



Mr Roboto

THE tales of the weird and wonderful incentive ideas available in Japan are tantalising.



I've always wanted to go, from the screen prints to the cuisine (can you die from eating sushi all the time always?)

The Japan National Tourism Organisation's (JNTO) annual meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions seminar, held last Friday in the soon-to-close Ocean Room (prompting JNTO executive director Hiroshi Kuwamoto to say the organisation would have to find another excellent restaurant for next year's seminar), has doubled down on this desire, following destination presentations from companies including Exotissimo, Destination Asia and JTB Australia

Incentive ideas with a difference included the Tokyo Robot Restaurant (www.robot-restaurant.com), where 15ft robots dance for your entertainment (apparently an offering for those who don't tend towards migraines, due to the heavy reliance on strobe



lighting).

Then there are the 'maid' and 'butler' cafes; men visit the former, staffed by waitresses dressed as maids who greet them with "Hello Master", and women visit the latter to be greeted by waiters with "Hello Princess".

And Hamish and Andy have already documented the monkey cafe, where two monkeys serve customers for two hours at a time because apparently it's quite tiring for them - honestly, monkeys these days don't know what hard work is!

Alex (standing in for Jill while she's away)

BECA confirms Hingerty

MATT Hingerty has finally been announced as the new chairman of the Business Events Council of Australia (BECA), almost six weeks after the appointment was exclusively revealed by Business Events News (*BEN* 19 Feb).

The appointment signals a ramping up of BECA's engagement with the government, with Hingerty confirming that the organisation will shortly embark on a "comprehensive study of the sector's economic contribution to Australia."

This study will be conducted with the support of the federal government's TQUAL tourism grants program, and will support BECA's aim to secure more support for Australia's meetings, conventions, exhibitions and incentives sector.

"This will form the foundation of our representation work - it will provide further valuable evidence of the enormous reach of the sector in driving economic development, trade and export



and also in attracting inward investment and talent," Hingerty said this morning.

Hingerty is currently ceo of lobbying firm Barton Deakin Government Relations, with his career also including roles as former chief of staff for treasurer Joe Hockey and as head of the Australian Tourism Export Council.

He replaces former Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre ceo Ton Van Amerongen in the BECA chair role, with the Council's board unanimously endorsing the appointment at its board meeting in Sydney last week.

BECA is the business events sector's peak body, with members including the Association of Australian Convention Bureaux, the Australian Convention Centres Group, Meetings & Events Australia, the Tourism and Transport Forum, the International Congress & Convention Association Australian Chapter and the Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia.

Bid writing workshop

THE Australian Events Academy is set to conduct a specialist workshop on "Submission and Bid Writing," with the half day session taking place from 8.45am on 08 Apr at the SMC Function Centre in Sydney.

Costing \$95 for MEA members and \$145 for non-members, it aims to help attendees to source information and ideas to develop persuasive submissions to increase win rates.

To register, [CLICK HERE](#).

Quick Trip to airport

SYDNEY Airport has new parking deals on offer through its Quick Trip online facility.

Rates online start from \$10 for one hour, with two hours coming in at \$15 and three hours at \$20 - see www.sydneyairport.com.au.

Baillies on the Rocks

BAILLIE Lodges has confirmed the suspension of its planned development of nine suite luxury hotel, Baillies Sydney.

The hotel was due for completion in 2015 and would have been developed within heritage buildings in the Rocks area of Sydney.

However the development would not continue "in its current form" due to increased construction costs and regulatory constraints, Baillie Lodges managing director James Baillie said.

The development was not considered viable any more due to forecasts of costs well in excess of budgets, he said.

Baillie said a more streamlined process for smaller developments would have been advantageous.

"We have had excellent support for this project from the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, however the complexity and costs of additional approvals required by the State Heritage Council and City of Sydney have created a considerable burden."

The area was leased to Baillie Lodges by the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority.

Baillie said the company was still keen to create a luxury hotel for Sydney.

Baillie Resorts operates a number of luxury properties including Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island, Lord Howe Island's Capella Lodge and Longitude 141° at Uluru.

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Japan - the time is now



THE Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO) has said the time is ripe to hold meetings and incentives in Japan.

Speaking at its annual meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions lunch seminar on Friday, director Maiko Zenki said the Australian dollar's current strength against the yen meant Australians could get the most from their money in Japan.

Destination presenters said while Japan was often seen as an expensive location for meetings or incentives, the conversion rate meant Japan was now more affordable.

JNTO Sydney executive director Hiroshi Kuwamoto said 2013 had seen the highest number of Australian visitors to Japan.

Zenki said reasons Australians were heading to Japan included value for money and the appeal of the snow season, which saw a growth in FITs.

"It is said that where FIT grows, MICE grows."

Feedback had been that the flexibility of DMCs and organisers in terms of what clients could do in Japan had increased, due to growing numbers of tourists and the need to compete with other destinations.

Zenki said visitor records for January and February this year had already surpassed previous years, since 2010.

The country saw its 10 millionth overseas visitor in December, with 244,000 Australians visiting in 2013, about 2.4% of total

inbound visitors, up 18.5% from 2012, Zenki said.

Business events would not follow the same growth trajectory as FIT, but where people had interest in Japan, meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions representatives would be interested, she said.

The business events market was very important to Japan, since it affected much of the economy, Zenki said.

JNTO hoped to host more famils for PCOs in the future, but would need to work with the industry including airlines and hotels to set this up, Zenki said.

Incentive ideas presented at the lunch included trips to onsen, staying in traditional housing, sumo tournaments, tea ceremonies and samurai lessons, as well as more interesting offerings - see **Jill's Column** for more.

Bailey joins ACEM

MEG Bailey has joined the Australian Centre for Event Management (ACEM) teaching team at the University of Technology, Sydney.

Formerly general manager and executive producer at DGSE, Meg has more than 19 years' experience in event management and production.

Bailey will replace Johnny Allen over the next 12 months.

Bailey said she was excited about sharing her experience with participants in the program.

Melb Sheraton open

STARWOOD Hotels & Resorts

today announced the much-anticipated opening of the new Sheraton Melbourne Hotel.

The move marks the return of the Sheraton brand to Melbourne, with the property the first of five new Sheratons to open in the Pacific region in 2014.

Sheraton Melbourne Hotel has 174 guest rooms and is part of the 31 storey 'wavelinear' building at 27 Little Collins Street.

It offers a heated indoor lap pool and a fully equipped fitness facility, along with six meeting rooms, which can be configured to accommodate between 12 and 400 delegates.

There's also a dedicated conference and events team on hand to provide ongoing support.

A special opening rate is currently available from \$260 per night for guest rooms and \$750 per night for suites including accommodation, breakfast, free high speed internet access and double Starpoints for Starwood Preferred Guest members.



"Sheraton Melbourne Hotel provides travellers and locals alike with a stylish, comfortable and social atmosphere where they can relax and enjoy the highly personalised service, signature features and thoughtful amenities which have become synonymous with this globally successful brand," said hotel gm Hal Philp.

Centara in Laos

CENTARA Hotels and Resorts will open its first hotel in Laos in 2017.

The building would be managed by Centara, but owned by Simuong Group, developed at a cost of US\$46.2m, Centara said.

This would add another property to the Grand brand, bringing the total to 20.

The hotel would have French colonial design, with 200 rooms and meeting facilities including a ballroom, the company said.

Senior vp for sales and marketing Chris Bailey said the hotel would add to Centara's marketing strength in Southeast Asia.



IMAGINE the travel warnings you'd have to stay on top of for business events clients if the subjects of the most recent Harry Potter movie actually existed - yes, JK Rowling is still rolling in it as the *New York Times* reports that a series of three Harry Potter spin offs could be in the works, based on Rowling's book *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* and produced by Warner Bros.

Written in 2001 to raise funds for Comic Relief, the book details various magical beasts, including the Australian billywig, a blue insect which causes victims to hover uncontrollably for days, the *Age* reported.

Should you be curious, there are roughly a bajillion websites dedicated to planning a Harry Potter party, which range from the incredibly hard core (green ink on parchment invitations) to the yeah-that'll-do (a banquet hall of plastic office chairs and wobbly trestle tables).

The mother of Harry Potter conventions, however, would have to be LeakyCon (you read that right), held in the Orange County Convention Centre in Florida for five days, with tickets starting from US\$125.

LeakyCon boasts actors from the film franchise as well as gigs by bands such as Harry and the Potters, with more than 5000 fans expected this year.

Diploma funding

THE Australian Events Academy (AEA) is offering subsidised fees on its Diploma of Events.

Thanks to government funding, the diploma's fees have been reduced to \$500 for the six month course.

Meetings and Events Australia (MEA) said the course was usually \$6000 and that there were limited places for the subsidised course.

The diploma covers event management processes and a range of skills to manage event operations, applicable to event management companies, venues or organisations which planned and produced their own events, MEA said.

To register, contact training@mea.org.au.



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Broome lounge

QANTAS' Broome Airport regional lounge is now open for business (travelers).

Qantas domestic ceo Lyell Strambi said the lounge expansion had improved the facilities, which would help cater for increased traffic.

These expansions include new work and rest areas, with free refreshments, magazines and newspapers and high speed WiFi.

The lounge also featured artwork from local indigenous artists and a view of the tarmac, Strambi said.

He said there had been "significant" growth in the leisure and regional business travel to Broome.

Strambi said despite pressures on the airline, it would continue to invest in its customer proposition.

MEA winners announced

FOUR regional awards for Meetings and Events Australia (MEA) have been held, with two more still to come.

Winners from Western Australia, Queensland, NSW and South Australia have been announced, with Victoria to be held tonight and Tasmania this Thursday.

When asked for a list of regional winners, MEA said it did not publish all state award winners before the national awards.

In the NSW awards, cievents won Corporate Meeting of the Year for the Woolworths Limited National Conference 2013, Incentive of the Year for Flight Centre's Global Gathering in Cancun, and the Education Award for 30+ employees, while Dockside Group took home the award for Specialty Event Venue for L'Aqua.

Verve Creative Events picked up the gong for Event Management Organisation, while the Australian



Turf Club won the Meeting Venue for 500+ delegates award.

Forum Group Events account manager Lauren Hayward (pictured second from left) won Event Manager of the Year, with the Group picking up four awards in total including Meetings and Events Organisation for less than eight employees.

Arinex pty ltd general manager Lorraine Di Vito won Meetings Manager of the Year.

In the Queensland awards, the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre won three awards, picking up the Meeting Venue for 500 delegates or more award, as well as In-house AV Services award and the Corporate Social Responsibility award.



Getting to Know: Trappers Cabin, Beaver Creek

by: Bruce Piper

FOR a truly "high end" incentive, it's hard to beat the US state of Colorado, which offers an array of stunning mountain resorts where your clients can rub shoulders with the rich and famous all year round.

One of these is Beaver Creek, located in the Rocky Mountains about 90 minutes drive from Denver International Airport. Beaver Creek offers a great array of accommodation including on-snow five star hotels, a huge array of apartments and some unique options, one of which particularly caught *BEN's* eye during a recent visit to the region.

The Trappers Cabin is situated high up in the resort, surrounded by ski trails at an elevation of 9,500 feet. The authentic log cabin is the ultimate in privileged privacy for a small group, who can be pampered by a personal chef while they enjoy the serenity of the mountains. There's a games room with a pool table, an outdoor Jacuzzi and of course a delightful wood-burning fireplace.

Sleeping up to 10 people, the Trappers Cabin is perfect for a summer or winter corporate retreat. In winter, you're right on the doorstep of some of the best skiing in north America, while in summer the trails are a gateway to hike through spectacular wildflower meadows. The high elevation of the cabin means it offers spectacular views across Beaver Creek's Bachelor Gulch area to the adjacent Gore Range and McCoy Park.

And there's likely to be wildlife too - in fact the cabin closes between mid-April and early July each year for the official Elk Calving Season.

A gathering at Trappers Cabin comes with a variety of dining options, including all-inclusive, a la carte and "Event Culinary Experiences" which can be fully customised to any requirement. An extensive wine list is available, and everything is served with sparkling crystal and silverware.

Guests won't have to lift a finger, with a Premium Package for cabin rental coming complete with an on-site Cabin Keeper and Roustabout. It's possible to book massage therapists to sooth away aches and pains after a day on the slopes. Beaver Creek also offers a variety of experiences including scenic snow cat rides and a range of stunning on-mountain restaurants which can be bought out for special celebratory events.

But despite all the high-end touches, in the end it's the spectacular location which will truly impress any group. The exclusivity and privacy of the Trappers Cabin at Beaver Creek will make delegates feel they're really on top of the world - details at mountaincollection@vailresorts.com.

