



Touring at its best

POST conference touring doesn't get much better than this gem from Mary Rossi Travel.



France's hidden treasures, secret cellars and holes in the wall are all part of a French Underground insider's tour of wine, food and fashion with winemaker and owner of Lisa McGuigan Wines, Lisa McGuigan.

Departing on 23 September – 7 October, the exclusive, privately escorted tour of the French underground, gives travellers an insider's view of life in France that takes the group from Monaco to Provence, through the wine regions of Burgundy, Champagne and the Rhone Valley, then to Paris.

With an ardour for French wine, food and fashion that stretches back to her days at a Swiss finishing school, Lisa opens doors to ancient cellars that nurture France's finest wines and champagnes, you dine at her favourite Michelin-starred restaurants, that are usually impossible to get a reservation and stay in luxurious boutique B&Bs, a grand 16th century residence and chic 5-star designer hotels - Jill.

Today's BEN issue

BEN today has four pages of editorial plus three full pages on:

- Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Centre
- New Caledonia Tourism
- Mantra Lorne

Abu Dhabi drives recognition

AS Abu Dhabi Convention Bureau looks for the emirate to be ranked by the International



Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) as among the world's top 50 association meetings destinations in five years, it launches a new drive to push its business events ambitions forward.

"We will provide free, and non-biased assistance and support to professional convention, incentive and exhibition planners, corporations and associations so that they can bid for, win and hold conferences, major business events, business meetings and congresses in Abu Dhabi," explained His Excellency Jasem Al Darmaki, deputy director general, TCA Abu Dhabi.

"This is a clear signal to the maturing local and regional business events industry and its international counterpart, that Abu Dhabi is prioritising their sector as never before and is a move totally aligned to Abu Dhabi's 2030 economic vision.

"The bureau's formation also demonstrates our recognition of the potential of exhibitions, conferences and business events – the MICE sector – to contribute to Abu Dhabi's wider tourism aspirations and generate significant economic impact for the destination through increasing visitor numbers, hotel

occupancies, flights and other visitor and exhibitor spend."

Al Darmaki went on to say that they are targeting six major business wins this year, a further eight next year and a total of 10 wins during 2015.

"Our strategy will be to target in-market opportunities that will generate incremental business in the short term while building on international relationships for the long term," he said, adding that one of the deciding factors for major associations and business event organisers is having the most competitive room rates ever. "In 2011, ICCA ranked Abu Dhabi 234th in the world for the eight major meetings held in the destination.

"We have more than doubled that last year and realistically expect to be within ICCA's top 150 when the rankings are announced in the next few months."

To strengthen Abu Dhabi's standing as a leading business events destination, Abu Dhabi Convention Bureau has partnered with several leading global communities and organisations including: The Energy Cities Alliance; the Future Convention Cities Initiative and the International Congress and Conventions Association.

The ICC Sydney story at MEA

WITH early bird registration for MEA 2013 in Darwin closing in three days, the time is nigh to take advantage of the savings.

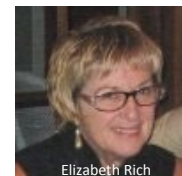
Under discussion at the National Conference 4-7 May is this foremost topic "Convention & Exhibition Centres: who needs them, and why?" The ICC Sydney story.

With the third generation of Australian convention centres on the drawing board, it is timely to re-examine the pivotal role of these purpose-built centres for the BE industry, along with the current expectations of government and the community from such major infrastructure.

Using the proposed Sydney ICC, this session will take a closer look at the commercial and political realities, and the integration of centres into their urban environs.

Today's convention and exhibition centres are expected to deliver much more than bums on seats and bed nights.

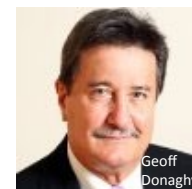
The event's moderator will be Elizabeth Rich AMM who will



Elizabeth Rich

lead a distinguished panel of Geoff Donaghy, AEG Ogden, Lyn

Lewis-Smith, Business Events Sydney and Infrastructure NSW in the debate.



Geoff Donaghy

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Grosvenor's \$multi-million refurbishment

NOT only is Adelaide entering into a phase of exciting development with a new sporting Oval and Convention Centre, the 93 year old Mercure Grosvenor Hotel Adelaide, has undergone a multi-million dollar refurbishment to all of its 181, 4-star accommodation rooms.

Boasting fresh new bathrooms, sleek leather desk chairs, LCD TVs and ipod docks, Mercure's upgraded Privilege Rooms offer extra touches such as comfy robes and slippers, Nespresso coffee machine and free Internet access.

Hotel general manager, Ben Patten said of the refurbishment to this hotel, which survived fire in 1918 and went on to open one of Australia's first conference facilities in the 1970's, "We have made considerable changes to uplift the style and functionality of the rooms which we hope will attract even more people to the hotel for business and leisure.

"It's really remarkable to see the ongoing transformation of Adelaide take place around the hotel and we're really excited to be a part of creating a vibrant new city," he said.



Managing meetings



MEETING Manager, a comprehensive tool, which provides event organisers access to a range of one-to-one meeting programs has been launched by GenieMobile.

Able to be delivered at events to improve the experience and to add value for attendees, Michael Douglas, operations director at GenieMobile said at the launch "Our new software supports event organisers in delivering this, by creating a platform where pre arranged meetings can be scheduled via the existing event engagement solutions.

"The tool has been specifically designed to enable event attendees to maximise the effectiveness of their attendance at an event by meeting the right people at a convenient, pre-planned location.

"Automated resource and agenda management ensures that meetings are allocated only when participants are available and at a free location.

"Diaries and requests are delivered to all participants via mobile apps and attendee web portal.

The Meetings Manager tool also provides event organisers access to the organiser console online live dashboard which allows the monitoring of requests, and arrangement of meetings directly, whilst providing organisers with in depth analytics.

See www.geniemobile.com.

Dead Sea achieves

THE Dead Sea Jordan, King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Centre, managed by Hilton, recently celebrated its 2012 successes and achievements at the annual team member's party.

Kamel Ajami, Hilton Worldwide country manager - Jordan, congratulated the team for their passion & enthusiasm and took the opportunity to outline the company's plans for future development and growth in Jordan for 2013.

Hayat Al Oneh from the housekeeping department was awarded the honour of Employee of the Year, while others earned recognition for their contribution to the success of the business during the last three months.



MULLINGAR, County Westmeath will become the Left-handed Capital of the World in the northern summer - one of the many events comprising *The Gathering* as Ireland celebrates in a year of homecomings and of all things Irish.

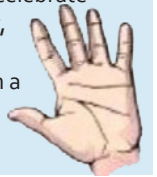
Mullingar, An Muileann Cearr, translates as 'the Town of the Left Hand Mill', a name derived from a miraculous seventh-century encounter at a local mill.

With no patron saint to bless and guide the southpaws of the country and the entire world's population of 700 million lefties, something had to be done.

So with Mullingar's ancient name and the remains of a fifteenth-century church still standing on the original seventh-century St Coleman monastic site, a campaign to give the local saint a permanent presence have him accredited as the Patron Saint of Left-handers.

For five days of celebrations, doors will be re-hung, cutlery reversed, tables re-set and the townspeople will be doing the right thing by left-handed people for five magical days of leftism.

Visitors will be able to drink and play pub games with the left hand only and celebrate left-hand creativity, adaptability and sporting prowess in a classic recipe for loads of Irish craic.



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business events news

6th March 2013

Easing access to Heron Island

THE launch this week of a new direct Qantaslink flight from Sydney to Gladstone, makes getting to Heron Island, one of the Great



Barrier Reef's most enchanting destinations, that much easier.

The new Qantaslink service will operate eight return flights a week from Sydney to Gladstone—including twice daily on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays – providing access to almost 1,200 seats per week.

Guests can either choose the 30-minute scenic helicopter flight or the two-hour boat launch to get to Heron.

With its own fully air-conditioned Wistari conference room offering views like no other of the reef outside (there are block-out blinds), delegates are encouraged to leave the outside world behind as televisions and telephones are not found in guest rooms, except in the Point Suites, The Beach House and the Wistari Suites.

To celebrate the new direct flights, Heron Island is offering a special early bird offer of \$999

per couple for a three-night stay.

The offer includes three nights' accommodation, all meals and return boat transfers.

Children 12 years and under stay and eat for free - for information visit - www.heronisland.com.

Banyan Tree refurb

THE Banyan Tree Seychelles is in the midst of an internal soft refurbishment, with an end date expected by summer of this year.

Causing no disruption to the resort, the refurb promises a new sophisticated appearance, an improved guest resort experience and an upgrade to all 60 villas, including a fresh re-design for the dining outlets and public areas.

The Hillside Pool Villas will be re-painted with new furnishings.

The Beachfront Spa Pool Villas will undergo a similar refresh with a cosy external gazebo and new wooden day beds.

DMS's Melbourne workshop

PRIOR to AIME, 90 people attended Destination Management Service's (DMS) workshop at River's Edge in Melbourne.

Managing director, Leila Bishara said that they had received some impressive feedback on the quality of the destination management companies in attendance.

Fabulous travel prizes were given away to the lucky winners



and the venue which Bishara said had worked really well for the event and will be used again next year.

Pictured from left are the DMS team: Bianca, Erin, Leila, Marissa and Niharika.

Ripples venue offer

HARBOUR front venues don't come much better than those run by restaurateur Bill Drakopoulos's - Ripples Chowder Bay and Ripples Sydney Wharf.

A special \$100 per person package to host a private function at either of these two venues includes a three course choice menu or substantial cocktail style menu with a house beverage package served on an unlimited basis for 4.5 hours.

The attractive offer, available until 31 March also includes a choice of either two complimentary canapés or a cocktail on arrival.

It's available at Ripples Sydney and Mosman's Ripples Chowder Bay, for exclusive use functions or in their 'AquaMine Room'.

Find out more from the Ripples function team online at ripplesydneywharf.com.au or rippleschowderbay.com.au.

Sanctuary in the sky

HANSAR Bangkok, described as a sanctuary of elegance, sophistication and exceptional comfort in the heart of the city, has a new 19th floor Rooftop Sky Terrace.

With both indoor and outdoor areas, it offers elegant function space for executive meetings with dining and coffee break facilities, private parties, cocktail, business and networking events.

The area is completely closed off from the hotel's public areas, making it a totally private and intimate space for up to 200 guests.

In addition, the Penthouse with double storey height ceilings and a view over the adjacent outdoor garden has an indoor capacity for 50 persons while the Penthouse Garden and Frangipani Bar with outdoor gardens overlooks the Royal Bangkok Sports Club and has a capacity for 200.

WIN a two night stay at Spicers Vineyards Estate, Hunter Valley

This week **Business Events News** and the Spicers Group is offering one reader the chance to win a two night midweek stay at **Spicers Vineyards Estate** including breakfast.

Set amongst the vineyards and natural bushland in the Hunter Valley, the estate has recently built four new luxury suites and a day spa facility, creating an exclusive retreat for Executive Meetings and small team Incentives for up to 12 guests.

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Rocky Mountaineer from Seattle to Rockies

ROCKY Mountaineer has announced a new route between Seattle and Vancouver with the inaugural service to begin on 24 August this year.

The service will run twice a day between the two cities and can be purchased with a two day, one night Rockies trip or more.

This three day two night experience will begin either in Lake Louise, Banff, Calgary or Jasper and finish in Seattle or vv.

Speaking to **BEN** at AIME sales manager, Asia Pacific Dianna Schinella said guests can clear US customs at the train station in Vancouver and is perfect for conference and incentive groups.

Customised itineraries can be created for group sizes between 10 to 500 with two speciality rail cars, that also have picture windows, to host onboard meetings and cocktail events.

Groups also get the benefits of the Gold Leaf dome by moving through the carriages, Schinella said.

Event organisers can arrange to have the carriages customised with logos printed on headrests, specialised menus, wine tastings onboard as well as other team building activities such as yoga,

truffle tasting and wine pairing.

Each night guests are moved into moderate accommodation, in Kamloops or Quesnel and will begin the journey when it is light the next morning.

The rail journey's one or two night itineraries are available between April to October to guarantee wildlife and maximise the beauty of the surroundings with early morning departures and late afternoon early evening arrivals into the designated overnight stay city.

Rocky Mountaineer has been exhibiting at AIME for the last three years and took part in the inaugural Luxperience event last year in a bid to reach out to the MICE market in Asia Pacific.

"We are offering the MICE market more customised itineraries and value adds," Schinella told **BEN**.

A special deal is being offered to FIT groups who book a four night package for a minimum of 14 adults by 28 March.

The deal includes one complimentary group tour package plus onboard credit per person to spend on merchandise or excursions - email groups@rockymountaineer.com.

Carly's off to the Waldorf

CONGRATULATIONS to Carly Adler, Flight Centre Group Sales who is the very lucky winner of two nights accommodation at the Waldorf Astoria, New York courtesy of *Business Events News*, DMS and Unique Venues.

Adler's business card was lucky enough to be picked out from those of the hundreds of visitors who dropped into the **Business Events News** stand at AIME last week.

She is **pictured** above with



Marissa Fernandez, general manager, Destination Marketing Services receiving her much coveted voucher to the prestigious New York City hotel.



Face to Face with...

Alicia Beachley CEO, April5



Business Events News recently caught up with April5's CEO, Alicia Beachley. April5 is an independent, multi service agency that specialises in promotional marketing, brand activation and events. April5 creates campaigns that drive action, change behaviour and deliver measurable results for its clients. Alicia is also on the executive committee of the Australasian Promotional Marketing Association (APMA) and manages its annual Star Awards program.

What does your role entail?

Managing an office of 5 staff and large corporate clients, keeping everyone happy and always producing great work.

What's the first thing you do when you get in the office?

Open my window and let in some fresh sea air.

What is the most challenging aspect of your job?

Managing my home and office life. While I love what I do and I am passionate about my business, my family is also very important to me, so maintaining a healthy 'work life balance' is something that I often find challenging.

How do you inspire your team?

By allowing them to have the authority to make decisions and then backing them up all the way. I run and maintain the agency with honesty and integrity and I have found that this spirit of openness provides a strong foundation and sets an example for the team.

Dealing with new technology - bonus or headache?

That's a tricky one, and often dependent on the day or

hours of sleep, but I'd say a headache that often comes with a bonus.

What would you be doing if you weren't in your current position?

Running children's parties.

Who has inspired you?

My mother.

How do you relax?

With my family and a glass of pinot.

What makes a great conference?

Of course I am tempted to say a conference that I organised! In general terms though, a great conference is one where the attendees walk away having taken something out of it, and where all the objectives are met.

What is the most inspiring conference you have been involved in?

Nokia Sales Summit – 80 International guests, Melbourne Cup, amazing money can't buy experiences. INCREDIBLE.

How many conferences have you attended in the last 12 months?

Ten.

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