



A tall tale

While on an IHG famil at the InterContinental Sanctuary Cove this weekend, one



of the activities included IHG's 'Insider Collection,' which allows delegates to experience a side of a destination that visitors rarely see.

One of these was breakfast at McLaren's Landing on South Stradbroke Island.

Not long after we had helicoptered in, Tall Ship Island Adventures' Sir Henry Morgan hove to at a pier near where we were dining.



It turned out the square rigged Tall Ship, built in 1970, had a rather colourful history.

She was built by a retired New Zealand naval architect, who couldn't sail her due to a "nasty divorce", Visit Gold Coast said, and eventually ended up in the hands of notorious Asia drug syndicate boss Terry Clark – whose life was featured in Channel 9's 'Underbelly' series.

Known as 'Mr Asia' he is said to have killed at least 12 people, including three in New Zealand

At the time, the yacht was used as a floating brothel and illegal casino in Sydney Harbour and had been under international police surveillance, until it was eventually impounded and sold by NZ Customs.

Twenty years ago the owners of McLaren's Landing salvaged and completely rebuilt, refurbished, refitted and relaunched the yacht and she now lives a reputable life on the Gold Coast and is a firm favourite with Gold Coast conference groups. *Jill*

Worthy cause for women

AN inaugural International Women's Day Breakfast is to be held by the Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia (EEAA).

The breakfast will celebrate the

achievements of women in business and provide the industry with a chance to give to disadvantaged women.

The event will be held on 06 Mar from 7.30am at Hyde Park Ballroom, Doltone House.

Tickets cost \$110 each or \$1,000 for a table of 10.

The United Nations theme for International Women's Day in 2014 is 'Inspiring Change' and EEAA chief executive Joyce DiMascio said it was one way EEAA could support this event.

"Women in business often wear many hats.

"They lead change, they nurture people and they develop organisations.

"They also contribute to the community and to their families.

"The Exhibition and Event industry has many women in leadership roles and we are very pleased to have some of our most successful leaders join us for this inaugural event."

Social commentator and marketing specialist Jane Caro will talk about contemporary issues impacting the lives of women.

She will also interview three top business leaders from the exhibition and events industry; Reed Exhibitions South East Asia and Australia president Debbie Evans, Info Salons Australia ceo Jo-Anne Kelleway and Anna Cesarano, ceo of Doltone House.

In keeping with the spirit of International Women's Day, the EEAA event will provide support for the not for profit organisation Fitted for Work, which provides corporate clothing, personal styling and job interview preparation to help

disadvantaged women get jobs.

EEAA is asking attendees to donate good quality corporate wear and accessories to the cause.



EXHIBITION & EVENT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALASIA

To book tickets or

for more information, visit the website at www.eeaa.com.au.

Viva la Eat Street

AUCTION items are being sought by one of Melbourne's favourite charity events, Eat Street, and they need your support by way of auction items and prizes to raise much needed funds for children's cancer charity Redkite.

This is the third year in a row that Eat Street has teamed up with Redkite.

Now in its 15th year, the night promises to be one of fantastic food, fundraising and French inspired frivolities.

To be held 27 May at 6pm at the Sofitel Melbourne On Collins, 800 guests will dine on signature dishes from 25 of Melbourne's top chefs and enjoy tastings from 25 of Australia's best wineries.

Tickets to The Gourmet French Affair with Eat Street are \$160 per person.

To donate a prize, contact Fiona Byrne by emailing fiona.byrne@sofitel.com.

To purchase tickets call 03 9653 0000.

\$4M Centre begins

GROUND has been broken on the construction of the Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley Conference & Events Centre, the largest and most comprehensive conference and exhibition facilities in the region.



To be built at a cost of \$4m by the Schwartz Family Company, it has an opening date of early 2015.

The Centre will offer a combined 2,012 sqm of pre-function, meeting and exhibition space and will be erected overlooking garden spaces within Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley.

With the new build comes an upgrade to the existing exhibition space, installation of a new large-scale commercial kitchen and establishment of a permanent marquee on the grounds.

Three conference rooms ranging from 380 sqm to 400 sqm, able to be used as a ballroom or a mix of rooms with flexible acoustic folding walls, will open onto a glass roofed gallery that connects the conference and exhibition spaces.

Bookings for 2015 can be made by emailing meetings.hunter@ihg.com.



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Incentives on upswing

ACCORDING to the Site International Foundation's newly released annual forecast on the industry, incentive

travel will increase somewhat or substantially between 2014 and 2016.

Of the 142 incentive professionals polled, 87% anticipated an uptick over the next two years.

At the same time, pressure to prove the ROI or ROO (return on objective) of incentive programs to stakeholders was expected to intensify over the next 12 months, according to 79% of the respondents.

And 82% expected a significant increase in the need to justify programs over the next one to three years.

Nearly three-quarters of those polled (72%) predicted an increase in the convergence

Imagine this Biennale

ON 20 Mar more than 2000 art industry leaders will help celebrate the start of Asia Pacific's largest contemporary visual arts event, the 19th Biennale of Sydney.

Sponsor Australian Technology Park say they are determined Australia's night of nights will be celebrated in an appropriate manner.

Combining forces with The Events Authority, this year's Biennale is titled 'You Imagine What You Desire' and features works from local and international artists at Cockatoo Island, the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia and the Art Gallery of NSW.

This year's Biennale also offers talks, tours, film screenings, performances and forums across a 12 week period.

To secure tickets to the 19th Biennale of Sydney Opening Night Celebration, visit www.biennaleofsydney.com.au.



of business meetings and motivational events over the next 12 months.

Kurt Paben, president of the Site International Foundation said

after several years of scrutiny, companies were realising the important role incentive travel and motivational events played in past success, and they were implementing new programs to elevate future performance.

"This can be attributed to an improving global economy, but it also reflects the current state of bookings for programs that will operate within the next three years."

Centara's ME move

CENTARA Hotels & Resorts will open its first hotel in the Middle East in West Bay, Doha in 2016.

Thailand's largest operator of hotels, Centara said the hotel would be operated under a management contract for Al Bandy Hotel Management LLC.

There are now Grand hotels in Thailand, Bali, Maldives and Mauritius, with more under way in Vietnam, Shanghai and Addis Ababa.

The Centara Grand West Bay Hotel Doha would cater for both international leisure and MICE markets, the company said.

Beijing takes a dive

ACCORDING to the *Beijing Morning Post*, MICE tourism in the region declined in 2013.

Some travel agencies specialising in this market reported a drop of 50% in profits, while the MICE-related hospitality industry had a year-on-year drop of 20%, the publication reported.

This had mostly impacted travel agencies that depended on local governments and state-owned enterprises for revenue, and is due to anti-corruption regulations issued by the Party and government in 2013, according to *China Youth Travel*.

Barry for Conrad

MARK McWhinnie, senior vice president of development and shared services and director of Sands Cotai Central, has appointed Bede Barry (**pictured**) as general manager, Conrad Macao, Cotai Central.

An Australian original, Barry brings a strong business and management background to the Conrad Macao, as well as extensive experience in hotel pre-openings and renovations, both at the property and corporate level.



In 2010 he moved to Macao to take up his most recent position as general manager at the Grand Lapa Macao.

Remote camping

IN a remote corner of Cambodia, luxury tented accommodation can be experienced right alongside the Banteay Chhmar temples.

Conducted by Kiri Travel, with the cooperation of the local community who are also involved with tent setup, maintenance and in providing hospitality, the experience is also supported by the Global Heritage Fund (GHF) and the Cambodian Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts.

The aim of GHF's Banteay Chhmar Conservation Training Project is to save the last great Angkorian temple complex in Cambodia, built in the late 12th or early 13th century, which remains largely unstudied.

Hawaii's plateau

HAWAII'S tourism economy is starting to plateau, according to the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

This followed two years of growth, with expenditures for visitor arrivals down 4.7% compared with the same period last year, the organisation said.

Each visitor in January spent US\$10 less per day than the US\$201 average in 2013, the Hawaii Tourism Authority said. However arrivals were on pace.



GUESTS staying in the topmost suites and villas of Grand branded properties in the portfolio of Centara Hotels & Resorts are given a personal suite and villa host.

These carefully selected hosts have undergone a detailed and extensive training programme provided by Paul Brown, a former butler to the HRH Queen Elizabeth II.

Hosts who have completed training under Mr Brown are then awarded the White Glove Certificate of Recognition.

This means they have achieved the highest standard of service required to work in a royal household.

With Grand Centaras in Bangkok, Pattaya, Hua Hin, Samui, Phuket, Krabi, Bali, Maldives and Mauritius, suite and villa hosts are on hand to address every whim and request of their guest, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Chookiat Hoijang, suite host at Centara Grand at Central Plaza Ladprao Bangkok, says "I have learned how to be more focused, how to place more emphasis on details, and how to provide a refined service that is discreet and attentive."

Brands and properties within Centara ensure that specific categories such as couples, families, individuals, and meetings and incentives groups will all find a hotel or resort that is appropriate to their needs.

Spice Up Your Style

ALL EAs and PAs throughout Melbourne are invited to an exclusive event to 'Spice up your Style this Autumn.'

Hosted by Red Spice Road's, The Orchid Room, along with partners Institute of Live Communications and PA Pages, the event will include top tips on how to style your own events by the 'Event Doctor' as well as canapes, drinks and entertainment on arrival.

The event is free so places are strictly limited.

It will be held on 20 Mar from 1pm at 31 Artemis Lane, QV Melbourne.

For more, email filomena.frisina@redspiceroad.com.



One and only AIME famil



THE increasing status of Port Stephens as a conference and events destination grew even further when a group of 20 international convention organisers visited the region, from 20 to 23 Feb, following AIME 2014.

Organised by local body, MICE Port Stephens, the visit was the only familiarisation tour for event organisers to follow on from AIME.

The organisers flew direct from Melbourne to Newcastle Airport in Port Stephens and took part in a four-day tour of the region.

This saw them experience sandboarding and quadbiking on the biggest sand dunes in the southern hemisphere as well as enjoy local craft beer and the blue, dolphin-filled waters of Port Stephens itself.

MICE Port Stephens manager Rebecca Morley said the 20 convention and incentive organisers came from China, Hong Kong, The Netherlands,

Russia, Poland, Czech Republic, India, New Zealand and also Australia.

“To be the only destination that AIME delegates visited after the convention in Melbourne is very exciting and is testament to Port Stephens’ growth as a compelling destination for business events and the hard work we have invested into growing this high-yield market for the region.”

Morley said business visitors spent a lot more in Port Stephens than leisure visitors.

During their visit, the group stayed at The Anchorage and Shoal Bay Resort & Spa and were hosted by Newcastle Airport, Quad Bike King, Murray’s Brewery, Vues on the Bay restaurant, Moonshadow Cruises, Port Stephens 4WD, Imagine Cruises, as well as operators in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley.

Harbour Grand’s lure

IN a bid for a greater share of the Australian MICE market, the Harbour Grand Hong Kong has launched an array of incentives to attract numbers to the waterfront property in the heart of Hong Kong Island.

Visiting Australia recently, director of MICE sales Brian Lee revealed a host of complimentary privileges for groups of between 30 and 59 rooms, 60 and 99 rooms and over 100 rooms.

The incentives include room upgrades, free internet access, airport limousine service, complimentary meeting packages and free use of meeting board room in the business centre.

Gorringe for MTA

MOBILE Travel Agents (MTA) has appointed Sally Gorringe as its Queensland, NT and South Australia business development manager.

Gorringe has industry experience of more than 20 years in retail and sales management roles, as well as experience running her own business.

MTA ceo Don Beattie said Gorringe’s key focus would be to assist consultants and agents in taking the first step into the home-based model and supporting them.

Archibald Prize 2014

PLATINUM Pass has expanded its portfolio to include the Archibald Prize 2014 awards, following corporate client requests for events in the arts and culture category.

The portraiture prize awards will be held on 11 Sep at the Modern Australian Galleries, followed by dinner at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

At dinner, a special guest speaker will educate guests as to how to pick a master piece - so pay attention, aspiring Antiques Roadshow success stories.

Platinum Pass general manager Michael Coulton said the event offered corporate businesses an opportunity to network with guests.

Platinum Pass was also the Australian Open’s corporate hospitality sales agent this year.

For tickets, visit info@platinumpass.com.au.

Springboard success

IVVY Event Software founder and ceo Lauren Hall has been inducted into the Global Network for Women Entrepreneurs after being selected from 150 women.

Hall joins the 544 female entrepreneurs who form the highly successful global expert network, Springboard Enterprises, a business accelerator for high growth, women-led businesses and a global not for profit organisation.

“I was very determined to join this program given the rate of successful business outcomes,” said Hall.

“It is an important vote of confidence on our achievements to date and can only help accelerate our growth into international markets.

“Having an additional mentoring team from the USA will really assist us in achieving our global strategy.”

Gluten free events

IF you think the whole world is becoming gluten free and you have many clients among them, Melbourne’s The Italian Restaurant and Bar has created a three course, completely gluten-free and vegan menu for functions and private dining events.

It’s a dining experience that has been given the nod of approval from *The Age* Good Food Guide for five consecutive years since 2009.



The menu was created by head chef Anthony Grafton and his team, with Grafton saying there was high demand for it.

The Italian owner Roberto Scheriani said the food and beverage team were committed providing a high quality menu for gluten-free and vegan customers.

“While our traditional dining menu offers a variety of both vegan and gluten free items for guests, it was important to offer the same three course dining experience for those attending private dining functions.”

The three course, gluten-free/vegan menu is priced at \$88 per person.

A gluten-free/vegan canapé option is also available for functions booked within the restaurant venue.

Located in the heart of the city, the restaurant is available for groups as small as 10 to sophisticated corporate functions for up to 400.

For more information, visit www.TheItalian.com.au.

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