



The child within

LET'S face it, going to the Sydney Opera House is on most visitors' Sydney bucket list.



It's a most appropriate experience for conference delegates and business clients, so it stands to reason that organising tickets to a performance and in this case, the opera, during their stay can be a sure-fire winner.

Okay, so opera may not be for everyone. However, the latest production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* is sure to soften the most recalcitrant heart.

This Opera Australia presentation packed the theatre during its 2012 run and such was the capacity last week when **BEN** went to this colourful production of magic, fanciful costumes and huge puppetry - a staging to delight children and to awaken the child in all of us.

Speaking of concerts, with Australia Day being celebrated this Sunday, the Australia Day Harbour Concert Series is being staged at a number of locations around the city.

It is being held on the Harbour on floating stages at Blues Point, Athol Bay and Darling Harbour. Free of charge, they start at 1pm and include Taylor Henderson and Justice Crew.

BEN will return on 29 Jan so until then, happy Australia Day! Jill.

Giving Hart to women

CONSIDERING that a predominant proportion of the meetings and events industry is made up of women, Suzanne Hart's SHE

travels introduction of 'Surf & Stay' trips to Bali for women wanting adventure by day, luxury by night, and

a healthy dose of pampering, is right on the money.

Hart said she founded the company in 2010 because an increasing number of women were looking for a travel experience tailored specifically.

"There are so many women out there who always wanted to learn to surf but were too scared, thought they were too old or just didn't know where to start.

"Our small group sizes - we have no more than eight people per trip - also makes it perfect for incentive travel groups.



"Overall, we've found that women are drawn to the idea of spoiling themselves whilst learning a new skill, which is why

we've launched SHE surfs."

Nine Surf & Stay experiences are planned for 2014 with the first scheduled for 29 Mar.

SHE's Surf & Stay is seven

days, six nights and priced at \$3,180 per person inc GST.

Flights are not included and the deal is subject to availability with conditions.

For further information visit www.shetravels.net.au.

A deal to yodel about

SWISSOTEL Sydney, with conference facilities for up to 450 people, has a boardroom hire special for February.

The boardroom is among the hotel's eight newly renovated meeting rooms, including its Blaxland Ballroom.

Each booking comes with complimentary access to the executive lounge with use of all amenities including wifi.

Also included is entry to the business centre, an assortment of sweet and savoury items and a coffee machine.

Enquiries and bookings can be directed to 02 9238 8926 or events.sydney@swissotel.com.

Ibis celebrates 1000th

LEADING economy and budget hotel group Accor, with more than 1,700 hotels worldwide, is celebrating its 1000th ibis hotel.

The landmark achievement comes two years after starting to review economy hotel codes in depth as well as modernising the ibis, ibis Styles and ibis Budget brands.

Chairs, Bolly darling

KAREN Bolinger, ceo of the Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB,) has been announced as BestCities Global Alliance 2014 board chair.

Bolinger brings more than 20 years' industry experience to the role, particularly in high level marketing and branding as well as leading the very successful and busy bureau team in Melbourne.

The Australia chair for the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), Bolinger is also treasurer and board member of the Association of Australian Convention Bureaux (AACB), board member of Business Events Council of Australia (BECA) and a member of the Victorian Advisory Board for the Starlight Children's Foundation.

Since joining the MCB in 2011, Bolinger has been deeply involved with the bureau's partnership with BestCities and is an active exponent for the continued growth of the alliance through her existing role on the BestCities Expansion Committee.

Delighted to take on the role, Bolinger said, "As a BestCities founding partner, MCB has strong ties with BestCities and we value the power of the strategic relationship with our nine partners."

One of Bollinger's first roles will be to host a breakfast for visiting media at the MCB-owned Asia-Pacific Incentives & Meetings Expo (AIME) in Melbourne next month.

DO DIFFERENT DO THE NT

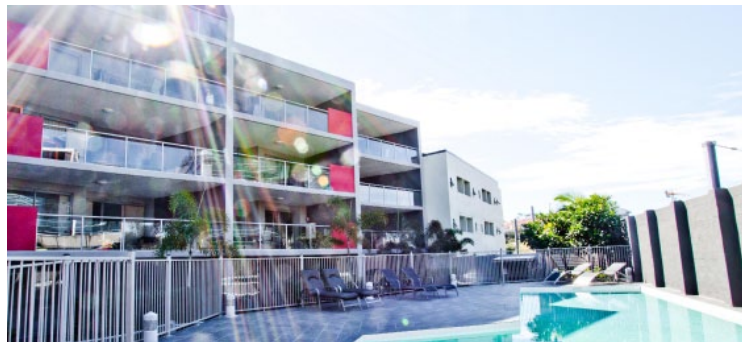
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Mantra on the move



AS the Mantra Group expands its 115 strong Australian network with the acquisition of new properties in Brisbane and Townsville, further additions are imminent in 2014.

The recently refurbished Skyline Court apartment complex will rebrand to BreakFree Fortitude Valley Brisbane in March, offering an economy style option for both corporate and leisure travellers in the constrained Brisbane market.

Located 2km from the CBD, the property offers studio, one, two and three bedroom apartments within walking distance to the restaurants and bars of Fortitude Valley and The Emporium shopping precinct.

"We are pleased to offer our corporate and leisure clients another price point option in Brisbane and believe BreakFree Fortitude Valley is the ideal property to launch the brand in the Queensland capital," said Mantra Group ceo Bob East.

The BreakFree joins Mantra South Bank and Mantra on Queen in the Group's Brisbane network

IBTM buyer reg open

HOSTED buyer registration is now open for Incentives, Business Travel and Meetings (IBTM) Africa, to be held in the Cape Town Convention Centre from 28 to 30 Apr.

Organisers have said meetings industry buyers will be able to do business with suppliers from across the continent.

Head to www.ibtmevents.com/ibtmafrica for more.

to now offer a total of 420 rooms in the city.

A hotel management agreement was signed on the new 185 room Mantra Townsville, set to open in 2016 as part of a leisure precinct planned for the CBD.

The hotel development project will bring a much needed four-star corporate hotel to the city, catering to the region's demand from the mining resources sector and overall expansion.

It will have extensive conferencing facilities for up to 500 delegates, from boardroom style rooms for smaller groups through to large conference venues.

The hotels complement recent announcements of future additions, which include Peppers Dunmore Brisbane set to open in 2015 and Peppers Docklands Melbourne in 2016.

Channel-ing a success

THE Channel Partners' conference at Novotel Twin Waters Resort on the Sunshine Coast created an inspiring conference experience for the 650 delegates and highlighted the resort's unique spaces.

Themed dinners were held on the Lagoon Beach, Circus Lawn and Eucalypt Clearing with entertainment by comedy duo Hamish Blake and Andy Lee.

In addition, a marquee was erected to accommodate a large trade exhibition with lucky delegates whisked away on helicopter flights over the Sunshine Coast.

The AIME of Korea



KOREA, reportedly on a fast track to becoming one of the top destinations for MICE events and ranked fifth by UIA statistics for the number of international meetings held in 2012, will again be exhibiting at AIME 2014.

This year hosted buyers will be able to meet with the Korea Tourism Organization and their co-exhibitors on the Korea stand number 3100 as well as being able to enjoy a complete Korean experience in the Hosted Buyer Lounge, which Korea is sponsoring.

Women in traditional costume will welcome the buyers, who can take part in activities such as traditional Korean fan making or enjoy medicinal Korean green tea and snacks. Guests can also have their photo taken in traditional Korean dress.

Dubai's eventful time



INTERNATIONAL and local gastronomic, music and sporting events are expected to draw sizeable crowds to the Emirate in January and February.

Dubai Calendar, the Emirate's one-stop resource for information on sporting, culture and heritage, entertainment and community events, confirmed that these will set the tone for the remainder of 2014 with a vibrant line-up throughout the year.

Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing executive director Hamad bin Mejren said last year was outstanding for the Emirate and 2014 was set to be even better.

"Events, such as those taking place in January and February, are a major contributing factor in attracting visitors to Dubai and a key pillar in our strategy to deliver the Vision for Tourism 2020."



ANNA and Elsa's bedroom in the Disney movie *Frozen* is the inspiration behind the Frozen Suite in Quebec's seasonal ice hotel, Hôtel de Glace.

A collaboration between Walt Disney Studios and the famed Quebec City hotel, the room is made entirely out of sculpted ice and snow, with construction supervised by the film's art director, Michael Giaimo. It includes a "Frozen Activity Cave" also featured in the movie.

Hotel guests and visitors are also invited 'Behind the Scenes' to discover the secrets of the construction and visit the ice workshop, where they can make their own ice glass.

The Hotel, which is open until the end of March, appears to have no option to book the Frozen Suite on the its website, nor is there a price, however, based on the price of their themed room adventure packages, it's around \$417 a night, which also includes a room at the Four Points by Sheraton in Quebec should it get too cold.



Hitting off at Centara

THE Centara World Masters Golf Championship 2014, Thailand's richest amateur tournament with US\$30,000 in prizes to be won, is to be held at the Centara Grand Beach Resort & Villas Hua Hin from 15 to 21 June.

With bookings already at 50% capacity, it is predicted to attract more than 600 golfers from 20 countries, and will be Asia's biggest week of amateur golf.

Title sponsor Centara Hotels & Resorts will be joined by Thai Beverage, Thai Airways, Coca-Cola (Thailand) and TaylorMade-Adidas Golf.

"We anticipate that every place available will be booked long before the event begins," said Centara Hotels & Resorts senior vice president Chris Bailey.



Days of Yore

AS Business Events Sydney (BESydney) enters a new era in the North American market, business events professional, Richard Yore, director of Yore Solutions Inc, will commence a representation contract with BESydney on 17 Feb, with Yore taking on the role of client relationship director – Americas.



Most recently director of sales – Meetings and Conventions at Tourism Vancouver, he also played an active role in industry discussion and development as the North American Chapter Chairperson of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA).

TPDDD seeks exec

DOUG Ryan, the executive officer of Tourism Port Douglas Daintree (TPDD), will not be seeking a new term after the expiry of his contract on 30 Jun.

A champion of tourism and the Port Douglas and Daintree region, he was heavily involved in the early evolution of the Port Douglas Tourism association.

Ryan said of the 27 years in the tourism industry, the last eight have been some of the most challenging and rewarding of his career, so far, and that last year was a record with over 2.19m room nights in the region.

With Ryan's departure the search will now commence for his replacement.

Applications for the position are expected to close late February with the successful applicant starting by the end of April.

Lyn Lewis-Smith, ceo of Business Events Sydney, said, "The International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney) development is underway and BESydney is dedicated to ensuring that North American associations and event planners are aware of the major opportunities this new development offers their organisations, members and industries.

"Cornerstone to this is strong in-market representation and sophisticated strategies tailored to market needs."

"Richard's skills and expertise will further strengthen BESydney's international presence following the 2013 appointment of Martin Boyle to represent the bureau in Europe," Lewis-Smith said.

Weekends in Uluru

MAKING it faster and easier for Victorians to experience the spiritual heart of Australia, direct three-hour flights operated by Alliance Airlines have been introduced.

Offering complimentary tea, coffee and water and a range of snacks for purchase, the flights from Tullamarine to Uluru will commence from 04 Apr 2014.

Departing Melbourne at 9am Friday and Ayers Rock Airport at 3pm Sunday, the service will run every weekend for an initial 13 week season, finishing the last weekend of June .

"This is a fantastic opportunity for Victorians to visit Uluru and connect with this special part of Australia," said Tony Mayell, ceo Tourism Northern Territory.

"Ayers Rock Resort itself has undergone a complete rejuvenation over the last two years and with a three hour direct flight from Melbourne it is the perfect time to enjoy a short break and reconnect with your loved ones."

The Uluru Weekend package is priced from \$899 per person twin share.

Oman wins IAOM

WHEN the Sultanate of Oman hosts the 27th annual International Association of Operative Millers (IAOM) Mideast & Africa District Conference and Expo from 05 to 09 Dec 2016, more than 1000 top food industry professionals are expected to descend upon the country.

Held at the Omran head office, chairman His Excellency Nasser Al Jashmi (**pictured** centre right below) said at the official signing ceremony that the announcement was a significant milestone in the development stage of the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre and they were delighted that the Sultanate had been selected to host such a prestigious convention.



It was one of the largest specialised conference and exhibitions in the world and the hot topic would be the sustainability of the food supply with Oman, set to become the hub for logistics and food processing in the Gulf region, he said.

"IAOM MEA Conference & Expo is certainly one of the most anticipated events in the milling and food processing industries.

"For the last 25 years, it has become a venue for key industry players, decision makers and top executives to broker next year's commodity prices and deals.

"This is serious business and we can't wait for the completion of the new Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre so we can host a congress that is relevant to Oman at a state of the art venue."

Blissful Bhutan



THOSE seeking to venture into Bhutan are able to experience its culture and breathtaking scenery on two journeys guided by Peter Bliss of Business is Bliss.

The first journey starts in May, a day after the MEA Conference, at which Bliss will speak.

"A percentage of the profits of the Bhutan tours are being given to an organisation in Bhutan called R.E.N.E.W. which stands for Respect Educate Nurture and Empower Women which specifically helps women and children in remote areas of the country," he said.

Sydneyiders can initially experience the kingdom, the connections and the people, and hear from past travellers without having to pack your bags, at an event in Rozelle on 30 Jan.

A fun hour or so is promised where stories, books and photographs will be shared and a short film run.

To find out more RSVP by text or phone on 0427 766 716.

Luxperience hotels

IN the run up to Luxperience 2014, a number of prestigious hotel partners have been confirmed as accommodation partners.

For the first time the Four Seasons Sydney has signed on while others include Park Hyatt Sydney, Intercontinental Sydney and Blue Sydney.

As official hotel partners it will allow Luxperience buyers first-hand experience with their upmarket offerings; fine dining and iconic locations.

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