



Feeling croc

IN the Top End, where the NT News headlines



tend to centre on Crocs, Cops and Cyclones, they reported on Wednesday, under the headline 'Gods must be crazy', that Darwin was the coldest capital in the country at 25.7 °C.

The Top End in 'the wet' can be an impressive sight to behold; we had arrived in Darwin on The Ghan on Wednesday morning, having



ridden the rails in torrential rain, watching as the waters alongside the track continued to rise.

Cyclone preparedness during 'the wet' is an annual thing for locals, who will tell you that when the cyclone warning reaches 'watch' level the order of readiness goes: bottle, servo, supermarket, hardware store.

I'm told the best places to view Darwin's electrically charged storms is in the city's waterfront precinct, striking out over the top of the Darwin Convention Centre and from Pee Wee's at the Point.

Jill

On the tiles with Accor



ACCOR is supporting the Sydney Opera House's grassroots fundraising campaign – Own Our House - by giving its guests the gift of an 'Ice' tile when they book three or more nights' accommodation at participating Accor hotels across Australia.

X-Men star Hugh Jackman was one of the first people to put money behind the campaign, which hopes to raise \$15 million.

People can personalise their tile with a photo and short message, choose a tile next to a famous artist.

They can even check out the view from their tile online.

With a donation of \$100 for an 'Ice' tile and \$400 for a 'Snow' tile, the Opera House's decade of renewal gives people the chance to express their support by owning a virtual tile on the World Heritage-listed building's

tallest sail.

To receive their tile, all Accor guests need to do is to book between 13 Jan and 9 Feb for stays until 31 December.

All bookings must be pre-paid and are non-refundable.

Accor Pacific's chief operating officer Simon McGrath said "Accor is proud to play a role in supporting the Own Our House campaign.

"This initiative is a great way for the public to become involved and we look forward to our guests taking advantage of this unique opportunity and owning their own piece of this iconic landmark."

All tiles must be redeemed through the Sydney Opera House by 28 Feb 2014.

For more information and to book head to www.accorhotels.com.

Nemonic's AIME plan

WITH many of Nemonic Concepts' international clients exhibiting at AIME 2014 in Feb, delegates and visitors wanting to get potential group travelling information in one convenient spot can head to the Nemonic Concepts stand #2532.

Here the Wedgewood DMC group is exhibiting for their third successive year.

In addition are Ruscice - Russia's eclectic and pro-active DMC, Travco Travel - the premier independent DMC in the Arabian Gulf and Condor Travel - South America's first winner of the prestigious SITE Crystal Award.

Time's almost up

WITH only three weeks to go before submissions close for the MEA Industry Awards, it's time to prepare your award tender.

The awards recognise excellence and best business practice in the Meetings & Events Industry.

Closing date is 10 Feb.

You can listen to the Awards Webinar recording of past winners, and judges, to help with planning, as a download at www.meetingsevents.com.au/awards2013.

Today's BEN issue

BEN has three pages of editorial plus a full page from:

- AIME (Asia-Pacific Incentives & Meetings Expo)
- CLICK HERE.

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Ticket to ride



A NEW luxury train has been launched in the southern island of Kyushu, in Japan.

The train is named The Seven Stars, a reference to the seven prefectures of Kyushu: Fukuoka, Nagasaki, Miyazaki, Kagoshima, Kumamoto, Saga and Oita.

The seven carriage, luxury sleeper train has 14 suites, each with a different design and fitted with ensuite bathrooms and twin beds.

Interiors are fitted with unique Japanese features, such as hinoki cypress wood and Arita porcelain basins in the bathrooms, calligraphy artwork and kumiko ramma dividing screens.

The train will offer two and four day journeys from April to June starting from Fukuoka's Hakata

Station.

It gives groups the chance to experience local cuisine, hot springs, natural scenery, and the island's distinct history and culture.

Prices start from 155,000 yen (AU\$1685) per person for the two day option, covering all rail, bus and other transportation costs/fares incurred during the specified itinerary.

This also includes meals, sightseeing, entertainment, accommodation costs and drinks from the mini bar.

Bookings need to be made well in advance of travel.

For more information or to book visit the Seven Stars' website www.cruisetrain-sevenstars.jp/en/.

Koindah special

THE 4.5 star Mercure Koindah Waters Golf & Spa Resort on the Central Coast at Wyong has a conference special.

When you book your conference, all delegates receive a complimentary buffet breakfast for the entire event.

Conferences need to be booked and the deposit paid before 30 Apr and the event need to be held before 31 Dec.

Conditions include a minimum spend of \$10,000 which does not include third parties such as AV and team building, a minimum of 20-accommodation rooms/night, subject to availability, and new and direct bookings only.

To find out more, email the resort at reservations@koindahwaters.com.au.

Dipping and swirling

WITH Strictly Ballroom The Musical opening at the Sydney Lyric Theatre from 25 Mar, the Metro Apartment's Darling Harbour has put together a great value accommodation package

It starts from \$219 per night, Sunday to Thursday, \$319 per night on Friday and Saturday, for the duration of the show (tickets not included).

With 32 recently renovated loft-style one-bedroom apartments, the special includes a complimentary bottle of wine on arrival and a minimum two-night stay.

To book online, visit www.metrohotels.com.au.

Alternatively, you can call toll free Central Reservations on 1800 004 321.

Managing Fiji Tourism

REINFORCING its commitment to the Australian travel trade industry, Fiji Tourism has appointed three new state managers in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria.

Responsible for frontline agent training, agency updates, trade support and incentives, their mission is to reinforce that Fiji really is "Where Happiness Finds You".

In NSW, Matthew Symonds brings a wealth of personal experience, including surfing some of Fiji's famous breaks.

He comes from Rail Plus where he served as the NSW/ACT sales manager for the past five years.

In Qld is Karen Everingham, a sales professional with more than 20 years' experience.

Previously she was the client development manager for Virgin Australia.

In Victoria, sales manager David McMahon brings extensive tourism-industry experience, most recently working at Intrepid Travel as business development manager for Vic and Tasmania.

Kearns joins MTA



HOME-BASED travel agency model, Mobile Travel Agents (MTA) has bolstered its management ranks with the appointment of high profile Clare Kearns as business development manager – Victoria and Tasmania.

MTA ceo, Don Beattie said Kearns needed no introduction to the industry having spent more than 16 years in several senior roles across the wholesale, retail and corporate travel sectors.

"Having Clare on board represents a major win for MTA.

"The skill set she brings will only enhance our already strong business growth seen in the Victorian market throughout 2013 which will grow substantially again in 2014."



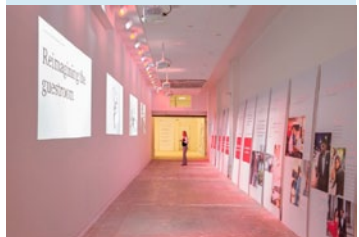
WHETHER you knew it or not, most major hotel brands have a secret lair where they test out their new room designs, amenities, and services before presenting them in their much tested glory.

Peninsula Hotels keeps its proprietary guest room technology under wraps in a laboratory in Aberdeen.

Hilton once kept its secret lab inside an unassuming Hilton Garden Inn near LAX while Starwood Hotels does its research in a warehouse somewhere in upstate New York.

Even the upcoming Virgin Hotels is thought to be testing its secretive room design somewhere in the Californian desert where Virgin Intergalactic exists.

Marriott Hotels is not so secretive about its hideaway, called the Innovation Lab.



It's apparently located two floors below the company's headquarters building in Bethesda, Maryland.

Known by insiders as 'The Underground', Marriott described it as 10,000-sq ft dedicated to promoting innovation and collaboration and offering a clean slate for anyone – whether architect, designer, employee or customer – to manipulate and make their mark.

The space shows the brand's commitment to the next generation of travellers, to blend work and play.

Visitors are welcome to participate and give feedback.

Describing it as "interactive and participatory," Karim Khalifa, senior vice president, architecture and construction said, "Marriott is dedicated to transforming the brand to make it relevant for a next generation of travellers – and we want these travelers to be a part of our transformative journey."



business events news

17th January 2014

One for footie fans

THERE is no shortage of footie fans, so the opening of the first football themed hotel in Thailand, the Amari Buriram United, is sure to do well.

The 60-room Amari Buriram, is located in the North Eastern province of Buriram, adjacent to the Thunder Castle Stadium, home to the celebrated local team, Buriram United and is owned by Buriram United Sport Hotel Co., Ltd.

Opened by the Thailand-based ONYX Hospitality Group, the hotel is modelled on a sports stadium with most rooms looking onto a central area, which includes a mini football field and pool.

It features 44 superior rooms, 14 deluxe rooms and two suites ranging from 36 to 118 sqm in size, all furnished in the crimson blue and white of the team's home kit and offers 'players changing room' style bathrooms.

Other highlights include an expansive ballroom for up to 450 with audio-visual equipment.

An opening rate is available until 28 Feb, from 1,111 THB (A\$38.00), per room, per night.

For more information, head to www.amari.com.

Bucket list specials

IF you've always wanted to swim in the pool that straddles Marina Bay Sands rooftop in Singapore, sip a Singapore Sling at Raffles, or stand on Tiananmen Square and feel the history under your feet, Scoot can get you there at a bargain price.

They have low fares on sale from \$119 from Perth to Singapore, economy and from \$299 ScootBiz, or \$149 Gold Coast to Singapore economy (\$349 ScootBiz) and from \$169 from Sydney to Singapore (\$399 ScootBiz).

Fares are one-way all inclusive of taxes and charges and available until 25 Oct 2014.

On sale until 11.59 pm (GMT+8) on 17 Jan. Some blackout periods apply.

Find out more at Flyscoot.com.

GTI wins NC Tourism

PUBLIC Relations, marketing and representation agency GTI Tourism, has been appointed as the Australian representative office for New Caledonia Tourism, winning the pitch from more than 20 companies.

As New Caledonia's representative in the Australian market, GTI will continue to be responsible for raising the profile of the destination, through an integrated programme of marketing, sales and PR, with a particular focus on digital.

Memorable Maui



YEAR after year Maui is named "Best Island" in Hawaii and continues to offer new and memorable experiences for groups.

Here the Makena Beach & Golf Resort salutes Makena's ranching history in its newest event space, the Makena Ranch.

Located at 800 ft elevation on the slopes of Haleakala, the space marks the place where Makena and Maui's upcountry ranch meet.

Offering more than 15,000 sq ft of space with breathtaking panoramic views of Makena, it is perfect for country-themed events and includes an outdoor grill, a traditional corral and a saloon bar area.

In addition, UFO Adventures Maui offers water sports private charters for groups on a 31 ft premium 12-passenger speedboat, with a choice of exhilarating activities.

They offer the freedom to build your own adventure with activities that can include boogie board towing, wake boarding, knee boarding, light-tackle coastal fishing, and whale watching or banana boating in season.

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 "Face Time"

There was a time when people went to industry events not so much to network with other professionals but to learn important information about how to do their jobs more effectively. While learning and education will always remain a key reason why people attend events, in the future it might well play second fiddle to networking or "face time". This kind of networking is crucial for the younger generations who do most of their networking online.

If not for networking, many industry events would be little more than back-to-back lectures. The very act of connecting with other like-minded people and getting to know them better is a basic human desire and need. Every time people network, they have the chance to engage in synergy. This synergy can bring about new insights and ideas that no individual member of a group would likely think of on their own.

It is for this reason that events need to exist, no matter how high-tech our events become. Not only do our attendees need face time with other people but they also need to be around people from whose experiences and views they can learn and whom they can mutually help. You just never know how you might be able to help someone and how, in turn, that person might be able to help you.

Physical networking is a non-negotiable component of an

event-going experience and it's the one part that attendees can't obtain in any other way. In order for events to remain attractive to attend and something attendees can't do without, more emphasis needs to be placed on networking and organisers should make it as easy as possible for people to connect.

Networking is going to happen whenever people with shared interests come together. As an event organiser, you should create a place where this natural networking is not only going to be possible but actively encouraged and facilitated. Randomly bumping into other people isn't good enough anymore. Your events should be designed as a fertile ground for getting people to connect and interact with one another, as opposed to simply meeting by chance. This is where technology can help via the deployment of a mobile event apps and private social event networks.

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.

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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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