



Could it be?

WE'VE heard it all before - that the Sheraton Mirage Port Douglas Resort is to undergo a complete renovation.



This time however, it looks a goer.

That is, if two concept rooms **BEN** took a sneak peek at this week are anything to go by.

Still, staff at the resort cautiously talked of contracts to be signed and approvals based on Starwood standards to be authorised. However, there was a July starting date bandied around.

The meetings and events family group I travelled with thought the design was "very One&Only" - an elegant canvas of pale tones, canopied beds, shuttered windows and splashes of colour.

One thing is for sure; the resort is a legend in the Australian hospitality landscape and she deserves a return to the heady days of 1988.

On a personal note, it was great to catch up with gm Steve Molnar who has been at the Mirage since December and who I seem to have followed to his various Sheraton posts in Australia and Fiji for more than a decade.

Other highlights from our family included a lavish breakfast at the Sheraton Mirage, a day on the Agincourt Reef platform via the newly refitted Quicksilver 5, where I did an Ocean Walker Helmet Dive (seriously weird fun), returning to inspect the beachside Peninsula Boutique Hotel and a splendid farewell dinner at the Pullman.

This full-on circus-inspired event hosted by Port Douglas Incentives was complete with trapeze acts, stilt walkers and a fairy floss and popcorn vendor.

Topping it all off was our pick up by Grub's Personalised Triketours for a thrill-a-minute ride along the coast to brunch at Thala Beach Lodge and breakfast on the beach.

Nice one Port! *Jill*

Last chance for AEA

THE tender for the Australian Export Awards closes today, the last chance to submit for the provision of event management services for the awards (**BEN** 07 May).

Addendums to the tender have been released, with the latest confirming Austrade was still in negotiations with the venue, asking tenderers to submit with the venue unknown.

"We remind Tenderers that the proposed contract is for a period of up to four years and the venue will change each year across states and territories (usually Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney) therefore the venue will continue to change.

"Previous venues have included National Gallery of Victoria,

Parliament House Canberra and Sydney Town Hall."

The tender comes with a budget of \$160,000 and appears to have sparked a certain amount of interest in the industry, with three addendums to the request for tender released.

Last year, the Awards were held at the National Gallery Victoria.

The previous event management provider was Fourth Wall Events Pty Ltd.

Managing director Grant Pisani said the company would be tendering again and due to this, declined to make any further comment.

For more information on the tender, **CLICK HERE**.

Versace takes two



THE Gold Coast's Palazzo Versace has welcomed two new members to its sales and marketing division.

Kel Constantine (**pictured** left) is the new marketing manager and Renay Logan is director of sales - MICE.

With a combined 30 years' experience, Constantine built a successful marketing career, from acting as an activation strategist at MasterCard and Microsoft to implementing marketing campaigns at Dick Johnson Racing and Gold Coast Turf Club.

Logan comes to the resort hotel after holding the position of director of sales and marketing for the Accor Group.

Prior to that she spent 10 years in the UK working with the Sloane Square Hotel and Mercer Group with a focus on corporate sales and MICE.

SPHC reunion



BACK in 1961 the first Parkroyal hotel was opened in Melbourne by the Southern Pacific Hotel Corporation (SPHC).

They went on to manage or franchise 59 hotels throughout the Asia Pacific that included 24 hotels in Australia, 13 in New Zealand, eight in the Southern Pacific Islands and the remaining 14 in Asia.

Recently, a reunion of some of the SPHC Melbourne team was held at Royal South Yarra Lawn Tennis Club and Margie Stewart, the Club's director of sales and marketing, said all the women had moved on to rewarding careers, in tourism, hospitality, travel and corporate life.

Pictured from left are Melanie Nixon, Tracey Kennedy, Julie Tippett, Dush Velcek, Margie Stewart, Wendy Patton, Fiona Scammell, Silvana Leonardi, Jo-Ann Irwin, Sally Clift.

Three pages today

BEN has two pages of editorial plus a full page from (**click**):

- Club Med

And the winner is...

THE winner of the JC Travel Competition for a Holiday Inn Darling Harbour stay of one night for two, featured in **BEN** from 05 to 18 May, is Andrew Mevissen from Peak Media Relations.

Congratulations, Andrew!

TCEB best itinerary

THE Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) and Thai Airways International have launched 'The Itinerary Contest' which invites trip planners and business travelers to design pre and/or post tour itineraries including agenda items, destinations and recreational activities.

Five final itineraries will be chosen to compete in the final round via social network voting, TCEB said.

The winning itinerary will receive two Thai Airways tickets with accommodation in Thailand.

For more, **CLICK HERE**.

As of 30 May, Destination Asia said curfew was still in place in Thailand with pockets of peaceful demonstrations in the streets and military keeping a "low profile".

Sofitel Singapore open



THE Sofitel So Singapore is now open, located in the Singapore CBD and featuring 134 rooms.

To celebrate its opening, special offers are now on including complimentary \$100 food and beverage credit for guests who book now, for a limited 100 day period.



Steal the Celtic Thunder



TOURISM Ireland and Event Partners hosted a number of guests from the meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions industry, and **BEN**, to see Celtic Thunder perform at The Star Event Centre last Friday.

After a delicious meal of fillet eye and lemon tart at the BLACK by ezard restaurant, the party headed off to see Irish singing group, Celtic Thunder, perform a medley of songs.

Sadly missing George Donaldson, who died in March of a heart attack, the group was obviously a fan favourite with the audience, many of whom were upstanding for Ireland's Call.

BEN then headed back stage to meet the group and for photos.

Tourism Ireland Australia and New Zealand manager Diane Butler said Ireland had been involved in securing many prestigious events over the past few years, offering a choice of venues.

"Ireland is a treasure trove of experiences to host incentives –

whether you've got a group of 18 or 80 year olds!

"Outdoor pursuits and adventurous activities, energising city stays, or remote locations and all set against stunning panoramas."

Access to Ireland was now fast and direct with one stop services via Abu Dhabi or Dubai, she said.

"With additional services on Etihad and Emirates from around Australia with excellent connections on to Dublin, delegates can be in the Emerald Isle within 24 hours."

For pictures from the event, **CLICK HERE**.

Pictured from left are Tourism Ireland ANZ manager Diane Butler, Celtic Thunder singer Keith Harkin, Pillowmint's Rebecca Easterman, Event Partners DMC sales and marketing manager John Costelloe, Tourism Ireland PR & communications manager Aoife Finnegan, Tourism Ireland EMarketing contact Fiona Clelland and Celtic Thunder singer Emmett Cahill.

The Voice



AV company Scene Change became the first Tasmanian Hall of Fame winner in any category at the national MEA Awards recently.

Scene Change co-founder Ian Whitworth said the company was a big believer in being an active part of the meetings industry and it was "wonderful" to see its work recognised at this level.

It has appeared on BRW's fastest-growing companies list.

The four winners of the Scene Change FlyMEA Scholarship, which pays for young industry innovators to attend the MEA conference, were Daniel Stone of Arinex SA, Katherine Halliday of Wrest Point, Lauren Carlyle of Complete Function Hire and Katie Boone of MCI NSW.

Stone said the conference had provided knowledge and connections that would have otherwise taken much longer to gather.

Whitworth said Scene Change was keen to encourage younger voices in the meetings industry.



FOR all you 'A Place To Call Home' fans and location seekers, you may be curious to know that the setting for the Australian Channel 7 drama is in the Macarthur region of NSW.

In particular, the Nepean River and Menangle River Reserve in Campbelltown is used for many locations shoots and Camelot, a 126 year old fairytale mansion popular for wedding shoots near Camden doubles as the 'Ash Park' estate in the drama.

The private, castle-like property boasts a romantic silhouette of turrets, chimney stacks, gables and arched verandahs as well as sweeping gardens and a winding, tree-lined driveway.

What's more, horses from the Sydney Trail riding Centre near Campbelltown, which hosts 'cityslickers' on trail rides across 200 hectares of rolling hills and dales in the Macarthur region, also star in the period drama.

Horses that actor, Brett Climo who plays landowner George Bligh, and Marta Dusseldorp who plays the enigmatic Sarah Adams, can be seen riding.

'A Place to Call Home' now also airs on television in New Zealand and Denmark.

Integrate 2014

INDUSTRY thought leaders and heads of Australian and global organisations will form the advisory panel for Australia's largest AV and Systems Integration industry trade event, Integrate 2014.

Formed by show organiser, Diversified Communications Australia to ensure the exhibition encompasses the latest thinking from the best in the business, a major feat so far has been the establishment of a brand new feature for 2014 - the Integrate Conference.

Association of Educational Technology Managers (AETM) president Terry Coe said there were some things that could not be learnt from the internet when it came to the industry's latest trends and technologies.

"Integrate 2014 and especially the Integrate Conference provides the perfect hands on experience and fills that knowledge gap for participants."

It will be held on 26 to 28 Aug, at the Sydney Showground.

IMEX inspiration

PROVIDING a touch of inspiration along the way to IMEX Frankfurt for a group of conference and incentive planners, DMS Destination Marketing Services together with its DMC partners, Gulf Dunes LLC and Tekser Tourism and Travel, featured developments in Dubai and cultural experiences through Turkey.

Showcasing the glitz of Dubai with an aerial view over 'The World' and 'The Palm', along with other iconic sites viewed from a helicopter and atop the Burj Khalifa, the itinerary also included a luxury yacht cruise.

Tekser Tourism and Travel shared the caves of Cappadocia on a hot air balloon ride at sunrise and experienced Istanbul.

More traditionally, the group attended presentations at IMEX from DMS' DMCs including @dmire Belgium and Activ' Travel Morocco.

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A unique event deserves a unique location

