



Bowled over!

AUSTRALIAN hosted buyer at IT&CMA in Bangkok, Virginia Perceval of the Function Specialists, no stranger to five star hotels, was so impressed by the new Okura Prestige Hotel in Bangkok, that she wrote to **BEN** to pass on her experience to readers.

Describing the 240 room, five-star hotel as "Japanese in style but offering true Thai hospitality," she went on to say, "Decadent, stylish, sleek with elegant design and finishes are some of the descriptions that come to mind."

"Guest rooms are well appointed and even the lead in rooms are huge," she enthused.

MEANWHILE a game we played at a recent cocktail function was how to manage canapés that are tricky to handle and ungainly to eat, especially with a glass in hand - this was after a canapé in a pastry case collapsed into my glass of bubbly.

Suggestions included waitstaff who actually pop the food into your mouth; a wall of canapés, like the indoor herb and salad walls, on which guests could graze; and a tiered canapé trolley pushed through the gathered throng.

I believe the latter idea was used to great effect at last year's AIME after party. *Jill*



BECA welcomes upswing

ACCORDING to a new Business Events Council of Australia (BECA) report, Australia's business events industry has recovered from the recent economic downturn.

The BECA 2012 State of the Industry Report reveals that 190,000 people visited Australia last year to attend a conference or convention, up 11% on 2011.

International conference delegate numbers grew last year as the nation increased its share of the global meetings market.

New Zealand remained the major source of conference visitors, with numbers rising 2.5% since 2011, while convention visitors from the USA grew 26% while numbers from China increased 23% and Japanese arrivals rose 16%.

At the same time Australia's market share of international association meetings increased to a ranking of 13th in 2012 compared to 16th in 2011.

The report showed a decrease in the deficit between inbound and outbound convention travel with a 10% rise in arrivals and a 3% decrease in departures.

BECA executive manager Inge Garofani (**pictured**) said, "The outlook is extremely positive."

"We are ahead of our 2020 target for arrivals and well on



track to achieving our goal of being a \$31 billion industry by 2020...with the new Coalition Government putting tourism and business events under the Minister for Industry and the Minister for Trade and Investment we can only see this outlook further improving."

For the full report visit businesseventscouncil.org.au.

Africa Showcase in November

SOUTH African Tourism, in partnership with On Show Solutions has committed their support to sponsor five trade evenings that are to take place in Perth, Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney and Auckland.

"It is also a great addition to our already successful South African Tourism roadshow series that we run every two years in Australia and New Zealand," said Lalie Ngozi, South African Tourism general manager Australasia.

The showcase will be a reflection of the diverse range of tourism products that Africa has to offer the Australasian travel trade, featuring a number of representatives from hotel properties, game lodges and national tourist boards.

Four pages today

TODAY'S issue of *Business Events News* includes a page of photos from InterContinental Hotels Group's recent Adelaide famil - see **page four**.

India visas easier

AUSTRALIA is among forty countries which are set to be added to India's "Visa on Arrival" scheme, with the yet-to-be finally approved move likely to make the movement of Australian groups to the subcontinent significantly easier.

According to various newspaper reports from India, planning minister Rajeesh Shukla said the government is hoping to make India a "tourist-friendly country."

Currently India only offers visas on arrival to visitors from 12 nations including Finland, Singapore, Japan, Indonesia and New Zealand.

Australian travellers, by contrast, have to submit their passport weeks in advance at a visa processing centre, incurring substantial costs in the process.

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business events news

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Flat out in the Alice

A recent four day Alice Stampede mega-familiarisation, held in Alice Springs from 12-15 September, inspired rave reviews from the 18 participants.

"I think it's a fantastic town and would definitely consider it for events in the future."

"There is a real sense of community there which I love," said Kirsty Cayzer of the BT Financial Group.

The famil program, a joint initiative of the Alice Springs Convention Centre and the



Northern Territory Convention Bureau (NTCB), showcased the quirky, cultural and business aspects of Alice Springs, plus a broad range of activities and venues.

Business sessions highlighted some of the extraordinary local speakers and the breadth of potential industry linkages.

The hosted group of conference and incentive specialists from Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and New Zealand, enjoyed a wide range of quirky "Alice" activities which included learning to play the "Wobble Board," nursing a kangaroo joey orphan called Rosie, and visiting the funky Alice Desert Festival Club tent for a nightcap.

Other highlights were getting up close and personal with the friendly reptile "critters" of the Alice Springs Reptile Park (above) and a gala dinner finale under the stars at the al fresco venue, The Quarry.

Fraser joins Toga

TOGA Hotels has appointed Emma Fraser to the position of group director of marketing.

She brings to the role a wealth of international experience with major hotel groups such as Carlson Rezidor, Raffles Hotels & Resorts, Jumeirah and Starwood.

Toga ceo Rachel Argaman said Fraser's experience "will be a major asset to Toga as we continue to expand our footprint of hotel brands."

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MEET TAIWAN launches

WITH international arrivals up 20% in 2012 to 7.3 million, the TCEB (Taiwan Convention & Exhibition Bureau) took advantage of last week's IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific to officially launch their new MEET TAIWAN brand, maximising an already significant presence at the event.

Speaking about Taiwan's central government support for MICE events, a MEET TAIWAN card plus an MICE app, TCEB secretary general Thomas Tsou revealed Taiwan as the 17th largest trading country in the world in terms of service industries.

"We have 63 official star-rated hotels and 20,000 MICE friendly rooms across Taiwan; 8000 of these are in Taipei," he said

Lily Su, senior manager of the MEET TAIWAN project gave an insight into Taiwan's rich offerings of cultural, gastronomy and scenery along with modern venues, saying "The multitude and diversity of options that Taiwan offers makes it easy to

create programs and packages for a variety of MICE agendas.

"Taiwan offers unlimited advantages for both buyers and sellers looking for innovation, value and fully integrated supply chain networks."

Meanwhile, several hotels are planned to open including the Mandarin Oriental Taipei, with 303 rooms and two ballrooms and the 104-room Eslite Hotel.



WITH the rise in the use of hand sanitisers, you might consider steering clear of the five most 'germiest' travel attractions, as polled by TripAdvisor.

1. The gift of the eloquent speech, bestowed on those who kiss Ireland's Blarney Stone may be more than you bargained for with more than 400,000 people puckering up to do it each year.
2. People have been sticking their unwanted chewing gum to the Gum Wall, in Seattle, Washington outside Seattle's Market Theatre since 1990. Today, the 50 foot-long wall is covered from floor to ceiling in brightly coloured, sweetly smelling chewie.
3. In Paris it's a tradition to kiss the tomb of famous Irish author and playwright Oscar Wilde in Pere-Lachaise cemetery. The memorial is covered in a rainbow of hundreds of lipstick prints.
4. Vendors no longer sell food to feed the pigeons in Venice's famed St. Mark's Square, home to thousands of hungry pigeons, in an attempt to get rid of them, however plenty of tourists still opt to pose for photos with them.
5. The forecourt of Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood, features the hand and footprints of some of the biggest stars in history, in which millions of grubby mitts have been placed to try and match those of favourite celebs.



What does \$20 mean to you?

To your delegates it could mean experiencing one of these...



Simply add \$20 to any Day Delegate Package (only \$65pp) and choose one of the above activities for your delegates to enjoy...

T&C's For new bookings only, not available in conjunction with any other offer. Minimum and maximum numbers apply per activity. Round robin style applies to activities if necessary. Subject to availability.

Spicers tempts

SET amongst natural bushland, the recently renovated Spicers Vineyards Estate with its own private vineyard in Pokolbin in the NSW Hunter Valley, now boasts more luxurious accommodation, a new indulgent day spa as well as award-winning onsite restaurant, Restaurant Botanica.

Making it even more enticing, the retreat has released an irresistible conference rate which includes accommodation, arrival mini bar, Wi-Fi, parking and cooked breakfast from just \$279 single share (normally \$395).

Book a residential conference and dinner package with a minimum six rooms per night and enjoy a complimentary Hunter wine and cheese tasting experience as an additional bonus.

Offer valid for events held between 1 October and 19 December, for midweek stays - conference@spicersgroup.com.au.



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Datai rainforest deal

IMMERSED in an ancient virgin rainforest, The Datai in Malaysia's Langkawi is offering exclusive group rates in a Rainforest Retreats promotion.

Available until 19 December for corporate retreats, private meetings, team building and high-end incentives, it includes deluxe accommodation from A\$317 per night, champagne breakfast, two complimentary VIP upgrades; the choice of a full-day or half-day meeting package with a minimum two night stay, meeting room and LCD projector; welcome cocktail and chilled towel upon arrival; a complimentary room for every 10 paying rooms; welcome amenities; 10% off spa treatments and free WiFi.

Contact Svetlana Jovanovic on (02) 9211 6590 or email svetlana@uniquetourism.com.

Frasers for meetings

FRASERS Suites Sydney and its sister WA property Fraser Suites Perth have launched "stylish summer meeting packages," which start at just \$78 for a day delegate package in Sydney.

The offer includes room hire, notepads and pens, iced water and mints, tea and Nespresso coffee, a light lunch and free parking for the organiser.

Delegates staying on site can avail themselves of room rates starting at \$200 including complimentary wi-fi, with meeting capacity for up to 140.

The new Fraser Suites Perth has similar day delegate deals from just \$69 per person in three spacious rooms that can accommodate up to 300.

Call Fraser Suites in Sydney on 1800 800 488, while the Perth property is on 1800 099 465.

The Menzies goes retro

IT'S part of the glamorous old guard of Sydney's hotel's and one that will see The Menzies Hotel Sydney turn fifty this October.

During the month Menzies' staff have stepped back to the 60s where it all began to dress in classic 60s staff uniforms.

The retro outfits represent everything from The Beatles, to Jacqui O, the perfect 60's housewife

(and husband) and the hippy movement.

The lobby will also feature a 60s inspired lounge room playing old school films and music from the era, where guests can capture a fabulous photo of themselves "back in the day".

Guests and patrons will also be able to enjoy 60s inspired alcoholic milkshakes in the Menzies Piano Bar.

The hotel, which was the first international hotel built in the



city since World War II, was officially opened by The Beach Boys in 1963.

It once hosted skating stars on a permanent, retractable ice and skating rink - a restaurant showpiece and local favourite.

Sydney's first ever Japanese restaurant, the Keisan, opened at the hotel in 1972, and in 1979 Shell House, the office building adjacent to The Menzies became part of the hotel adding 196 rooms to the hotel's inventory.

Auckland's rewarding launch



AT the launch of a new rewards program - Auckland a La Carte - held in Sydney at Luna Park on Wednesday evening, Anna Hayward, Auckland Convention Bureau manager said to the assembled conference and event organisers, "This new program now gives you more reasons to choose Auckland for your next event."

Following a simple process, the client needs to just book an event, hold the event, generate points and redeem rewards.

For example, a three-night conference of 400 delegates in a 4.5 star hotel with welcome function, gala dinner, coach transport and two tourism activities would generate 37,000 Auckland a La Carte points, which translates to A\$5,500.

This could be redeemed for a Visa pre-paid gift card, a 60-inch plasma screen TV and home theatre system or \$5,500 worth of Coles vouchers.

"There is nothing quite like this anywhere in the world and we are excited about the prospect of giving our clients tangible rewards when they choose to bring their event to Auckland," Heywood enthused.

Dominic Strobel of Explore NZ

who was at the event said, This rewards program should give Auckland a great edge as an event destination and Corporate Explore is looking forward to seeing the results."

Pictured above at the launch are Sharon Auld from CINZ with Anna Hayward, Auckland Convention Bureau.

MTA ACT conference

AN impressive line-up of keynote speakers is anticipated for the Mobile Travel Agents 'MTA - more than expected' themed national conference, including networking strategist Robyn Henderson.

Taking place in Canberra from 11-13 October, Australian Federation of Travel Agents ceo Jayson Westbury, MTA brand ambassador Jessica Watson and creative engagement expert and ABC TV The Gruen Transfer' regular, Dan Gregory are all confirmed for the event.

About 180 attendees are expected, with conference high spots including a cocktail party in the National Gallery's Sculpture Gardens and a gala dinner in the Anzac Hall of the Australian War Memorial.

CONTACT US:

Publisher
Bruce Piper

Editor
Jill Varley

For advertising enquiries email Christie-Lee Lachance:
advertising@businesseventsnews.com.au

P: 1300 799 220 F: 1300 799 221

PO Box 1010 Epping, NSW, 1710

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RIGHT: The National Wine Centre of Australia located adjacent to Adelaide's Botanic Gardens offers a spectacular setting, with function spaces suitable for 10 to 1000 delegates.

It has six pillarless function spaces replete with natural lighting and spectacular design, one of which is pictured **below**.



RIGHT: Beauty becomes you at the Jurlique flower farm.

BELOW: Newly inducted pasta chefs at Casa Carboni Cooking School in Angaston.



ABOVE: InterContinental Adelaide's Shiki award winning teppanyaki restaurant.

LEFT: What a friend we have in yummy SA cheeses.

IHG Adelaide famil

INTERCONTINENTAL Hotels Group recently took a fortunate group of conference and event planners from Melbourne and Sydney to experience the delights of Adelaide and surrounds.

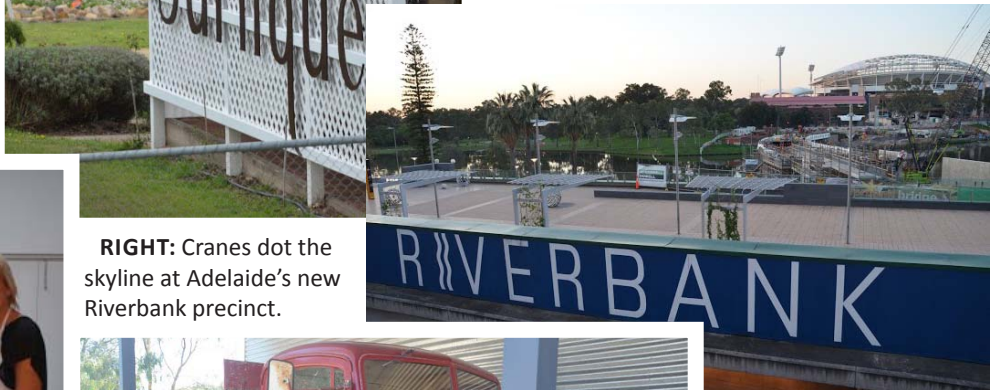
BEN was also part of the trip, which took in the offerings of the InterContinental Adelaide and the

Crowne Plaza Adelaide - as well as many other options including the National Wine Centre, Jurlique's biodynamic flower farm in the Adelaide Hills, lots of culinary delights and of course the Barossa Valley.

These pictures were taken of the good time that was had by all.



ABOVE from left: Melissa Relly, Adelaide Convention Bureau; Dee Prendergast, IHG Global Sales; Malcolm McLeod, Business Psychologist and handwriting analyst; Sara Coleman, InterContinental Adelaide; and Jennifer Dullens, Crowne Plaza Adelaide.



RIGHT: Cranes dot the skyline at Adelaide's new Riverbank precinct.



LEFT: Turkey Flat Vineyards, where the winemaking process is kept simple and traditional.

BELOW: Spacious accommodations at the InterContinental Adelaide.

