



Pounamu

AFTER a mesmerising massage at the Sofitel Queenstown Resort & Spa, with wonderfully warm greenstones said to contain special healing powers, I was keen to buy some, but was warned by the hotel's gm Vincent Marquard, "You never buy greenstone for yourself, it must be gifted and these stones blessed by the local chief."

"At Sofitel we embrace not only our French connection but the local culture too," he said.

A type of hard, durable and highly valued nephrite jade, bowenite, or serpentinite, greenstone or its Māori name Pounamu, plays a very important role in Māori culture.

It is often presented as a gift to visitors and to New Zealanders moving overseas.

MEANWHILE Friday October 5 was pronounced Global James Bond Day when VisitBritain launched its biggest ever film tourism campaign, centered on the release of Albert R. Broccoli's 23rd James Bond adventure - SKYFALL.

Bond fans and those heading to Britain might like to visit some of SKYFALL's iconic London locations, including the National Gallery, Whitehall and Greenwich, as well as Glencoe and Glen Etive in the Scottish Highlands where Bond author Ian Fleming's family once owned a home. - Jill.



DMS reports on IMEX Las Vegas

DESTINATION Marketing Services' (DMS) Leila Fiedler, newly returned from leading an Australian and New Zealand delegation of hosted buyers to IMEX America 2012 in Las Vegas, said it was 28% larger than the inaugural exhibition, staged last October with the addition of 77 new booths, showcasing 2413 exhibiting companies.

The expo attracted 2,400 buyers from across North America and 43 other global markets – 20% more than last year, with some 1,700 attendees.

Word from the DMS delegates was that they found the MICE product exhibited of a very high calibre.

"The show was very well organised and the 30 minute appointments sufficient to discuss itineraries or to learn more about new products," Fiedler said.

"IMEX'S October timing is well suited to the Australia/New Zealand market and the ease of access from these ports to Las Vegas proved another drawcard for our participation."

Prior to IMEX, DMS business partners' "Hosts Global Alliance" showcased the highlights of Las Vegas with venue and hotel inspections, a helicopter flight over the Grand Canyon and a performance of the musical "The Jersey Boys".

Post IMEX the group flew to New York where they were



hosted by Shackman Associates and the Waldorf Astoria.

Highlights included visiting the 9/11 Memorial, an evening cruise on the Hudson River, attending the Broadway musical "Once" and enjoying an exclusive lunch in a luxury suite with the management of the Waldorf Astoria (above).

"All in all the participants agreed that it was a most worthwhile and successful trip," Fiedler concluded.

KLCC gets fruity

THE Kuala Lumpur Conference Centre reported that 2012 has so far been a remarkably fruitful one.

For the 9-month review period, the Centre has hosted 1,119 events, up 13% on the previous corresponding period, and served 1.2 million delegates and visitors bringing in an economic impact contribution of RM407 million to Kuala Lumpur city and Malaysia.

The numbers since commencing operations in June 2005 total 6,322 events, over 13.2 million delegates in attendance and a huge RM4 billion in economic impact contribution.

Tab into this offer

A "Stay Connected" package, which gives hotel guests a one-night stay experience in a recently renovated room and a Samsung Galaxy Tab 2, is being offered by Traders Hotel, Brisbane, in celebration of Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts' first Traders hotel in Australia.

The "Stay Connected" package is available for just the retail price of the tablet, A\$459, including service and tax.

Valid from now until 31 December, guests will be presented with the brand new Tab 2 10.1 16GB Wi-Fi enabled tablet on arrival.

With free Internet service part of Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts' group-wide initiative, Bruno Cristol, general manager of Traders Hotel, Brisbane said, "Getting internet access while on the road is no longer a rarefied luxury.

"We understand that travellers, whether business or leisure, need to be connected."

Guests can expect a different series of "Stay Connected" packages to be presented in the coming months.

Partnerships such as these with technology giants gives Traders Hotel, Brisbane an opportunity to design packages to let guests enjoy some of the most innovative and advanced technological experiences available in the industry at a special rate - for more info see www.tradershotels.com.

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Sebel Parramatta to Novotel

FOLLOWING on from the acquisition by Accor of the Mirvac hotel portfolio, The Sebel Parramatta has rebranded to Novotel Sydney Parramatta.

Joining more than 390 Novotel hotels worldwide the newly rebranded Parramatta hotel will also undergo a refurbishment of its guestrooms, which will see half of the 194 rooms updated by the end of October with the remainder to be completed by May 2013.

Included in the refurbishment, all of the bathrooms will receive a complete makeover, with rich, red splashbacks a feature, while soft furnishings will be updated along with the carpets.

Zac Hope, the hotel's gm said, "The hotel has always been popular with the corporate market and it is a key conferencing and event hotel for many businesses in the area.



"As well as this, particularly when big sporting matches are on, the hotel is packed with people in town for the weekend, so the refurbishment will make a big difference to our guests and we're excited to see the transformation."

Other customer benefits will include the Le Club Accor hotels and Accor Advantage Plus loyalty programs.

In addition to the hotel rebranding and in partnership with Apple, two Mac computers will be installed in the hotel's lobby allowing free internet access.

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Darwin MEA deal

TO assist in the early booking of flights and accommodation, MEA members are being offered a discounted rate of \$995 inclusive of GST for early registrations for the 26th Annual Meeting and Events Industry National Conference in Darwin.

But you'll have to be quick - the special is available to the first 50 members who book by the end of this month.

MEANWHILE in the last week of September, the Australian Institute of Medical Scientists (AIMS) held its 2012 National Scientific Meeting in Darwin for the first time.

Officially opened by Dr Len Notaras AM, executive director National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre and attended by 350 delegates from Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region, the theme for the meeting of "Wet to Dry" not only reflected the seasons of the "Top End" but also focused on tropical diseases & conditions common to the region.

IHG goes seamless

MEETING attendees now have a seamless way to book their hotel rooms with the launch of InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), new meetings and events booking tool.

Across 23 of its Australian and NZ properties and hosted entirely online by GroupMAX reservations technology, it is designed for use by any standard web browser or smartphone, giving planners a more efficient process to work with IHG hotels.

Anne Gill, director, commercial, Australasia, said IHG recognised the role technology plays in hotel service delivery; especially regarding IHG's MICE clientele.

Gill is confident the new tool will foster tighter relationships between its hotels, clients and guests, adding its deployment will provide the hotels with insights into their MICE business.

The 23 properties deploying GroupMAX will be equipped with a suite of tools to ensure a higher level of service for delegates.

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crumbs!

PERFECT for fans of high style and design in Paris's haute bourgeoisie 16th arrondissement, the Trocadero Dokhan's Hotel has a quirky touch which is ideal for those of us who just love labels.

The luxury property's tiny elevator has been made to look just like the interior of a Louis Vuitton trunk, with bold trompe l'oeil stripes coating its walls.

Then, depending on the time of day cool jazz or baroque music is played as you elevate.

It's a very appropriate outfit for the elevator, because the building used to house Louis Vuitton's first ever store which was the biggest travel goods retailer when it opened in 1854.

Golf stars shine

ADAM Scott, Tom Watson, defending champion, Greg Chalmers and former US Open champion Geoff Ogilvy are the first big names to confirm they will be a part of the action at this year's Emirates Australian Open event at The Lakes Golf Club from 6-9 December.

Sydney's The Star will again be the event's official accommodation partner, which will see players and other event representatives enjoy three impressive accommodation offerings - the harbour facing five star business hotel, Astral Tower, the spacious 1, 2, and 3 bedroom apartments in Astral Residences, & Sydney's newest five star boutique hotel, The Darling.

Oz Oman connection



THERE was a strong Australian presence when Rochelle Uechtritz, group manager, convention sales development with AEG Ogden, a joint venture between the Australian based Ogden IFC and AEG Facilities of the United States attended the recent IMEX America tradeshow.

Part of an Omani delegation lead by the country's government mandated organisation, Omran, their attendance at the event was to ensure the country's readiness leading up to the completion of its cornerstone project, the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre in 2016.

The objective of the visit to understand the globalisation strategies of international organisations based in North America and to determine how Oman can be part of this and also meet with other countries to share their experiences.

Uechtritz said about 23% of international associations were headquartered in North America.

"Omanis have been actively involved in international and regional associations for decades and have been asked to host many of the world's most prestigious congresses, however that has not been possible until the development of the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre," she said.

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Kessler celebrates a decade

WELL known industry identity Donna Kessler, founder of Sydney-based Tourism Portfolio, one of the Australian travel industry's leading sales representation companies, is popping the champagne in celebration of their tenth anniversary.

Kessler who has spent more than 20 years with some of the world's most prestigious hotel brands, saw an opportunity a decade ago to use her experience to launch a boutique

representation company serving high-quality venues, properties and destinations.

Since then Tourism Portfolio has represented a wide range of resorts, venues and destination marketing companies across Australasia, Africa, Europe, Asia, the Middle East & North America.

"The business has grown organically through reputation and referral and we now have the honour of working with some

of the travel industry's most powerful and successful brands," says Kessler.

The recipient of state & national Meetings & Events Australia awards, including winning Kessler

'Sales and Marketing Person of the Year' in 2005 and 2008, she has nevertheless experienced some dramatic changes in the business tourism sector over the past decade.

"In 2002 companies had big budgets for multiple, knock-your-socks-off events each

year to long-haul destinations.

"With the global financial crisis came a shift towards fewer events, smaller budgets and short-haul locations.

"Budgets have returned, however, clients are now more savvy and demanding.

"They want experiences that are simply not available to the everyday tourist, and they expect each trip to surpass the previous journey.

"That has put pressure on destination marketing companies to continually create new and innovative solutions."

"Fortunately Tourism Portfolio has been lucky enough to work with partners who enjoy pushing the envelope and exceeding expectations", Kessler explained.

Having faced a number of challenges during those 10 years, including the need to re-educate consumers that top-shelf experiences require realistic budgets, she went on to say, "I think the MICE sector must also learn how to use social media and online channels to more effectively build brand awareness, forge networks, and engage with new and existing clients."

Kessler also cautioned the industry's need to be better informed and for research to help understand the sector's importance and to keep abreast of market issues and trends.



Conrad adds value

THREE complimentary value-added benefits together with distinguished services and facilities are being offered to meeting organisers by Conrad Macao, Cotai Central for bookings until 31 December.

Groups who book a full day meeting package with a minimum of 20 delegates and a two-night stay at Conrad Macao, for events to be held on or before 30 December, are entitled to 100 King Deluxe Suites free upgrades, complimentary Wi-Fi covering event venues and suites and double Hilton HHonors event bonus points.

A full-day meeting package at HK\$650 per head, comes with the use of main meeting room for eight hours, morning coffee and tea, deluxe set or buffet lunch, and complimentary wireless.

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