



What would Putin say?



WE'VE already had a dig at the bizarre chart uncovered in the Sochi Winter Olympics athletes' village that lists the 'Sochi bathroom rules' (*BEN* 05 Feb) but wait, there's more!

A Chicago Tribune reporter, Stacy St Clair tweeted, "My hotel has no water" to which the front desk replied "If restored, do not use on your face because it contains something very dangerous."

She resorted to using Evian water!

Other reports list things like a menu offering "cake in ass."

And then there are rooms where the doorknob comes off in your hand!

CNN (@HarryCNN) tweeted that they had booked 11 rooms in a media hotel five months ago.

"We have been here for a day and only one room is available."

"The reception of our hotel has no floor" said another. "But it does have a welcoming picture of Russian President Putin."

Still, at least the grass is always greener in Sochi after *The Wall Street Journal's* Paul Sonne retweeted from Evgeny Feldman (@EvgenyFeldman) a picture of a woman spray-painting dead grass green.

It all sounds very Basil Fawlty.



As if to top all this off, there is speculation on the Russian internet as to who will light the Olympic flame.

Rumour has it that it will be 2004 Olympic rhythmic gymnastics champion Alina Kabaeva - long romantically linked to Putin.

As they say, only in Russia! Jill

Platinum's grand slam

EVENTS specialists Platinum Pass, the Australian Open's official corporate hospitality sales agent, entertained more than 1700 guests during the two-week tennis tournament.

This included two private events during the semi-final and finals.

Guests enjoyed corporate match seating at Rod Laver Arena for the men's and women's finals, an exclusive men's final pre-match event at The Westpac Centre, entertainment from tennis legends Jim Courier and Goran Ivanišević (pictured on the right), as well as meet and greet and photo opportunities with special guests and lucky door prizes featuring signed tennis racquets, balls and programs.

"We were absolutely thrilled with the overwhelming interest received from corporate business guests and passionate tennis fans for this year's finals functions", said Platinum Pass general manager, Michael Coulton (pictured left).

Dates for the 2015 Australian Open are 19 Jan to 01 Feb.

VS – flies in, flies out

INCREASING costs and a challenging economic environment has been cited as the reason that Virgin Atlantic announced its intention to withdraw operations between Sydney and Hong Kong from May this year.

The carrier said these factors had affected revenues to the point that the route was no longer considered profitable.

Virgin Atlantic ceo Craig Kreeger said these were difficult times for the airline industry and as part of the company's strategy to operate more efficiently, it needed to deploy aircraft to routes with the right level of demand to be financially viable.

The last flight departing Hong Kong to Sydney will be on 04 May, with the final Sydney departure the following day.



For more information visit www.platinumpass.com.au or call 1300 766 332.

Super cruise February

A RECORD number of 90,000 inbound passengers from 39 cruise ships will see the biggest ever stream of international visitors in Sydney's cruise ship history enter Sydney Harbour in February.

The cruise passengers are being officially welcomed by a team of City of Sydney ambassadors stationed at the Overseas Passenger Terminal at Circular Quay and two at White Bay wharves.

Hailed as 'Super February', the ambassadors are armed with maps, advice and information.

In its third year, the successful Ambassador Program is a joint initiative with Destination NSW and Sydney Ports.

"The program has proven so popular, we are now taking bookings from cruise operators who want personalised welcomes aboard their ships before passengers disembark," Lord Mayor Clover Moore said.

Among the ships to arrive are the Queen Mary (2,600 passengers), Costa Deliziosa (2,800), Radiance of The Seas (2,500), Arcadia (2,300) and MS Oosterdam (1,800).

On 01 Mar, Queen Elizabeth will also bring in another 2,500 visitors.

AIME booking promo

SINCE joining the Wyndham Hotel Group two years, Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre Marcoola Beach Resort, a popular corporate beach retreat on the Sunshine Coast, is to launch an exciting new booking promotion at AIME 2014.

Set on an absolute beachfront, in a stunning location for inspiring conferences, intimate dinners are held under the stars on the Drifts Lawn or in the resort's diverse collection of six function rooms ranging from the Beachfront Ballroom with a 240-delegate capacity right down to the private Longboard Boardroom.

Unique team building experiences and tailored solutions include hands-on environmental projects, surfing and access to the Sunshine Coast's many attractions.

Learn more about the resort and their new booking promotion at AIME, on stand #2634.

Alternatively you can visit their website, www.wyndhamAP.com/hotels.

Cross at Aussie World

MEAGAN Cross has joined Aussie World and the iconic Ettamogah Pub on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.



Cross has extensive experience across marketing, advertising and communications in various industries and most recently with Allianz Global Assistance.

Cross' experience in Tourism covers Queensland, Central NSW and the south island of New Zealand.

She brings leadership, passion and a fun attitude with her.

Aussie World and the Ettamogah Pub reported record numbers this holiday season.



7th February 2014

Disney magic at AIME



THE first name in worldwide theme parks, Disney, will be exhibiting at AIME 2014.

With a history of driving record-breaking attendance for congresses and conferences, Disney's second appearance at AIME comes at a time when it continues to unveil new developments across the globe.

They will be exhibiting at booth #3514 to share what's new in the world of Disney meetings.

Planners could learn about the benefits to booking one of the five Disney destinations, such as being able to privatise theme park attractions and lands for corporate events; add professional development content from the Disney Institute; leverage the Disney Event Group for a range of services including event concepts and scripting, entertainment and audiovisual services, Disney said.

As part of the largest expansion in Disney history they are offering an array of new private event

options within the theme parks, including the recently refurbished Test Track that features a new Chevrolet Design Center where guests can create their own custom concept vehicles prior to buckling into their 6-person "SimCar" ride vehicle and putting their design through its paces on the exhilarating Test Track circuit.

This summer the Seven Dwarfs Mine Train opens in the Magic Kingdom Park and the long term transformation of Downtown Disney into Disney Springs continues, scheduled to open in phases through 2016.

Also underway is Disney's collaboration with filmmaker James Cameron and Lightstorm Entertainment to bring to life the mythical world of Pandora, inspired by Cameron's *Avatar*.

Scheduled to open at Disney's Animal Kingdom theme park in 2017, it will offer new nighttime entertainment and private- event options.

Small group tours

A NEW portfolio of A&K Connections Small Group Journeys has been released.

Guaranteed to operate with a minimum of two guests and limited to 24 passengers, each tour is accompanied by an expert A&K tour director on every departure.

Recommended tours include: Chile & Argentina in March, China in April, Turkey in May, Tanzania in June and the Canadian Rockies in July.

For more information, visit www.abercrombiekent.com.au/small-group-journeys

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Q sky high winner

QANTAS' \$15 million dollar investment in the Australian Wine industry each year has seen the carrier win five of the 13 awards at the annual Cellars in the Sky Awards, held in London recently.

The airline said it sourced more than 250 wines from more than 150 different producers.

The gongs include Best Overall Wine Cellar and Best First Class Cellar, make Qantas the winner of more awards than any other carrier for the fifth year running.

Qantas executive manager customer experience Alison Webster said the airline was committed to offering the best Australian wines and educating its crew to become sky Sommeliers.



MICE trends in Hawaii

HAWAII Tourism Oceania will expand its presence at AIME this year after experiencing a strong year of growth for MICE business from Australia.

Hawaii Tourism MICE representative Holly Ballard said in the wake of a large overall increase of 104% of MICE arrivals in 2013 versus 2012, it was a good time to plan a MICE event to one of the islands.

"One major trend emerging so far in 2014 is the growth in group enquiries to the Neighbour Islands which means the PCOs can tailor make a very unique and unforgettable experience for their clients that 'ticks all the boxes'."

At booth 2832, in addition to representatives from Hawaii Tourism Oceania, and the various islands including Oahu, Kauai, and Hawaii, the stand will also host senior representatives from various organisations including Hawaiian Airlines, Hilton Hotels Hawaii, Hyatt Resorts Hawaii and DMC organisers, Kathy Clarke and MC&A Inc.

crumbs!



AS most of us know, star of the silver screen John Travolta owns and flies five planes, one of which is a Qantas Boeing 707-138, complete with Qantas livery.

This may well have been the inspiration for a plane crazy twenty two year old San Franciscan to own a plane too.

The twist here is that his plane is made out of manila folders. (Lock up the stationery cupboard!)

The 1.22m long craft, more befitting his age and status is a painstakingly detailed replica of an Air India Boeing 777.

Created out of cardboard and a little glue it is currently parked in a mini-hanger in a place he declines to disclose.

No doubt this was an insurance against the 1:60 scale aircraft getting hijacked, or whatever the paper-plane equivalent is, and the 10,000 hours he estimates he's devoted to the project over the past five and a half years.

This is not to mention squandering around 400 manila folders, by his estimates.

That's enough to give your average stationery manager apoplexy.

Double the Pullman

THE second Pullman hotel has opened in Shanghai – the Pullman Shanghai South, making it the 15th Pullman in China.

The 25 storey hotel with 338 rooms and suites has seven function rooms and meeting facilities that include a 1300 sqm pillarless grand ballroom.

It offers convenient access to Hongqiao International Airport, Shanghai South Railway Station, Shanghai Stadium and Caohejing High-tech Park.

It was designed for today's cosmopolitan travellers, Accor Greater China chief operating officer Paul Richardson said.

Neutze joins Raffles

NATIVE New Zealander John Neutze has joined the Raffles family as director of sales and marketing, Raffles Hotel Le Royal and Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor, Cambodia.

Neutze has more than 20 years' experience in the hospitality industry and was national director of sales for Hilton Worldwide's national sales office in Thailand.

He has worked for a number of other prominent hotels including Hyatt Auckland in NZ and the Stamford Plaza in Melbourne.



7th February 2014

NCCC's new DSM



JENIFER Dwyer Slee has been appointed to The National Convention Centre Canberra (NCCC) as director of sales and marketing (DSM).

With a wealth of experience as DSM at Accor, Starwood and The Event Team, Slee joins Karen Lock who was recently appointed business development manager and is well known through her roles with the Northern Territory Convention Bureau and Alice Springs Convention Centre.

Slee said it was an exciting time to be part of Canberra's Business Events community and to be

working with partners locally and nationally to develop the conferences and meetings to be held in Canberra.

"Canberra offers unparalleled access to key political figures and senior decision makers, world leading researchers, academics, scientists and innovators in a diverse range of fields."

Pictured from left to right are NCCC manager Stephen Wood, Jenifer Dwyer Slee, Karen Lock and sales manager Robert Doyle.

Pillars' suite rewards

THE 30 suite luxury boutique hotel, 137 Pillars House in Chang Mai, has special full or half day meeting packages with seating for up to 24 people.

The hotel is built around an original colonial teak homestead dating back to the early 1800s.

The offer includes the full day use of the Drawing Room for US\$50 per person, and half day use until noon or 1pm to 5pm for US\$40 per person.

The offer includes coffee breaks, basic audio visual equipment and 20% discount on photocopies.

The offer is valid to 31 Oct.

The ICE-ing on AIME

PROFESSIONAL Conference Organisers, ICE Australia, will present the Education Program at AIME 2014 in their first time exhibiting at the expo.

Working with AIME to produce the two day program, Harriet Innes of ICE Australia said topical issues had been selected.

"We think it will be most beneficial for the people of our industry."

You can find ICE Australia at booth #1120.

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

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GENerating Change

Director of Conference Focus, Max Turpin is sharing his insights on a range of topics with a regular column in *BEN*.

Topics will include new generation events and making events effective and valuable.



Networking at Events Part 2

Following on from my previous column about the importance of networking in next generation events, I've recently seen several industry articles about this same topic. A recent study conducted by myQaa, an event app producer, of leading event industry figures and visionaries asked what they thought events would look like in 2050. Amongst other things it concluded that, "Networking will be the main reason for people to attend meetings". This is especially noteworthy when you consider the ever-increasingly connected world in which we live...and that face-to-face networking will never go out of fashion and indeed become even more important at future live events.

One reader of this report commented that collaboration will trump networking and indeed that collaboration should become a fundamental objective for events. When you consider the origins of the word "conference", derived from conferre, the Latin word meaning 'to bring together', that's hard to argue with. And as I've mentioned previously, there's nothing more powerful at live events than the 'collective intelligence' of your event participants....and you'd be crazy not to consider this in your event design and the fact you have the brightest brains together in the same room.

Another article I recently read was a forecast of Non-Tech Event Trends for 2014 in the fantastic Event Manager Blog. It sees the audience being more

in control (more choice, input and interaction), less structured formats, collaborative working (a shift from information exchange to participative learning) and, because of the aforementioned, the increasing importance the role of the professional facilitator will take.

One final article I would like to mention was in Bizbash on International CES – the Consumer Electronics Show recently held in Las Vegas that attracted a mere 150,000 visitors. The header of the blog article: "Never mind the technology. Pros say face-to-face interaction keeps CES relevant". This from one of the biggest electronics shows on the planet! And if you've ever doubted the importance of networking, interaction and collaboration at your own events, I'll leave you with this quote from the show: "Part of live event interaction is getting inspired, feeding off other's energy and encountering surprises that might jump-start an idea – and those face-to-face synergies aren't likely to happen via email or seated in your chair engaged in social media".

If you'd like to learn more about how to make your events fresh, innovative and effective, please contact Max Turpin at Conference Focus on 02 9700 7740 or visit the website at conferencefocus.com.au.



Sharing the Portfolio

TOURISM Portfolio is expanding its presence at AIME 2014 by sharing stand 1938 with two world-class destination management companies and three Australian resorts; Lizard IncentEvents, Gulf Ventures, The Byron at Byron Resort and Spa, Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa and Riverside Oaks.

Gourmet Abu Dhabi

GOURMET Abu Dhabi, the annual culinary festival, has kicked off, running across more than 20 of the city's restaurants until Feb 19.

This year's festival was the fastest selling in the event's six year history, the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority said.