London 2012 Olympics on the cheap. N2

Bag takes care of baby and business. N5

CLIFF OWEN / Associated Press

CHARLES FOX / Staff Photographer

A woman in a King T-shirt was one of the first to tour the memorial, where the granite statue faces the Jefferson Memorial across the Tidal Basin.

WHERE KING STANDS TALL

His 30-foot statue and his challenging words are the heart of the new memorial on Washington's National Mall.

By Cary Clack
SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS

WASHINGTON — I was 7 years old and standing between the bedrooms of my mother and grandmother the evening of April 4, 1968, when Walter Cronkite appeared on the television screen to report that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had been killed.

I'm sure I'd heard of King, but I can't remember anything about him before that moment.

Last September, my mind drifted back to that evening as I sat staring at a 30-foot-tall statue of King less than 100 feet away. Carved out of pink granite, it's the centerpiece of the

See KING on N5

In Australian bush, with a grand array above

Courtesy Larissa and Michael Milne

A chook confronts the camera at The Belars ranch, 300 miles west of Sydney. At right, Larissa Milne feeds Bella.

A Year & A World
By Larissa and Michael Milne

I was staring at a beautiful tree frog — its tiny, bright green body with huge black eyes and cute little pods on its feet that were perfectly designed by nature to stick to any surface. There was only one problem: Those cute little pod feet were perched on the toilet seat I was about to use, and they weren't letting go. This was not a camping trip or a portable toilet in a national park. This was our home life in Australia's bush country.

After a month in cosmopolitan Sydney, we were itching to see "the real Australia" — the land famous for wide-open spaces and wild kangaroos. We drove about 300 miles west of Sydney to The Belars, a circa-1898 homestead on a 3,500-acre cattle ranch. To give you an idea how big that is, the dirt driveway was a mile long.

See AUSTRALIA on N4

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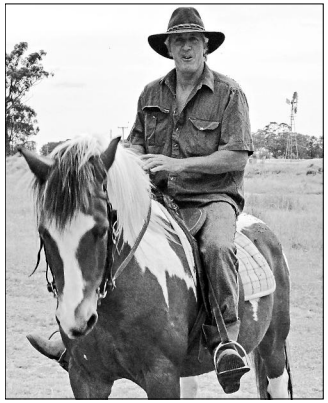
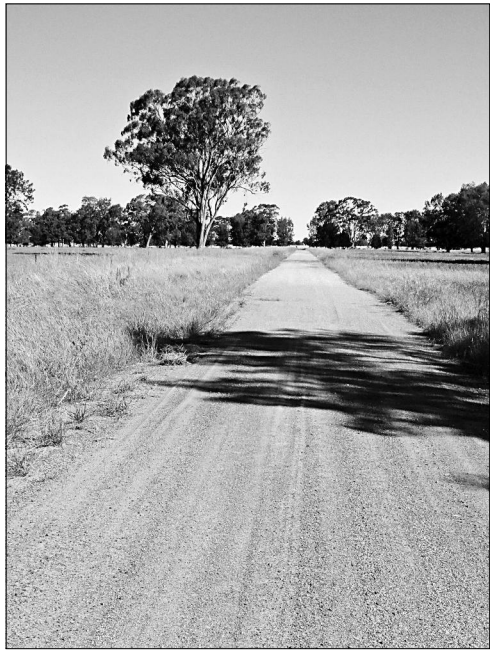


Rob Wright, fourth-generation farmer and host at The Belars cattle ranch, where he was raised. He and wife Deb have created a retreat in the home built by his great-grandfather.



Courtesy of Larissa and Michael Milne

The long driveway at The Belars, a 3,500-acre cattle ranch where guests can experience a blend of rural life in Australia's bush country and world-class astronomical research, where observatories peer into the flawless skies.

Information

Parkes Radio Observatory

12 miles north of Parkes, Australia, on the Newell Highway. Open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. daily. Free admission.

Warrumbungle Observatory

Five miles west of Coonabarabran, Australia. Contact Peter Starr at www.tenbyobservatory.com/shows. Shows start after dusk. Fee is $20 for adults, $10 for students.

Ensconced in Australia's expanses

AUSTRALIA from N1

Our host was Rob Wright, a fourth-generation farmer who looks a bit like Crocodile Dundee, dusty hat and all. He and his wife, Deb, have created a secluded retreat in the home his great-grandfather built.

The bathrooms were accessed via the veranda, so it was convenient for the frogs to visit as well. In the arid climate, toilets serve as a cozy pond, so they had a habit of hanging around in there. Add to this the warbling of a few free-range chickens (or *chooks*, as they are known) and a motherless calf named Bella, and we had quite a menagerie on our hands. Bella and the chooks seemed to like hanging out with us, so we offered to feed them for Rob. Bella took a bottle twice a day, and the chooks ate everything in sight. With the odd kangaroo bouncing by at dusk, we had a kind of *Green Acres* Down Under experience going on.

This part of the bush country is a surprising blend of rural life with world-class scientific research. The wide-open spaces and pristine skies are ideal for stargazing. About 45 miles south is the Parkes Radio Observatory and Telescope. Operated by CSIRO, the Australian equivalent of NASA, it relayed the first television signals of the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969. The story of this achievement was later made into the offbeat film *The Dish*.

Set in a grassy field, the radio telescope, 210 feet in diameter, towers over the landscape. Its neighbors are mostly sheep, who graze contentedly just outside the fence. Displays in the visitors' center explain the telescope's continuing role in space exploration. The outdoor cafe provides the best spot on the planet to sip a cappuccino while gazing up at a giant dish that, among other things, is seeking life in the great beyond. In an unusual afternoon moonrise, the moon peeked over the dish, providing a view of both our closest neighbor and the device that relayed the first images taken on it.

The clear atmosphere provides unimpeded night skies for telescopes of the optical kind as well. Coonabarabran, known as the Astronomy Capital of Australia, is about 80 miles north of The Belars. It is home to the Siding Spring Observatory, regarded as one of the best sites in the world to see the stars. The observatory is open to visitors, but only during the day, which doesn't do a would-be stargazer much good.

However, a town with a world-class observatory also means a town full of rocket scientists, many of whom search the heavens in their spare time. Thus, Coonabarabran sports a unique landscape of white cylindrical structures dotting its hills. These supersize R2-D2s are silos housing professional-caliber personal telescopes. Some of these folks offer views of the night sky for a small fee.

> Bella joined us with a gentle moo on the ranch with the mile-long driveway, and the three of us shared a bush-country moment under a canopy of stars.

We visited the Warrumbungle Observatory, where the wonderfully named Peter "That's really my name" Starr leads two-hour astronomy sessions looking at galactic objects through a 20-inch telescope. Five silos are planted on his front yard, a few of which belong to amateur astronomers from around the world who, via remote access over the Internet, are renting his piece of the sky. He calls it his "telescope farm."

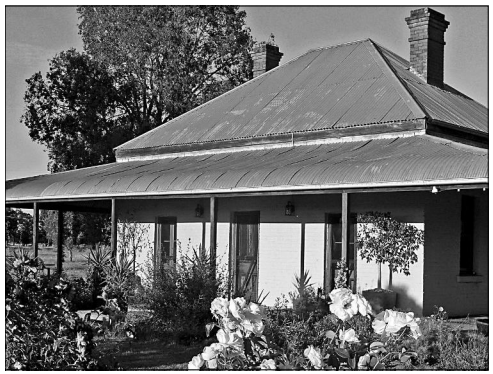
The blazing sun packed it in for the day, allowing the creeping blackness of night to envelop us. The star-studded dark sky looked like a planetarium show from a class trip. Using a laser pointer, Starr traced the outlines of several constellations including Scorpio and Capricorn. Due to the flawless sky, we could visualize the figures that the ancient Greeks saw. We had such a clear view of the Sea of Tranquility on the moon that we could almost imagine the footprints left behind by the Apollo 11 crew. It was a perfect bookend to our earlier lunar-themed visit to Parkes.

After a night in the heavens, it was time to get back down to earth at The Belars. At dusk the next day, we hopped into Rob's pickup truck for a bumpy excursion out to the back paddocks. We watched exuberant troops of kangaroos bouncing through the fields before they bounded over the fence to visit the neighboring farmer. In the low-lying bush, we also spotted a few wallabies, the kangaroo's smaller, timid cousin.

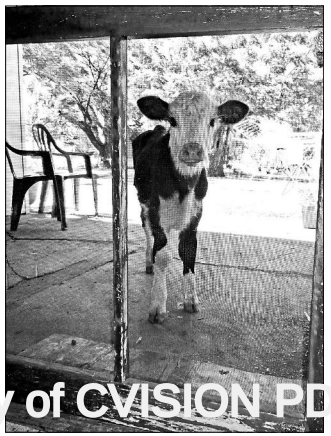
By now we had settled into the rhythm of country life and had our menagerie well in hand. When we needed to, we shooed the frog off the toilet seat, and he happily hopped outside, no doubt looking for another toilet pond. The chooks waddled over to be fed, and then obediently went into their pen. Bella took her evening bottle like a good little calf and sat down under a tree while we made our dinner in the big country kitchen.

Later that night we stood under a canopy of stars using our newfound astronomical knowledge to spot constellations and planets. We felt a nudge at our legs — it was Bella, coming to join us with a gentle moo. We spied the shimmer of a passing satellite and then a shooting star. It was a special bush-country moment, for the three of us.

Larissa and Michael Milne are traveling around the world for a year and will be reporting in regularly about their journey. You can follow them at www.ChangesInLongitude.com. To comment on this article, e-mail traveltalk@phillynews.com.



The Belars homestead, where visitors can get a feel for life in the bush country about 300 miles west of Sydney.



Bella, a motherless calf. Countless chooks also scrounge for affection, though but more likely for the bottle she knows will be coming from the obliging guests.

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