



## Alice regenerates



IT is said that when the mostly dry Todd River flows past you three times, you become a local.

The last time that happened was in 2010 which bodes well for events like the famous Henly-on-Todd-Regatta on which people - slightly mad ones at that, race boats on foot in a delightful mix of ships, tubs and bottomless boats.

It's an event that can be incorporated into a program at a spectacular private site called The Quarry, as it was on our Alice Springs famil last week.

A massive outdoor space, it borders Undoolya Cattle Station where we embarked on a thrilling Outback Quad Bike Adventure.

We did site inspections of the Heavitree Gap Outdoor Lodge, Crowne Plaza Alice Springs, soon to become a Doubletree by Hilton property and the Chifley Alice Springs Resort.

We also saw the Araluen Cultural Precinct and the Alice Springs Convention Centre had drinks at the Muk Muk Gallery, dinner above the track at the Alice Springs Turf Club, visits to the inspiring Bindi which provides opportunities for the disabled, the historic Telegraph Station, the original site of the first European settlement, ideal for outdoor functions and breakfasted in Todd Street Mall, currently undergoing a redevelopment.

We drove out and walked to Stanley Chasm where in the Park is a delightful, small meeting facility, spending our nights in the comfort of one of Lasseters Hotel Casino 66 new accommodation rooms, as it undergoes a colossal \$35 million development.

It's just some of the many facilities and new undertaking happening in Alice Springs - Jill.

## Hotel conference for NZ

**CONVENTION** centres and their importance as a key tourism driver will be a hot topic at the seventh annual New Zealand Hotel Industry Conference on Thursday 30 May at Pullman Auckland.

"Convention centres are recognised as an effective way to fill hotel rooms year round, especially in the low and shoulder seasons," said Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIA) chief executive Martin Snedden.

"The hotel sector is taking a keen interest in the progress of the proposed New Zealand international convention centre in Auckland, as well as the development of smaller convention facilities being planned in areas like Christchurch

and Queenstown."

Managed by Accor the platinum sponsor of the conference, and co-hosted by TIA and Horwath HTL Ltd, it will be attended by 250-300 senior decision makers including hotel owners, developers, operators, investors and consultants.

Keynote speakers include Rachel Argaman, CEO of Toga Hotels, previously Telstra National Corporate Businesswoman of the Year.



Air New Zealand's new ceo, Christopher Luxon will also speak about market development and growth, challenging costs and productivity.

And TIA ceo Martin Snedden will lead a discussion around the development of a National Tourism Plan, including the importance to the hotel and tourism industry of world class infrastructure like convention centres.

See - [nzhotelconference.com](http://nzhotelconference.com).

## Starwood returns to IT&CM China

**AFTER** a four-year hiatus from Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings (IT&CM) China, Starwood Hotels & Resorts returned strongly to the tradeshow last week.

Showcased were their China portfolio of 119 hotels, among which are new hotels such as the recently opened W Guangzhou - the first W-branded hotel in China, the architecturally stunning and iconic Sheraton Huzhou Hot Spring Resort, and the largest hotel in Starwood's portfolio - Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central.

With more than 100 in the pipeline Wendy Huang, vice president, sales & marketing, Greater China, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide said, "China is Starwood's second largest market outside of the US, and our commitment to China is growing ever stronger, from our senior leadership team relocation to China in 2011 to the launch of the Starwood Preferred Guest Chinese iPhone App".

## Hilton event rewards

**EVENT** planners reap the rewards when booking Hilton Worldwide hotel stays in more than 100 hotels across Asia Pacific.

This latest promotion, "Book More and Get More," offers rewards that range from complimentary cocktails for guests, to room upgrades and meeting venues.

The offer runs until 30 June on bookings made for 20 room nights and above.

In addition, event planners who are Hilton HHonors members will receive Double Event Planner Bonus Points for any bookings made within this promotion as well as an additional 125,000 HHonors Event Planner Points for bookings made during the Group Value Date Incentive period which is defined on respective hotel websites and at [HiltonWorldwideMeetingsAPAC.com](http://HiltonWorldwideMeetingsAPAC.com).

## NZ's new funding

**TOURISM** New Zealand will receive an additional \$29.5m in funding in 2014-15 bringing the budget up to \$113m, said Prime Minister John Key over the weekend.

Focusing on the international business events sector, the increase in budget will involve the promotion of what NZ offers as well as the preparation of the delivery of new conference facilities in Auckland, Christchurch and Queenstown.

# Aloha!

**Simply book** a conference valued at **over \$200,000** to be held until **30 June 2014** to receive a trip for 2 to Hawaii\*

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\*Terms and conditions apply.





## Global hotel survey positive

**HORWATH HTL's** Annual Global Hotel Market Sentiment Bi-Annual Survey, which has just been released for 2013, is no surprise to Hotel Windsor ceo David Perry.

The report Perry said "shows that Oceania had the most positive sentiment of any region in the world when it comes to current levels of optimism in the hotel sector".

Perry went on to say, "Globally the major change would have to be the more positive sentiment coming out of the USA which is still the world's largest economy".

Horwath pointed out that "there are strong indications there of a recovery beginning to take root and following three or four years of effectively zero supply growth

any hardening of demand is going to translate directly to the bottom line of hotels in that market in a way that has not happened in previous cycles".

Perry commented that the Windsor has had the busiest February and March since records began throughout the hotel's 130 year history with February seeing an occupancy rate of over 89% and March reaching a dizzying 92%.

"With occupancy reaching peak levels the only thing to expect is for rates to steadily rise following what had been a relatively flat three years."

To see more of the report visit - <http://bit.ly/ZeSz92>.

## Metro's flagship refurb

A two-year refurbishment will come to an end this month following a complete upgrade of Metro Hospitality Group's flagship property, Metro Hotel Sydney Central.

Located on the corner of Pitt and Campbell Streets in the heart of Sydney, the makeover includes all its rooms, the pool, restaurant terrace and guest lifts.

With its former standard rooms phased out, the Metro Hotel Sydney Central gm Sandra Calabretta said, "The higher standard of guest accommodation is expected to further strengthen the hotel's appeal with the overseas tourism market."

## Fair trade B2B event

**MORAL** Fairground, an organisation that aims to raise awareness and promote Fair Trade and Ethical Business in Australia and part of their Victorian Fair Trade Festival in May, is running a B2B Fair Business Breakfast Series, aiming to bring the conversation of fair trade, sustainability and ethical production into the workplace.

Free to the public, it is being held at The Edge, Federation Square, Melbourne on Friday 17 May, from 7am to 9am.

Find out more online at [www.moralfairground.com.au/vicattend.html](http://www.moralfairground.com.au/vicattend.html).

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## The Liwa desert ensures privacy

**THE** Qasr Al Sarab, one of conferencing's most sublime luxury experiences, in Abu Dhabi's Empty Quarter has 362.5 square metres of space in its Liwa Ballroom with classroom seating for 240 or theatre style presentations for up to 300.

Located two hours' drive from Abu Dhabi city, it's the perfect location for clients seeking a private and guarded conference venue.

Within the resort's fort-like, Liwa Desert setting, one of the largest uninterrupted sand deserts in the world, business and leisure clients have the opportunity to indulge in a range of excursions including reflecting the region's ancient cultural traditions such as authentic culinary journeys at Al Waha, or 'The Oasis', where the richness of indigenous culture is expressed in theme nights featuring local performance artists, cooling down with icy treats at the poolside bar, followed by an afternoon ritual of authentic Arabian coffee and pastries, then embarking on adventures - desert walks, archery, dune bashing, biking, camel trekking and more.



**QANTAS** unveiled its new uniforms last week, the work of acclaimed Australian designer Martin Grant.

To be worn by 12,600 domestic cabin crew and ground employees from early 2014, Qantas Group ceo Alan Joyce described the new look as "fresh, modern and bold."

All in all some 400,000 garments are being produced, using approximately 350,000 metres of fabric in 35 styles designed for male and females.

15 fabrics have been selected including Premium Super Fine Australian Merino Wool in the suiting, while the uniforms will be delivered to 85 different locations in 21 countries.



## Sebel hosts Jimmy Yang

**SEBEL** Pier One Sydney with its new \$4,000 a night suites and sparkling harbourside background played host to Chinese celebrity chef Jimmy Yang as he filmed an episode of iKATCH TV, a spin off to his enormously popular Food on the Silk Road television program which is watched by more than 120 million Chinese people every week.

The program to be broadcast across mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong, will take viewers on a culinary tour of Australia as Jimmy catches and cooks



up Australian seafood at iconic Australian locations.

**Pictured** above from left are: David Lowe, The Sebel Pier One Sydney; Angela O'Connor, Accor; Celebrity Chef, Jimmy Yang; Andrew Hestelow, Down Rigger Shop and Neil McGuigan, McGuigan Wines.



# business events news

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## eVault peace of mind

**ANOTHER** useful tool to give  
piece of mind and to make life  
easier when you travel is Rocket  
Innovation Group's new app, "My  
eVault."

Developed to help Australians  
keep track of their valuable  
items, travel wallet items,  
passport, loyalty cards, insurance  
information, it is particularly  
useful when it comes to  
unforeseen loss due to natural  
weather events, victims of crime  
or other losses that may occur  
wherever you are – such as work,  
travelling and dining out.

Simple to use, the app has a  
patent pending security passcode  
and timeout features to protect  
the data (plus you can backup  
via phone connection to iTunes  
on your home computer and/or  
backup to iCloud).

See - [www.myevault.com.au](http://www.myevault.com.au).

## Singapore retains its top ranking



**ACCORDING** to global rankings  
by the International Congress  
and Convention Association,  
Singapore has reigned as Asia's  
top convention city for a decade.

Additionally, the city state has  
retained its spot as the only Asian  
city in the Top Five Convention  
Cities in the World alongside  
Vienna, Barcelona, Paris and  
Berlin, since 2006.

Helping to cement its top  
MICE position, Destination-Asia  
Singapore say that venues such  
as Empress Place, regarded as  
one of the finest neo-classical  
buildings in Singapore, dates back  
to 1854 when it served as a court  
house.

Today the building houses  
a world-class museum and  
exhibition centre, featuring  
cultural and archaeological  
treasures.

## From little acorns – Oaks grows

**TWO** new properties will join  
accommodation provider Oaks  
Hotels & Resorts portfolio, this  
year.

They are Oaks on William in  
Melbourne, Victoria and Oaks  
Liwa Executive Suites in Abu  
Dhabi, part of a continuing  
expansion under the direction  
of Bangkok-based owner Minor  
Hotel Group.

Oaks on William is on track to  
be completed by August, taking  
the company's Victorian property  
portfolio to a total of four, while  
Oaks Liwa Executive Suites  
opened its doors under Oaks  
Hotels & Resorts' management  
earlier this month.

General manager of sales Daniel  
Csortan said, "Melbourne is a  
niche market for Oaks Hotels &  
Resorts, capitalising on the steady  
number of corporate and leisure  
travellers it attracts."

The Oaks Liwa Executive Suites,  
located in Abu Dhabi's central  
business district, offers leisure  
and corporate guests a selection  
of spacious, four-star suites which  
are spread over 11 floors.

See - [oakshotelsresorts.com](http://oakshotelsresorts.com).



## Getting to Know: Toulouse, France

by: *Barry Matheson*

Think of Toulouse, and most of us think of Airbus, makers of the A380 super-jumbo, but the city of 450,000 people is worth a visit for its beauty, history, heritage and culture, and ranks in 4th spot in France after Paris, Marseille and Lyon.

Called the "Pink City", it owes its nickname to the terracotta brick buildings in the town square called the Capitole where you can wander the cobblestone streets, or sit and have a coffee at the many outdoor cafes and people watch.

On the banks of the river Garonne, it's a young, dynamic place crowded with thousands of students who attend the local university and at nights becomes a paradise for night owls; as such it's said "nights are hot near the Garonne".

Being French, there are lots of wonderful gourmet treats here, one of which you can try on board barges along the Canal du Midi built in the reign of Louis XIV. On the barge Maison de la Violette, you can sip a nice Violet cocktail and eat chocolates as you watch Toulouse at night.

But, make a point of dining at Le Bibent, one of the most beautiful restaurants in all of France, located in the Place du Capitole.

This 1874 vintage brasserie, with its restored Belle Epoque interior is classified as a national monument, and the food's excellent.

The fixed price menu is €29, wine extra.

Airplane buffs! Head to the Airbus plant to see the A380 super-jumbo in production. There are guided tours by private companies, such as Taxiway that take you to the final assembly and mockup. Best to book ahead. Check the website [www.taxiway.fr](http://www.taxiway.fr).

If that's not enough, stay at the Hotel Le Grand Balcon which salutes French pioneer pilots with its stunning aviation decor and posters.

The city caters well for conferences big and small and hotels can arrange ones for a big impact or something more discreet.

Toulouse is located in south-west France, 580km from Paris, 6 hours by train or less than a hour's flight, and is right on the door step of the Midi-Pyrenees region, with its centuries old charming villages and five UNESCO World Heritage sites.

