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Sydney. Photo courtesy of Hamilton Lund; Tourism NSW.

Sydney enters world's top 10

Story by Brad Foster

2010 rankings in the International Congress & Convention Association's annual guide which lists the number of international meetings held in cities and countries around the world has seen Sydney rocket from 27th place to 10th.

According to the peak body, Sydney hosted 102 international association meetings in 2010, helping to lift Australia to 11th in the country rankings (with 239 international meetings in total). In comparison New Zealand moved from 53rd place in 2009 to 52nd

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PCO conference for Auckland

If you organise meetings then you might like to attend the 2011 PCO Conference which will take place at the Langham Hotel Auckland from December 4 to 6.

This year's theme is Adapt, Improve, Overcome – Identifying Risk and Opportunity. The conference will examine a number

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Christchurch gets its share of RWC

The plan to turn part of Hagley Park into a giant Fan Zone and Festival Area for Rugby World Cup 2011 is being welcomed by Canterbury's tourism industry.

Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism chief executive Tim Hunter said it was a major blow when the region lost its RWC matches.

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The Hobbit expected to boost business

Story by Edwina Storie

Filming for *The Hobbit* has begun and the business events sector is anticipating a new wave of popularity to New Zealand.

In mid-May goblins and orcs were once again being spotted in Wellington as the filming of *The Hobbit* movies began. Jackson's epic two-part project will recreate the magical story by JRR Tolkien using 3D camera technology to bring the tale to life for audiences. The film will enchant locations throughout New Zealand, transforming them into the settings and battlegrounds of mystical creatures. The movies' host of Hollywood stars such as Cate Blanchett, Orlando Bloom and Elijah Wood, and New Zealand actor Martin Freeman as the lead Bilbo Baggins, will draw extra media attention to the nation.

The ongoing coverage leading up to the first film's release in December 2012 will highlight the beauty of New Zealand

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Photos courtesy of Nick Osborne.

New Zealand planners discover Tasmania

Some top-end clients from New Zealand have been targeted to host business events in Tasmania with 11 professional event planners recently visiting the state to experience the best of what Tasmania has to offer. Business Events Tasmania in conjunction with Business Events Australia and Qantas hosted the group who deal specifically with

high yield clients – a lucrative market that provides significant economic and social benefits to Tasmania. Over four days the group took part in a range of activities including wine tasting at Josef Chromy Winery, a scenic helicopter flight over Wineglass Bay and a visit to MONA, the Museum of Old and New Art. They also enjoyed

a medieval feast at Meadowbank Estate, met a baby Tasmanian devil at Cataract Gorge Restaurant, strolled Salamanca Markets, sampled whisky at Lark Distillery and explored Woolmers Estate – one of Tasmania's UNESCO World Heritage Listed convict sites. Auckland based event specialist

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MEETINGS event looming

MEETINGS, New Zealand's largest tradeshow for the business event segment, is all set for a June 21 start in Rotorua. The kick-off welcome function to the event will be on Tuesday, June 21 at Skyline Rotorua where visitors will be able to enjoy spectacular views of the city and experience some of the adventure activities that Rotorua is famed for as they mingle with other attendees. In the morning buyers can get their business day off to an inspired start at the Breakfast Speakers Showcase, sponsored by Events & Venues Rotorua, Certain Software and Celebrity Speakers. This new addition to the programme is being hosted by renowned actor and corporate entertainer Greg Ward and will feature four 10 minute presentations from scientist Sir Ray Avery, award-winning current affairs journalist Mike McRoberts, Atlantic yachtsman Tony Mowbray, and Certain Software's event management guru Bill Taylor.

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Novotel launches pioneering hotel at Auckland Airport

The Novotel Auckland Airport was officially opened by Kingi Tuheitia and New Zealand Prime Minister, John Key, in a traditional dawn ceremony recently. The launch of the innovative hotel – just 50 metres from the international terminal – came just over 100

days from the kick-off of the World Cup, and is said to provide a huge confidence boost to New Zealand tourism after the devastating Christchurch earthquake earlier this year.

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New face at Te Papa

Elena Ford is Te Papa's new conventions and functions sales manager, based in Wellington. Russian born, Ms Ford has held many positions in the hospitality industry around the world, including the Cayman Islands, Turkey, Egypt and UAE. She will be on the Wellington stand at MEETINGS later this month.

Warren Harvey joins Events & Venues Rotorua

Warren Harvey has joined the Events & Venues Rotorua sales team. With nearly three decades of experience in the sales arena (the past three years in the conference and incentive industry), Mr Harvey took up his new role as a sales representative with Events & Venues on June 10. With a work history ranging across the transport, souvenir and clothing industries and latterly a conference venue (The Blue Baths), Mr Harvey's sales skills will be put to good use "selling" potential clients on the benefits of using the range of the group's venues – Energy Events Centre, Rotorua Convention Centre, Rotorua Civic Theatre, Rotorua International Stadium, Te Runanga Tea House

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Active Ashburton visitors take on the sea, land and sky.

Ashburton strengthens its offerings

Story by Edwina Storie

Ashburton's strength in the business events industry continues to grow.

Within the first hour of the February 22 Christchurch earthquake Ashburton was being inundated with residents, visitors and conference delegates fleeing to the rural town that was just one hour's escape from the destruction. It wasn't until a week and a half later that the numbers began to stabilise and people returned home to assess the damage.

Ashburton District Tourism's event development executive, Verity Lyford, says that during that first week, Ashburton District Council received many urgent calls to relocate conferences that had been planned for the devastated area. "Since February we have continued to see an increase in the number of conferences coming into Mid Canterbury," Ms Lyford says. "I believe we will continue to be one of the main conferencing destinations in the Canterbury

region for at least the next two years, especially given our close proximity to Christchurch airport." Ashburton has appreciated receiving the relocated corporate events so they can keep business close to Christchurch and continue to support the efforts to rebuild. Ashburton's conference facilities and venues assisted the town in taking on the unexpected influx of people and events. The Hotel Ashburton and the Ashburton Trust Event Centre are the two main conferencing venues in the area, able to cater up to 400 and 500 delegates respectively.

Ashburton Trust Event Centre

The Ashburton Trust Event Centre is in the middle of the Ashburton CBD and is the region's only purpose-built convention venue. It boasts a capacity of up to 500 seated delegates in the auditorium, brand new entertaining equipment, a stage and an orchestra pit. A suite of varied-size rooms allows groups of all sizes to be perfectly catered to for anything from small meetings to major concerts and

gala dinners.

Hotel Ashburton

Hotel Ashburton is celebrating her fortieth year with a makeover as gifted by the Ashburton Trust. The renovation will reward the years of successful conferences, weddings and events, and celebrate the many more to come. Hotel Ashburton's quality of events will continue to impress as 10 new corporate superior rooms, a revamped swimming pool area and refurbished corridors and

reception rejuvenate the venue.

Terrace Downs Resort

Sitting on 550 acres of lush green land boasting a manicured golf course, Terrace Downs caters to business events and leisure activities without delegates having to travel to the city. With nine function spaces including a new guest theatre that caters up to 200, along with luxurious

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Visitors get a taste of Marlborough.

The nature of Marlborough

Story by Edwina Storie

Marlborough's natural landscape makes a business trip feel like a holiday.

Unfortunately, conventions and business events can become a repetitive routine of speeches and discussions. Bland regions with little character can make for monotonous conferences that sometimes would have been better kept to the head office. Marlborough however, is a destination brimming with personality, with its spectacular environment of mountains, ocean, farmland and vineyards providing the creative spark to liven up any meetings program. Marlborough sits on the South Island and showcases rural character with a passion for the plonk, and water-side charm with a fifth of New Zealand's coastline. Constant clear-blue skies put a gleam on the view making for a glorious escape from the city. Destination Marlborough's

marketing executive, Olivia Bowers, constantly receives feedback that delegates feel instantly relaxed once they arrive.

"We are a region where teams come to get away from the daily grind, to see things from a different point [of view], and to regroup," Ms Bowers says.

Despite the holiday atmosphere of the city with no traffic lights, Marlborough's landscape enlivens it with things to do. The fertile land makes for brilliant grape growing and the region is patterned with vineyards and cellar doors. It is known for its sauvignon blanc, with many regarding it as the best region in the world for this variety. And, with such a claim, it is only fair to taste what the area has to offer. The natural environment creates a welcome change from the urban chaos so delegates are without distraction or extra stress. Its diversity has inspired a range of activities, with the myriad of landscapes experienced through eco tours, mountain bike trails, sea kayaking, fishing, sailing and golfing.

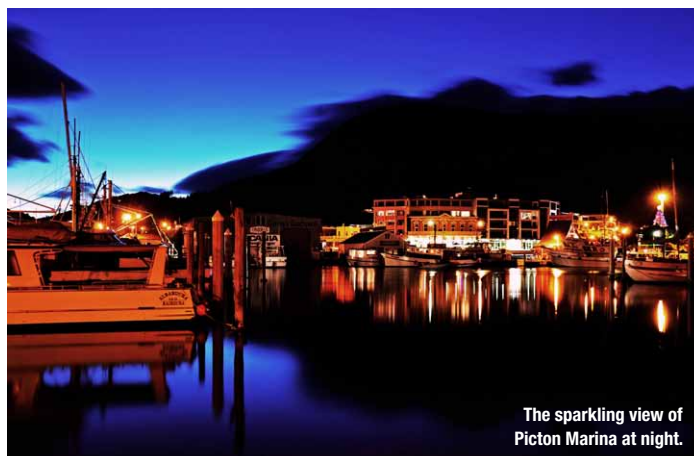
Getting There

Receiving direct flights from Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch makes the town a simple business trip that can also be made by road or boat. Blenheim is the centre of Marlborough's action with the Blenheim Airport only five kilometres away. Nearby Picton is only a 30-minute drive from the small city and can be accessed by air or water.

Natural Beauty

The magical network of sea-drowned valleys of the Marlborough Sounds are a highlight, blessed with beauty, history and the M ori mythology that surrounds them. The huge spans of land and sea can be explored and admired by foot, mountain bike, sea kayak and sea cruise.

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The sparkling view of Picton Marina at night.

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The impressive
Hilton Surfers
Paradise.



Australia promotes as one

Story by Brad Foster

Australia's international reputation for meetings and incentive travel rewards is growing thanks to an ongoing whole-of-country approach to marketing.

While city convention bureaux continue to do their own thing in many respects, it is the combined efforts of Australia as a whole, led by Business Events Australia, that appears to be working effectively on the international arena.

Most recently major bureaux and venue operators from around the country joined forces and participated in a two-and-a-half week roadshow through Asia, making contact with more than 400 key corporate buyers and business event agents with the aim of encouraging them to choose Australia for their next business events.

The six-city tour with 22 operators visited Hangzhou, Taipei, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and Jakarta, with plenty of leads garnered from the high-profile attendees.

Also on the international front, Business Events Australia led a delegation of 15 companies to the huge IMEX trade show in Frankfurt

with the organisations marketing themselves under the Tourism Australia branded stand. A media conference and hospitality on the stand at the conclusion of each day was reportedly well received by attendees.

The Australian Associations Project, a cooperative project between Tourism Australia and Australian convention bureaux and centres, had exclusive Australia branding of the IMEX media centre to raise the country's profile amongst international media as a destination for association meetings.

Indications are that Australia's unified approach is working.

Indications are that the unified approach is working. Statistics for March 2011 confirmed there were 853,100 business arrivals to Australia, with 176,600 arrivals for travellers attending conferences, representing a 19 per cent increase in comparison to March 2010. Business was strong from several markets during March, in particular from Asian markets including India (convention and conference arrivals increased by 64 per cent), China (up 53 per cent), Korea (up 51 per cent)

and Germany (up 45 per cent). This figure comes on top of the release of annual International Congress & Convention Association country and city rankings for 2010 which places Australia 11th with 239 international meetings held. This is a significant rise from 2009 where Australia was ranked 16th and hosted 169 meetings. The ICCA rankings are based on the number of association meetings held in a country/city each year. Figures cover meetings organised by international associations which take place on a regular basis and rotate between a minimum of three countries. Three Australian cities (Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney) were also in the top 20 list of Asia Pacific cities. Sydney was ranked 10 in the top 10 cities worldwide.

What's new

In early June the NSW Government announced it would be calling for expressions of interest shortly for the construction of a larger convention and exhibition centre for Sydney which is expected to significantly bolster Sydney's ability to host large international and national events.

And it's not just Sydney where the action is. In South Australia the Adelaide Convention Centre is expanding, and is already targeting

the Chinese market, recently launching a Chinese language website.

In Brisbane, the finishing touches are being done to the expanded Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, with the expansion due to open later this year. And the Gold Coast is not to be outdone, with new properties coming on line including the impressive Hilton Surfers Paradise. The resort style development consists of two curved towers rising above the city skyline. The Boulevard Tower, comprising 134 residences managed by Hilton is due for completion in December, while the Orchid Tower, featuring a Hilton Hotel and boutique shopping mall, is due to be completed in 2011.

Hilton Hotels is renowned the world over for spectacular levels of quality and service, and the Surfers Paradise property will be no different. Rooms will feature beautifully designed interiors and striking floor to ceiling views of the ocean, Surfers Paradise or the hinterland. Quality kitchen appliances including a stovetop, microwave and oven, as well as broadband internet and cable TV access will be standard.

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