



PHOTOS BY DENTON MORRIS

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE: Melbourne offers a sophisticated, cosmopolitan vibe, left, lush foliage and farmlands, center, and breathtaking beaches, right.

Melbourne on the menu

Australian city serves up fine dining, scenery and wildlife

By **JAE-HA KIM**
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

MELBOURNE, Australia — It was in Melbourne's chic South Yarra district that the standard was set. Hungry and suffering from extreme jet lag, my husband and I also were cranky because a local had guided us to a "fabulous breakfast place" that wasn't open yet.

After walking back toward the chic, boutique property Lyall Hotel where we were staying, we settled on Cafe Darling — a small, neighborhood eatery. I ordered a focaccia veggie sandwich with a piquant salsa dressing. He opted for a softly poached egg, which was served with thick slices of ham and tomato on a chunk of toasted French bread.

It was delicious, and not just because we were hungry, but because it was prepared fresh and served hot with coffee. Wait, I mean our skinny latte (latte made with skim milk) and long black (espresso thinned out with steaming hot water).

Australians and Americans may both speak English, but don't think for a second that we share the same vocabulary. You give away your foreignness by referring to your spouse as a husband or wife. In Australia, they're your partner. Your friend is a mate. Ripper means



HOP TO IT: At Ballarat Wildlife Park, an hour's drive from Melbourne, visitors can feed kangaroos, emus and other Australian wildlife.

great. And plonk refers to cheap wine. Got that?

We hadn't expected much from Australia in terms of fine dining. Maybe it had something to do with the image of Paul Hogan encouraging us all to put another shrimp on the barbie. Granted, that was a couple of decades ago, but some things just stick with you.

Though Canberra is Australia's capital, Sydney and Melbourne are the country's more famous cities. Melbourne is lo-

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The thunder Down Under: Aussie Rules Football

By **JAE-HA KIM**
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MELBOURNE, Australia — Judging by the name, you wouldn't expect the Melbourne Cricket Club to host one of the country's most beloved — and dangerous — sports.

We're not talking about cricket, a game many Australians consider the glue that holds the

country together. No, we're talking about Australian Rules Football, which also is played at the MCC.

At any given game, celebs such as Russell Crowe are in the crowd rooting for their favorite teams.

Take the toughest elements of soccer, rugby and American football — minus any protective gear — and you've got Aus-

tralian Rules Football (or Aussie footy, as the natives call it). The sport is so physically demanding that most pro players have a shelf life of less than five years.

Maybe that's why most are reluctant to give up their day jobs. Oddly enough, the Australian footy teams are composed of an inordinately high

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