have made it one of the country's most popular tourism destinations (and also one of the most expensive). As the birthplace of the nation's most cherished pastime, Australian Rules football, and home to the Australian Open, a Formula 1 track and the fabled Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), Melbourne also makes a strong case for being Australia's premier sports city.

"Melbourne is a vibrant, world-class city," said Consul General Frankie Reed, who arrived in March after serving as ambassador to Fiji, "and it's easy to see why The Economist has named it as the 'World's Most Livable City' for five years running."

Melbourne hosts the headquarters of nearly 40 percent of the country's multinational companies, including two of Australia's "big four" banks (ANZ and National Australia Bank) and two of the world's largest mining companies, BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto. A number of giant U.S. companies, including Boeing, GM Holden, Ford, ExxonMobil, Alcoa, Kraft, Mission Foods and others are headquartered in the state of Victoria. Hundreds of smaller U.S. companies have operations in Australia.

"The United States enjoys a robust economic relationship with Australia," said Vanessa Colon, pol/econ officer. "We are Australia's largest foreign investor ($159 billion), and Australia's investment footprint in the United States also is growing rapidly; Australia currently is the 10th largest foreign direct investor in the United States ($56 billion).

"Our bilateral goods trade has nearly doubled since the 2005 implementation of the U.S.-Australia Free Trade Agreement, from $21.8 billion to $35.5 billion, and Australia is now the United States' 15th largest export market."

Aside from strong economic ties, cultural similarities and shared values have helped the United States and Australia forge an enduring partnership over the past century. The U.S. Consulate General in Melbourne works to sustain that relationship through various forms of outreach to a diverse cross-section

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