



Sights and signs

US actor John Cusack, currently on the Gold



Coast filming a new movie 'Hard Drive', caused a frisson of excitement amongst the predominantly female pco participants on a Gold Coast famil this week.

Sadly, no sightings were reported, although out at sea breaching whales and a few spouts were spotted from the expansive windows of the Watermark Hotel & Spa Gold Coast, which in part made up for any disappointment.

What we love here at **BEN** is the Gold Coast Business Events little man USB stick.

A happy chappie, wearing colourful boardshorts and thongs with his jacket and tie - check him out **right**.



Bouquets to Virgin or the Sydney Airport Authority, whoever it is that looks after these things.

There was a rather nice fragrance or perhaps a 'signature scent' emanating in the ladies toilets last week at the Virgin Domestic Terminal.

What a pleasant difference from some other airport toilets that need a good hose out.

On the subject of airports – what I'd like to know is, how is it that McCafe at both the domestic and international airports can sell an excellent cappuccino and toasted ham, cheese and tomato sanger for \$5.95 when at other outlets you'd pay in excess of \$10.00.

Check it out - neither your pocket or your stomach will be disappointed! - *Jill*.

Have your say on SICEEP

WANT to get in your two bob's worth about the proposed SICEEP (Sydney International Convention & Exhibition & Entertainment Precinct) and Haymarket residential and commercial quarter development?

Now is your chance, with three planning applications by Lend Lease currently on public exhibition, which provide further detail for three of six plots identified in the concept plan.

An important element of the NSW Government's vision to transform the 20 hectare precinct at Darling Harbour, Lend Lease is delivering the proposed commercial development after being announced as the successful proponent last year.

Applications include details on:

- A mixed use residential development with a podium and three residential buildings;

- A student accom building;
- A new urban square and meeting place and east-west pedestrian laneway; and
- A mixed use commercial office building with ground level retail space and a public car park.

The DAs are on public exhibition until 2 August and can be viewed at <http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au> under 'On Exhibition', or during business hours at Department of Planning and Infrastructure, 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney.

Feedback should be submitted to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure to be taken into consideration in assessment of the application.

Pacific Fair set for major makeover



PACIFIC Fair, once Queensland's largest regional shopping centre until 2006, is set for a \$580 million redevelopment.

With the announcement of the planned transformation by the AMP, the ageing centre is set to take on rival Robina Town Centre for the shopping dollar.

The project will include two full line department stores, two supermarkets, three discount department stores, luxury and high street fashion, "unrivalled dining and bar experiences", a world-class indoor-outdoor leisure and entertainment precinct and more than 400 specialty stores.

With works already under way behind the scenes to enable builders to arrive on site to commence construction in early 2014, the centre is expected to be ready in time for the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

DARE to change

RESORT designer and manager, Interior Space has introduced a new product dubbed DARE retreats and workshops (Discover, Adventure, Rejuvenate, Educate).

"The concept is about having the courage to do something different; to make changes that will impact your life in a special way," says director Ros Hemley.

"We offer workshops and retreats which have been designed specifically to provide a guide to 'kick start' away from demanding life patterns by learning to focus on what is important to create an optimistic future and become skilled at the art of positive living," she said.

Staffed by talented and well-qualified facilitators, DARE works with such high-end accommodation partners as Aman, Alila and Air Resorts.

"In addition we also have luxury group cultural holidays and in the near future we will also be adding three new resorts," Hemley revealed.

Courtney-O'Connor created AO



WELL-RESPECTED tourism and hospitality industry identity, and International College of Management, Sydney (ICMS) founder, Darryl Courtney-O'Connor, has been appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for his services within the tourism and hospitality industry.

Courtney-O'Connor who founded ICMS in 1996 and which has since become an internationally recognised business college offering bachelor and master degrees which both include applied industry training, is also the chairman of the Touraust Corporation, founding the Constellation Hotel Group with 12 country motels in 1986 which grew to over 60 hotels across Australia and New Zealand by 2011.

Commenting on the award, Courtney-O'Connor said: "I'm very delighted to receive this prestigious honour.

"It really was a very big surprise and I'm humbled that my work with the Touraust Corporation and ICMS has been recognised on such a large scale.

"The college is in particular close to my heart, as I can pass on my knowledge and experience to the leaders of tomorrow.

"I'm very proud of what we have achieved at ICMS and I think our strong international partnerships, such as with the Caesar Ritz College in Switzerland, and our various tourism and education awards are a testament to our commitment to furthering progress within the industry."



Virgin flies to Hamilton Island

HAMILTON Island, on the Great Barrier Reef, just got a whole lot easier for those living south of the border since the announcement this week that Virgin Australia has launched flights direct from Melbourne.

With tickets on sale now, Hamilton Island expects this increased flight capacity to lead to Melbourne overtaking Brisbane as the Island's second largest market.

Philippa Harrison, Hamilton Island's general manager sales, said, "Hamilton Island relies heavily on our airline partners, so we are thrilled that Virgin Australia has chosen to expand its offering and will be servicing Hamilton Island and the surrounding Whitsunday region direct from Melbourne."

With flights commencing on 15 August - just ahead of the start of the 30th celebration of Audi Hamilton Island Race Week on 17 August, "the timing couldn't be better," Harrison said.

Operating Boeing 737-800 aircraft, for the first time since 2004 the new route includes Business Class with both luxury leather seating in both Business and Economy, and a Business Class menu designed by acclaimed chef Luke Mangan.

Flights will depart Melbourne at 8:30am on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, arriving into Hamilton Island at 11:30am.

The return flight departs Hamilton Island at midday on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday arriving into Melbourne at 3pm.

Leaving on a jet boat

PARADISE Jet Boating on the Gold Coast's many waterways, is the holiday destination's original jetboat operator.

Known for their unique combination of 360° spins, high speed drifting and other exciting manoeuvres in as little as 10cm of water, they are able to customise rides, with a max capacity of 49 per departure.

These can range from adrenalin-fuelled adventures to milder sightseeing experiences and with flexible departure times and durations it makes it easy to fit this thrill into tight group itineraries.

For details see www.paradisejetboating.com.au.

Crowne's Hunter Valley first

CONSTRUCTION of the NSW Hunter Valley's first dedicated conference centre together with an on-site brewery and distillery is part of a \$5.5 million investment about to take place at the Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley.

IHG Australasia has also announced that it will continue to manage the property after signing a new 10-year agreement with owner, Schwartz Family Company.

The \$4 million conference centre, due to be completed by the end of 2014, has received significant Government support, with the Federal Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism granting \$250,000.

In addition, there will be an upgrade to the existing exhibition space at the hotel, the installation of a new large-scale commercial kitchen and the establishment of a permanent marquee on the grounds of the hotel.

The Crowne Plaza will also become the centre of operations for the Schwartz Family's Sydney Brewing Company, a micro distillery and cellar door facility which will become part of the hotel's main complex.

Eventually, a larger, purpose-built craft brewery and distillery will be established on 41 hectares of newly acquired, adjacent land.

Enhancements to be made include a soft refurbishment of the Crowne's 150 hotel rooms and 169 two and three bedroom villas, improvements to the hotel's 18-hole golf course, expansion of the kid's club (which has already received a children's train and 22-horse carousel), an extension of the hotel's

Grapevine Bar and Restaurant, and new energy and water consumption infrastructure.

Bill Edwards, head of operations at IHG Australasia said the company was delighted to extend their management agreement for Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley, adding that the team was eagerly anticipating the upgrade of the hotel.

Visit Malaysia Year '14



AUSTRALIA and New Zealand has been chosen by the newly appointed Tourism & Culture Minister for Malaysia, Hon. Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Bin Tan Sri Abdul Aziz, as the first destination to launch the Visit Malaysia Year 2014 to the global travel industry.

The Minister, who arrived in Australia on Wednesday, hosted a media conference in Melbourne to make the announcement and will also host a series of travel industry events in both Melbourne and Perth.

Part of an intensive global campaign, it is set to drive a target of 28 million tourists to the country next year, of which the campaign hopes to target 620,000 Australians, nearly a 25% increase from 2012 visitor arrival figures.

Commenting on the Australian sales mission, the Honourable Minister said: "Australia is a key market for Malaysia, with visitor arrivals from Australia to Malaysia growing year-on-year.

"In statistics received so far this year short term visitors from Australia to Malaysia are up 6% compared to the same period in 2012," he said.

Last year over half a million Australians travelled to Malaysia, making Australia the eighth top producing market for Tourism Malaysia.



FORGET loading up on Valium.

If the thought of flying scares you rigid, the latest research shows that British singer Adele's hit *Someone Like You* has been named the best song to calm your nerves on a plane.

Apparently, the song came out on top because it has a tempo of 67 beats per minute (bpm) and harmonious tones - close to the optimum 60 beats per minute.

Anxiety psychologist Dr Becky Spelman, who carried out the study, said breathing in time to music, with a low bpm with headphones on and your eyes closed lowers your heart rate and blood pressure.

Songs, she says, that stimulate the 'logical' left and 'emotional' right sides of the brain are best.

Enya's *Sail Away*, Bob Marley's *Buffalo Soldier* and Coldplay's *Paradise* were also good tracks to listen to.

Pines having a Ball



KERRY Ball (above), with a wealth of experience as senior sales manager international, Gold Coast Convention & Exhibition Centre and as director of sales & marketing, Palazzo Versace, has been appointed to the role of Queensland senior sales manager conference & events at RACV Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast.

In her new role Ball will represent both RACV Royal Pines Resort & RACV Noosa Resort.



New 'glamping' experience



GLAMOUR camping in an authentic outback experience is to open at Wilpena Pound Resort, 400kms from Adelaide.

The safari tent accommodation set under South Australia's

Take a hike in France

NOWADAYS, getting involved in a destination or giving back to a community rates highly on many travel agendas.

Heart of Provence Tours, a boutique Australian travel company for small groups includes some intriguingly tasty olive tours and olive harvesting in Provence in its itineraries.

One of France's best-loved regions with its spectacular countryside, picturesque villages and hearty cuisine, this Autumn, Art and Olives tour blends insights into generations of artistic inspiration with a taste of Provençal life at its most traditional time – the annual olive harvest.

Another program - *Mountain trails, Matisse and more* - is still under development will be ready for June 2014.

This will include walking in the hills behind the Cote D'Azur and time in the mountains beyond.

The tour takes in Vence and its famous Chapelle du Rosaire, decorated by Henri Matisse and the new museum in Le Cannet dedicated.

For more information see heartofprovencetours.com.au.

astonishing outback skies is due to open by 15 September.

Luxury en-suited safari tents will offer guests a new 'glamping' experience in an exclusive area away from the main campground and resort, but still within the Flinders Ranges National Park.

Set amongst river red gums, native pines and abundant wildlife, it offers zip king beds (for doubles and twins) with luxurious linen and bedding, en-suite bathrooms, while dining will be in dedicated camp lodge area.

A 'bush butler' is on hand to prepare meals and cocktails in an open dining area for up to 30 people.

Including dinner, bed and breakfast, prices start from \$340 per couple in low season (November to March) and \$390 per couple in high season (April to October).

For more details on Wilpena Pound Resort's glamour camping visit the property's website at www.wilpenapound.com.au.

In Dublin's fair city



CAPITALISING on the fact that the G8 Summit is currently taking place in Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland has taken advantage of the opportunity to showcase Northern Ireland to potential visitors and to convince them to visit in 2013 and beyond.

Topping this off is the fact that while US President Barack Obama was in Fermanagh at the Summit, Michelle Obama and her daughters were enjoying Dublin.

The Obama girls went to see Riverdance, which ties in nicely with the Irish Gathering and the promotion of *Riverdance - the Gathering World Record attempt* on 20-21 July.

Ritz-Carlton to Bali

THE Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company will return to Bali next year with the official opening of the 288-room Ritz-Carlton Bali.

The luxury resort in a stunning cliff-top location will feature six restaurants and bars including a cliff-side eatery integrated into a natural cave which doubles as a private dining room.

EOFY Décor special

MY Decorations, who supply a diverse range of stylish decoration ideas, have an \$12.50 End Of Financial Year freight special on all orders within Australia, regardless of order size.

Select from an extensive bulk pricing range of: table candles, hanging glass balls, fairy lights, lantern bags, guest books, flower baskets, photo albums, cake bags and LED lighting.

See www.mydecorations.com.au



As the only working movie studio and theme park in the world, Universal Studios Hollywood is a totally unique meeting destination offering both thrilling attractions such as 'Transformers: The Ride – 3D' and the mystique that is authentic Tinsel Town.

Universal Studios Hollywood events are completely turnkey.

All the event planner needs to do is simply share their vision for the event and Universal's talented events team will cover every detail from start to finish.

From gourmet to casual fare, to audio visual needs, to elaborate or simple accent décor – Universal Studios Hollywood can provide the complete package.

The biggest challenge that Universal Studios Hollywood faces is communicating to the masses the vast array of options available for the MICE market.

While some people may recognize Universal for its picnics and theme park fun, others think of an event there as an elegant affair in the Globe Theatre.

Universal Studios Hollywood is both of those, and more!

"At Universal Studios Hollywood, the possibilities are limitless.

"The expertise we provide, the customer service to which we commit ourselves and the quality of the product is second-to-none," says Kim Weedmark, Vice President, Group & Event Sales.

"The best event idea we've brought to life this year saw guests welcomed by stilt walkers and look-a-like characters including Marilyn Monroe and the Blues Brothers," Weedmark said.

Later entertainment for the group included a Beatles cover band on Baker Street, Can Can dancers on French Street and a Parisian quartet in the Parisian Courtyard.

Universal Studios Hollywood can cater for from 100 through to 20,000 people in a group.

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