



Bellissimo!

GOING with the notion of practising what we preach, the Travel Daily team (those behind *Travel Daily*, *Cruise Weekly*, *BEN* and *Pharmacy Daily*) rolled up our collective sleeves, clasped our hands around whisks, knives and spoons and headed into Casa Barilla in Sydney's Annandale to learn, cook and eat our Christmas lunch in a fun team building exercise this week.



Welcomed with morsels of tasty Italian antipasto, glasses of Prosecco (the next big thing in sparking wines), Pinot Grigio and Peroni beer, we were well primed to form into teams and cook our three-course meal.

Which, by the way, was nothing short of MasterChef standing - check out the winning entree at right!



This authentic Italian cooking school offers hands-on classes in a fun and interactive atmosphere.

They also offer demonstrations and Chef Master Classes, in which participants watch from their table, tasting the delicious results of the chef's efforts throughout the sessions.

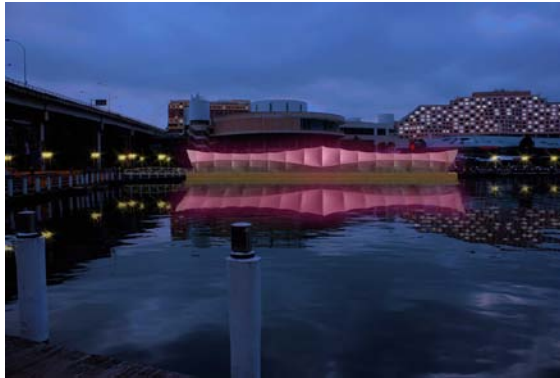
All classes include Prosecco and nibbles on arrival, all food and wine with your meal, plus a generous take-home goodie bag.

The team building classes, led by dedicated experts (**below**) are available as a customised hands-on experience for corporate teams, with capacity for groups of up to 24 - for info email them on silvia@barilla.net.au. Jill



Floating on a cloud

FILLING a gap in the market for large-scale function space during the construction of the new ICC Sydney through until 2016, events and hospitality firm Dockside Group has received



development consent to build an anchored floating pontoon which will be known as the Dockside Pavilion at Darling Harbour.

With a capacity to cater for up to 1,440 seated guests and 2,000 standing, it is due to open mid-2014, providing spectacular water and city views in the heart of Darling Harbour.

Dockside Pavilion at Darling Harbour is a partnership between Dockside Group, the Darling Harbour Alliance and the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority.

The Pavilion (think Auckland's The Cloud) is set to become an outstanding event and entertainment destination, as a part of the exciting business activation strategy for the precinct during the redevelopment period.

It's being created by internationally-renowned fabric architect Warwick Bell of Fabric Structure Systems, the creators of globally celebrated ventures including Louis Vuitton's 150th Anniversary Trunk and The Cloud, Auckland.

Dockside Group md Christopher Drivas said, "With capabilities

Etihad to add Perth

ETIHAD Airways this morning announced that it will commence daily flights between Perth and Abu Dhabi and onwards to its global network from 15 July 2014.

Perth is Etihad's fourth Australian port, with the WA flights to use a 262-seat A330 with 22 in business class.

to host numerous and diverse events, including conferences, business events, charity gala events, festivals and public events, the Dockside Pavilion will offer event organisers an exciting new option.

"We felt it was important for us as long-term tenants of Darling Harbour to support the industry and the businesses around us during this time of transition.

"We are looking forward to hosting many exciting and wonderful experiences," he said.

For info visit the website at www.docksidegroup.com.au.

Sunny outlook as Air NZ flies longer

NEW Zealand is the Sunshine Coast's largest international market representing 52,000 travellers in the year to September 2013, so the news that Air New Zealand will extend its seasonal flights from Auckland to the Sunshine Coast for another three years after successful seasons in 2012 and 2013, has been welcomed by the Queensland tourism industry.

As a result, the Sunshine Coast is aiming to boost leisure, business and conference travel over the four months that the direct flights operate between June and October.

A total of 42 return trips between Auckland and Sunshine Coast Airport (MCY) will be scheduled each year.

Qld tourism minister Jann Stuckey said the outcome was thanks to a successful partnership

Variety's big bang!

THE 18th Variety Children's Christmas Party, staged by Lehmann & Associates, was the last five-hall show to be held at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre before it closed.

It caused md Glen Lehmann to say, "We definitely went out with a bang!"

This year's event, which offered 5,000 special needs children a Christmas spectacular with each child receiving lunch and a Christmas present at no personal cost, was as grand as ever.

The event opened with Marcia Hines welcoming Santa's arrival on a Ducati motorbike.

Across the day the children were able to go on rides, play with dogs, play in Fairy Sparkle's garden, do arts and crafts, get their faces painted and more.

There were also several performances from special guests like Dorothy and Friends, Village Performing Arts School and the Jingle Bellies.

The event is dear to the hearts of the Lehmann team who have been staging it for 18 years.

with the Sunshine Coast Airport, Tourism and Events Queensland and Sunshine Coast Destination.

In 2013 the 17-week seasonal flights delivered 8,351 passengers, 85% of whom were New Zealanders.

"To support the Auckland-Sunshine Coast flights, Tourism and Events Queensland will continue to work with Air NZ and Sunshine Coast tourism industry partners to market the seasonal services," she said.

"The total direct expenditure in the region by visitors for the 2013 season was estimated to be \$9 million, with the overall economic impact \$22 million," she said, with these figures expected to grow to \$54m in direct spending over the next three years with a total economic impact of \$132m.

The 2014 season commences on Friday 27 June.



crumbs!

FORGET the traditional fir or pine Christmas tree and wrestling with boxes of tinsel and glittery baubles.

Time to think outside of the box and to make something more creative - and if you Google "Christmas Tree" you'll see some amazing ideas.

For those who love their vegies, how about a Christmas tree made of broccoli (right)?



Offices can be easily made more festive with the help of a liberal serving of Post-It Notes (left).

For a real celebratory spirit you can't beat a balloon tree (right), while the literary set will have plenty of holiday reading via the "epic book tree" (left).



And it's not such a drag taking down the tree in January if it's made of bottles of beer (below).



IPRA World Congress 2015 chooses Jo'burg

JOHANNESBURG has won the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) World Congress in 2015.

The win is "an accomplishment of pride to the city's residents," according to Johannesburg executive Mayor Mpho Parks Tau.

"Hosting the public relations practitioners, who are gurus of reputational standards of corporations, organisations and destinations is a great honour."

The successful bid was achieved following a combined bidding effort by Jo'burg Convention Bureau, the Gauteng Convention Bureau and the South African National Convention Bureau.

"It simply endorses our assertions that Johannesburg is a well-developed destination of choice for investment, commerce and tourism in the global community," Tau said.

Another recent win for Johannesburg was the announcement, by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, that the C40 Summit will be hosted in Johannesburg in February 2014.

"Following a successful run of hosting some really high profile events in 2013 – including the Metropolis Congress in May, as well as the One Young World Summit in October, as well as the World Anti-doping Agency Conference in November - we're thrilled to have secured the bid for IPRA 2015," says Pumla Ntsele, Jo'burg Convention Bureau manager.

Inspire EX 2014

EVERYTHING you need to know about Inspire EX, including details on the new and enhanced features for 2014, exclusive sponsorship opportunities and visitor breakdowns, is now available in the exhibition's newly released prospectus.

Formerly ABEE, Inspire EX is offering exhibitor deals via an early bird special which expires on 20 Dec - **CLICK HERE** for info.

Rising star hits its stride

BUSINESS

event buyers from Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington, recently attended an invitation only famil in the Hamilton & Waikato region.

Aptly named 'An exclusive look at New Zealand's rising star', the two and a half day 2013 National Mega Famil, which placed the Hamilton & Waikato region third highest in New Zealand for delegate days at 11%, a 2% growth on the previous year, was hosted by the Hamilton & Waikato Convention Bureau.

Hamilton & Waikato Convention Bureau manager Jenny Tukiwaho Stokes said, "Familiarisations like this are a great way to showcase the variety of products suitable for meetings, incentive and conference events to be held in our region, and really allow our operators to highlight what they have to offer to a large group of potential clients."

Throughout the famil, the 22 buyers experienced a variety of business event specific product including Claudelands Conference & Exhibition Centre, Novotel Tainui Hamilton, SkyCity Hamilton Mystery Creek Events Centre, Vilagrad Winery, Hamilton



Gardens, Hobbiton Movie Set (pictured above), Discover Waitomo, Waitomo Adventures, Hampton Downs, Waikato River Explorer and many more, leaving participants raving about the region.

One of the government attendees, Libby Thomas, said "I really had no idea, having only been to Hamilton once before, that the Waikato area had so much to offer.

"The famil certainly instilled plenty of confidence in me, in that anything I would want to organise in your area, would be very well organised," she said.

AEG expansion

IT'S an extremely busy time for AEG at the moment.

As well as being involved in operating the temporary SEC@GI and the International Convention Centre Sydney when it opens in 2016, AEG has also last week taken over management of the Los Angeles Convention Center.

The outsourcing of the LACC management will see AEG introduce new services including the "Taste of LA" as the venue's signature dining experience.

Meanwhile the next milestone for AEG is 01 Jan 2014 when the company will assume management of the Hawai'i Convention Center.

The Hawaii operation will be headed up by Teri Orton, who moves to AEG from Outrigger.

St Regis for Jakarta

A plan to bring Starwood's luxury St Regis brand to Jakarta has been announced by the hotel group, with the all-suite St. Regis Jakarta being developed in the city's central business district.

Due to open in early 2016, it's an integrated 141,000 sqm development that will include a 124-room hotel, a premium 47-level office tower and a special food and beverage and retail area.

The hotel forms part of a 20-year strategic partnership between Starwood and the Rajawali Group – one of the largest investment groups in Indonesia, which has already seen the development of the St Regis Bali.



business events news

13th December 2013

Enter, Alpha Hotels & Resorts



PLANS have been announced to grow a new Australian footprint of upper midscale hotels, resorts and apartments by a new,

privately owned hotel owner and management company, Alpha Hotels & Resorts.

Covering major capital cities, key urban centres and popular leisure destinations, the portfolio will include a collection of strategically located, well-established properties that will be rebranded as Alpha Hotels, as well as a new multi-use hotel and retail development.

The Alpha Canberra in Tuggerang will make its entrance from 1 February, with Alpha Eastern Creek in Western Sydney from 1 March, and Alpha Mosaic Brisbane in Fortitude Valley to follow in April.

The boutique Diamant Hotel in Potts Point, majority owned by Alpha Hotels & Resorts, will provide the group with an affiliated Sydney property of exceptional quality.

Alpha Hotels has been founded by Jonathan Wooller and Bruce Holliday, two of Australia's most experienced hospitality professionals with a combined 50 years experience with brands including SilverNeedle, Accor, Constellation, Hilton and Hyatt.

The call goes out

A NEW food and wine trail is being planned in the Port Stephens region of NSW and Destination Port Stephens is asking all farmers, fishing operators, food tour businesses, food manufacturers, wineries, brewers and restaurants to get involved.

"Our aim is to diversify the appeal of Port Stephens beyond our staple but successful products of beaches, dolphins and whales," said Destination Port Stephens marketing manager, Tars Bylhouwer.

"We want to embrace our rich variety of food, wine and farm-gate experiences, with the aim of guiding visitors from oyster, macadamia, fish and avocado farms to wineries, craft breweries, seafood shops and cutting-edge restaurants where local produce is translated into memorable experiences."

Know someone who should get involved?

Call Destination Port Stephens on 4980 6905 or 0417 668 642 or tars@portstephenstourism.com.au.



All I Want for Christmas is my USB!

Andrew Klein, director of SPIKE Presentations, presents his front line observations on conferences in a regular feature in *BEN*.

As this is my final 'Confessions' column for 2013, I feel I need to make a big confession to round off a big year of conference confessions.

Here it is. I use my conference t-shirts as pyjamas. There, I've said it. As a compulsive conference goer, I receive lots of free "stuff" – conference polo-shirts, baseball caps and a never-ending stream of sponsors' paraphernalia and stationery items from Exhibition Halls and conference satchels.

I wear those t-shirts once, at the conference. But on my return, I don't wear them ever again, except when I go to sleep. My "Onwards & Upwards 2004 Microsoft Sales Conference" t-shirt is thin and faded, but it must be said, cosy and comfortable in bed.

And it's not just t-shirts. My son recently remarked that every second toy in our playroom seems to have a company logo.

So while I'm in end-of-year confession mode, I'll admit that a few of the frisbees, mini footballs, calculators,



torches, jelly-bean jars and the majority of pens lying around the house, may have been "sourced" at conferences.

Sure, they were given to me as a free gift by a friendly exhibitor, but at least I was thinking of my children when I collected 3 of each item and returned home with "gifts" from my days away.

"Another plastic drink bottle with logos of obscure IT companies, just what I needed, um, thanks Dad, welcome home".

My top drawer is jam-packed with little containers of mints – none of which have use-by dates. So, while Blockbuster may no longer be renting out videos, their delicious 2008 mints still do the trick in keeping my breath smelling fresh.

And because I'm confessing all, I must say that to the best of my recollection, I've never purchased a USB stick in my life, but I have enough of them to back-up the entire contents of the Wiki-leaks office.

So clients and sponsors, at least all that stuff you give out is getting good use.

Actually, those Bunnings Conference USBs might make a great Christmas present.

For more information about Andrew and what he can do for you at your next conference email andrew@lunch.com.au or visit his website at www.andrewklein.com.au.



Sign for Mandela

FOR those who would like to offer their own message of condolence to the family of Nelson Mandela, a number of Condolence Books are open across key locations including at the South African High Commission in the ACT, South African Tourism in York St Sydney as well as honorary consuls in Melbourne, South Australia, Brisbane and Perth.

The books will be compiled and handed to the South African Government and passed onto the Mandela family.

Hump it at Uluru

A NEW tour *Camels to Sounds of Silence* to further enhance the already popular Sounds of Silence dinner, has been launched along with Uluru Camel Tours.

The added optional extra departs two hours prior to sunset, and takes guests on a one-hour camel ride meandering through the dunes, with the breathtaking Uluru and Kata Tjuta as a backdrop, concluding at the dinner site in time for sunset drinks prior to a three-course bush tucker inspired buffet.

See ayersrockresort.com.au.

CONTACT US:

Publisher Editor
Bruce Piper Jill Varley

For advertising enquiries email Christie-Lee on:
advertising@businesseventsnews.com.au

P: 1300 799 220 F: 1300 799 221

PO Box 1010 Epping, NSW, 1710

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