



Airport living

WITH the news that Singapore's Changi Airport has picked up the World's Best Airport for the second year in a row, I've been reminiscing about my times in various areas of air transit.

Changi's win in the SKYTRAX World Airport Awards, its fifth time winning in total, is pretty well deserved, in my opinion.

I've been through a few airports and never risked missing a flight due to comfort, except at Changi.

When travelling long haul as budget passengers last year, my brother and I had a short stop over at Changi and were pleasantly surprised to find those oh-so-wonderful full length recliner chairs, and fairly ecstatic to find they were free to use.

Cue complete silence as we sat back 'for just a few minutes' and my brother promptly fell asleep, and proved a little difficult to wake up when boarding calls rang out for our flight.

Other than that, the airport has things like an Entertainment Deck with Xbox consoles and free foot massage chairs.

But really, I'm thinking it was the loungers that swayed things.



In more home grown news, Australia dominated the top five in the Best Airport Australia/Pacific Region category, with third, fourth and fifth place going to the Brisbane, Melbourne and Gold Coast airports.

Auckland Airport beat out Sydney as the Best Airport Australia/Pacific region and as a Kiwi, I have to say, it's nice to be welcomed home with tui calls through the carved gateway - kia ora, New Zealand, and congrats to all the winners! *Alex (filling in for Jill while she's away)*

\$52m in NT conferences



MORE than 30 major conferences will inject \$52m into the Northern Territory economy this year.

Minister for Tourism Matt Conlan said the conferences, which would bring 12,000 delegates to the Territory, was part of an overall events sector worth \$89m a year.

The business events market was a lucrative one for the Northern Territory, which was highly competitive both in Australia and globally, and securing 30 national conferences would greatly benefit the tourism industry, he said.

"It shows the Territory is punching above its weight when it comes to attracting business conferences."

The events were important to plans to develop Northern Australia, since they offered potential to grow international trade links and make use of new investment, he said.

There was also the flow-on benefits from delegates bringing family members, to dine shop and stay in the Territory, he said.

The NT Convention Bureau's was working to keep the Territory as one of the country's best business event locations, Conlan said.

"In the 2012-13 financial year, every dollar spent fighting for these conferences saw a return on investment to the economy of \$39 – compared to the national average of \$21.

"The Country Liberals Government is committed to growing this value of business

events even further as part of our vision to develop Northern Australia, deliver \$2.2 billion in visitor expenditure by 2020 and create extra 4,300 jobs."

Hartigan for DNSW

FORMER News Ltd chief John Hartigan has been appointed the new Chair of Destination New South Wales (DNSW).



Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) ceo Ken Morrison said Hartigan brought decades of experience in the business world to the role of chairman, ensuring DNSW would be led in a strategic fashion.

"Mr Hartigan's insights and acumen will be of enormous value to DNSW as it seeks to double overnight tourism expenditure to \$36 billion a year by 2020."

Attracting visitors and increasing yield were critical to this, he said.

"Having a chairman with the commercial nous of John Hartigan will ensure the good work already done by DNSW will continue."

Morrison thanked the previous chair, John Conde, and acting chair Russell Balding for their contribution.

New brand for Perth

CULTURE and lifestyle hotel brand Aloft will enter the Australian market in Perth, with a 224-room new build slated to open in late 2016.

Aloft Perth will be located in the suburb of Rivervale, bordering the Swan River and about 5 km from the CBD and airport.

The new addition will aim to tap into the social scene of the WA capital city, featuring a full-service restaurant, XYZ bar and 550 sqm of meeting and function space.

Starwood senior vp acquisitions and development Matthew Fry told **BEN** the reason Perth has missed out on a lot of corporate and incentive business is due to uncompetitive mid-week rates compared with the east coast.

"So with new supply coming in, this hotel will have a ballroom and this will induce group business and travel into Perth, and we think that's good for the city".

Aloft was introduced into the Starwood brand stable in 2008 and has become the group's fastest growing name, with 79 properties in 14 countries.

Industry digs deep

LAST night's Platinum Networking Night in Sydney provided a great opportunity for senior industry staffers to get together - and this time the event also supported a great cause.

As well as convivial drinks and networking, organiser Helene Taylor from recruitment firm TMS Asia-Pacific had gathered sponsors to provide prizes for an auction, with the proceeds going to an autism school in Sydney's Forestville.

More than \$6500 was raised from just two items - a case of wine and the major prize which was a trip to the USA, with spirited bidding seeing the holiday eventually taken out by a generous Mary Borg from QBT.

Thanks to all the sponsors including FCm Travel, Avis, American Airlines and the Ramada Plaza West Hollywood.



Floating on an incentive cloud

THE advantage of a shipboard meeting, conference or incentive, according to Anja Ringel of Sea Cloud Cruises, is that “you know where everyone is” - unlike a hotel where delegates sometimes wander off to pursue their own agenda.



Sea Cloud Cruises operates two unique sailing yachts on itineraries in the Mediterranean, Baltic and West Indies, and has operated a number of charters for Australian clients in recent years.

Ringel was in Sydney earlier this week, and told **BEN** that the luxury vessels are ideal for group organisers wanting to offer an unforgettable experience.

Sea Cloud (pictured) is an historic sailing yacht built in 1931 as the plaything of a wealthy American billionaire.

It’s been lovingly restored and now operates as the only five star cruise ship to be “sailed by hand” while still offering 32 luxury cabins along with fabulous cuisine.

Ringel said a key feature of a full ship charter for incentive organisers is that the pricing is fully inclusive of meals, alcohol and activities meaning there aren’t any nasty surprises when it comes to settling the bill.

For slightly larger groups the *Sea Cloud II* has 47 cabins and also offers the sailing ambience which ensures great memories for participants.

Charters can be fully customised allowing organisers to specify

activities, gala dinners and even itineraries and on-shore experiences for their groups.

Currently there is limited availability for 2015 charters, with the company in discussion with a number of parties regarding 2016 bookings.

Ringel said as well as corporate groups, *Sea Cloud* was also popular for birthday celebrations and weddings, with recent changes to regulations allowing the ships’ captains to conduct legally binding marriage ceremonies on board.

For more information on Sea Cloud Cruises charters or bookings contact Sales Activation Marketing on 1300 583 572.

Fiji Expo sold out

TOURISM Fiji has said the first Fijian Tourism Expo is now sold out for exhibitors.



The new exhibition facilities at the Sheraton Fiji Resort would be at maximum capacity during the Expo, which is held from 05 to 08 May, the organisation said.

More than 140 exhibition booths and 280 exhibitors from the tourism industry would be attending, it said.

Tourism Fiji ceo Rick Hamilton saying the program was shaping up to be “very exciting” for the industry.

Conf lessons from KL

A PANEL session at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre’s ninth Association Seminar said local and regional sponsors could boost an event’s budget.

Looking at the theme ‘How to boost your conference budget’, the panel included 21st FIGO World Congress of Gynaecology organising committee chair Datuk Dr Abdul Aziz Yahya, who said sponsors could ensure that the overall quality of the meeting was not compromised.

Strong program content was important in attracting delegates, particularly young attendees, International Federation of Surveyors Teo Chee Hai said.

“So in our bid presentation, we included a theme that focused on the development of youths; which is one of FIG’s goals, and demonstrated our commitment with the suggestion of concurrently hosting an undergraduate conference.”



The seminar saw more than 110 participants from 42 national associations and meeting industry partners.

Luxury at Meetings

MEETINGS 2014 has added a new feature to the exhibition with the Luxury Collection.

The collection would showcase the top end of the New Zealand business events market, including boutique lodges and luxury yachts.

Held from 18 to 19 Jun in Auckland, confirmed exhibitors in the Collection include Huka Lodge near Taupo, The Lodge at Kauri Cliffs and Queenstown cruiser Pacific Jemm.

New Zealand Tourism Board member Jacqui Spice said the addition aligned with Tourism New Zealand’s strategy to attract more high-yield visitors to the country.

“The trends are showing that more and more people want to truly experience what New Zealand has to offer over and above the beds being slept in they want to taste it, touch it, feel it and experience it.”



MARKET research can be an interesting thing - in an effort to support the United States’ First Amendment, and to hear from the people, the White House has the website ‘We the People’, where people can petition the government online.

If a petition receives 100,000 signatures within 30 days, it will receive a response from the White House.

Humans being human, the site has been abused (or appropriately used) with a number of weird and wonderful petitions launched.

There was the pure awesome that was the petition calling on the government to build a Death Star, with a White House response that this would be too expensive and the Administration did not support blowing up planets.

Then there was the petition asking that Justin Bieber be deported.

The latest to get 30,000 signatures asks the government to give Alaska back to the Russians, due to its once belonging to the Russian Empire, *Yahoo News* reported.

Mantra’s green conf

MANTRA Mooloolaba Beach has a new ‘Eco Conference’ package on offer, in partnership with Carbon Neutral.

The package includes a tree planted for each delegate attending and completely paper-free event organisation, as well as locally sourced produce, recyclable stationery and a reusable bamboo tote bag, for \$60 per person.

Standard offerings are included with venue hire including buffet lunch and AV, with hire free for groups of 25 delegates or more.

The initiative would be piloted at Mooloolaba Beach with plans to roll out across Mantra conferencing properties and then across the Peppers and BreakFree brands, Mantra MICE group director Paul Wilson said.

“We have every confidence that this initiative will prove popular with conference groups and our goal is to introduce it across our network over the next six months.”

To book, email conferencesc@mantragroup.com.au.



Perth to get Ritzy



PERTH is set to get a Ritz-Carlton, due to open in 2018.

The hotel would be the city's first international luxury hotel, and signalled the return of the operator to the country, Ritz-Carlton said.

The planned development is a result of an agreement between the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company and Asian residential apartment developer Fast Consortium.

The Consortium will build the hotel while working with the Western Australian government and the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority in the Elizabeth Quay development on

the waterfront, which is adjacent to the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre.

It is set to have 204 rooms and views over the Swan River and of the Botanical Garden.

The ground breaking is expected next year and with its opening, would double Ritz-Carlton's presence in the region to 44 hotels and resorts by 2018.

Healthier menu vital

SILVERNEEDLE Hospitality surveyed 85 industry event organisers and 93%, or about 79, said having healthier options on the menus was an important consideration when booking venues for corporate functions and conferences.

The company said it had feedback from many of the hotels that conference organisers were asking for healthy choices and a range of activities.

Twenty nine questions were asked about topics including AIME and booking conferences over a week, both online and face to face.

Forty five percent of respondents said they had incorporated sports or games into recent events, with the most popular being team building activities, SilverNeedle said.

SilverNeedle Hospitality has launched a health-focused business events program called 'Healthy Minds, Healthy Thinking' as a response to the trend for healthy options, and includes healthy menus and activities.

Best Western upgrade

BEST Western Hobart is inviting event organisers and business owners to a public open day on 06 Apr to tour its upgraded conference spaces and new restaurant.

Sales and marketing manager Liz Gifford said the upgrades had become a priority to cater for business and events in the city.

Soft refurbishments to the 140 rooms and exterior were due for completion at the end of 2014, Best Western Australasia ceo Rob Anderson said.

The first round of the three part refurbishment needed to be complete by April for MONA's Dark Mofo in June, and local conferences in August, Gifford said.

The open day will involve local wine sampling and free pizzas, and prizes throughout the day.

Shangri-La goes digital

FROM 29 Mar, Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts will be offering guests digital versions of its complimentary print newspapers.

The hotel group has partnered with digital newspaper and magazine service PressReader to give guests and those dining in the group's restaurants unlimited free access to more than 2000 local, regional and international publications from 100 countries in 60 languages, the group said.

The service works with guests connecting to hotel WiFi with laptops, tablets or smartphones and downloading the free PressReader app (for iOS, Apple, BlackBerry and Windows) or going to the PressReader website.

Shangri-La said it would also offer print editions of selected newspapers on request.

Shangri-La president and ceo Greg Dogan said the service offered more value to guests in an environmentally friendly way, which contributed to sustainable operations.

IBTM content on TV

IBTM Events has partnered with BOB.tv to put its education content on the company's Events Network channel.

The company's global portfolio, which includes AIME, CIBTM, GIBTM and IBTM India, would provide the content, with BOB.tv onsite at events, allowing those accessing the online site to view interviews and live reactions, IBTM Events said.

IBTM global events portfolio portfolio director Sallie Coventry said the partnership provided a platform to extend the reach of events and the knowledge program.

To access the knowledge program, visit BOB.tv's website at www.events.bob.tv.

Ben on BEN



Each month Business Manager for inPlace Recruitment, Ben Carnegie, writes his observations from the recruiter's perspective to help job hunters find the perfect job.

Ben has over 15 years working in 5 star hotels and the MICE industry and has worked on some of Australia's biggest events.

In the candidate short market we are facing in Australia, securing the perfect employee can be



harder to find than your shadow at night. When reviewing the selection criteria for your candidate shortlist, most employers set out to tick every box before making that final decision. Is this being realistic or just dragging out the inevitable of hiring someone that requires some training? My suggestion is to look at your list of selection criteria and determine which skills are essential and which ones you could do without should you need to. What resources do you have available to train someone in the areas a particular candidate may not possess?

In our experience, if employers invest some time into up-skilling a new employee to fit the needs of your business, you end up with highly motivated, dedicated employees with longer tenure. Plus new blood equals new ideas! Now go and find your shadows!

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