



Insights

TWO tradeshows in one day spent talking with people who actually live in the locations



means you pick up local insights not found in the brochures.

For instance, at the launch of Australia's Nature Coast Great Beach Drive, Glen Wiggins of Surf and Sand Safaris, who takes 4x4 private or small group tours, said that the sand on which Fraser Island sits arrives there after being swept north from New South Wales and southern Queensland, a phenomenon that has been taking place over the past two million years and because of which, the Great Barrier Reef has been saved from a sandy grave.

I also learnt that Fraser Island's first people, the Kgari, are moving to have the island's name changed back its original 'Kgari', just as Ayers Rock was changed back to Uluru and The Olgas to Kata Tjuta.

Talking with Helen Bolton of the Conrad Maldives Rangali Island Resort during the Hilton Showcase, a whole of island buyout can be made on the smaller of the two islands that form the resort and are linked by a 500 metre bridge.

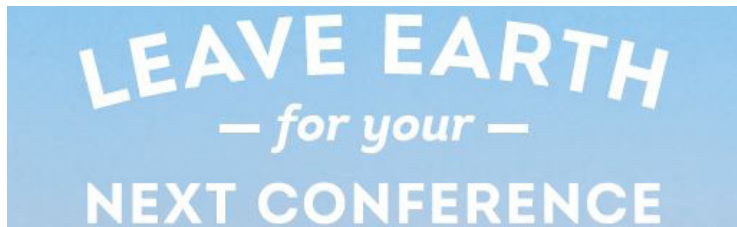
Those with the dosh to stay in the Sunset Water Villas with their own lagoon and glass floored living room will also have a circular rotating bed to capture the incredible views (pictured).

While in Japan, Kimberley Kim of Hilton Worldwide Japan advised that the weekend is not the time to book a group into a Tokyo hotel, when the rates are in free flight as cashed up locals pay whatever it takes for a two day break there.

"Try another destination in Japan - it's much cheaper." Jill



P&O sees conference boost



P&O Cruises has seen 24 corporate groups booked this year, up 12 from its official launch at AIME, with more awaiting confirmation.

The company was on track to book 4,000 delegates for this year (BEN 25 Feb), with more than 60 enquiries in the first quarter, P&O Conferences senior sales manager Rebecca Mutanen said.

This was more than double those received in the first quarter of 2014, she said.

The groups booked included media outlets and retail companies with an average group size of 100 delegates, the company said.

Mutanen said most of the bookings were for shorter

itineraries of two to five nights.

P&O Cruises director of sales Ryan Taibel has said while the initial focus would be on Australia, there was a desire to expand into New Zealand in a few years (BEN 25 Feb).

Mutanen said P&O's involvement in the business events sector included that it would be exhibiting at the Meetings and Events Australia expo in May and was a major sponsor of the awards.

P&O would also attend the EAN expos in Brisbane and Melbourne, the Associations Forum in July and the PCO Association Conference and Exhibition in Adelaide later this year.

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Luxperience awards announced

LUXURY travel tradeshow Luxperience has confirmed it will launch the Luxperience Awards this year.

The Gala Dinner and Awards Evening on 08 Sep would take place on the rooftop of The Star, as partner and host, it said, with the trade show taking place from 06 to 09 Sep.

Three award categories would recognise a buyer and supplier in each, Luxperience said, as well as an award for a destination partner that had helped development of luxury tourism in its country or region.

The categories, 'Inspiring', 'Meaningful' and 'Connections', include innovation in products and services, preservation and communication of the environmental and cultural elements of a product or service, and e-marketing campaigns.

Judges were being finalised, a spokesperson said, with decisions made based on a submission.

Entries were open to those registered to attend, not just Australian attendees, the spokesperson said.

Entries open on 13 Apr and close on 13 Jul.

CLICK HERE to read more about how to apply.

New Starwood brand

STARWOOD Hotels and Resorts Worldwide has launched a new brand, Tribute Portfolio.

A collection of independent hotels, the portfolio would feature four star "upper upscale" hotels, Starwood said.

The first hotel in the brand would be the Royal Palm South Beach Miami, with one hundred hotels set to be open by 2020, initially in North America and Europe.

Tribute Portfolio hotels would be in destinations where Starwood Preferred Guests travelled but where the company had little or no footprint, it said.



IF YOU'RE a tinned food loving event organiser looking for a festival with a difference, consider taking notes from the Waikiki SPAM Jam festival.

Presented by Outrigger Resorts, the festival links to a cultural tradition of SPAM enjoyment dating back to WWII (**BEN** 30 Mar).

Held on 02 May, 25,000 attendees were expected, with SPAM dishes and merchandise on sale, Outrigger said.

All proceeds will be donated to the Hawaii Foodbank.

Apparently, the historical affection sees nearly seven million cans of SPAM eaten every year in Hawaii.

For those wanting to double up on the SPAM love, **CLICK HERE** to view the classic Python routine, entitled simply 'Spam'.



The future is nigh

WHEN ISES Sydney holds its event technology showcase and presentation, 'The Future of Events' at Luna Park on 23 Apr, keynote futurist Craig Rispin's presentation will be streamed worldwide to more than 5,000 ISES members.

Guests will also have the opportunity to interact with event technology providers in a specialised showcase.

CLICK HERE to register.

Driving the Nature Coast

THIRTY exhibitors from Australia's Nature Coast strutted their new accommodation, attractions and touring options at L'Aqua on Wednesday.

A partnership between Sunshine Coast Destination Limited (SCDL), Fraser Coast Opportunities, Destination Gympie Region and Great Sandy Biosphere, Australia's Nature Coast was launched in 2013 by Tourism Australia to promote the eco-destination to the rest of the world, and was in Sydney on Wednesday after visiting Melbourne on Tuesday and before continuing on to Brisbane yesterday.

SCDL ceo Simon Ambrose said the partnership allowed the Sunshine Coast to wrap its hands around the "amazing" World Heritage-listed Fraser Island and to get some of the millions of people who came to the Sunshine Coast each year to also travel north into the Fraser Coast.

The events also included the launch of the region's Great Beach Drive, a 4WD journey from north of Noosa to Rainbow Beach and then onto Fraser Island.

TPDD appointment

TOURISM Port Douglas and Daintree (TPDD) has appointed Ben Brearley as market development executive to cover Chelsea Mee's 12 month maternity leave.

Brearley had worked in sales, marketing and business development for more than 10 years, TPDD executive officer Tara Bennett said.



The drive covers two UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and a World Heritage-listed Marine Park.

Pictured from left is Stephen Hutton, Sunshine Coast Airport; Mark Skinner, Tripstick; Glenn Wiggins, Surf and Sand Safaris; Ambrose.

Singapore famil in Port Stephens



TWELVE Singapore-based travel agents took part in a two day famil to Port Stephens from 09 Apr, as part of a partnership between Destination Port Stephens, Destination NSW and Qantas.

As part of a bid to convince the agents to encourage customers to visit the region, the group took camel rides, tried local seafood and went to Irukandji Shark and Ray Encounters, staying the night at Oaks Pacific Blue, a spokesperson for Destination Port Stephens said.

Feedback had been extremely positive, the spokesperson said.

Largest Oz showing at Asia showcase



TWENTY one industry partners will be attending the Business Events Australia North Asia Showcase this month, the largest contingent so far.

This compared with 16 attending last year, Business Events Australia said.

The organisations would meet with more than 100 Chinese buyers and media from 19 to 21 Apr at naked Retreats (**pictured**) in Moganshan, it said.

A Business Events Australia spokesperson said China was forecast to be Australia's largest source of visitors by the end of the decade.

The Showcase was being held outside of central Shanghai for the first time, providing greater opportunity for networking and information sharing, as a residential event, it said.

Attendees include Business Events Cairns and Great Barrier Reef (BECGBR), with director of business events Rosie Douglas saying it would use the showcase to build relationships and make new contacts.

"Because the showcase targets corporates and agents interested in Australia, it's [an] extremely worthwhile event to attend."

She said BECGBR was still targeting medium to large size incentive groups out of China to fill the shoulder seasons (**BEN** 25 Feb), with about five groups coming through over the past two months.

Business Events News is Australia's newest online publication dedicated to the vibrant meetings, incentives, conferences and events sector.

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