



Really?

CORRECT me if I am wrong, but does all this tut, tutting about empty seats at the London



Olympic events and offering them to the military, seem to have a familiar, Sydney Olympic ring about it?

Clearly I stand corrected because the head of Australia's Olympic Committee, John Coates said of the furore, "We didn't have that problem in Sydney."

Perhaps Colin Moynihan, British Olympic Association head who made the comment that past Olympics have also seen scores of empty seats at some events, wasn't talking about Sydney.

Did you have a similar experience? Why don't you tell us about it and while you are at it "Like" us on Facebook - Jill.

Heart of The Centre in Kuala Lumpur

THE *buka puasa* gathering with the children from Yellow House and Living HOPE has been an annual event in the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre's calendar since its opening in June 2005.

In keeping with tradition, they recently played host to eighty children who were treated to the Centre's sumptuous *buka puasa* buffet.

The occasion was made more memorable when the Centre's team, headed by general manager Datuk Peter Brokenshire, surprised Living HOPE with a birthday cake to celebrate the organisation's fifth anniversary.

Speaking on behalf of Living HOPE, founder and chairman Dr Peggy Wong said the Centre's annual *buka puasa* treat is one the kids look forward to every year.

"More important though, is the wonderful bond this (occasion) has fostered between the Centre's team members and the children."

Yes! Christchurch to get its new convention centre

DESCRIBED as "exactly what we were after," by Christchurch and Canterbury Convention Bureau manager Caroline Blanchfield, comes the announcement from New Zealand Prime Minister John Key's that a new state-of-the-art convention centre will be built in Christchurch in a prime central location stretching from Victoria Square and the Avon river.

The three-storey Centre, covering 24,000 sqm will be able to cater for up to 2,000 delegates in discrete areas – one for 1,000 delegates and two of up to 500 people and configured so that as many as three events can be run simultaneously.

Included in the plan is a provision for two hotels and retail operations on the ground floor.

"This is the news we have been waiting for and we're thrilled there is now some certainty around the planned new convention centre," says Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism chief executive Tim Hunter.

"The new convention centre will form the core of our tourism and hospitality sector and is going to be a catalyst for further hospitality-related investment.

"Hotel investors have been holding off on making decisions about where they're going to build until a decision on the location of the convention centre had been made, but now they can start actively planning for the future," Hunter added.

Hunter says pre-quake conferences were pumping around \$80m a year into the Canterbury economy.

It was predicted the new convention centre would provide



the opportunity to grow conference and convention business by at least 40%.

The size and scale of the new Christchurch Convention Centre "ticks all the boxes for conference organisers and fits what the convention industry is looking for in New Zealand," says Blanchfield.

"It will significantly improve our ability to attract trade shows and consumer exhibitions at a national level," she said.

Conventions and Incentives New Zealand chief executive Alan Trotter has also welcomed the plans for Christchurch's new convention centre.

"New Zealand needs large state-of-the-art convention centres if it is going to continue attracting international conferences so we're thrilled the Government has given this project priority," Trotter says.

Shark fins saved

IN a move that spans all the luxury brand's global culinary operations, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts has formally removed shark fin from all of its menus.

The move is in line with Fairmont's industry-commitment to environmental stewardship and supports an earlier pledge to offer sustainable seafood choices in an effort to conserve precious marine species.

The first major Asian hotel group to remove shark fin from its menus was the upmarket Peninsula Hotels.

Top chef steps up

THE Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre's (MCEC) new executive chef Tony Panetta who worked his way up to chef de cuisine after six months and took on acting executive chef in November 2011, now steps up for the main course.

Panetta joined MCEC as sous chef in October 2010, and said: "I'm passionate about the farm to fork story we tell and I want our visitors, many who are new to Melbourne, to enjoy a true taste of Victoria at MCEC.

"I'm fortunate to work with an incredibly skilled team of chefs and together our focus is creating memorable food and wine experiences, regardless of size and scale, using the best local ingredients," he said.

Rent a Resort For Exclusive Events



Club Med
GROUPS & INCENTIVES



FIRST it was books being replaced by Kindles or iPads.

Now it looks as though the Bible found in the bedside table of your hotel is being replaced by something a touch racier!

That is if the Damson Dene Hotel has anything to do with it.

The British Lakes District hotel (40-rooms & three conference rooms) has replaced its Gideon's Bibles with the popular 'Fifty Shades of Grey' novel.

Don't fret about the Bible though - it is still available on request from the reception desk.

Manly makeover

ICONIC Manly beachfront hotel, the 213-room Novotel Sydney Manly Pacific has completed a significant two year refurbishment and rejuvenation program, "with reinvestment paying off as a catalyst for growth," says general manager Darren Cann.

Combining comprehensive facilities for business and leisure guests, the refurbishment of the 4.5 star hotel's Level 1 events centre has resulted in a fresh, unpretentious and warm new function space.

With nine totally refurbished first class venues to suit a discreet meeting for 10 through to a larger conference for 500 delegates in the pillar-free ballroom, the floor plans and room capacities at Novotel offer seamless flexibility.

"With the SCEC closing facilities at Darling Harbour in late 2013, we see a boost for our upgraded facilities with the pillarless ballroom capacity for 500 guests able to take up some of the slack.

"We expect a brisk trade in business events during this down-time for SCEC," said director of sales & marketing, Lindy Andrews.

The introduction of Novotel's global Meetings Menu has expanded on the scope now available, with a healthy selection of vegetarian, gluten free and low GI options.

Two transformations



CONTINUING Rendezvous Hospitality Group's (RHG) transformation and re-branding which unites Rendezvous Hotels and The Marque Hotels under one Rendezvous brand, The Marque Hotel Perth has now become Rendezvous Studio Hotel Perth Central.

The brand new name also comes with changes to logos, signage and an extensive upgrade of hotel facilities.

Renovations include new design, technology, amenities and brand identity, and five newly renovated function rooms catering to 130 delegates plus a brand new business centre.

The makeover also saw the hotel awarded a Bronze Certification from Earth Check, acknowledging its smart energy efficient lighting.



MEANWHILE The Sebel Newcastle Beach has been rebranded to Novotel Newcastle Beach, following the acquisition by Accor of the Mirvac hotel portfolio earlier this year.

Accor says the rebrand will help bring international recognition to Newcastle and cement its status as being one of the top 10 must-see destinations in the world, as asserted by Lonely Planet in 2011.

The 4.5 star hotel, located two hours from Sydney and only minutes from the centre of Newcastle, features 88 guest rooms each offering contemporary furnishings and many with harbour vistas or ocean views.

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TripAdvisor surveys hotels

FINDINGS from the latest TripAdvisor Industry Index hotel survey reveal some interesting results about Australia's hospitality industry trends.

Collected from more than 25,000 responses from hoteliers around the globe, including around 1,000 in Australia, these include the fact that Australian hoteliers came in ninth in the world in terms of having eco-friendly practices in place, beating counterparts in Asia Pacific such as India, Thailand and Japan - but behind New Zealand which came in first place in the rankings.

In the last six months, only 21% of Australian properties responding to the survey reported to have been "extremely" or "very" profitable.

BESydney recruits

CONTINUING to recruit industry leaders to newly formed roles,



Business Events Sydney (BESydney), Joanne Sollom has joined the organisation as its new head of client services.

Then from 10 September Oliver Philpot will assume the newly created role of Head of Bidding and Strategic Partnerships.

Sollom brings to her role a wealth of experience in the business event industry, including direct conference management, strategic planning and operations management.

Philpot, a well-respected leader in the tourism and events industry has held roles at Tourism Queensland, Virgin Blue Holidays and most recently as the ceo of Central Coast Tourism.

He is also the current chair of the Australian Tourism Export Council NSW branch.

There was no major difference in terms of profitability between larger properties with over 50 rooms and smaller properties with 50 rooms or less.

Other trends examined included optimism, with just 34% of Australian properties feeling that the economy would improve in the second half of the year - lower levels of optimism than hoteliers in Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Thailand, New Zealand, China and Japan.

The lower levels of optimism in the local industry also reflected in staffing prospects, with just 8% of Australian hoteliers expecting to increase employee numbers in the next six months.

And Australia topped the list for being the country where hoteliers are most likely to offer discounted room rates over the next six months, with a hefty 32% of properties reporting expected decreases in rates.

The survey also looked at the rise of online booking, with both Australia and New Zealand in the top ten countries in terms of offering internet booking options for travellers.

Wifi was a key hotel feature highlighted in the report, with 36% of properties that don't currently offer free in-room wireless internet access planning to add it in the next six months.

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“Like no other”

SYDNEY'S

EVENT SHOWCASE

RSVP12 | 15TH-16TH AUG | SCEE

IDEAS + *inspiration* FOR EVENTS

WITH less than three weeks until the opening of Sydney's Event Showcase 2012, the release of new features has seen the ramping up of strategies to engage event buyers visiting the show floor.

“This year's Showcase will be an exhibition like no other,” promises event director Rowan Marchingo

A brand new experience, the ‘Interactive Kitchen’ will see team building gurus Cheeky Food Group, Taste Food Tours and many others lead a communal cooking class, whilst the best caterers in town will share samples of their food creations via the roving BiteTastings.

Visitors will be encouraged to touch and feel all the new products at the 180 exhibitor stands, and get up close and personal with industry influencers at the networking Party After Dark evening which will take place at Cargo Bar.

For the first time ever, visitors will be able to purchase tickets to attend the event industry networking function of the year.

A transformed corporate Entertainment Showcase will have famous Australian headliners on the bill; in addition, entertainers will rove the aisles adding an element of surprise.

There'll be an interactive and informative smart phone app available for exhibitors and visitors, provided by ShowGizmo, detailing all the exhibitors complete with a calendar of all the activities taking place.

Keynote speakers from Australia's Event Master Class Seminars will congregate at Central to talk one-on-one with those wanting more insights into their knowledge and skills.

A full schedule of the show is now available online at: sydney.rsvpvent.com.au.

Mandarin Oriental heads to Chengdu

THE Mandarin Oriental hotel Group has announced that it will manage a new luxury hotel in Chengdu, the capital of China's Sichuan province.

The Mandarin Oriental Chengdu is currently under development and will form part of a mixed-use development on a riverfront site in the Jin-jiang district.

It's scheduled to open in 2015 and will feature 320 spacious rooms across the top 33 floors of a tower building along with a sky-high rooftop bar and tea lounge plus a range of specialty dining venues and a luxury spa.

For meetings and events the Mandarin Oriental Chengdu will offer a 1200 seat grand ballroom, a 500-seat junior ballroom and a variety of multi-purpose function spaces.

Macau is massive

NEW tourist attractions complementing high end shopping and large contemporary international hotels are helping Macau prepare to meet “growing waves of tourists”.

The newest addition to the Cotai Strip is the Sands Cotai Central which has provided an extra 1800 hotel rooms and suites - with a further 4000 to be added next month with the opening of the huge new Sheraton Macao.

Last year the enclave welcomed 28 million visitors, up 12% on the previous year - and so far this year visitor numbers from Australia to Macau are up 7.67% for the six months to 30 Jun.

MEANWHILE Macau will shortly host its inaugural Global Tourism Economy Forum - a three day event at the Macau Tower which is expected to attract 600 guests.

It's being jointly organised by the Macau government and the China Chamber of Tourism, aiming to provide a platform “to capture a macro view of the interplay between tourism and other major economies”.

Participants include the UNWTO PATA and the WTTC.

Sitting Pretty

Welcome to *Sitting Pretty*, our regular review of experiences up the front of the plane.

Swiss International LX180
Mon 19 Jun Zurich-Bangkok

The Swiss International Air Lines A340 aircraft flies daily between Zurich and Bangkok. Business Events News recently flew in the business class cabin on this sector as the first leg home between Switzerland and Sydney as part of a Switzerland Tourism famil.

The aircraft

Swiss operated a long-haul Airbus A340 on this route, a modern and comfortable aircraft of the Airbus family. Capable of seating up to 295 travellers in the three-class layout, the aircraft offers plenty of space as well as comfortable seating.

The cabin

The Swiss A340-300 is the carrier's flagship aircraft, used to operate long haul services from its primary hubs of Zurich and Geneva. The Business Class cabin contains 47 seats, with 8 ahead in first-class and 172 in Economy.



Service

This is an area of which special mention must be made. Upon being seated, passengers were promptly offered a glass of champagne or orange juice, and shortly after take-off were provided with our cutlery for the dinner service. The side of the cabin **BEN** was occupying was generally served throughout the flight by a single obliging steward who was never impolite, never dressed untidily, never unable to assist with a request or query, simply exemplary in his service standards and a glowing credit to the Swiss International carrier as a whole. A hearty kudos must go to him.



The seat

BEN was seated in the back row of the Business Class cabin, in a seat capable of adjusting to a fully horizontal lie-flat position, with a small table to the right and a reading light over the shoulder.

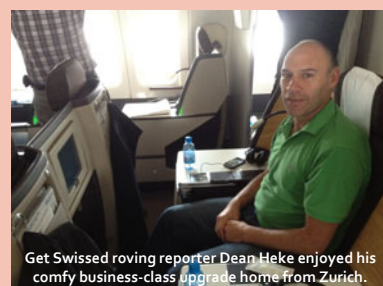
Each seat has a personal TV screen which offers an excellent range of movies, TV shows, games and music in a variety of different languages.

Food and Beverage

Swiss offers cuisine created by local masterchef Alexander Kroll, and what fine offerings they are. As mentioned earlier, a champagne or orange juice was forthcoming quickly upon **BEN** locating our seat. Soon after takeoff, a selection of dried meats from the Zurich canton is served while mains are prepared. Among the dinner selections on our flight was sliced veal in a mushroom cream sauce with local delicacy potato rosti, with the alternatives being a wholemeal penne pasta with tomato, olive and caper sauce, or thirdly, a lemongrass, coconut and mushroom soup, with chicken. Often, cabin crew with boxes of delectable Swiss chocolates move through the cabin offering a selection of sweet treats.

At the airport

Zurich Airport is an extremely efficient operation, with a railway system operating between terminals for speedy transition to onward connecting flights. A railway station to move anywhere in Switzerland is across the road. All in all, a very slick operation well worth consideration by any Australian travellers to Europe.



Get Swisssed roving reporter Dean Heke enjoyed his comfy business-class upgrade home from Zurich.



1st August 2012



ABOVE: Stunning Port Macquarie landscapes - truly inspiring.

BELOW: Alex Cassegrain and Leanne Mephum, Cassegrain Winery; Tiffany Slack-Smith, PMHC; Janette Hyde, Greater Port Macquarie Tourism; Sonya Fingleton Good Food Group; and Paul Jogever, Cassegrain Winery.



ABOVE: Jean Davy serves lunch at Amber Healing Farm.



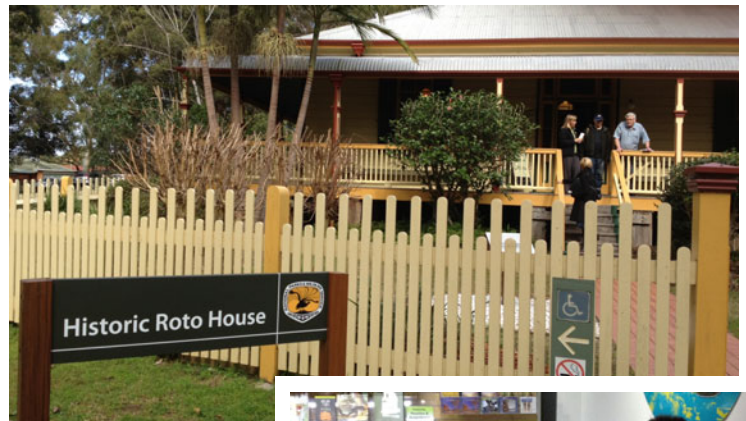
Port Macquarie pulls out all the stops

PORT Macquarie recently hosted a group of meeting planners and media to this beautiful coastal destination, an easy one hour flight or four hour drive north from Sydney.

Taking in Port's impressive \$50 million, purpose-built conference centre, the Glasshouse, and a range of first class accommodation, the group lunched with Jean Davy at her Amber Healing Farm, visited and learnt of the Koala Hospital's Corporate Koala Adoption program, marvelled at the historic Roto House and took to sea with Port Venture Cruises.

There was breakfast at Bonnie Hills Surf Club, a walking meditation tour in Sea Acres rainforest, dining at Panthers, Quality Resort Sails, Zebu Bar + Grill, The Edge Café and The Corner Restaurant.

The faml ended memorably with Port Macquarie tourism identities at the spectacular Cassegrain Winery.



RIGHT: A didgeridoo performance at the Sea Acres Rainforest Centre.



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