



MELBOURNE ON A HARLEY...

The TICKET

Fareeda Kanga
*discovers the charms of
Australia's second city*

WHAT I DID | Explored the city — not on foot as is otherwise recommended, but on a classic Harley Davidson, a novel service provided for tourists who are too hot to trot! Dined on local delicacies in Melbourne's oldest tram that has been refurbished in Pullman-style decor to become the world's first mobile tramcar restaurant. Soared above the city in a hot air balloon and landed in the picturesque Yarra valley for a superb champagne breakfast, with only the cattle and livestock for company.

WHAT I SAW | The Mecca of cricket - The Melbourne Cricket Ground, one of the most historical sporting venues in the world. Thirteen hectares of rolling lawns and 60,000 plant species at The Royal Botanical Gardens which give Melbourne a sense of tranquil spaciousness. Acclaimed as one of the most outstanding public gardens in the world, they are the green lungs of this vibrant city.

WHAT I BOUGHT | The Gourmet foods, authentic Australian artefacts and souvenirs at the largest open-air market in the southern hemisphere. Queen Victoria Market is more than just Melbourne's shopping mecca - it's

a historic landmark, a tourist attraction and an institution for Melbournians. Almost a thousand traders sell everything from exotic Australian fruits and vegetables to hardware, clothing etc.

WHAT I LEARNT | Melbournians take their sports very seriously... Be it rugby, cricket or the upcoming Commonwealth Games, the city lives and breathes sports. They excel in hosting high-calibre international events like The Australian Open Tennis Championships, The Melbourne F1 Grand Prix and The Melbourne Cup, Australia's premier horserace.

WHAT I LIKED | The city exudes a European charm with its outdoor cafes, fusion of arts and events, leisure, hospitality and promenading. In Mel-

bourne, there's something for everyone — adventure sports for the adrenaline junkie, arts and culture for the high-browed. Add to that, world-class shopping and internationally acclaimed food, and of course, the Yarra valley wines that are enjoyed worldwide.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE | Temperatures can fluctuate and suddenly the sunshine makes way for drafty winds, catching tourists by surprise. The city's famous boutique hotels, though trendy to boot, offer service that fluctuates between borderline snobbery and graciousness.

WHAT I RECOMMEND | Plan an itinerary that allows at least five days in Melbourne. Apart from the city sights, many of the state's regional attractions, including valleys of vineyards and international surf beaches, are less than a two-hour drive from the city and are a must-see. Whether its deserts, Alpine ski resorts, mighty rivers, great lakes, wildlife, or the unparalleled spectacle and beauty of the world-renowned Great Ocean Road, Melbourne and its environs all offer a quality experience.

