



Alice delights

TODAY BEN is in Alice Springs on a post AIME famil and no, we haven't been wandering the country for the past few months.



It's just that the Northern Territory Convention Bureau, who by the way are looking after us like we are family, made the decision that now was a better time to showcase Alice to AIME delegates.

And, they aren't wrong – the weather is glorious and the nights balmy and warm.

It's been a fairly leisurely first day with a tour of Alice Springs Desert Park, an intriguing first stop for outback travellers to get acquainted with the fascinating array of wild life they are likely to encounter in Australia's red heart.

The clever people at Quest Alice Springs Apartments were waiting with refreshing fruit salads & juices when we arrived after our Park experience and showed us their impressive apartments, which overlook the dry riverbed of the Todd.

Finally, a BBQ dinner last night at the Royal Flying Doctor service, in its impressive new facility was a real treat, about, much more needs to be said – and will - Jill.

Sydney to host major Indigenous festival



AN announcement made by NSW Governor Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir with the Minister for Tourism, Major Events and the Arts, George Souris and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Victor Dominello, will see a new annual festival called Corroboree staged in Sydney for at least the next three years.

To be held over 11 days, from 14 November to 24 November, it has an aim of bringing together Indigenous art and culture from around the nation.

"Corroboree will give us all a chance to begin to understand and celebrate the true culture of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - the original inhabitants of this great land," Governor Bashir said.

Supported by the NSW

Government, Corroboree will bring together a number of Sydney's premier cultural organisations and deliver on the recommendation contained in the Visitor Economy Taskforce Report to establish a major Indigenous cultural festival in Sydney, to raise the profile of NSW's Aboriginal heritage and contemporary culture.

A Working Group has been formed to develop and execute the program and includes predominately Indigenous staff from Bangarra Dance Theatre; Blackfella Films; Australian Museum; Gadigal Information Service; the Art Gallery of NSW; Museum of Contemporary Art Australia; State Library of NSW; Sydney Opera House and The Royal Botanic Gardens.

Her Excellency, the Governor of NSW, Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO is Corroboree's Patron.

Sydney's new exhibition pavilion

A purpose built exhibition pavilion is to be constructed at the Sydney Showground, a move that complements last year's \$64m upgrade of Sydney Showground Stadium.

Sydney Showground general manager, Peter Thorpe stated that, 'It's no news to anyone that demand for space will be at a premium from the end of 2013.

"We currently already hold some of Sydney's major exhibitions such as AIMEX, AusPack and Home & Giving to name just a few, with a number of other exciting expos coming on board from 2014.

"We need to ensure that our planning is robust and future focused and that our infrastructure is therefore capable of taking on any challenge that organisers and promoters throw at us."

The new building, intended to provide approximately 8,500sqm of useable exhibition and event space dividable into two separate facilities by an operable wall, is adjacent to the Dome and Halls and interfacing with the existing Southee Complex (requiring the removal of the Badgery Pavilion), will depend upon the response from the respondents to the Tender process.

The total footprint when complete, inclusive of the retained Southee Complex, will be approximately 11,000sqm.

Call for HKCEC memorabilia

FOLLOWING in the wake of the SCEC's call for memorabilia (**BEN** 10 Apr) the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) also celebrating its 25th anniversary this year is seeking its own reminder of the past.

Among the celebratory initiatives is one designed to arouse interest in the community and rekindle fond memories of events over the past quarter-century.

"We are calling on all our clients to dig out HKCEC-related

memorabilia, be they mementos, historical photographs, souvenirs, show catalogues, or newspaper and magazine cuttings," said Josephine Lam.

Selected historic items will be showcased during the anniversary cocktail reception on 3 December.

Clients who provide items with historical value will be presented with a souvenir.

If you want to contribute contact josephinelam@hkcec.com by 30 September.

Aloha!

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Ethiad boosts top tier



TOP-TIER Gold Elite Etihad Guests members now have even more advantages with the unveiling of Etihad's new suite of loyalty benefits.

These include an increase in tier bonus miles from 50% to 75%; complimentary Etihad Guest Gold membership for another member of the Gold Elite member's choice; check-in at the Diamond First Class counter regardless of class of travel; an invitation for an accompanying guest to the exclusive Diamond First Class Lounges in Abu Dhabi's Terminals 1 and 3, as well as luxury lounges exclusive to Diamond First Class guests at all other airports, when travelling together on the same flight, regardless of class of travel; a guaranteed Pearl Business Class seat on an Etihad Airways-operated flight for any chosen date and destination, if booked at least 48 hours prior to departure.

Barry Green, Etihad Airways' vice president customer relationship management and loyalty, said "The new Etihad Guest Gold Elite member benefits, with 75% tier bonus miles and Guaranteed Pearl Business Class seat, ensure that our elite offering continues to set the highest benchmark across the industry."

Gold Elite benefits are available to Virgin Australia's Velocity Platinum members when travelling on Etihad Airways-operated flights, and vice versa.

Asian Trails travels Australia



THIS month, Tourism Portfolio - a leading Australian representation company - hosted a group of senior leaders from Asian Trails.

The delegation that included the managing directors of the company's operations in

Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia, travelled to Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne in order to update key meeting, event, conference and incentive organisers on new developments.

Launched in 1999, Asian Trails is a company that provides a broad range of destination services throughout South East Asia.

Pictured in Sydney from left are: Emir Cherif and Roger Haumueller, Asian Trails; Nicole Skjaerbaek, Donna Kessler and Lisha Singh, Tourism Portfolio; Thuy Tien and Andre Seller, Asian Trails.

Rydges to open eleven new spaces

ELEVEN different spaces for functions and events will be offered at the 4.5 star, 318 room Rydges Sydney Airport, when it opens at the international terminal in May.

The function areas will include rooftop spaces overlooking the international runway and city skyline.

Promotional room rates are being offered, priced from \$200 when booked between 24 April and 14 May for stays between May and July, whilst every one in five bookings will win their room night free.

The deal includes a King room, 24 hours free wifi and a \$35 food and beverage credit.

For a chance to win a free night accommodation or for more information on the hotel visit www.rydges.com/sydneyairport.

Jinks appointed to Sofitel Fiji

INTERNATIONAL hotelier Simon Jinks has joined the Sofitel



Fiji Resort & Spa in the role of general manager, taking over the top job from Adam Laker who has departed to become gm at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza in Manila.

Originally from Britain and boasting a 19 year career in hospitality, Jinks' various gm roles, has also seen him part of the Accor Operations Support team in 2011 for the Pullman Oceanview Sanya Resort in China.



EXCUSE us if you are eating lunch but when it comes to food fads, some of the most bizarre are found in China where eating animal heads, particularly rabbit, is on the up after a culinary dry spell.

This much-loved local street food, preferably spiced has deep cultural roots.

It began, no doubt, as peasant food when meat was a rare and expensive treat, so people developed a taste for the bits that wealthier classes discarded.

Don't turn your nose up too much, we Aussies have been known to eat witchetty grubs, crocodile, and camel, the French frogs and snails, the Scots oatmeal stuffed stomachs and the Germans pig's feet!

New flights to CHC

AIR New Zealand and Virgin Australia have announced that they will become the first airlines to offer a direct service between Perth and the New Zealand city of Christchurch in more than 20 years.

The twice-weekly non-stop service will operate through the peak demand period from December until late April 2014.

McConnell joins Emporium Hotel

JUSTIN McConnell has been appointed as executive assistant manager of Brisbane's multi-award-winning Emporium Hotel.

McConnell brings to the role 17 years' experience in luxury hotels across the Asia Pacific.

He will work alongside general manager, Peter Savoff.



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Japan Convention Bureau (JCB) has been promoting Japan as a MICE destination since 1966.

Renowned for its superb level of hospitality, safety, cleanliness and above all, professionalism, Japan also offers highly-developed infrastructure, world-class venues and excellent facilities, a wide variety of accommodation and a wealth of tourist attractions.

According to research carried out by the Union of International Associations, Japan has been ranked in the top 5 destinations since 2008.

"There is increased competition for international conferences by new markets, such as the Asia-Pacific region and Africa," said JCB's executive director, Akira Ninagawa.

"Japan has been perceived as an expensive country in the past, however with the current state of the Japanese yen to the dollar Japan is excellent value for money.

"There is a trend amongst delegates to expect a high level of service & unique programs.

"Holding an event in a historical castle, temple or shrine or in a movie studio could be a unique and distinctly memorable experience".

Coral planting, turning into a samurai for a day and learning sword fighting and meditation are some activities on offer.

JCB offers a one-stop service for event organisers, and puts you in contact with PCOs, DMCs and relevant MICE contacts in each city as well as providing consulting and support with venues and facilities, and assisting with proposals, PR and marketing tools.

See www.jnto.go.jp/MI/eng.

Teleconferencing at Fraser Suites

FRASER Suites Sydney is complementing its meeting services with the introduction of new high tech video teleconferencing system.

Available in the boardroom on level 11 of the hotel, it is ideal for intimate groups of up to 12 delegates.

The new conferencing system combines superb audio with an immersive, high definition video experience that is powerful, flexible and easy to use.

A special conference day delegate package is being offered with prices starting from \$78pp when booked by 30 August.

The deal includes room hire for 20 - 100 people, a complimentary 30-minute welcome cocktail party, stationery and morning and afternoon tea.

Email conference.sydney@frasershospitality.com.

QantasLink moves to T3

BUSINESS and leisure travellers will have improved access to Qantas' premium lounge and retail offerings, reduced check in times and a smoother flight connection following an upgrade of the regional service that will see QantasLink customers access their flights through the Qantas Domestic Terminal, Terminal 3 in Sydney.

QantasLink executive manager John Gissing said the move will deliver big benefits to customers flying to and from Sydney and beyond as they will not need to transfer between terminals to connect to their flight.

"With QantasLink in Terminal 3, customers can expect smoother connections between regional, domestic and international services.

"Our customers using Qantas' premium lounges, including the Qantas Club and Domestic Business Lounge, will now only



Pullman Hyde Park unveiled

LESS than 12-months after the start of Pullman's expansion in becoming Australia's largest and fastest growing 5-star hotel brand, the 241-room Pullman Sydney Hyde Park has been unveiled in a striking, multi-million dollar refurbishment where everything from the lobby to guestrooms have been renovated.

An impressive new-look lobby with a Paul Smith-style designer rug sits under an enormous cylindrical chandelier, while the Pullman Executive Lounge located on level 21 is tailored towards the business traveller.

In addition, there is the Pullman Connectivity Lounge, one of the most technologically advanced lounges of the Pullman portfolio.

All of the 22 accommodation floors have been completely stripped back and refurbished, with new carpets, artistic bed heads, glasswork desks, chairs and artistic lighting a feature.

General manager for Pullman Sydney Hyde Park, Lorraine Mercuri said the renovation had been a long time in the making and that the hotel would benefit considerably from the upgrade.



"We have been receiving positive feedback on the new rooms and people are loving the lobby and lounge areas.

"We're looking forward to welcoming back former Sydney Marriott Hotel guests and introducing them and new guests to the new look hotel and look forward to seeing them enjoy the Pullman benefits".

Novotel opens in Sofia



ACCOR is pushing into Eastern Europe with the launch of the first Novotel branded hotel in Bulgaria's capital, Sofia, Novotel Sofia.

The 178-room property has views of the Vitosha Mountain and is located just five kilometres from the airport and east of the city's business district.

Prices for guest rooms start from AU\$58 per night per room which includes free wireless broadband access.

Business travellers have also been catered for with the first floor offering 400 square metres of meeting rooms as well as a new modular Eureka meeting room that can be fully personalised and is designed to facilitate team working and brainstorming sessions.

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