

# BUSINESS MARKET STRONG FOR HOTELS, WITH LEISURE BOOKINGS STARTING TO LIFT



Sea Temple resort, Surfers Paradise

Strong business demand is driving hotel rates up in key CBD locations, while the leisure segment is only now showing signs of revving back up.

By Kate Atherton

IT'S a two-speed accommodation market, according to hotel groups – with strong business demand driving up rates and occupancy, while the leisure market simply chugs along.

The strong Aussie dollar has hit leisure hotels hard, with a drop in the number of international visitors, and domestic travellers heading overseas.

However, there are signs that leisure bookings are starting to accelerate, with solid forward bookings reported by many groups for summer.

“With the rise in the Australian dollar, the leisure segment has been hit hard, but slowly we are seeing positive growth in this area,” Mirvac Hotels and Resorts’ group director of marketing and communications, Linda Sweeney says. “We think this will improve

even more over the coming summer months.”

The Mantra Group’s director of sales and revenue Kent Davidson says that the environment for domestic leisure “has obviously been challenged by exchange rates”.

“However, we have seen Australians’ appetite for domestic short breaks start to rise again and we are forecasting a strong summer season.”

The InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) is reporting “encouraging” bookings for summer in the leisure sectors across each of its brands, while Constellation Hotels – which has a network of more than 60 hotels across five brands – has seen “an uplift in both corporate and leisure markets over the past 12 months”, although not necessarily for all market segments.

“In terms of leisure we have seen a good lift in domestic wholesale for our Gold Coast, Noosa and Brisbane hotels,” Constellation’s director of sales, Mark Pollard says.

Accor Australia reports that hotels in some regional centres and destinations that rely principally on leisure tourism “are not doing so well”.

“More and more independent hotels will seek branding to ensure they can gain a competitive advantage,” Accor Australia’s vice president Simon

McGrath told *travelBulletin*, with over 20 hotels joining the group this year.

He says the business travel market has been strong “for close to two years now”, complemented by a return to strength for the business events sector, “with the conference and exhibition sector up almost 20 per cent compared to the second half of 2010”.

“Cities such as Sydney, Brisbane and Perth are regularly reporting occupancy levels of 95 per cent-plus mid-week due to the strength of the corporate and MICE markets. Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide are also performing well.”

McGrath says that rates in major cities have grown by more than 10 per cent this year and double-digit increases are anticipated for 2012, “though the increases only just compensate for the declines experienced during the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)”.

However, the Mantra Group’s Kent Davidson describes the GFC as “nothing more than a short term glitch for business travel in Australia”.

“Demand has returned strongly in most all CBD locations, (and) that demand gives rise to price increases.”

Mirvac has also reported an increase in occupancy in the past 12 months, “particularly within the corporate market”.

“Brisbane, Sydney and Perth sectors

have seen strong corporate and meeting demand,” Mirvac’s Sweeney says.

The Constellation group is reporting “double digit growth in both rev par and average rate” as a result of strong corporate demand, while the InterContinental Hotels Group is forecasting “a very promising 2012”.

IHG’s director, commercial – Australasia, Anne Gill says consistently high occupancy is driving rate growth among the group’s InterContinental, Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn hotel networks, largely due to “solid demand from the business travel sector for CBD accommodation”.

“And we are starting to see demand strengthen for regional meeting destinations,” she says.

The imbalanced market is also reflected by the number of hotel refurbishments nationally in contrast to costly new builds, as hotels aim to ensure their product remains attractive and competitive.

Some of the rare new hotel openings of late include The Ascott group’s Citadines on Bourke apartment hotel in Melbourne, and more recently, Mirvac’s Sea Temple Surfers Paradise (see separate story page 47).

Accor’s McGrath says there has been “little impetus for the development of new hotels in city centres in recent years, despite two years of solid rate growth”.

“The continuing uncertainty in the world’s economies and the relatively high cost of land and construction means new builds will be the exception rather than the rule.”

And it seems travel agents remain a key part of hotel groups’ strategy for business growth, with Mantra’s Davidson saying that agents provide “a unique service to the public that cannot be fulfilled through other means”.

“The agent networks that continue to play an important role in the transaction process are those that continually focus on their core competitive advantage; the packaging, the service, the special attention that those agent loyal consumers crave,” he says.

“If agents are doing nothing more than match the component pricing of the product, without adding true value to the consumer transaction it is then that they risk making their role redundant.”

IHG’s Gill says: “The importance of travel agents is undiminished by the emergence of alternate booking channels.”

# Australis hotels group releases bonus deals

AUSTRALIS Hotels, Resorts and Apartments is offering a special deal during spring and summer, with guests able to stay for two nights on the weekend or three nights mid week for the same price.

The special offer is available at the group's seven Australian properties and include the Australis Noosa Lakes Resort on the Sunshine Coast from \$240 in a one-bedroom apartment. Set on 2.8 hectares on the shores of Lake Doonella and the Noosa River, it is



opposite Noosa Marina, and features three lagoon-style swimming pools.

Rates at the Australis Sovereign Hotel (pictured), on the Gold Coast start at \$270 in a one-bedroom suite, while in NSW, guests can stay at the Australis Retreat at Wisemans located on the Hawkesbury River from \$294.

The Australis Margaret River has rates from \$330, while the Australis Diamond Beach Resort and Spa, on the Mid North Coast of NSW has rates starting from \$348 in a two-bedroom Resort Spa Villa. Conditions apply. The special deals are commissionable to agents at 10 per cent.



# Mirvac opens new Sea Temple resort in Surfers Paradise

Mirvac Hotels and Resorts has unveiled its new five-star Sea Temple Surfers Paradise property, housed within the luxurious 'Soul' complex, opened in September.

The 77 level Soul tower is made up of elegantly designed two and three-bedroom apartments; with every apartment boasting uninterrupted ocean views. With floor-to-ceiling windows, the east facing, fully self-contained two-bedroom apartments offer spacious open balconies with separate living and

dining areas, full kitchens and laundries, ensuite spa bath and furnished with stylish, contemporary décor.

The three-bedroom beach view apartments, also fully self contained, are positioned on the north and south ends of the tower and again boast floor-to-ceiling windows. In addition, the three-bedroom beach view apartments feature east and west facing open balconies, with spacious separate living and dining areas and two bathrooms with a spa bath in the master ensure.

All accommodation offers individual air conditioning, Mii Spa bathroom amenities, bathrobes, slippers and hairdryers, an in-room safe, IDD/STD telephone, voice mail and internet, 40-inch LED televisions, Blu-Ray player and home theatre system, music and DVD system and clock radio iPod docking station.

The resort also features an outdoor pool and spa, a barbecue area, an indoor lap pool, gymnasium, plunge pool, spa, sauna and steam room.

## Uluru hotel upgrade now underway

SAILS in the Desert hotel, part of Voyages Ayers Rock Resort, is undergoing a massive refurbishment, due for completion in May, 2012.

The upgrade of the five-star hotel will see refurbished Sails rooms with new furniture, curtains, linen, carpet, artwork and 42-inch LCD TVs. Balconies will be refreshed with new outdoor furniture and rooms will be upgraded with both cabled and wireless high-speed broadband access.

## Summer breaks, in big spaces...

For the best online rates guaranteed visit [medina.com.au](http://medina.com.au)



### APARTMENT SPACE | HOTEL SERVICE | MEDINA STYLE

With more space than a hotel room plus full kitchens and laundries, our 1 and 2 bedroom apartment hotels are designed for the whole family – so you can fit more into your holiday.

Sydney • Melbourne • Brisbane • Perth • Adelaide • Darwin • Canberra • Wollongong



APARTMENT HOTELS





## Summer breaks in big spaces at Medina apartments

WITH the summer holidays looming, Medina Apartment Hotels is reminding agents of its family-friendly apartment-style accommodation options available in 21 locations.

A selection of studio rooms along with one, two and three bedroom apartments are available, with features including separate living spaces, fully equipped kitchens, laundries and individual climate control air-conditioning.

A spokesperson for Medina said a range of family-specific extras are also available on request at Medina Apartment Hotels including a pantry service that allows guests to pre-order groceries, cots, high chairs, complimentary toy chests and kids' packs (containing four non-toxic crayons, a colouring-in sheet and assorted puzzles).

Apartments are located in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Darwin, Adelaide, Canberra and Wollongong.



■ SYDNEY'S **Shangri-La Hotel** has launched its 477 newly refurbished and guestrooms and suites located on levels four to 29 of the hotel.

The six-month \$20 million refurbishment program was designed to "enhance the existing oversized room layouts and panoramic harbour views", with interior design company Hassell creating a modern oriental style.

Room additions include an iHome dock, Bluetooth media hub and custom designed furniture and carpet to enhance the rooms' comfort and feel. All guestrooms have sensor lighting to reduce energy consumption along with air conditioning that automatically returns to its standard setting after a guest has departed the room.

The Shangri-La Hotel is located in the historic Rocks district between the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge.

■ ACCOR has released plans to revamp its economy hotel products, ushering ibis in as the "mega brand".

Under the plan, the economy hotels will be divided into three groups – ibis, all seasons which will become ibis styles and Etap Hotel and Formule 1 will be renamed to ibis budget.

Accor says the implementation of this new segmentation – which will be completed worldwide by early 2013 – will increase the clarity, consistency and strength of the three economy brands.

The rebranding involves 1570 hotels.

■ THE 30-suite **Regents Court Hotel** in Potts Point, Sydney has entered into a long-term operating agreement with 8Hotels.

Regents Court is located in the heart of Potts Point where guests can enjoy views of the city skyline and harbour from the roof top garden. This eclectic and cosmopolitan neighbourhood is home to many of Sydney's finest cafés, restaurants and boutiques and close to Kings Cross nightlife and central to the CBD, Woolloomooloo and Darlinghurst.

This brings to 15 the number of properties managed by 8Hotels (all offering commission to agents). The group claims to be the largest boutique hotel operator, and Regents Court is the sixth Sydney-based property in the collection.

# \$199 Business Package\*

Citadines on Bourke Melbourne



Free WiFi

Free Breakfast

To book visit Ascott's unique GDS code AZ

131-135 Bourke St., Melbourne, VIC 3000

For more information visit [www.citadines.com.au](http://www.citadines.com.au)

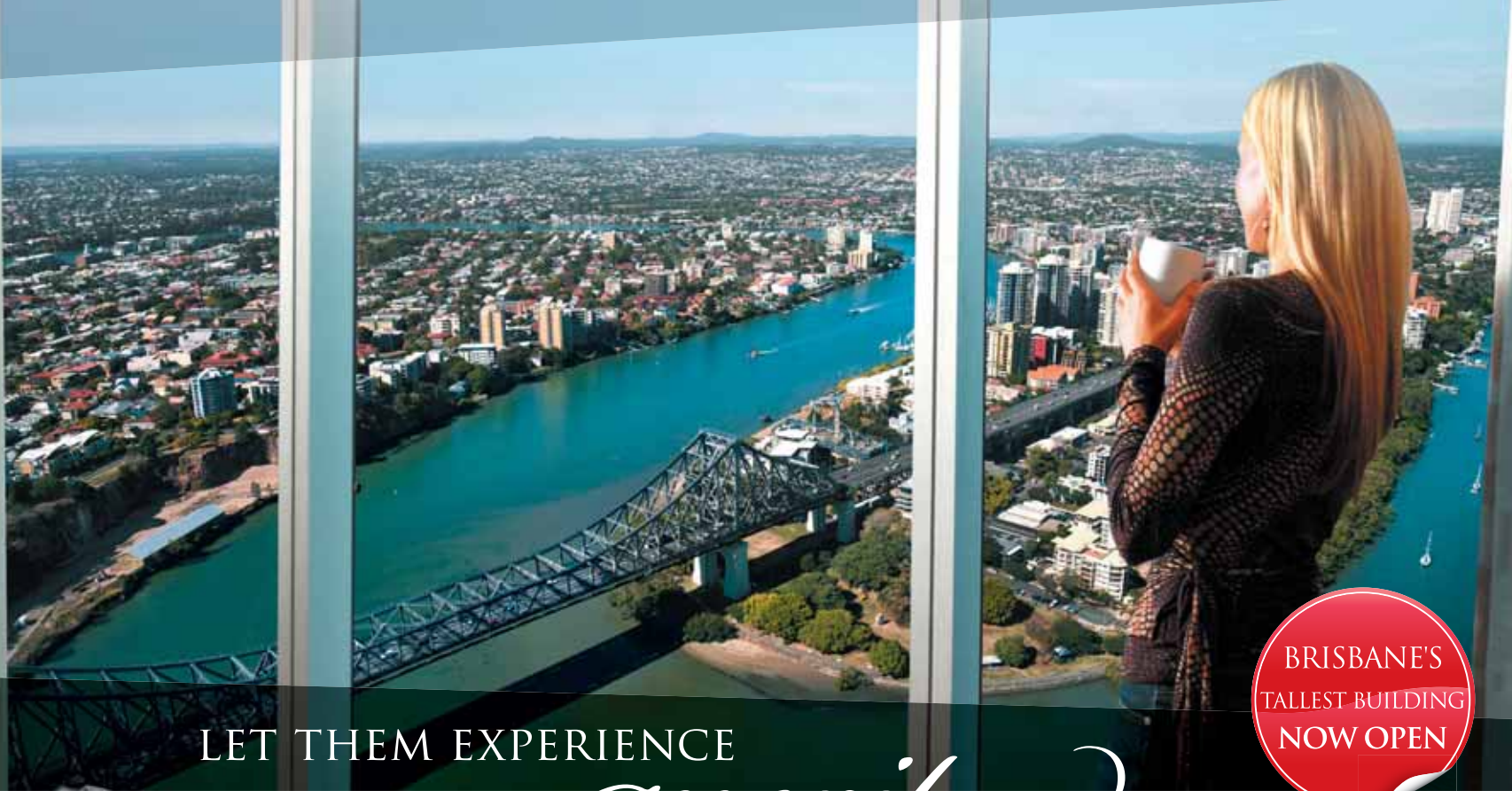
**Citadines**  
APART' HOTEL

\*Terms and conditions: Package is nett, inclusive of 10% GST. Up to 500mb per day internet download limit is included and one hot plated set breakfast at Heirloom Restaurant. Package is based on one person, extra person charges apply for breakfast for same room type for two people. Package is valid for stays to 31 December 2011. Package is subject to availability and block out periods may apply.

Citadines on Bourke Melbourne is managed by The Ascott Limited, a member of CapitalLand. It is the largest global serviced residence owner-operator in Asia Pacific, Europe and the Gulf region, managing the Ascott, Citadines and Somerset brands in over 70 cities across more than 20 countries.

DISCOVER NEW PLACES YOUR CLIENTS WILL

*Love*



LET THEM EXPERIENCE

*meriton*  
SERVICED APARTMENTS

BRISBANE'S  
TALLEST BUILDING  
NOW OPEN



MERITON  
SERVICED APARTMENTS

A new generation of accommodation that offers quality, luxury, comfort, value and an abundance of space in which to relax. Our range of contemporary studio, one, two and three bedroom apartments are serviced daily and located in prime destinations within Australia, with new properties opening soon.

You are welcome to stay for just one night but, with our extensive resort style facilities, quality furnishings and luxurious surroundings, you'll find it hard to leave. Every apartment is designed, built, furnished, owned and managed by Meriton, offering unparalleled consistency and a name you can trust.

Proudly supporting the



[www.staymsa.com](http://www.staymsa.com) 131 MSA (672)

*follow us on twitter*  @MeritonSA

**NSW** WORLD TOWER • PITT STREET • KENT STREET • CAMPBELL STREET • BONDI JUNCTION • PARRAMATTA • WATERLOO  
**QLD** BROADBEACH • SOUTHPORT • BRISBANE



# Meriton opens Brisbane apartment hotel

MERITON has unveiled its 10th property with the opening in September of its first serviced apartments in Brisbane, in the towering Soleil building in Adelaide Street.

Comprising 464 apartments, the 234-metre-high building is Brisbane's tallest residential building and highest hotel accommodation option (until the opening of Meriton's second Brisbane property in late 2012 will take over this title).

Meriton says the "cleverly designed" serviced apartments offer a fresh Brisbane accommodation option for both leisure and business travellers.

The building's riverside location affords spectacular views up and down the Brisbane River and the river boardwalk provides access to the main business areas of Eagle Street, Queen Street and Elizabeth Street.

The property is also within walking distance of restaurants and entertainment options, and within easy reach of the Brisbane Convention Centre.

Apartment features include wi-fi internet access (charges apply) and



each apartment has a work desk with a lamp. The Adelaide Street property also has a well-equipped gymnasium and a 20 metre heated pool with a large spa and a dry sauna.

Meriton Serviced Apartments' move into Brisbane has extended its reach

beyond its traditional markets of Sydney and the Gold Coast.

The company recently added its seventh option in Sydney, with the opening of a property on the corner of Campbell and George streets in the Haymarket area.

■ THE landmark \$700 million **Hilton Surfers Paradise** complex on Queensland's Gold Coast officially opened in September, making it the newest leisure property for Hilton Hotels and Resorts in Australia. The property offers a total of 169 guest rooms and 250 modern one, two and three-bedroom residences, with self-contained residences including full kitchens, laundry facilities, as well as separate living and dining spaces.

Hilton Surfers Paradise also offers in-room dining, mini bar, daily housekeeping, valet parking, 24-hour reception, concierge, and dining options including Salt grill by celebrity chef and restaurateur Luke Mangano.

■ **OAKS Waterfront Resort** located in the seaside town of The Entrance in New South Wales, has undergone a transformation to refresh the existing property façade and make improvements to water view balconies.

Oaks Waterfront Resort offers a combination of room types, including studio, one and two bedroom luxury loft apartments and executive, one and two bedroom self-contained apartments. Rates start from \$109 per night (minimum stay of two nights) for a Studio Apartment (commissionable to agents), valid until December 21, 2011.



RELAX IN GRAND STYLE THIS SUMMER  
TRAVEL AGENT SPECIAL RATE. 30% OFF BEST UNRESTRICTED RATE ACROSS ALL ROOMS  
grand hotel & apartments melbourne

**Grand Hotel & Apartments Melbourne**  
Victorian splendour and utmost privacy in the very heart of Melbourne.

33 Spencer Street - Melbourne - VIC 3000  
Bookings: [grandhotelmelbourne@accor.com](mailto:grandhotelmelbourne@accor.com)  
or call 1300 361 455 (Quote Summer Agent)  
[www.grandhotelmelbourne.com.au](http://www.grandhotelmelbourne.com.au)

THE ART OF STAYING.



\*Limited rooms available and subject to promotion rate availability. 30% discount applied to Best Unrestricted Rate. Valid for stays between December 1, 2011 and January 15, 2012. Blackout Date 31 December 2011. Must book by December 15. Valid IATA or appropriate travel ID required.

# Arrive and Relax



**Stay  
2 or 3 nights, for  
one great price,  
the choice is yours!\***  
[australishotels.com.au/bulletin](http://australishotels.com.au/bulletin)

\* Subject to availability. Valid to 31 March 2012. Available at participating hotels.

## Australis

HOTELS • RESORTS • APARTMENTS

### AUSTRALIS KIRRA SURF APARTMENTS Coolangatta, QLD

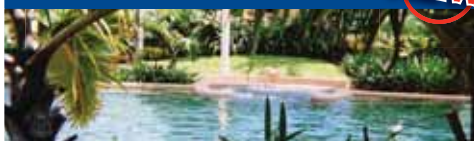
**NEW**



- 30 minutes from central Surfers Paradise
- 1, 2 & 3 bedroom self contained luxury beachfront apartments
- Heated pool, sauna and BBQ facilities on site
- Restaurants, cafes and shops nearby

### AUSTRALIS CAIRNS BEACH RESORT Cairns, QLD

**NEW**



- Beachfront location, only 10 minutes from central Cairns, metres from restaurants, cafes and shops
- 1 bedroom self contained apartments
- Saltwater resort style pool and BBQ facilities

### AUSTRALIS MARINERS NORTH Townsville, QLD



- The only absolute oceanfront accommodation, situated on The Strand
- 2 & 3 bedroom self contained apartments
- Restaurants, marina, shops and casino nearby
- Swimming pool, spa and tennis court on site

### AUSTRALIS SHELLEY BAY RESORT Hervey Bay, QLD



- Beachfront location, only minutes walk to restaurants, cafes and shops
- 1 & 2 bedroom self contained apartments
- Lagoon style swimming pool, spa, tennis court, restaurant and BBQ facilities on site

### AUSTRALIS NOOSA LAKES Noosaville, QLD



- Set on 7 lake front acres opposite Noosa Marina
- 1 & 2 bedroom self contained apartments
- 3 lagoon style swimming pools
- Restaurants, cafes and beach nearby

### AUSTRALIS SOVEREIGN HOTEL Surfers Paradise, QLD



- Close to theme parks, and only 5 minutes walk to patrolled beach and shops
- 1 & 2 bedroom spacious suites
- Swimming pool, spa and sauna
- Flavours Restaurant and BBQ facilities on site

### AUSTRALIS DIAMOND BEACH RESORT & SPA Mid-North Coast, NSW



- Beachfront location with beach access
- Easy 3 hour drive north of Sydney
- 1, 2 & 3 bedroom self contained apartments and villas
- 3 Nippers Restaurant and endota spa on site

### AUSTRALIS RETREAT AT WISEMANS Wisemans Ferry, NSW



- Nestled on the banks of the Hawkesbury River, just an hour's drive from Sydney
- Double, twin and family accommodation
- Professional 9 hole par 34 golf course on site
- Restaurant and massage therapy on site

### AUSTRALIS MARGARET RIVER Margaret River, WA



- Set on 5 acres of landscaped gardens
- Surrounded by the famous vineyards, surf breaks and gourmet restaurants of the region
- Deluxe, spa and family accommodation
- Restaurant, pool and BBQ facilities on site

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY FOR NEW HOTEL UPDATES SENT STRAIGHT TO YOUR INBOX**

**[www.australishotels.com.au/subscribe4newhotels](http://www.australishotels.com.au/subscribe4newhotels) or call 1300 650 464**

# Rendezvous announces new branding for hotels



THE Rendezvous Hospitality Group (RHG) is dumping the Marque hotel brand, as it makes a multi-million dollar adjustment to its hotel portfolio.

Under a new structure, the Rendezvous Hotels and The Marque Hotels will evolve into one Rendezvous brand, introducing different tiers to target three distinct market segments.

The first hotel in the group to be renamed and re-launched under this new model will be Rendezvous Grand Hotel Singapore in December, 2011. The hotel and adjoining retail podium Rendezvous Gallery are completing a

\$S25 million (about \$A19m) upgrade.

Rendezvous Hotel Auckland, Rendezvous Hotel Melbourne, Rendezvous Hotel Perth (pictured) and The Marque Hotel Perth are currently undergoing refurbishment.

Under the new branding, hotels will be defined as Rendezvous Grand Hotels (premier hotels offering superior accommodation for the upscale discerning travellers), Rendezvous Hotels (targeting “upper-midscale mindful travellers”) and Rendezvous Studios (the compact hotel targeting “midscale value-conscious travellers”).

## \$4m upgrade for Melbourne Mantra on the Park

MELBOURNE CBD apartment hotel, Mantra on the Park has unveiled a \$4 million upgrade to offer business and leisure travellers “the newest apartment product in town”.

All 144 fully self-contained one and two-bedroom apartments have completed a full refurbishment which includes stylish and bold new furniture from local and European manufacturers, 37-inch LCD TVs, iPod docking stations, new kitchens and appliances, new carpet and paint in all corridors and public areas.

Mantra on the Park’s two split level three-bedroom penthouses have also been completely refurbished. One-bedroom apartments start from \$159 per night.

Mantra on the Park is one of seven Mantra hotels and apartments in Melbourne which include Mantra 100 Exhibition Street (which recently completed a \$1 million upgrade).

Mantra says it is the “leading provider” of apartment-style



Mantra on the Park

properties in Australia and NZ under the Peppers, Mantra and BreakFree brands, with more than 130 properties and expansion into Fiji in 2012.

The group recently announced Pat Rafter as the Mantra brand ambassador (*travelBulletin*, September).

■ **GRAND Mercure Melbourne** in Flinders Lane has completed a \$4.3 million renovation, said to “bring the property back to its glamorous glory, so well known by stars of stage and screen over the past two decades”.

■ **THE Surfers Paradise Marriott Resort and Spa** on the Gold Coast has completed a \$20 million refurbishment of the hotel. The luxurious 28 level resort features 329 rooms and is located on a riverfront site just a few minutes from the heart of Surfers Paradise. The hotel’s extensive makeover has included an upgrade to all guest rooms, lobby area, lagoon pool area, front entry, dedicated events floor and a new all-day dining interactive restaurant, Citrique.

■ **MERCURE Melbourne Spring Street** has undergone a \$4 million refurbishment of 164 rooms and is the first Mercure in Australia to showcase new Mercure design standards.

■ **SHERATON on the Park** in Sydney has launched its newly refurbished Deluxe Terrace Suites, adding to the already refurbished 48 suite inventory. Covering up to 120 square metres, the suites offer contemporary living and comfort and mark the culmination of a \$40 million renovation at the hotel.

■ **MERCURE Capricorn Resort Yeppoon** joined the Mercure brand last month. A 30 minute ferry ride from Great Keppel Island located off the coast of Yeppoon, the existing 281-room resort is one set on a secluded coral reef coastline with an outlook to the Great Barrier Reef.

**TICKET WALLETS**      bagTAGS

Visit our website gallery for more options...  
[www.swanplastics.com.au](http://www.swanplastics.com.au)

**LEATHER LOOK ZIPPED CORPORATE TICKET WALLETS**  
ORDERS 60+ WITH YOUR NAME AND LOGO

Please contact our friendly sales team:  
[sales@swanplastics.com.au](mailto:sales@swanplastics.com.au)  
Free Call: 1800 339 603

■ **GRAND Hyatt Melbourne** has completed the final phase in its total transformation, the complete interior redesign of all 548 guest rooms, in time for its 25th birthday this month.

The hotel upgrade started in 2008, and has seen it completely revitalised with new upper and lower lobbies, the restaurant, Collins Kitchen, the bar, RU-CO, as well as the addition of an exclusive retail environment and events venue.

The extensive \$45 million redevelopment of the public spaces and subsequent \$20 million guest room redesign is said to be one of the most significant projects undertaken by a hotel in Australia in recent years.



■ **ACCOR** has just added two new apartment hotels to its existing network, with the Grand Mercure Apartment group now offering more than 20 locations across Australia and New Zealand.

Blue C Apartments Coolangatta in Queensland has joined Accor, renamed as Grand Mercure Apartments Coolangatta, while the existing 124-room apartment resort One Bright Point has been renamed Grand Mercure Apartments Magnetic Island.

■ **CONSTRUCTION** has commenced on the new **Gladstone Mercure Hotel** in Queensland, with an expected opening date of September 2012. The new hotel will be built onsite at the Yaralla Sports Club and provide 60 hotel rooms, and conference facilities.