TRAVEL / WERRIBEE

The curious creatures never took their eyes off

us and we were lucky to see them sit, something

which takes amazing but awkward co-ordination

and is often not done in the wild where predators

ner: camels in need of a back-scratch fighting for

a tree, a zebra mum and daughter having a tussle

(or was it a cuddle?) and lazy rhinos belying their

Werribee Zoo is particularly proud to raise the

The poaching situation in Africa is heart-break-

awareness of this often misunderstood herbivore.

ing: more than 1000 rhinos were killed last year,

Werribee Zoo is also home to one of the larg-

est gorilla exhibits in the world. At 6000 square

metres, the spectacular exhibit — complete with

wading pool and large climbing poles — allows

silverback Motaba and his two sons, Yakini and

Ganyeka, the space to behave as they would in the

And then there are the lions at the Edge exhibit.

comparable to back in the 1900s.

formidable stature.

Photo opportunities are at the turn of every cor-



Hear the call of the wild these school holidays at Werribee Open Range Zoo, where going on safari is a fantastic way to meet the residents, writes TANIA PANOZZO.

ERCHED high on the top of the savan-nah, peering down below to the vast grasslands, for a moment it's hard to believe we're not on safari ... in Africa,

The arid beauty, and the cool breeze synonymous with the sub-tropical eco-system, has us wrapped in blankets in our open-air four-wheeldrive, ready to get up close and personal with giraffes, zebras, rhinos and antelopes. And we did.

Werribee Open Range Zoo, just a three-hour drive from the Border, is home to some of Australia's most iconic animals but it is also the native wildlife of Asia. North America and Africa that draws visitors from all over the world — more than 5 million in the past 30 years since it began as an agistment area for animals from Melbourne

The 235 hectares are home to about 350 animals, with 57 species. And it's the zoo's popular safari tour, departing regularly throughout the day, that provides a unique way of meeting the animals on the savannah.

The tour is included in the zoo's general admission but for a more intimate experience you can upgrade to an off-road adventure, with a specially designed open vehicle accommodating up to 14 people and your own personal guide. An experience I highly recommend.



ABOVE: Zoo keeper Kelly during the serval cat presenta-

ABOVE RIGHT: Lioness love at the Edge exhibit, which includes a real jeep to encourage children to jump on and get a better view from behind the glass.

Pictures: TANIA PANO770

Going cross-country we were completely immersed in the sights, smells and sounds of the savannah as we travelled across the zoo's open

Our guide Lauren had done it all before: she was a fountain of information and parking within grasp of the animals often meant a photo opportunity was foremost on our minds. Harold the giraffe was more than a willing subject. Ears up, ears back and finally, both ears out to the side, I captured my new friend in all his beauty.

The giraffes, in particular, enjoyed our visit.

with lioness Jarrah, and males Tonyi, Tombo and Johari. But it is the Kubu River space that has perhaps attracted the most attention during the past month: spanning more than three hectares, it is a paradise home to six hippos — Harry, Prim rose, Tulip, Lotus Brindabella and her new baby, Pansy, born in December.

The hippo "gallery" is packed when we visit, and

the waiting game seemed to go on forever.

But when Pansy finally raises her head from beneath the swamp it's all worth it. Her little head, still nussled next to her semi-submerged mum, pokes out to greet the tourists. Some who have been waiting for hours, let out a cheer and the rest of the crowd shifts in unison to get a better view.

THER special experiences offered at the zoo include a Tall Order Giraffe Feed, Lion Encounter, African Cat Encounter, Mini Zoo Keepers and the overnight stay known as

the Slumber Safari. During these school holidays, kids can take a journey through the savannah with a new indoor play space called Ranger Kids, where they become a wild life ranger or a vet and explore life in an African village with a range of fun dress-ups and props to play with.

We finished our day at the Rhythm of Africa concert series. Centred on the zoo green, the evening runs each Saturday over summer and brings together a magic mix of live African music, wild animal encounters and picnics on the grass. Throughout the night families can take part in an Ethiopian coffee ceremony, make their own music with free drumming workshops and children can have their hair braided and faces painted, all animal-like, of course.

Saturday, April 5, 2014

A testament to days gone by

Mansion would be a constant

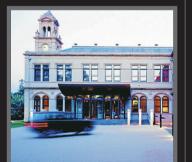
Talk of greyhound racing, duck shooting, lunching and lounging, and of unrequited love.

Victoria's answer to Downton Abbey, Werribee Mansion stands tall and proud in the extensive Werribee Park grounds. The 60-room Italianate building took three years to build and was hed in 1877; it is still the state's largest and most elabo rate private residence but began life as the passion of brothers Andrew and Thomas Chirnside, leaders of the Victorian squat-

tocracy.
The home remained in the family until 1922 when the park was sold and a year later became home to Corpus Christi College, a training ground for young men entering the priesthood.

About 1972, the college started to defer students to a

new campus on the other side of Melbourne and sold it to the Victorian government. The semi nary lay desolate for almost 30 years until one of the mansion's



wings was transformed into the award-winning boutique hotel it is today: the Werribee Mansion

Hotel & Spa.

At a stone's throw away, it is the perfect base from which to explore the park.

Other areas of interest include the Victorian State Rose Garden, which was established in 1986 and features more than 4000 roses; the National Eques-trian Centre and Chirnside polo ground; and the Werribee Open Range Zoo.

More recent additions to the precinct are Shadowfax Winery, in 2000, and the Werribee Park

in 2000, and the Werribee Park
Sculpture Walk, in 2004.
Strict heritage guidelines have
prevented much of the Mansion
Hotel & Spa from changing but
that only adds to its appeal.
Like the mansion itself, one
can almost feel the days gone
by in the guest rooms, the

by in the guest rooms, the billiard room and the library — the former chapel still has its original stained glass windows, archways and doorframes.

Today the spa wing comprises 32 king deluxe rooms and eight suites (there are 91 rooms in all), The Spa and a 17-metre in-door heated pool. The award-win-ning Joseph's Restaurant takes

on the seminary's name. In its relatively short life, the Mansion Hotel & Spa has been recognised as one of Victoria's best deluxe hotels and was inducted into the Victorian Tourism Awards' prestigious Hall of Fame in 2004 for its services

• Entry to Werribee Mansior is included in your stay at The Mansion Hotel & Spa.

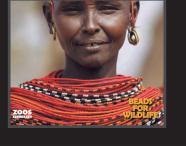
Beads make a difference

THERE are only 2000 Grevy's zebras left in the wild — and Melako in Northern Kenya is home to almost 10 per cent of the population. Competition with livestock for food and water is the biggest threat to their survival. But Beads for Wildlife, a Zoos Victoria initiative, alleviates the impact of grazing on native habitat by providing women with an alternative source of income.

women of the Melako Community Conservancy is sold to provide employment and alternative income. This money reduces family dependence on maintaining large numbers of livestock, which

then benefits species such as the Grevy's zebra. Since the partnership began in 2009, Zoos Victoria has raised more than \$300,000 and the number of participants has increased from 40 to 900

Bangles, necklaces and ornaments can be bought at the Melbourne, Werribee and Healesville zoo gift shops, or online at shop.zoo.org.au/shop.



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SYDNEY



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The Hop on Hop Off cruise departs every 45 minutes and allows passengers to hop from one Sydney Harbour attraction to another with a 24-hour pass. The cruise features live commentary and visits Circular Quay, Taronga Zoo, Watson's Bay, Luna Park and Darling Harbour. Tickets are \$40 an adult and children are free with every paving adult.

Travel on the Zoo express, the most fun way to travel to Taronga Zoo, these school holidays and receive a free upgrade to a Hop On Hop Off, 24-hour Sydney Harbour Explorer cruise including Taronga Zoo entry valued at \$65 an adult. Rocket ferries depart every 45 minutes from Jetty 6, Circular Quay and Darling Harbour Pier 26 and are \$51.50 for adults and \$25.50 for children including retur rocket ferry, entry to Taronga Zoo and Sky Safari cable car.

For details phone (02) 9206 1111 or visit captaincook.com.au.

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modation, buffet-style breakfast, valet parking, Wi-Fi and a Lindt chocolate pack to share. Price: From \$285 a night. The packages are available from April 6-25 subject to avail-

ability. Visit crownhotels.com.au or phone (03) 92926688.

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