

Australia:

The state-continent

Sidney - Mounir El-Fishawy

I spent six days traveling through Australia a small, isolated continent in the south-east of the globe. My journey took me from the north eastern state of Queensland to Victoria State in the extreme south, passing through New South Wales in the north-west.

Arrival in Sydney

At the exit of the airport, at dawn, I called a taxi. After loading my luggage in the back, I moved to the right door to take my place beside the driver. But, I was surprised when a European tourist burst out laughing and the driver asked smiling: "Do you want to drive the taxi instead of me?" I discovered that, as in England, car wheels in Australia are on the right. The cold climate of England seems to have also transposed itself to Australia: even though my visit was in June, it was cold. This state-continent is in the southern hemisphere, and the seasons are upside down!

The taxi moved in the direction of the hotel. I spoke to the driver and he told me that he is a Moslem, married to a New Zealander and that his taxi belongs to a young person of Egyptian origin. He added that life in Australia is fine for both immigrants and locals and everyone is free to practice their religion. One finds mosques beside churches and other places of worship be they Jewish, Buddhist, Taoist, Hindu etc

Australian Tourism

Australia is located in the south-east of the globe. New Zealand is its nearest neighbour and there are many small islands - the countries of the Southern Pacific -including Fiji, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Tuvalu, Samoa and the Solomon Islands, nearby. Most of Australia's 20 million people live in the south-east.



Sydney's beautiful harbour

ميناء سيدني الجميل

The country is made up of seven autonomous states: Queensland (capital Brisbane) in the north-east, New South Wales (capital Sidney) in the south east, Victoria (largest city Melbourne the old capital in the south, the State of South Australia (capital Adelaide) in the central-south, the Northern State (capital Darwin) and the State of Western Australia (capital Perth). The Island of Tasmania (capital Hobart) is a state in its own right and the capital of the whole country Canberra, is in New South Wales State.

The Continent State

Australia is the only country in the world which has been described as a "continent

state", where tourism has never stopped growing. The main difficulty is its distance from Western Europe, the United States and the Arab countries of the Gulf.

Apart from that there is no problem. Mr Shanhan, one of the people in charge of tourism in Queensland pointed out that contrary to popular perceptions we are happy that our country is described as a "state-continent" and we don't mind the isolation. With the development of technology and communication, we are in contact with various cultures, and at the same time we have our own, diversified world. We are a mixture of 140 nationalities. This gives the Australian people a special, unique character. The fact that we don't ➤

have common borders with other countries saved us intractable border problems and allowed us to devote ourselves to our own development and consolidating friendly ties with other countries.

Sidney or London?

As soon as I started walking around Sidney I thought I was in London. The people live in typically two – three storey British houses with tiled, ^-shaped roofs, small gardens and a garage. Parking is forbidden in many streets.

One notices many boulevards and streets with British names such as King' s Cross, - the Soho of Australia- Pitt Street with the largest hotels, New South Wales State and the state of Victoria named after a great British queen. Like London, Sidney is a cosmopolitan city with diverse nationalities and cultures.

But despite the similarities each city has its own defining feature. In Sidney, it is the Opera House located at the mouth of the river, and the famous zoo with a number of kangaroos, Australia's symbol and koala bears, hanging from the trees. The zoo is accessible by road, cable car or ferry.

The Chinese districts and markets in Sidney are another 'must-see'.

They are full of Chinese products and restaurants offering various Chinese dishes, but most of the customers are foreigners.

The high Tower of Sidney is a significant monument with a splendid view of the city and its sparkling lights and signs, which can be enjoyed from a revolving restaurant: Sidney is displayed like an invaluable stone collection.

What else?

Much remains to be written. We have yet to describe our meeting with Arab emigrants in Kimbia and Pinsh Bool and the wonderful time we had with Australian people from all walks of life, who made us welcome and invited us to eat roasted Australian meat.

We introduced them to our dishes full (broad beans), falafel and humus and realized that despite the geographical distance which separates Australia from the other major continents, it's a small world. ■



Sydney's famous Opera House

دار أوبرا سيدني الشهير



The National Museum of Australia in Canberra

متحف أستراليا الوطني في كانبيرا