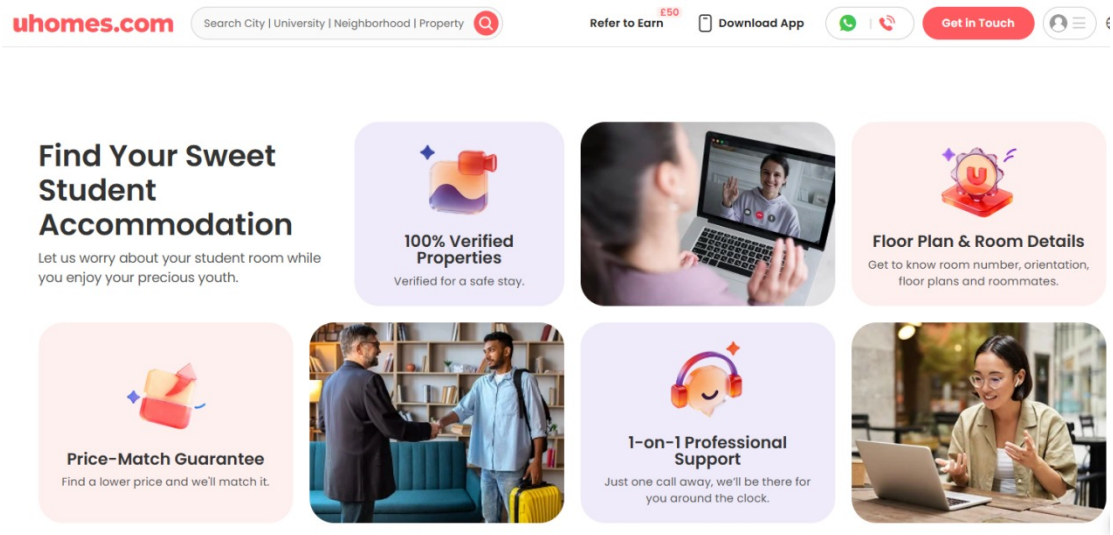
How Much Does Different Student Housing in Melbourne Cost?

Purpose-built student accommodation in Melbourne typically costs AU$550–650 per week, while catered residential colleges can exceed AU$1,000. University-managed accommodation, including on-campus residences, generally costs around AU$340–790 per week, depending on the university, room type and facilities. Private shared houses cost around AU$200–450 per person, and homestays typically cost AU$300–500 per week. The main differences are the facilities, meal arrangements and services included in the rent.

Purpose-Built Student Accommodation

Purpose-built student accommodation in Melbourne typically costs AU$550–650 per week on average, according to CBRE's 2026 market research. Buildings are concentrated around Melbourne CBD, Carlton and Parkville, providing convenient access to universities such as RMIT and the University of Melbourne. Properties commonly offer furnished rooms, study areas, gyms, communal kitchens and social lounges. Many also include electricity, water and Wi-Fi, making weekly expenses easier to manage.

When looking for PBSA, uhomes.com offers plenty of quality and **cheap student accommodation in Melbourne** with all-inclusive bills and convenient locations. Most are located near major universities or in Melbourne CBD, ensuring students can easily navigate academic and city life. With a lot of PBSAs under AU$500 per week and user-friendly filters, students can easily secure the ideal housing within your budget.



On-Campus Accommodation

On-campus accommodation in Melbourne generally costs around AU$340–790 per week, depending on the university, room type and facilities. At Monash University's Clayton campus, weekly rates range from AU$342.30 for a bedroom in a shared flat to AU$441.70 for a one-bedroom apartment. At the University of Melbourne, weekly rates for university-managed apartment-style accommodation near the Parkville campus range from AU$448 to AU$786, covering options such as shared apartments and private studios.

Fees at both universities include utilities and internet, although other inclusions vary by residence. Living close to campus gives students convenient access to lectures, libraries and university facilities, reducing the need for a long daily commute.

Residential Colleges

Melbourne Residential colleges generally cost AU$1,000 or more per week for catered accommodation at some universities. While ordinary on-campus university apartments offer self-catered rooms and basic modern facilities, traditional residential colleges provide a fully inclusive lifestyle. This bundled cost includes three meals a day, small-group academic tutorials, formal dinners, and intensive pastoral support.

Established University of Melbourne residential colleges such as Trinity College, Ormond College, Queen's College, and Newman College function as independent academic communities with rich traditions. Their higher weekly rates reflect the complete catering and academic mentorship provided, making them ideal for students who value strong campus integration and structured daily living over independent meal prep.

Private Rentals and Shared Houses

Private rentals and shared houses in Melbourne generally cost AU$200–450 per person per week. Students can rent a room in a shared house around Carlton, Brunswick, Clayton or Bundoora and split household expenses with other tenants.

This option offers flexibility and can be cheaper than PBSA, particularly outside the CBD. However, rent may not include furniture, electricity, gas, water or internet, so students should calculate the total cost before signing a lease.

Homestays

Homestays in Melbourne typically cost AU$300 to AU$500 per week, with prices varying based on the suburb, room type, and included meal plans. Students live with a local host family, receiving a private bedroom and shared access to household facilities. Most homestay packages include breakfast and dinner, helping students control their weekly food expenses while settling into a new city.

Homestays is particularly essential for international students under 18 years of age who must satisfy Australian visa welfare requirements before starting their courses. They are also ideal for new foundation and first-year university students who want a supportive environment to adjust to Australian culture and improve their English skills through everyday interactions with local hosts.

How Much Does Student Accommodation Cost in Different Areas of Melbourne?

Student accommodation prices vary by suburb in Melbourne. Shared rooms in more affordable student areas such as Clayton and Bundoora generally cost around AU$250–300 per week, while popular inner-city suburbs such as Carlton, Brunswick and Melbourne CBD typically cost AU$300–400/week. The following details major students areas and their room rental medians in Melbourne:

- Melbourne CBD (AU$300 to AU$350 per week): Best for RMIT students and those attending secondary city campuses. Living in the CBD puts key transit hubs, Queen Victoria Market, and major retail complexes right on your doorstep. Residents also benefit from the Free Tram Zone, eliminating daily public transport expenses into university lectures.
- Carlton (AU$350 to AU$400 per week): The primary base for University of Melbourne students due to its direct border with the Parkville campus. Known as Melbourne's Little Italy, Carlton combines historic Victorian terraces with leafy parks and famous espresso bars along Lygon Street, offering a strong academic and cultural community.
- Southbank (Around AU$375 to AU$425 per week): A modern high-rise district ideal for students who prefer luxury apartment living along the Yarra River. Positioned right next to the Arts Precinct and National Gallery of Victoria, Southbank delivers premium student towers within a short walk across the river into the city centre.

- Clayton (AU$250 to AU$300 per week): The most practical, cost-effective choice for Monash University Clayton campus students. This multicultural suburban hub features extensive Asian grocery markets, authentic dining options along Centre Road, and convenient bus connections from Huntingdale Station.
- Bundoora AU$250 to AU$300 per week): A budget-friendly northern suburb tailored to La Trobe University students. Bundoora provides a relaxed, green setting with spacious house shares and student complexes linked directly to campus via the 86 tram line.
- Brunswick (AU$300 to AU$350 per week): Perfect for students seeking an artistic, alternative lifestyle in Melbourne's inner north. Sydney Road forms the heart of the neighbourhood, lined with live music venues, vintage clothing stores, and multicultural eateries, with rapid train links into the CBD.

What Extra Costs Should Students Budget for in Melbourne?

Besides rent, students in Melbourne should budget for utilities, internet, rental bonds, rent in advance, public transport and household expenses. These costs depend on the property and whether services are included in the weekly rent.

- Electricity, water and gas: Private rental tenants may need to pay these bills separately or split them with housemates. Heating is worth considering during Melbourne's colder winter months. Many PBSA and university residences include utilities in the rent.
- Internet: Many student apartments include Wi-Fi, while private rentals may require students to arrange their own NBN or internet plan. Housemates can usually share the cost.
- Bond and rent in advance: In Victoria, a rental bond is generally capped at one month's rent for properties costing AU$900 or less per week. The bond must be lodged with the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority. For weekly rent payments, landlords generally cannot request more than 14 days of rent in advance.
- Public transport: Students living in Clayton, Bundoora or Footscray may need to budget for regular train, tram or bus journeys. Melbourne's Free Tram Zone covers central city journeys, while eligible international students may qualify for a 50% concession through Victoria's International Student Travel Pass.
- Laundry and household supplies: Students in private rentals may need to pay for laundry, cleaning products, bedding and kitchen equipment. Unfurnished properties can also involve higher initial moving costs.

How to Find Affordable Student Accommodation in Melbourne?

Students can save on Melbourne student accommodation by comparing rental prices, considering more affordable suburbs, choosing budget-friendly room types and checking additional costs before booking. These tips can help international students find suitable housing within their weekly budget.

- Compare Prices on uhomes.com: Use uhomes.com to compare verified student accommodation near the University of Melbourne, RMIT, Monash and La Trobe. Filter listings by suburb, room type, and weekly budget to find options that suit your finances. Check price-match guarantee, exclusive offers and cashback promotions for potential savings.
- Consider More Affordable Suburbs: Clayton, Bundoora and Footscray generally offer lower rents than central Melbourne. Choose a location with convenient public transport to balance rent and commuting costs.

- Choose Shared or Non-En-suite Rooms: Shared and non-en-suite rooms usually cost less than private studios and en-suite rooms. Sharing a bedroom or bathroom can help reduce weekly rent.
- Check Bills and Included Facilities: Compare electricity, water, gas and internet costs before booking. Accommodation with bills included may offer better overall value, even if its weekly rent is slightly higher.
- Book Early and Look for Offers: Start comparing accommodation before the February or July university intakes. Check early-bird discounts, cashback promotions and special rental offers to secure a better price.

Final Thoughts

Student accommodation in Melbourne offers options for different budgets, from affordable shared houses in Clayton and Bundoora to modern apartments in the CBD and catered residential colleges near the University of Melbourne. Most students can plan for around AU$250–650 per week for typical student housing, although some premium and catered options cost more. Before booking, compare room types, university locations, transport connections and included bills to understand the full cost. Platforms such as uhomes.com make it easier to compare Melbourne properties, explore different rental prices and find available offers that suit your budget.

Photo: Macourt Media via Pexels

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Affordable Suburbs for Students in Sydney

Our Friends · Tuesday, November 10th, 2026

Sydney is home to world-renowned universities, beautiful beaches, and a vibrant city lifestyle. However, living in Australia’s largest city can be expensive, especially for students managing rent and everyday costs on a limited budget. While suburbs close to major campuses and the CBD often come with higher rents, there are several well-connected suburbs that offer more affordable accommodation without sacrificing access to universities, shops and everyday essentials.

Here are seven affordable suburbs in Sydney worth considering for students.

1. Kingsford

Kingsford is a popular choice for UNSW students who want to live close to campus without paying for accommodation in the CBD. A private room in a shared house typically costs around

A$260–380 per week. Many student residences are around a 15–25-minute walk from UNSW, while the light rail can take approximately 5 minutes. The suburb has a strong student presence, particularly around Anzac Parade.

Things to Do in Kingsford

Anzac Parade is the main commercial strip in Kingsford, with Korean, Chinese, Malaysian and other Asian restaurants, cafés, supermarkets and everyday shops. Students can grab an affordable meal between lectures or meet friends for dinner without travelling into the city. The Juniors Kingsford is another local social hub, offering restaurants, bars, a gym, aquatic facilities and live entertainment. For outdoor activities, nearby Kensington Oval provides sports and recreation facilities, while Centennial Park and Coogee Beach are popular weekend destinations for cycling, walking and spending time outdoors.

2. Burwood

Burwood offers a wider range of off-campus **USYD student accommodation** options. A private room in a shared house typically costs around A$250–330 per week. Trains from Burwood Station to Redfern Station take approximately 9–13 minutes, followed by a 10-minute walk to the University of Sydney. The journey from Burwood to USYD generally takes around 20–25 minutes, excluding the walk to Burwood Station.

Things to Do in Burwood

Burwood has one of Sydney’s liveliest suburban dining scenes. Westfield Burwood offers fashion stores, supermarkets, a food court and Event Cinemas, making it convenient for shopping and catching a film. For Asian food, Burwood Chinatown and Emerald Square are popular dining and entertainment destinations, with restaurants, street-food options and late-night activities. Burwood Park is another local favourite, with open green space, walking paths, playgrounds and sports facilities.

3. Macquarie Park

Macquarie Park is a practical choice for students at Macquarie University. A private room in a shared house typically costs around A$230–340 per week. Macquarie University Metro Station is approximately a 2-minute walk from the university campus, making the suburb particularly convenient for students who want to reduce their daily commute. Compared with inner-city suburbs, Macquarie Park has a quieter and more suburban atmosphere, with plenty of green space nearby.

Things to Do in Macquarie Park

Macquarie Centre is the main shopping and entertainment destination in the suburb. It has major retailers, supermarkets, restaurants, cafés and a cinema, as well as leisure attractions such as an ice rink and bowling facilities. Students can shop for groceries, meet friends for dinner or spend an afternoon away from campus without travelling far. Café Calibre is another local option for coffee, brunch and casual meals. For a weekend outdoors, Lane Cove National Park is within reach and offers walking trails, picnic areas, cycling routes and opportunities for canoeing along the river.

4. Camperdown

Camperdown is ideal for students who want to live close to the University of Sydney. A private room in a shared house typically costs around A$300–420 per week. Many Camperdown student residences are approximately a 12–15-minute walk from the university. The suburb has a strong university and healthcare presence, with the University of Sydney and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital nearby. Students can find apartments, shared houses and purpose-built student accommodation in the surrounding streets.

Things to Do in Camperdown

Victoria Park is one of the best-known green spaces near USYD. Students can walk around the park, relax by the pond or stop at Gardener's Lodge Café for brunch. Camperdown Park also offers open lawns and sports facilities for outdoor exercise. For something cultural, the Chau Chak Wing Museum on the University of Sydney campus has free public collections covering art, history, science and archaeology. Students can also explore the university's historic Quadrangle or head towards Newtown for independent cafés, restaurants, bookshops and live entertainment.

5. Redfern

Redfern suits students at the University of Sydney and the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) who want convenient public transport. A private room in a shared house typically costs around A$250–380 per week. Redfern Station is approximately a 10-minute walk from the University of Sydney's main campus, while UTS is also within walking distance.Redfern has a mix of older terrace houses, apartment buildings and student-friendly rental properties. Its train station provides direct connections to Central Station and other parts of Sydney, making it a useful base for students who study or work across the city. The suburb also borders Chippendale and Surry Hills, giving residents more options for dining, shopping and entertainment.

Things to Do in Redfern

Redfern has a growing café and dining scene, particularly around its station, Cleveland Street and the neighbouring Surry Hills precinct. Kepos Street Kitchen is a well-known local spot for Mediterranean-inspired brunch and lunch, while Henry Lee's Redfern is another option for a relaxed café meal. For shopping and casual dining, Wunderlich Lane has restaurants, cafés, Coles and Harris Farm Markets.

6. Wolli Creek

Wolli Creek is worth considering for students who want convenient train connections and a choice of modern apartments. A private room in a shared house typically costs around A$295–420 per week, based on current room listings. Trains from Wolli Creek Station to Redfern take approximately 9–10 minutes, followed by a 10-minute walk to the University of Sydney. The total journey is generally around 20–25 minutes, excluding the walk from the accommodation to Wolli Creek Station.

Things to Do in Wolli Creek

The Discovery Point precinct is the suburb's main local hub, with cafés, restaurants, shops and landscaped public spaces close to Wolli Creek Station. Village Square is a convenient place to

meet friends or grab a meal, while nearby restaurants such as Onyu and Yan Restaurant offer options for Korean and Asian dining. For outdoor activities, Cahill Park and Discovery Point Park sit along the Cooks River and provide walking paths, open lawns, picnic areas and playgrounds. Cahill Park also has sports facilities and a riverside café, Kals on Cahill, where students can stop for brunch after a walk.

7. Mascot

Mascot offers a mix of shared houses and apartment rooms, with a private room typically costing around A$300–420 per week. The suburb is particularly convenient for students who travel frequently or want access to Sydney Airport. Mascot Station provides train connections to Central and the airport, while students travelling to UNSW can use connecting bus services towards Kensington.

Things to Do in Mascot

Mascot Central is the suburb's main shopping and dining precinct, located opposite Mascot Station. The open-air retail area includes Woolworths, cafés, restaurants and everyday services, making grocery shopping and grabbing a quick meal convenient for residents. Students looking for a café can try That Place Café for breakfast and brunch, while Teras Java is a local option for Indonesian food. Mascot Memorial Park offers green space for walking and outdoor exercise.

Average Rent Across Sydney's Student Suburbs

The table below compares the weekly rent for a private room in a shared house across the seven suburbs.

Suburb	Best For	Typical Weekly Room Rent
Kingsford	UNSW students	A$260–380
Burwood	Students commuting to USYD and the city	A$250–330
Macquarie Park	Macquarie University students	A$230–340
Camperdown	University of Sydney students	A$300–420
Redfern	USYD and UTS students	A$250–380
Wolli Creek	Students who rely on trains	A$295–420
Mascot	Students travelling to the city or airport	A$300–420

How to Rent Cheap Student Accommodation in Sydney

uhomes.com is a reliable rental platform that helps students find and book their ideal **student accommodation in Sydney** at the lowest price. It features over 2,300 properties across Sydney, with weekly rents starting at A$260. Finding your ideal student home through uhomes.com is simple and takes just three steps:

Step 1: Search and Filter Properties

Visit the Sydney student accommodation page and enter your preferred university or suburb. Use filters to narrow down properties by weekly budget, room type, move-in date, tenancy length and facilities. For example, UNSW students can start with Kingsford, while USYD students can compare Camperdown, Redfern and Burwood.

Step 2: Compare Rooms and Check Availability

Compare rent, room layouts, furniture, bills, facilities and travel times to campus. Check property photos, videos and virtual tours to understand the living environment. If you are overseas, ask whether a live video viewing is available. Confirm the room type, move-in date and tenancy period before applying.

Step 3: Apply and Confirm Your Booking

Submit your application with the documents required by the property. Once approved, review the tenancy agreement, including rent, lease dates, payment arrangements and cancellation terms. Complete the booking and payment through the confirmed process, then keep your booking confirmation and prepare for move-in.



Photo: Max Vakhtbovych via Pexels

What to Check Before Renting Student Accommodation in Sydney

Before signing a lease, make sure you understand the full cost of renting, the lease terms and your responsibilities as a tenant. The weekly rent is only part of the picture. Pay particular attention to these points:

- Rent and bills: Check whether electricity, gas, water and internet are included in the rent. If bills are shared, find out how they are split between housemates and whether any extra fees apply.
- Lease terms: Read the agreement carefully, including the lease dates, rent payment schedule and break lease conditions. A lease that runs beyond your semester or exchange programme could leave you paying rent after your studies end.
- Rental bond: In NSW, the bond for a standard residential tenancy is generally no more than four weeks’ rent. The landlord or agent must lodge it with NSW Fair Trading. Tenants can also use

Rental Bonds Online to pay and manage their bond.
- Property condition: Inspect the room and shared areas before moving in. Check that appliances, furniture, windows, doors and bathroom fixtures are in good condition. Record any existing damage in the condition report and take photos for your records.
- Rental scams: Never pay a deposit before confirming that the property and landlord or agent are legitimate. Inspect the property where possible, verify the agent's details and make sure you have a written agreement before transferring money.

Essential Tips for International Students Renting in Sydney

Renting in Sydney for the first time can be challenging, especially without an Australian rental history or the chance to inspect a property in person. Getting your documents ready and understanding the application process will help you secure a place with fewer delays.

- Get your documents ready: Rental applications commonly require a passport, visa details, university offer letter or enrolment confirmation, proof of funds and references. Having digital copies ready can speed up the process.
- Apply without an Australian rental history: A lack of local rental references does not automatically rule you out. Explain your situation to the landlord or property manager and provide alternative documents, such as your university offer letter, financial statements or a reference from a previous landlord.
- View the property before paying: Students applying from overseas can request a live video inspection. Ask to see the bedroom, kitchen, bathroom and shared areas, and confirm that the property matches the listing before transferring any money.
- Match the lease to your study dates: Exchange students and those on shorter programmes should check the available lease terms before applying. Confirm the minimum stay, fixed-term dates and any break lease costs.
- Check what comes with a furnished room: A furnished room usually includes a bed, desk and wardrobe, but bedding, cookware and tableware are not always provided. Confirm what is included before moving in so you can budget for anything you need to buy.

Conclusion

Finding affordable student accommodation in Sydney starts with choosing a suburb that fits both your budget and university location. Kingsford is a practical choice for UNSW students, Burwood offers more affordable shared rooms for students willing to commute, and Macquarie Park suits students at Macquarie University. For USYD students, Camperdown and Redfern offer shorter commutes, while Wolli Creek and Mascot provide alternative options with convenient train connections.

Before choosing a property, compare weekly rent, utility bills, room facilities and travel costs rather than focusing on rent alone. Students can use uhomes.com to compare more than 2,300 Sydney accommodation listings, filter by budget and room type, and check property details before booking. This makes it easier to find a room that fits both their study plans and living budget.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the cheapest area to live in Sydney as a student?

Burwood and Macquarie Park are two suburbs worth considering for students on a budget. Both offer shared rooms at relatively affordable weekly rents and have convenient public transport

connections. Students should also compare Kingsford and Redfern, depending on their university location.

2. How much does student accommodation cost in Sydney per week?

The cost depends on the room type and location. Based on a sample of Sydney student accommodation listings in November 2026, shared or twin rooms typically cost around A$400 per week, private rooms with shared bathrooms around A$450, en-suite rooms around A$590, and studios around A$600. Actual prices vary by property and lease conditions.

3. Which Sydney suburbs are best for UNSW and USYD students on a budget?

UNSW students can consider Kingsford due to its proximity to campus and light rail connection. USYD students can compare Camperdown, Redfern and Burwood. Camperdown and Redfern offer shorter commutes, while Burwood can provide more affordable shared rental options for students willing to travel by train.

4. Can international students book accommodation in Sydney before arriving?

Yes. International students can search for properties, submit applications and confirm bookings online before travelling to Sydney. They should first check room availability, lease conditions, payment arrangements, and cancellation policies. If they cannot inspect a property in person, they can ask whether live video or virtual viewings are available.

5. Does student accommodation in Sydney include utility bills?

It depends on the property. Many purpose-built student accommodation providers include electricity, water and internet in the rent, while private rentals and share houses may require tenants to arrange or split utility bills. Students should check exactly which costs are included before signing a tenancy agreement.

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Top Affordable Neighborhoods in Boston for Students

Our Friends · Tuesday, November 10th, 2026

Boston offers students a wide range of off-campus housing options, but rent and commute times vary across neighborhoods. Allston, Brighton, Mission Hill, Roxbury, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain and East Boston are popular areas to consider. This guide compares their rental costs, university access and local amenities to help students find a cheap area to live.

1. Mission Hill

Mission Hill is an affordable neighborhood for renting **apartments near Northeastern University** and the Longwood Medical Area and offers many shared apartments and multi-bedroom houses. The neighborhood has access to the Orange Line, Green Line E branch and several bus routes. Monthly rent in Mission Hill ranges from $ 2,500 to $ 4,500. Rents are slightly higher than in some of Boston's other affordable neighborhoods, but the location offers shorter commutes to Northeastern University and the Longwood Medical Area.

Things to Do in Mission Hill

Brigham Circle is one of the neighborhood's main commercial areas. Students can find restaurants, cafés, convenience stores and everyday services around Huntington Avenue. One Brigham Circle is a local shopping center with retail and service businesses.

For outdoor space, Kevin W. Fitzgerald Park provides a place to relax, exercise or meet friends. Huntington Avenue also connects Mission Hill with the Longwood Medical Area and Northeastern University, making it convenient for students who spend much of their day on campus.

2. Allston

Allston is a popular choice for students looking for lower rents near Boston University and Harvard University. The neighborhood has a range of **affordable student housing in Boston**, including shared houses and larger apartment buildings. Located west of Boston University's Charles River Campus, Allston also has frequent MBTA bus and Green Line services.

Monthly rent in Allston typically ranges from $2,850 to $3,600. Housing options include traditional triple-deckers, shared houses and larger apartment buildings. Rental prices and property conditions vary from one street to another, so arrange a viewing and check the unit's condition before signing a lease.

Things to Do in Allston

Harvard Avenue and Brighton Avenue are two of Allston's main commercial streets. Students can find casual restaurants, cafés, supermarkets, and independent shops along both roads. Novo Marketplace on Brighton Avenue is a food hall option for trying different food vendors in one place. Packard's Corner is another convenient area for everyday shopping and dining.

Allston also has a lively music scene, with local venues and bars attracting students throughout the week. Commonwealth Avenue provides a direct route toward Boston University, while the Green Line B branch connects the neighborhood with other parts of Boston.



Photo: Max Vakhtbovych via Pexels

3. Brighton

Brighton is a relatively affordable neighborhood for students renting near Boston University and Boston College. The area has a mix of apartment buildings and shared houses, with Green Line stops providing connections to both campuses and downtown Boston.

Monthly rent in Brighton typically ranges from $2,600 to $3,200. Rental options include older apartment buildings and newer developments. Compare the condition of each property, the utilities included in the rent and the commute to campus before signing a lease.

Things to Do in Brighton

Brighton Center is a major local shopping and dining area, with restaurants, cafés, grocery stores and everyday services along Washington Street and nearby roads. Washington Square offers another cluster of local businesses and restaurants, as well as access to the Green Line C branch. Students who enjoy outdoor activities can visit Chestnut Hill Reservoir for walking, running and views across the water.

4. Roxbury

Roxbury is one of Boston’s more affordable neighborhoods for students, particularly those attending Northeastern University and Roxbury Community College. Its location provides access to downtown Boston, with Orange Line and Silver Line stations and local bus routes serving the area.

The monthly rent in Roxbury typically ranges from $2,300 to $3,100. Rental options include apartments and shared houses, but prices and property conditions vary by address. Check the location, building condition and commute to campus before signing a lease.

Things to Do in Roxbury

Nubian Square is one of Roxbury's main commercial and cultural centers. The area has restaurants, local shops, community services, and bus connections to other parts of Boston. Students can also explore the neighborhood's cultural institutions and historic sites.

Fort Hill offers historic architecture and a residential atmosphere, while Franklin Park provides extensive green space for walking, running and outdoor activities. Franklin Park Zoo is also located within the park, making it a popular weekend destination.

5. Dorchester

Dorchester is one of Boston's more affordable neighborhoods for students, particularly those attending the University of Massachusetts Boston. The Red Line, commuter rail and local bus routes connect different parts of the neighborhood with UMass Boston and other areas of the city.

Monthly rent in Dorchester typically ranges from $2,300 to $2,800. As Dorchester covers a large area, you should check the property's distance from the nearest transit stop and your campus before choosing a rental.

Things to Do in Dorchester

Fields Corner has plenty of restaurants, cafés, grocery stores and local shops for everyday needs. Dorchester Avenue is another popular spot for dining and shopping. For outdoor activities, students can visit Savin Hill Beach or walk and cycle along the Neponset River Greenway. Near UMass Boston, Columbia Point offers waterfront paths and access to the JFK Presidential Library and Museum.

6. Hyde Park

Hyde Park is one of Boston's more affordable neighborhoods for students who are willing to commute farther to campus. Monthly rents are generally lower than in central Boston, making it a good option for students looking to keep housing costs down.

Monthly rent in Hyde Park typically ranges from $2,700 to $3,880. Rental options include apartments and houses, with commuter rail and bus services connecting the neighborhood to other parts of Boston.

Things to Do in Hyde Park

Cleary Square is Hyde Park's main commercial area, with restaurants, cafés, shops and everyday services along Hyde Park Avenue. Logan Square also has supermarkets and retail stores for daily shopping.

For outdoor activities, Stony Brook Reservation has wooded trails and ponds for walking and hiking. The Neponset River Reservation offers more paths and green space, giving students places to get outside close to home.

7. East Boston

East Boston is one of the more affordable neighborhoods for students who want to live outside

central Boston, with Blue Line connections to downtown and other MBTA services. It is particularly useful for students who study or work in central Boston and want to compare rental prices outside the most student-heavy neighborhoods. Monthly rent in East Boston typically ranges from 2,500 to 3,000. This is lower than the rent ranges in Allston, Mission Hill and several other popular student neighborhoods.

Things to Do in East Boston

Maverick Square and Central Square are two of East Boston's main local centers. Both have restaurants, grocery stores, cafés, and everyday services. Students can also explore the neighborhood's waterfront spaces, including Piers Park, which has harbor views and walking paths.

The East Boston Harborwalk provides a route along the waterfront, while Bremen Street Community Park offers open space and walking paths near the airport and Blue Line. These outdoor areas are useful for students who want somewhere to walk, exercise or take a break from studying.

Tips for Renting Student Housing in Boston

Findingaffordable student housing in Boston takes more than comparing monthly rent. Your commute, utility bills, lease terms, and upfront costs all affect your housing budget. Keep these tips in mind when looking for an apartment:

- Compare the total cost: Check whether rent includes heat, electricity, water and internet. Ask about extra fees and how utility bills are split between roommates. The monthly rent alone does not show how much you will actually spend.
- Consider sharing an apartment: Renting a two-bedroom or larger apartment with roommates can reduce your share of the rent. Before signing, agree on how to divide rent, utilities, and the security deposit, and make sure everyone understands their responsibilities.
- Check the commute and start early: Use the MBTA trip planner to compare travel times from each apartment to campus. Start your search several months before the fall semester, when demand is high, so you have enough time to compare neighborhoods, arrange viewings and find a convenient location.
- Prepare your application documents: Landlords and property managers commonly ask for photo ID, proof of enrollment, proof of income or funds, and rental references. International students without a US credit history or rental history should ask about alternative documents and guarantor requirements before applying.
- Review the lease and upfront costs: Check the lease dates, payment schedule, security deposit, broker fees (if applicable), utility responsibilities and early termination terms. Confirm the total amount due before signing or transferring money, and make sure the lease covers your intended stay in Boston.
- Choose a reliable rental platform: Use established rental platforms to compare listings and check property details before booking. uhomes.com features verified student housing in Boston, with photos, videos and room information, as well as free support from consultants throughout the booking process. You can arrange an in-person or live video viewing through the website to verify the property before booking and reduce the risk of rental scams.

Conclusion

The right Boston neighborhood depends on where you study, how much you plan to spend on rent and how far you are willing to commute. Compare the average rents in the table with the actual commute and amenities around each property before narrowing down your options. At uhomes.com, international students can find verified rental listings that do not require a US-based guarantor or prior US rental history. Explore more affordable Boston student housing on the platform to find an apartment that fits your budget and university location.

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South Africa’s Proposed 20% Online Gambling Tax Heads for a February 2027 Decision: What It Means for Players

Our Friends · Tuesday, November 10th, 2026

Treasury’s national levy on online betting revenue survives the mini-budget, with the final design due in next year’s Budget. Operators face a sharply higher tax bill, and players should expect the effects to show up in odds, bonuses and the choice of where to bet.

JOHANNESBURG, 9 November 2026 — South Africa’s online gambling market is heading into its most significant tax change in two decades. Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana confirmed in his Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement on 21 October 2026 that National Treasury is still working on a proposed national tax on online gambling, and that the final design will be announced in the February 2027 Budget. The proposal now on the table is a 20% levy on the gross gambling revenue (GGR) of online betting and interactive gambling operators, charged on top of the taxes they already pay.

Background: how the proposal came about

National Treasury first set out the idea in a discussion paper, The Case for a National Online Gambling Tax, published on 25 November 2025. The paper argued that online gambling has grown faster than the current tax and regulatory framework was built to handle, and that the social costs of problem gambling should be reflected in what the sector pays. Treasury framed the levy as a “sin tax” along the lines of the excise duties on alcohol and tobacco.

The numbers behind the proposal are substantial. National Gambling Board figures show that around R1.5 trillion was wagered in South Africa in the 2024/25 financial year, an increase of about 31% on the year before. Gross gambling revenue, the amount bet minus winnings paid out,

reached R74.5 billion, up 25.6%. Online betting now accounts for more than 85% of betting GGR, driven by smartphone access and aggressive marketing.

Treasury chose the 20% rate with reference to international practice, noting that 11 jurisdictions already charge 20% on GGR and a further 16 charge more. At current revenue levels, it estimates the tax would raise over R10 billion a year for national government.

The public comment period was extended twice and closed on 27 February 2026, followed by workshops with affected parties. The 2026 Budget in February gave the tax only a passing mention, which tax advisers had expected given the length of a new tax's consultation process.

The latest update: still alive, not yet law

The October mini-budget kept the proposal on track but did not confirm a rate or a start date. Godongwana told Parliament that "the submissions received generally recognised the need to address the growth of online gambling and its associated harm," and that consultations are continuing on three points: the design of the tax, how it fits with the existing regulatory framework, and what it means for provincial governments and the regulated market.

In practical terms, this means:

- The tax is not in force. Nothing changes for operators or players until the February 2027 Budget sets out the final design and Parliament passes the legislation.
- 20% is the proposed rate, not the confirmed one. Treasury could adjust it, phase it in, or change how it interacts with provincial levies.
- It would sit on top of existing taxes. Provinces currently tax **online betting** at roughly 6% to 9% of GGR, and licensed bookmakers also pay VAT. Industry estimates put the current combined burden at about 18% to 19% of GGR. Adding a 20% national levy would push the effective rate to around 38% to 39%, among the highest in the world.
- The constitutional question is open. Gambling is a concurrent national and provincial competence, and provinces collect gambling taxes. Critics, including the South African Online Gambling Association (SAROGA), argue that a national levy reshapes the regulatory settlement through tax rather than through law. Treasury's paper also proposes taxing revenue from interactive (online casino) **online gambling**, which remains unlawful nationally.

Licensed operators have pushed back hard. Their central warning is that a heavy additional levy on the legal market could drive bettors toward offshore and unlicensed sites that pay no South African tax and offer none of its consumer protections.

What it means for players in practice

The proposed tax is levied on operators' revenue, not on players' winnings. South African punters would not be filling in a new tax return or seeing 20% deducted from a payout. The impact, if the tax goes ahead as proposed, is more likely to be indirect:

- Tighter odds and margins. Operators facing a near-doubling of their tax bill are likely to recover part of it through the margin built into their odds. Small differences in odds add up over hundreds of bets, so comparing prices across licensed bookmakers will matter more.
- Fewer and leaner promotions. Welcome bonuses, free bets, **free spins no deposit** and loyalty rewards are among the first costs operators trim when margins shrink. Players should expect

smaller offers and stricter wagering requirements.
- Higher minimums and fees. Some operators may raise minimum deposits or withdrawals, or pass on payment processing costs that they currently absorb.
- Market consolidation. Smaller licensed brands may merge, exit or scale back, leaving players with fewer choices. Anyone holding a balance with a smaller operator should keep an eye on announcements.
- More pressure from offshore sites. Unlicensed operators may use the tax as a marketing angle, promising better odds and bigger bonuses. Betting with them carries real risk: no provincial license, no local dispute resolution, and little recourse if winnings are withheld. Only provincially licensed operators offer the protections of **South African online gambling law**.
- Stronger responsible gambling measures. Because the tax is explicitly aimed at gambling harm, the final package may come alongside tighter rules on advertising, affordability checks or deposit limits.

None of these effects are automatic, and the timing depends on the final design announced in February. Operators are unlikely to change their pricing significantly before the rules are known.

Staying informed

With the final design due in February 2027 and implementation details still to follow, the picture will keep moving over the coming months. Players can follow the latest developments, including Budget-day analysis and how individual operators respond, at **southafricancasinos.co.za**, our leading site for South African gambling news and updates as the market develops.

What to watch next

- February 2027 Budget: the final rate, the tax base, the start date, and whether the levy replaces or sits alongside provincial taxes.
- Draft legislation: the bill that would give the tax legal effect, and any further public comment window.
- Provincial response: how provincial gambling boards and treasuries adjust their own levies.
- Operator announcements: changes to odds, promotions and product ranges in the weeks after the Budget.

If gambling is causing you or someone close to you harm, free and confidential support is available through the National Responsible Gambling Programme.

About SouthAfricanCasinos.co.za

SouthAfricanCasinos.co.za is an independent news and information site covering South Africa’s gambling market and **best online casinos site**. It tracks regulatory and tax developments, reviews provincially licensed operators, and publishes practical guides on payments, promotions and responsible gambling, helping South African players make informed choices in a fast-changing market.

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The Pension Decisions You Can’t Take Back

Our Friends · Tuesday, November 10th, 2026

Most financial choices can be corrected. You can rebalance a portfolio, refinance a loan, or change a contribution next month. An Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS) pension isn’t like that. A few of the decisions attached to it are made once, in a moment, and then they stay with you for life.

That is why **planning around an ASRS pension** deserves more attention than it usually gets. For members, the real risk isn’t picking a bad investment. It is signing a form you didn’t fully understand.

Decision one: the date

Your retirement date sets your starting benefit, and it can set it permanently. Leaving at one age instead of another can change the monthly amount for as long as you collect. It can also change when your health coverage begins, when you can claim Social Security, and how long your savings must cover the gap.

People often choose a date because of a birthday, a school year, or a feeling that they are done. Those are all fair reasons to leave, but they are not a plan. The better question is what the date does to your income, your taxes, and your insurance once the paychecks stop.

Decision two: the benefit option

When you retire, you generally choose how the benefit is paid. Some choices give a higher monthly amount during your life and less, or nothing, to a surviving spouse. Others give up some income today to protect someone after you are gone.

There is no universally right answer. It depends on your spouse’s age and health, their own income and benefits, whether you have life insurance, and how much you worry about the survivor’s standard of living. A couple with two pensions faces a very different choice from a couple living on one.

What matters is that the choice is generally final. You can’t come back in ten years and switch because your circumstances changed. So run each option against real household numbers, including what happens to the surviving spouse’s income, before you sign.

Decision three: going back to work

Many retirees want to keep working, whether part time, as a consultant, or in a new role. That is a reasonable plan, but the pension system has rules about it. Hours, timing, and how long you have been retired can all affect whether your pension continues, pauses, or changes.

The trouble is that the rules are easy to trip over. Someone accepts a role in good faith, works more hours than they realized, and discovers the consequences afterward. Check the rules for your situation before you say yes to any job, and get the answer in writing where you can.

Decision four: how the pension fits with everything else

The pension is only one part of your retirement income. Social Security, savings, and any supplemental accounts all sit alongside it, and the order you use them in affects your taxes. So does the timing of Roth conversions in lower-income years. Healthcare costs before Medicare are another piece people forget to price in.

Getting these pieces to work together is where a **financial planner for ASRS members** can earn their keep. An independent view can catch the gap you hadn’t seen, or confirm that your plan is sound so you can retire with confidence.

What to do before you sign

- Write down your monthly spending and subtract your guaranteed income
- Compare each benefit option against your spouse’s needs
- Check the return-to-work rules before accepting any job
- Map out health coverage from your last day until Medicare
- Update your beneficiaries on every account
- Give yourself time, because rushing is the most expensive mistake

The pension is a gift of stability, but only if you use it well. Take the time to understand the choices that can’t be undone, and you’ll make them with your eyes open.

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Sydney Lea: Two Poems

Sydney Lea · Tuesday, November 10th, 2026

Darkness

I was not lost, only turned around,
as old Vermonters say.
I know the countryside cold,
so I'd find my way out of those woods, that swamp.
Still, a darkness under those trees this morning
recalled a chilling moment.
16 or so, alone,
small flashlight clamped in one hand,
I groped along a slim limestone seam,

intent on local fame:
I'd explore the cave, then report to my friends,
each one of them besieged like me
by an adolescent hunger to show
the world how tough he is.
I saw I was not when I snapped off the light
at the first fork I reached.
A blackness instantly descended,
more absolute than black.
As never before, I understood

what helplessly *lost* might mean.
I turned myself around on the spot.
The feeble torch showed webs,
pale insects within them like hovering souls.
Chalk-dust fell around me,
so fine I seemed to dream more than sense it.
Four hundred miles from that cave,
where a sense of my doom had struck me,
I stood today, mud clutching my boots,

then staggered as fast as I could from the murk,
the unnerving forest, the bog,
no human trace there but a rust-riddled bucket,
from an age when even wetland
had been cleared for pasture. The woods have simply
returned to claim what was theirs from the start.
I emerged from my brief confinement,
as I did from that tunnel decades back,
tracking my puny beam of light

into a fathomless future.

*

All That's Waiting

—for MRB

Under radiant foliage two months before winter
I pledge I'll stand right here beside her

for just as long as I possibly can
and her gentle face will catch the sun

all through the rest of my life and then
of hers and her smile will live in winds

like today's or any which will endlessly flutter
the threads of that frayed old Irish sweater

she always wears whenever she's knocking
around the house or when she's hiking

inherited garment that's worn and tatty
and can't mask the inner and outer beauty

that has blessed me for more than forty years
as has that beguiling scent in her hair

which I am daydreaming now will persist
the one I catch when she comes in like this

from out in October chill with the lively
dogs so young they'll surely outlast me

and all I describe may wait in some Eden
that at worst it does me no harm to imagine

***

(Featured image from Pexels)

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Promotional Products for Outdoor Events: What Gets Used and What Gets Thrown Away

Our Friends · Monday, November 9th, 2026

After many outdoor events, a lot of branded merchandise ends up in trash cans, car trunks or sealed boxes. Items get used when they solve a real need for that specific audience, and they get thrown away when they are irrelevant, awkward to carry or poorly made. It also helps to separate two categories: giveaways people take home, and durable branded equipment that stays with your team and works across many events.

What Makes an Item Worth Keeping?

Before ordering anything, run each idea through a few practical questions about your audience.

- Relevance: Does it connect to what this audience does, at this event or afterward?
- Portability: Can someone carry it easily while walking around all day?
- Immediate use: Will they use it today, such as at a hot festival or a long conference?
- Useful life: Will it still work after a few weeks of normal use?
- Material practicality: Is it sturdy enough for its purpose without being bulky?

Be careful with environmental claims. Calling an item “eco-friendly” or “recyclable” needs real evidence about the materials and how they are handled, so describe it accurately instead, and let usefulness speak for itself.

Choose Giveaways People Can Actually Use

Useful items tend to share one trait: they fit naturally into someone’s routine. A refillable water bottle makes sense at a summer festival where water stations are available. A sturdy tote helps visitors carry samples and brochures at a craft fair. A compact notebook may suit a business expo, where people take notes between sessions. A printed event map can be the single most practical handout when the venue is large.

Compare that with novelty items chosen mainly because they are cheap or fun to design. Stress toys, oddly shaped gadgets or flimsy trinkets often get set down at the next table and forgotten.

Choose by audience and budget, not by assumption. A family-oriented outdoor concert, a tech conference and a marathon expo each call for different items. If budget is tight, ordering fewer, better-matched giveaways usually makes more sense than spreading the money across lots of low-value items.

Separate Handouts From Reusable Site Equipment

Not everything with a logo is meant to leave with visitors. Some branded items work better as equipment that stays at your stand and supports the experience.

Shade is a good example. At an outdoor demo area, product station or seating corner, **custom umbrellas with logo** serve as reusable site equipment rather than something handed to guests. They provide comfort where people pause and carry your branding all day, then pack up for the next event.

Treat this kind of equipment as an investment, not a consumable. Use bases suited to the ground, follow the manufacturer’s setup and weighting guidance, and close umbrellas when wind picks up. Clean and dry them before storage, and inspect ribs, poles and fabric between uses.

Keeping handouts and site equipment in separate budget lines also makes planning clearer, since each is judged differently.

Reuse the Branded Environment Across Events

Durable equipment can quietly carry your identity across a whole season. Instead of printing new

temporary banners for every show, many teams build a consistent branded environment that travels with them.

A **Custom Canopy Tent** works as a repeatedly deployed event asset: it frames your space, shows your name above the crowd and returns to storage afterward. That is a very different role from a promotional product handed out once. Its value comes from repeated use, so judge it on durability, ease of setup and fit.

Consistent visuals across tents, table covers and signs can reduce how often you need to remake one-off graphics. Plan the artwork so it stays relevant, avoiding event dates or campaign slogans that will quickly go out of date.

Measure Actual Use and Waste

After each event, count what came back unopened and note which items ran out first. Ask a few attendees or staff what they kept. For equipment, track how many times each piece was deployed and what you spent on repairs or replacements. Together, these numbers show where money is working and where it is wasted.

Spend Less on Clutter, More on Value

The most effective promotional mix is often smaller than expected. Choose fewer giveaways that clearly match the audience, and invest in durable equipment that earns its place event after event. Over time, that balanced approach tends to reduce waste, simplify planning and leave visitors with something worth keeping.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does swag mean in business marketing?

In marketing, swag means branded items that companies give away for free, usually at events, trade shows or conferences. Common examples include water bottles, tote bags, pens and notebooks. The aim is to keep the brand in front of people after the event, which only works when the item is useful enough to keep.

How many giveaways should I bring to an outdoor event?

Base your order on realistic interactions, not the total attendance. Look at how many people you expect to actually stop at your space, how many staff hours you have and how many items you gave out at similar events. Ordering slightly less and tracking what runs out is usually better than shipping home full boxes.

Are branded umbrellas good event giveaways?

Large patio or market umbrellas are generally not giveaways. They are site equipment that provides shade at your stand or demo area and is reused event after event. Small personal umbrellas can work as handouts for some audiences, but larger outdoor umbrellas belong in your equipment budget, along with proper bases and care.

Photo: Khaya Motsa via Pexels

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Online Crude Oil Trading Brokers: How to Pick a Reliable Platform Before You Place Your First Trade

Our Friends · Monday, November 9th, 2026

Many economies around the world have been fueled by oil for more than a century. If you have a smartphone, you can easily trade oil online from anywhere around the world.

Here is the catch, though: many unregistered firms are waiting to grab your deposits as a beginner. To avoid this, you need to learn how to pick a reliable platform before you place your first order. Here is your quick guide.

Start with Regulation

First things first, check the broker's license. Some of them are running unregulated and are real scammers. You need to look up the broker on the regulator's public register and match the name and license number.

Regulated online crude oil trading brokers are supposed to keep your money safe and also treat you fairly. If you ever want to trade oil online using an oil trading app like **Weltrade**, regulation gives you someone to complain to if things go wrong.

Compare the Spreads and Fees of Online Crude Oil Trading Brokers

Spreads and fees are an important factor to consider. Because some online crude oil trading brokers hide costs in different places, you should check overnight financing, commissions, and inactivity fees.

Before you begin to trade oil online, you can open the fee page and place a tiny trade on their oil trading app. Your result will show the true cost.

Check How Money Moves

When you are dealing with a reputable broker, depositing and withdrawing money becomes very simple. To trade oil online with ease, the first thing to do is check the payment method. Confirm whether there are local options listed and read the withdrawal rules as well.

Whether you use online crude oil trading brokers or an oil trading app, slow payouts and hidden conditions are red flags. You need to walk away if the terms feel unclear.

Red Flags to Avoid

As hinted, there are some shady brokers out there. How do you spot one? It is easy. Many will lie about the potential for huge profits. Some will rush you to deposit. If a stranger messages you out of the blue about an oil trading app, run.

Fake addresses and no registration info are also red flags to watch out for. Additionally, legitimate online crude oil trading brokers teach you first, but scammers push you hard. Always check before you trade oil online.

What a Good Oil Trading App Offers

There are many things that a good oil trading app comes with. Some include real-time prices, clear charts, and low fees. You also need to make sure it loads quickly on your phone and lets you set stop losses easily.

Many online crude oil trading brokers offer these features, and they make it simpler to trade oil online without stress.

Know What Moves Oil Prices

You are probably asking, “What makes oil prices jump or drop?” Mostly, it comes down to how much big exporters pump, the weekly stock reports, tension between countries, and economic growth.

Keep an eye on these, and you can trade oil online with a plan, not a hunch. Good online crude oil trading brokers give you news and tools.

Conclusion

You need all the above tips to find the best online crude oil trading brokers to trust today. Begin with a demo account so that you can practice and learn new skills safely. Also, it is advisable to start small and grow your account gradually.

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How to Date Someone With Expensive Tastes When You're on a Budget

Our Friends · Monday, November 9th, 2026

What do you do when the person you are falling for knows the wine list better than the waiter, and your budget for the month is already half spent? Booking the restaurant they would pick and paying for it on a credit card works for a month or two, until the statements start to arrive.

The Price of a Gift

In 2009 Francis Flynn of Stanford University and Gabrielle Adams studied how the price of a gift relates to the gratitude it brings. Givers in their studies expected a higher price to bring more gratitude, while recipients showed little connection between what a gift cost and how much they appreciated it.

The same gap appeared with engagement rings. Among newly married couples, men believed a costlier ring would bring more appreciation, while women's appreciation was only weakly linked to the price they thought had been paid. The authors' advice to givers was to spend effort on choosing a thoughtful gift. A partner with expensive tastes is likely to remember a plan built around what they enjoy.

Novel Activities for Couples

Couples report more satisfaction after doing something new together. In a series of studies published in 2000, the psychologist Arthur Aron and colleagues asked couples to complete a short task together in the lab. Couples who spent 7 minutes on a novel and physically demanding task, which involved moving an object across a room while tied together at the wrist and ankle, reported larger gains in relationship quality afterwards than couples who did a dull version of the same task.

Surveys in the same paper found that couples who did more new and stimulating things together also reported higher satisfaction. Novelty can cost very little. A walk through an unfamiliar neighbourhood, a free gallery evening or a first attempt at a new cuisine all count as new. The authors linked the effect to boredom, since the couples who reported more shared novelty also reported feeling less bored in the relationship, and boredom is something a small budget can address as well as a large one.

Relationship Choices and Early Conversations

Two people who agree on what kind of relationship they want can usually work out other differences between them. The options range from **dating a sugar baby** to a slow path toward marriage or a casual relationship that ends with the summer, and each one starts from different assumptions about how often two people meet and how soon they meet each other's friends.

Settling that question in the first few dates spares both people weeks of guessing about where things are heading.

Cheaper Hours at Good Restaurants

Statistics Canada reported that prices for food bought from **restaurants in Canada** were 5.1%

higher in March 2024 than a year earlier, and 4.3% higher in April. Prices dipped in December 2024, falling 1.6% year over year during the temporary federal tax break on restaurant meals, but most of the earlier increases remained.

Timing is the simplest way to eat well for less. Many restaurants with expensive dinner menus offer lunch menus or early-evening set menus at a lower price, from the same kitchen. Sharing two starters and one main, or going for dessert and a glass of wine at a place you could not afford for a full dinner, gives a partner with expensive tastes the setting they enjoy at a fraction of the cost.

Money Spent on Outings

People who spend money on doing things tend to report more lasting satisfaction than people who spend it on owning things. In a 2003 study, the psychologists Leaf Van Boven and Thomas Gilovich asked 1,279 American adults about purchases they had made to make themselves happier. Asked which had done more for their happiness, 57% named a purchase made to do something, such as a trip or a concert, and 34% named a material one, such as clothing or jewellery.

The researchers suggested that outings and trips are more closely tied to identity and are easier to share with other people, and that people keep retelling them long after the money is spent. In a follow-up in the same paper, students who were asked to think about a trip or an outing they had paid for reported better moods than students asked to think about a material purchase. A couple on a limited budget can put most of it toward one memorable outing a month and keep the other evenings simple.

Talking About Money Early

Beliefs about **who should pay for dates** vary widely. A study led by the psychologist David Frederick at Chapman University, presented in 2013 and published in 2015, surveyed more than 17,000 people about dating costs. In it, 64% of men said women should contribute to dating expenses, and 57% of women said they offered to help pay. The picture was mixed, because 39% of women said they hoped the man would turn the offer down, and 44% of men said they would stop dating a woman who never paid.

Many people who enjoy fine food or good clothes are happy to **split a bill** or cook at home most nights, and the only way to find out is to ask. In a 2017 YouGov poll of American adults, 15% said the cost of a first date should be split equally and 9% said each person should pay for their own order. Saying plainly that you are saving for something, or that you prefer to keep weekday plans cheap, gives the other person a chance to suggest ideas of their own.

The conversation is easier on the second or third date than after months of quiet overspending. It also shows something about the relationship itself, because a partner who responds well to a frank comment about money is likely to respond well to other frank comments too.

Expensive Tastes on a Modest Budget

Dating someone with expensive tastes on a budget means spending on attention, novelty and the occasional memorable outing, and spending very little on everything else. In practice that can mean one concert a month and lunch at the restaurant they love, along with a frank word early about what you can afford.

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