



Hotel chatter

THE hotel concierge can be your friend, the go to person with all the answers on a city.



ConciergeCorner on Twitter has some tips on how to get the most out of your concierge contact and especially what not to ask.

1. Don't ask for the newest hotspot in town. Just because it's new doesn't make it good. Ask for what you really want.

2. Don't waste time asking for a recommendation if you don't really want it. It's aggravating to recommend a favourite restaurant, or neighbourhood and then have you seek directions to the most generic and/or chain-like place.

3. Don't ask for freebies. This includes internet, parking, breakfast, executive/club floors and rooms, suites etc.

4. Don't ask which celebrities are staying here. "For the love of my job and the hospitality industry, refrain from asking me to divulge this sort of information."

5. Don't ask for directions if you can't remember them. It's annoying to have to repeat things because you are not paying attention.

Now that you know what not to ask, keep reading today's issue to find out what is happening in the industry with stories on the IACC's new chapter, hotel and conference room upgrades and a Getting to know on Ballarat in Victoria, a famil taken during AIME - Jill.

IACC announces new chapter

THE International Association of Conference Centres (IACC) has announced the formation of its newest chapter, IACC-Australia Asia Pacific, in support of the growing membership in Australia, Japan as well as the opportunity for growth in Asia.

Announced as a key strategy for IACC in 2012, the IACC currently has 22 members in Australia, Japan and New Zealand.

Ceo Mark Cooper commented, "With our emphasis on the meeting experience and the

significant number of corporate and university conference centres in Australia as well as the increasing development of the conference centre concept throughout China, Korea, India and other Asian countries, this chapter has great

potential to grow in the coming years."

The IACC now has three chapters including IACC-Americas, IACC-Europe, and IACC-Australia Asia-Pacific.



Events with benefits

SUCH has been the success of the Toga Hotels (Adina, Medina, Vibe & Travelodge) *Events with Benefits* that it is being offered once again.

It's an offer that gives meeting planners and organisers flexible and intimate conference solutions across Toga Hotels in Australia and New Zealand from just \$49 per day.

For instance companies benefit with such things as the 15th delegate free pass, spend \$5,000 and get a free mini bar or AV equipment or spend \$10,000 or more and get a \$500 rebate on your next conference.

Similarly there are benefits for the booker of gift cards from \$40 to \$300 and bonus benefits of a weekend away for two when you hold 10 conferences or more within a 12 month period.

See - www.togahotels.com.au/benefits.

Fight Hunger - Donate Food

IN a joint initiative, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre Management Ltd ("HML") and UBM Asia Ltd ("UBM Asia") will donate unconsumed food from UBM Asia's seven international trade exhibitions held at the Centre in support of the "Food Angel" Food Recovery Program.

It kicked off in March at the APLF - Materials, Manufacturing & Technology and Fashion Access fairs, where unconsumed food were donated and distributed to people in need.

Monica Lee-Muller, md of HML said, "We are committed to be at the forefront of efforts to ensure continuous sustainability development and care for our community.

"We hope to motivate other organisers to join this meaningful program and our other sustainability and CSR initiatives."

A right Royal upgrade



PRIOR to Royal on the Park's \$5 million redevelopment the 44-year-old Brisbane hotel sought advice from the AAA to ensure the improvements would be within the criteria.

They also arranged to be assessed after the guest rooms were refurbished.

Secondary glazing was installed in all rooms, additional recycling options, biodegradable products and some innovative and customer driven extras such as free and unlimited high speed wireless internet and iPads for all guests use and iPod docks in all rooms.

The pool area was decked and the gardens rebuilt with the addition of a croquet lawn.

Achieving a AAA green star rating and benchmarking the property with two years of Global Travel Agents Association Sustainability awards, general manager, Steve Underwood said "the importance to the industry to have an internationally recognised system of rating was pivotal to the hotel.

"It's about credibility in the market.

"The AAA standards are benchmarked internationally and the expectation of customers can only be fulfilled if this process evolves, keeping pace with customers' expectations".



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Welcome to Fantasy Island, Indonesia



THE largest eco theme park and the first gated island community in the world is to be developed on Fantasy Island, located in the Riau Islands Province in Indonesia.

To be managed by Asian hospitality chain Meritus Hotels & Resorts (MHR), the deluxe resort development comprising a 200-room condotel, a 230 suite hotel, and an aggregate of 413 unit villas, is slated to open in 2014.

Spread over 810 acres of pristine tropical islands situated between Batam and Singapore, Fantasy Island will house hotel suites and villas complementing retail, convention, dining and recreational facilities.

16 kilometres off the coast of Singapore, it will be accessible via a 20-minute luxury yacht or ferry ride from the Harbour front ferry terminal.

The island is approximately two-thirds the size of Sentosa island, with 70% of its total area being preserved as a nature sanctuary.

Eco-themed activities will include aquaculture tours in the surrounding waters as well as nature trails, allowing visitors to explore the island's unspoiled environment.

Garuda's consistent growth

THE Indonesian carrier, Garuda Indonesia has reported consistent growth across the board that saw it doubling its comprehensive income in 2012 compared with 2011, from US\$72.7 million to US\$145.4m.

The increase of 72.6% in net profit from US\$64.2m in 2011 to US\$110.8 the following year, also posted a passenger increase of 19.6% with 20.4 million carried.

In Australia and the SWP region, Garuda's passenger increase was 20.05%, while flight frequencies increased by 22.12% from 1,537 to 1,877.

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Can you manage it?

THE Hawaii Tourism Authority has issued a Request for Proposals to provide management of the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu.

They are welcoming submittals from qualified organisations that have proven experience in convention, exhibition or other major public assembly management, including collaboration in sales and marketing for the meetings, convention & incentive business.

The most advantageous to Hawaii's tourism economy, taking into consideration multiple factors including applicant qualifications, experience, sales and marketing approach and price, will determine selections.

Written proposals are due by 21 May at 4.30pm, HAST.

Bagus Y. Siregar, vp Garuda Indonesia Australia and SWP said "We are seeing a rapid increase in passenger numbers due to the ongoing increase in flight frequencies, and the introduction of more convenient and direct services for the passengers in this region.

"We foresee these strong figures continuing in 2013, especially with the launch of new services for the whole region such as our daily service from Melbourne to Denpasar which started this month.

"We are also proud to launch a new direct Perth – Jakarta service for the first time on 28 June, as well as the momentous re-introduction of Brisbane – Denpasar services in August."



A hell of a trip!

Most of us love to travel – but being told to 'go to hell,' is an entirely different proposition.

However, according to the Italian news agency ANSA, it's entirely possible, especially since archeologists working in the ancient Phrygian city of Hierapolis in southwestern Turkey claim to have located the Plutonium, or Pluto's Gate and it has nothing to do with Disney!

This ancient pilgrim site – a small cave near the temple of Apollo - was considered the entryway to the underworld or the gateway to Hades.

The Plutonium grew in association with death from deadly gases it emitted.

Star turns at the Amari

WITH Amari Watgate Bangkok home to Thailand's 'Dancing with the Stars' and the show's exclusive sponsor, they have the connections and resources to stage a truly impressive, dance-tastic themed event at the Amari in Bangkok and the Amari Orchid Pattaya.

Embracing the show's glitz and glamour they have created special four day and three night meeting packages for between 100 and 600 delegates.

Right from the glamorous arrival guests are greeted by professional salsa dancers and presented with branded room keys.

The conference takes place with plenty of 'dancing' touch points including mirror ball pens, a judge's notepad and a judging panel desk for meeting presenters.

All breaks and meals will follow the theme of a different style of dance with appropriate music and performances.

The gala dinner will be an opportunity for delegates to truly



embrace the theme through dressing up and learning to jive.

The 'dancing' theme runs through the conference, which can be extended by additional days or shortened, to a minimum of two nights.

Commenting on the packages, David Barrett, the Amari's executive director of events said "It is really exciting for us to associate and theme a meeting package around a globally renowned brand and we can't wait to stage our first 'Dancing with the Stars' meeting.

"We have already received a number of requests for this theme, simply through our association with the show, so we are expecting both the conference and gala dinner options to be very popular."

Team building. More fun in the Philippines

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Glamping it up



'SERENGETI Safari Tents' at
Murphy's Creek Escape are
offering the chance to get back
to nature without sacrificing all
the creature comforts, with the
launch of their six luxury tent
accommodation.

The permanent tents, appointed
with high-end furnishings,
luxurious linen and an ensuite
bathroom and kitchenette,
are set among 20 hectares of
lush bushland in south east
Queensland's Lockyer Valley.

Rates are \$270-\$300 per night
valid for a min two night stay.

See murphyscreekescape.com.au.

Kuranda goes for gold

MORE

than
400,000
visitors are
expected to
take the
Kuranda
Scenic
Railway,
which
winds
through
World



Heritage protected rainforest
from Cairns to Kuranda this year.

It's a journey that included
240,000 international visitors
from as far as Japan, China, India,
United Kingdom, Europe and
North America.

In an effort to step up its appeal
Queensland Rail has launched a
new Gold Class Kuranda Scenic
Railway experience with a fresh
focus on local produce and the
area's rich heritage.

Queensland Rail Travel general
manager Carol-Anne Nelson
said, "The new onboard Gold
Class menu showcases the best
of Queensland and Tablelands
produce throughout the one
hour 45 minute trip, including

freshly baked muffins with Mango
Sorbet, as well as a gourmet
selection of the State's best
cheese, nuts, dessert, wine and
beer.

"The carriages have been
hand-crafted in Victorian-inspired
décor, and feature comfortable
club lounge seating," she said.

The story behind the railway
which reaches 328m above sea
level tells of how crews in the
late 1800s worked their way
up a mountain through dense
rainforest to construct 15 hand-
made tunnels and 37 bridges - a
phenomenal engineering and
physical feat.

For more details on the Scenic
Railway - www.ksr.com.au.



Getting to Know: Ballarat, Victoria

by: Jill Varley

IF the 10% increase in visitor numbers over the past year at Greg Parker's Ballarat Wildlife Park is any indication, then business in this former gold rush town is on the up.

The Wildlife Park set on 13 hectares of peppermint gum woodland where 100 kangaroos roam free, played host recently to the Qatar Royal family and to actor Nicholas Cage who was an enthusiastic and regular visitor.

A 75-minute drive from Melbourne, Ballarat is a city of substance, with leafy boulevards, heritage buildings and the living history of Sovereign Hill.

It has all the infrastructure and wherewithal to inspire and reward the meeting delegate.

There are some delightful places to conference, such as the Ballarat Lodge & Conference Centre with 71 rooms set in its lush, sprawling gardens. The largest conference venue in the city, it has a capacity for 1000 theatre style or 700 banquet.

Surprises are everywhere, from the bullock-cart sweep of Lydiard Street with an importance of historic buildings, to the legendary goldfields icon, Craig's Royal Hotel.

The city's oldest and most luxurious hotel, it's a step back to a time of magnificent bedrooms and public rooms where four function rooms with a capacity for 140 have played host to royalty, poets and prime ministers.

In between the goldfields and the Spa Country is Novotel Forest Resort with 144 rooms and 10 purpose-built conference rooms for up to 1000 delegates.

Things not to miss are the Ballarat Art Gallery, with the original Eureka flag on display, Sovereign Hill a recreation of goldfields in mid-19th century and the sound and light spectacular 'Blood on the Southern Cross.'

