



Where waters run BEROWRA

Waters Inn is one of those aspirational Sydney restaurants that over the years has had glory and exultation heaped on its shoulders and conversely has weathered a few bumpy rides.



Now, up where it belongs under the guidance of Irish born chef and owner Brian Geraghty who has worked alongside some of the most influential names in modern cuisine, including the much-awarded Quay restaurant with Peter Gilmore and more recently with Tony Bilson at Bilson's as executive sous chef.

Installed since October last year at Berowa Waters, he's now making a name for himself with his inspired degustation menu which includes his signature dish - confit of ocean trout, eucalyptus smoked milk and ginger dashi consommé with wild rice.

As with any endeavour worth the journey, getting there is half the fun and that means access is only by seaplane, boat or a short trip on a private ferry.

Guests are then treated to an exceptional food experience with a four or seven course degustation menu designed for diners to leisurely graze their way through a story of flavours, while the ever-changing scenery of the Hawkesbury drifts by.

There's a small private dining room with a capacity for 16 while the restaurant is available for private functions any day of the week for up to 90 guests.

What about this for a special event?

Fly guests up on seaplane from Rose Bay or luxury bus from Sydney, take over the restaurant and hire any number of the Hawkesbury's houseboats and invite guests to stay overnight or for an unforgettable weekend - Jill.

US opens doors to world

THE United States is continuing to aggressively target inbound business tourism, with a range of programs aiming to lower the barriers to visitation as authorities recognise the major benefits that travel brings.

This week the US Travel Association is hosting its annual International Pow Wow event in Las Vegas, with more than 6,400 delegates from 74 countries.

Amazingly, that's actually quite a small part of what's going on in Las Vegas, where a major consumer electronics show has also welcomed more than 100,000 visitors this week.

Convention centres across the country are continuing to expand (see page four) and the priority placed by President Obama on tourism and travel is seeing a range of longstanding logistical issues for visitors addressed.

"Nothing can replace the value of face-to-face meetings," US Travel Association president Roger Dow (pictured above) told **BEN**, with the organisation's ongoing advocacy program highlighting the "travel effect" on businesses, the economy and people's lives.

"Travel can drive the American recovery," he said, with tourism now the country's number one service export.

The US is likely to become even more attractive for global



conferences with major moves to address issues with visitor visas.

Dow is pushing hard to extend the number of countries in the US Visa Waiver Program which allows easy access, with the most recent addition being Taiwan and Chile under active consideration.

He said that a further 11 countries are on the radar for the VWP including Brazil, Argentina and Poland.

And for nations where a visa is required for travel to the USA, procedures have been revamped to slash processing times from the previous 100+ days for some countries such as China and India to just 2-3 days.

Dow said that when the Visa Waiver Program was introduced for South Korea, US arrivals from that country rose a staggering 49% in just one year.

Other initiatives include working on a "timely and welcoming arrival process," with legislation currently under consideration to recruit thousands more customs and border patrol officers.

For more from International Pow Wow see page four.

Marriott is the 'Best'

THE largest employee research project and market practice in the Australia, New Zealand region, Aon Hewitt's Best Employers study - has crowned Marriott Australia as the Best Employer.

The hotel company who outperformed 19 accredited companies, in the study that included data from a survey of over 100,000 employees from 125 organisations, marks the first time that a hospitality company has been awarded this honour.

The study found that a staggering 91% of Marriott Australia Associates responded that given the opportunity, they would tell others about the great things associated with working for the company.

Neeraj Chadha, Multi Property vice president, Australia – Marriott International has said "All employers are confronted by the same set of economic circumstances, but our Best Employers are able to do a substantially better job of leading and managing the workforce to create high levels of engagement.

"This mitigates many of the economic issues they face – leading to better results," said Stephen Hickey, Employee Engagement Lead at Aon Hewitt.



Taiwan goes free

FREE wifi connection just went up a notch with the introduction of 4,400 'iTaiwan' wifi hotspots at major tourist spots all over Taiwan with international travellers now able to access the internet, free of charge.

Tourists entering the island can apply for an 'iTaiwan' account on arrival at Taoyuan International Airport, Taiwan Tourism Bureau service counter or any visitor centre - <http://itaiwan.gov.tw/en>.





InterCon. Osaka open

INTERCONTINENTAL Osaka with panoramic views of the city and the surrounding area of western Japan has opened in the centre of the city's latest commercial development, Grand Front Osaka.

The development also includes office buildings, commercial outlets, a convention centre, academic and entertainment facilities and residences.

With a total of 215 guest rooms, averaging more than 50sqm each and a further 57 serviced apartments and fully-furnished residential suites, the hotel's lobby, sits on the building's 20th floor.

Included in the development is a total of four meeting and event spaces.

Spicers opens spa suites in the Hunter



AN especially built day spa, Spa Anise, offering a range of blissful massage, beauty and therapeutic treatments performed by qualified spa therapists, has opened as part of Spicers Vineyards Estate boutique Hunter Valley resort's new makeover.

Four new luxurious 50sqm Spa Suites have also been introduced which offer separate living and bedroom areas, each with their own individually controlled TV and reverse cycle air conditioner.

The lounge areas feature large bluestone fireplaces and either a private courtyard or balcony.

Luxurious bathrooms offer under floor heating and heated towel rails, twin basins, a spa bath and both an overhead rain shower and directional shower.

The new accommodation takes the number of rooms at Spicers Vineyards Estate to 12, adding to eight king spa guest suites.

Council demands changes

THE City of Sydney is demanding big changes to the redevelopment of the \$2.5 billion Sydney International Convention, Exhibition and Entertainment Precinct (SICEEP) and the new residential neighbourhood at Haymarket.

Describing the planned events centres' as "overpowering and monolithic" the council is asking that it be scaled back and a high-rise tower wiped from the plans, adding that the proposed convention centre was "overpowering at the waterfront" and called for the event facilities to be made smaller to reduce overshadowing, view loss & bulk.

Exteriors too were treated in a "monolithic manner" and should be redesigned with varying colours and textures while an elevated event deck was inaccessible and may have "limited public value" and that Tumbalong Green should be kept as a park, not a frequent event space.

The City of Sydney submission, also said the residential towers

were too close together and would cause overshadowing, view loss and an unpleasant "wind tunnel" effect.

According to the report (*SMH* 10 June), the plan would allow two student housing blocks to be built up to 22 storeys - taller than the indicative designs, which were already "too high", the council said, calling for the height to be lowered.

The council said that under the deal with Lend Lease, the scale of the residential plan essentially "offsets" how much the government pays for the new event facilities, warning that its "commercial dependency" provided only "narrow scope" for the planning process to manage the extent of development.

Infrastructure NSW said the commercial arrangements had no bearing on the planning process and the project would be assessed on merit.

A Lend Lease spokeswoman said the project had "overwhelming support and would respond to its submission."

Rendezvous's transformation



THE Rendezvous Grand Hotel Perth Scarborough, located in a prime position on Scarborough Beach, has been transformed through a major investment in the latest technology, modern amenities and brand identity, making it Western Australia's largest beachside conference and event venue.

In announcing the new name, Rendezvous Hospitality Group ceo, Eric Teng said the culmination of the Group's year long rebranding initiative was a significant milestone in RHG history.

"The completion of refurbishment works to the flagship Rendezvous Grand Hotel Perth Scarborough is a fitting transformation to our investment in bringing all the Rendezvous hotels together under one brand," Teng said.

The property now offers outstanding convention facilities and accommodation with more than 3000sqm of refreshed conference space across 26 venues, including two expansive ballrooms, five new purpose built boardrooms and multiple outdoor locations.



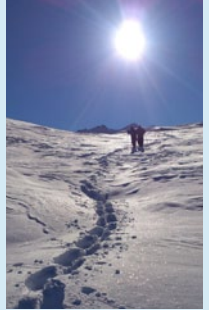
GUIDED walks, could be so yesterday or at the very least so summer, now that New Zealand's oldest guiding company, Queenstown-based Guided Walks New Zealand, has launched its heli-snowshoeing operation for the 2013 season.

Owners Peter and Karyn Hitchman who introduced the heli-snowshoe option for the first time last year say its more high-tech than the 'tennis racquet' shuffling of the past.

An idea as a team exercise, combine the slim-line snow shoes with the addition of a helicopter flight with Queenstown's Heli Tours and you can get into magical untouched areas.

Guided Walks operates regular full or half day snowshoeing tours and half day helicopter options, either on a group or privately guided basis.

Trips are available between May and September, and are snow dependent.



Heli company appoints Howarth



LEADING North Queensland helicopter tourism operator, Great Barrier Reef Helicopters has appointed David Howarth as the head of its Customer Services department.

Originally from the United Kingdom, David Howarth has global experience within the tourism and event management industries and is excited at the prospect of leading the customer service team at GBR Helicopters.



Radisson's Sydney Push

IT was all go when Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Sydney hosted a group of pco's from Melbourne, Adelaide and Wellington to experience their stylish five-star hotel and to introduce them to Radisson Hotel & Suites, bordering Darling Harbour.

Part of the two-day event saw team building company Hidden Door organise the visitors in a convoy of Mini Coopers for a team challenge loosely based on the movie 'The Italian Job.'

Hurray for Hollywood

SOME of Hollywood's most iconic film costumes from the last century are being exhibited at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in Melbourne.

The Hollywood Costume Exhibition is on show at this one-of-a-kind events venue until 18 August, the exhibition explores the role of costume design in cinematic storytelling.

Iconic pieces include that little black dress, designed by Hubert De Givenchy and worn by Audrey Hepburn in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961) and Dorothy's glittery red 'no place like home' slippers from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939).

More recent costumes include Sylvester Stallone's satin boxing shorts from *Rocky III* and Christian Bale's Batman costume.

All this can be combined with a day conference, cocktail function or dinner with Peter Rowland Catering, ACMI's in-house catering partner.

They have designed exclusive Hollywood Costume event packages that include the "Hollywood Diner" and "Hollywood Glamour" themed cocktail and canapés packages, which includes complimentary venue hire and a private viewing of the exhibition.

In addition, a daytime event, "Lunch with the Stars" offers a 2 course menu with a glass of wine.

For further details visit - www.acmi.net.au/hollywood-costume.

Starbucks rolling stock

THE first ever Starbucks carriage is to go into operation in September in a move they believe will further enhance the Swiss Federal Railways - SBB's onboard catering and restaurant services.

On 1 September, a brand new two day Swiss Flexi Pass will be launched, entitling travellers to travel by train, bus and boat on any two days within one month from AU\$223.

The travel period for this Pass is from 1 September 2013 to 31 May 2014 - see www.myswitzerland.ch/rail.

It was an event that took them to some iconic inner-city locations and included pizza making and flipping lessons, a bocce challenge, an Italian cocktail making class at Emmilou Tapas Bar in Darlinghurst, a tomato stomping and bottling contest to create 500ml of traditional Italian tomato sauce before a final dash to the finish line.

They also visited the Sydney Observatory, had lunch at Luna Park's The Deck, with a champagne ride on the Ferris Wheel and a thrill-a-minute jet boat ride with Oz Jetboating.

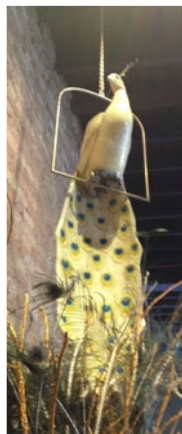
Day two was given over to site inspections and much eating and drinking in and around the city and The Rocks, at the Opera House with Aria Catering, the Lindt Café, the Argyle Exchange and a number of Merivale venues.

More information can be found in **BEN 31** May.

Pictured (right) from left are: Alex Nieuwenhuys, Radisson Hotel & Suites Sydney; Adair Cameron, Williment Travel Group, Wellington; Lisa Bacon, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group; Sabrina Kamann, Radisson Blu Hotel Sydney and Wendy Ronksley, Phil Hoffman Travel, Adelaide.



Below: The Mini Coopers parked outside Luna Park.

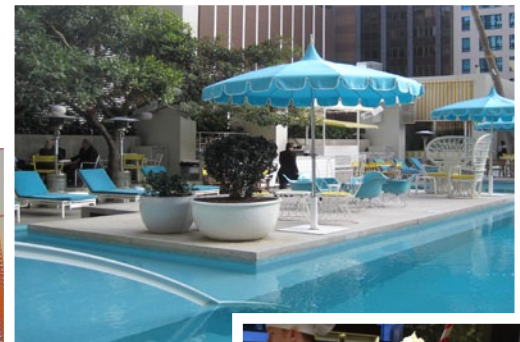


Left: Bar Ananas' design includes this gleaming peacock.



Left: Radisson Blu Sydney's stylish suite.

Right: Lamp artwork in The Reiby Room at The Argyle.



Above: Merivale's stylish pool deck.

Right: Chocolate heaven at Lindt Chocolate Cafe.



The Sydney Opera House Utzon Room which can be used for parties, corporate functions and small productions, features a brilliantly coloured woollen tapestry designed by Opera House architect Jørn Utzon (**pictured left**).



Las Vegas ups ante

DESPITE massive capacity for business events, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Bureau is continuing to push for even greater expansion.

The city's Convention Centre is currently in the midst of a US\$2.5 billion eight year expansion project which includes boosting the existing 3.2 million square feet of exhibition space by 33%.

The project also includes more meeting space and a plenary session facility for 5,000 people; rebranding the surrounding area which is located off the Las Vegas strip; and significant improvement of transport links which includes the Las Vegas monorail linking hotels directly to the convention centre.

Australia is a key international market for Las Vegas, with one in every five visitors to the USA experiencing the city - more than any other country.

Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority spokesperson Jesse Davis told **BEN** that interestingly non-gaming revenue for the city now significantly outstrips money from gambling, accounting for about 65% of visitor expenditure.

On any given day Las Vegas is playing host to about 340,000 visitors from across the globe and while many of these are from within the US the city is also heavily targeting international growth.

Denver associations

DENVER in Colorado is promoting its credentials as a year-round conference destination at International Pow Wow, with 9000 hotel rooms in walking distance of the city's convention centre.

Located at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, Denver enjoys more than 300 days of sunshine each year with a mild climate.

Popular as a gateway to the skifields, the city and surrounds also offer rich culture, museums, activities and the stunning Red Rocks outdoor amphitheatre.

Anaheim OC guide

THE Anaheim Orange County Visitors Bureau has released a new MICE Destination Guide, giving an easy summary of the California city's offerings for meeting professionals.

Pepe Avila of the AOCVB told **BEN** at IPW yesterday that Anaheim boasts the largest convention centre on the US West Coast, with a huge range of hotels within easy walking distance.

Orange County's array of attractions including Disneyland Resort, Knott's Berry Farm, fabulous shopping and activities are also highlighted in the guide, which features a simple reference for meeting spaces, site selection, dining options and more - see meetings.anaheimoc.org.

Spaceport offering

THE world's only custom-built spaceport in New Mexico is set to launch a new experience ideal for groups wanting to get a taste of commercial space travel.

Spaceport USA, which boasts a number of tenants including Virgin Galactic, will begin operating tours next year with a range of activities and access to onsite meeting facilities.

See spaceportamerica.com.

Chicago IPW 2014

THE US Travel Association's Pow Wow event will be held in Chicago next year, the first time the city has hosted the event since 1998.

IPW 2014 will take place 09-14 April next year, and in an unusual move the USTA also today announced the venues and dates for every IPW through until 2020.

In 2015 it will return to Orlando (30 May-03 June), followed by Miami in 2016 (04-08 June).

Washington DC will host its first ever IPW in 2017 (03-07 June), followed in 2018 by another first-timer, Denver (10-23 May).

IPW 2019 will take place in Anaheim (01-05 June) and then will return to Las Vegas in 2020 (30 May-03 Jun).

A transforming experience!



GROUPS of up to 500 can enjoy a quintessential Hollywood experience via special VIP tours of Universal Studios Hollywood.

As the only attraction in the world to combine a theme park with a working movie studio, Universal can tailor group visits to include unique opportunities such as visiting areas normally off-limits or even interacting with some of the celebrities who make films there.

Vice president of sales, Thomas See, who's **pictured** above with Los Angeles Visitors Bureau ceo Ernest Wooden and some not-so-cuddly creatures promoting Universal Hollywood's new Transformers ride, told **BEN** that Universal is also ideal for single-site conferences.

"We have hotels right next door, lots of self-contained meeting spaces and of course many attractions for delegates," he said.

The Citywalk area which boasts a range of upmarket eateries is ideal for large functions, and there's also easy connectivity via public transport to other parts of Los Angeles to make transporting large groups easy.

The resort is also on a hop-on hop-off bus route to make it easy

for delegates to explore the area.

The Universal Studios VIP experience, which includes breakfast and lunch, a personally guided tour and all day front-of-line access can be customised for conference delegates into a three hour activity, See said.

LA loves MICE guests

MEETINGS and conventions in Los Angeles last year generated 307,000 hotel room nights and had a US\$402m economic impact.

The Los Angeles Convention Centre is set for significant expansion, with Los Angeles Visitors Bureau president Ernest Wooden telling Pow Wow delegates today that there are plans afoot to expand the contiguous space offered "so we can go ahead and attract even larger conventions".

Wooden said that the modernisation process would "consider what meeting planners will need 5, 10 and even 20 years into the future".

Los Angeles is also working hard to attract hotel investment, with analysis showing the market can absorb around 5000 more rooms without affecting occupancies.

CONTACT US:

Publisher Bruce Piper	Editor Jill Varley	Contributor/Coordinator Chantel Housler
--------------------------	-----------------------	--

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

P: 1300 799 220 F: 1300 799 221

PO Box 1010 Epping, NSW, 1710

Business Events News is part of the Travel Daily group of publications which also include: Travel Daily, Cruise Weekly & Pharmacy Daily.

Disclaimer: While every care has been taken in the preparation of *Business Events News* no liability can be accepted for errors or omissions. **BEN** takes no responsibility for the opinions of its contributors/columnists. Information is published in good faith to stimulate independent investigation of the matters canvassed.