

Kelvin King looks at the joys of using serviced apartments

Flexibility, convenience, space... it's just like being at home

When a new drink or snack line is released, one marketing ploy that is usually successful in introducing it to the target market is sampling. Serviced apartment suppliers don't — more's the pity! — give away free sample stays, but this is an accommodation choice which should definitely be tried at least once by business travellers.

It's only too easy, as we all well know, to get into the rut of staying in a familiar hotel or following a favoured accommodation brand almost wherever in the world you go.

There are advantages to that, including points earned in loyalty schemes and the cossetting convenience of familiarity.

But try a serviced apartment property which is oriented towards business travellers — such as the Quest, Medina or Waldorf groups, or any of several other groups and individual properties in Australia and New Zealand — and the chances are high you'll quickly appreciate that this type of accommodation choice could be included in your travel repertoire.

That's not to say that you'll become a 100 per cent convert to serviced apartments.

I know many people who prefer to stay in serviced apartments and always do so, unless some external factor influences the decision, such as a non-apartment hotel being a conference base or wanting to be close to a colleague for business convenience.

Actually, bringing colleagues together is one of the advantages of serviced apartments. Choose an apartment with two or three bedrooms and you're away and laughing. Well, usually; I do remember a shared apartment stay that wasn't a barrel of laughs because of a colleague's grumpiness and the sexual prowess of another caused a strained moment or two...although perhaps it was just envy.

Most of my stays in serviced apartments have, however, been on my own.

It's quite a simple equation, really. Serviced apartments



The Medina Grand Adelaide Treasury, a five star apartment style hotel with 80 one and two bedroom serviced apartments and studio rooms.

make me feel at home. I enjoy the extra spaciousness offered by most — I've stayed in a few that were so big you almost needed a map to find your way around, although most are just comfortably bigger and less rigidly laid out than the usual hotel room.

The opportunity to spread out work files and laptop are a big plus for me — the strictures of hotel rooms are sometimes a bugbear.

Feeding the inner man becomes a series of options: cook from scratch (I like sussing out local supermarket and deli offerings), heat up convenience packs in the microwave or simply go out to a nearby restaurant. Some apartment blocks have in-house coffee shops or even more sophisticated restaurants.

Working sessions with a colleague or two are both practical and comfortable; few hotel rooms are attuned to such sessions, especially if there are more than two visitors.

There often seems to be a sort of camaraderie to serviced apartments. You tend to get talking in the lift lobby, the mini-mart, the workout room or laundry (although communal laundries are becoming a thing of the past in most serviced apartment blocks - the necessary equipment is right at hand in

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Comfort, Convenience, Choice



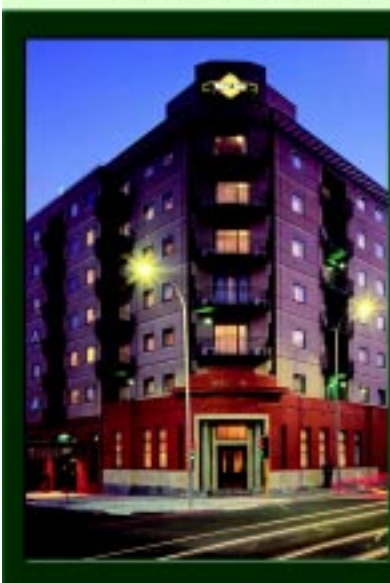
Quest on Rheola, West Perth



Quest Mandurah



Quest Margaret River



Quest West End, CBD



Quest Bunbury



Quest Yelverton Kalgoorlie



Quest on James, Northbridge



Quest on Arlington, South Perth



Quest Harbour Village, Fremantle



Quest Subiaco

Quest Serviced Apartments in Western Australia
Visit the WA section of our website for information and to book online.

www.questapartments.com.au



QUEST
Serviced Apartments



Meriton commits to more apartments as occupancies jump to 90 per cent

SERVICED apartments are helping to absorb the pent-up demand for accommodation in Sydney — and showing exceptionally high occupancy rates.

And, according to Sydney developer, Harry Triguboff, international tourists, conference delegates and long-stay visitors have embraced this type of accommodation, with demand exceeding all expectation at his Meriton Serviced Apartment division, where he claims average weekly occupancy is 90 per cent over the five properties.

Now Triguboff is moving full steam ahead to boost his current stock of 554 apartments and is well underway with Meriton Tower in George Street, which will add a further 323 serviced apartments to his portfolio.

“While the demand continues, we’ll keep building serviced apartments,” he said “and I can only see this form of accommodation becoming more popular because it offers space, flexibility and good value for money,

“I’m not trying to take custom away from hotels, which provide an essential service to specific types of visitors. My serviced apartments are simply a further ingredient in the accommodation mix — and they are helping Sydney cope with the increasing number of tourists.”

All five Meriton serviced apartment properties — two of which are in the Sydney CBD and others at Bondi Junction, Moore Park and Parramatta — carry five-star AAA accreditation.

For business people, serviced apartments are large enough to make ideal offices.

“Business guests are able to convert the living areas into a true dedicated

office to work and negotiate in peace, privacy and comfort, or into a show-room for special clients,” said Suzanne Carter, manager of sales and marketing for Meriton Serviced Apartments.

“Women, in particular, want a profes-

sional atmosphere in which to conduct business, and many feel a hotel room is an inappropriate setting.

For more details about the Meriton properties:

www.meritonapartments.com.au



Quest portfolio now numbers 3500

IN LESS than a decade, Quest Serviced Apartments has grown its portfolio from one to more than 90 properties, offering over 3500 apartments across Australia, New Zealand and Fiji.

Quest — now the largest serviced accommodation provider in Australia with properties in CBD, suburban and regional locations — says it has achieved this growth and continual success through its franchise network.

In Western Australia, Quest has 10 properties and plans to open more. All cater to business and leisure travellers, with the extra apartment space over hotel rooms allowing guests to entertain and hold small meetings.

In and around Perth, there are six properties — Quest on Arlington in South Perth, Quest West End (CBD),

Quest on Rheola (West Perth), Quest on James (Northbridge), Quest Subiaco and Quest Harbour Village in Fremantle.

In regional WA, there are four properties — Quest Yelverton Kalgoorlie, Quest Mandurah, Quest Margaret River and Quest Bunbury.

Depending on the location and property type, features can include: swimming pool, spa, sauna, gym, tennis courts, barbecue area, car parking and restaurant or café, while secretarial services are available at all properties.

Accommodation ranges from studio to one, two and three bedroom apartments, which feature a fully equipped kitchen and laundry, apartment-controlled air-conditioning, fax and modem lines, and direct dial telephones.

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Star City
SYDNEY
HOTEL • APARTMENTS

Star City completes upgrades to its 131 serviced apartments

THE INCREASING popularity of apartment-style accommodation sees Sydney's Star City Hotel and Casino complete a multi-million refurbishment of its 131 serviced apartments, with a stylish and contemporary look design to suit the business traveller.

Set on the edge banks of Sydney's colourful Darling Harbour, each apartment has been designed to maximise the spectacular views over the city skyline. They are also within walking distance to the Sydney Convention Centre and the CBD.

The apartments have been redesigned with soft furnishings in rich chocolate and natural tones and king-size beds.

Offering one, two or three bedrooms and ranging in size from 75sqm to 120sqm, they are over twice the size of a standard hotel room. Each apartment comprises a spacious sitting room,

separate dining area, a stylish marble bathroom, a fully equipped kitchen and integrated laundry.

Each apartment includes 24-hour room service, deluxe mini bar, individually controlled air conditioning and central heating, alarm clock, digital movies sports and entertainment channels, international direct dial phone and personalised voice mail, separate fax/data lines, balconies and opening windows. There is also a choice of smoking or non-smoking rooms and floors.

Ideal for business

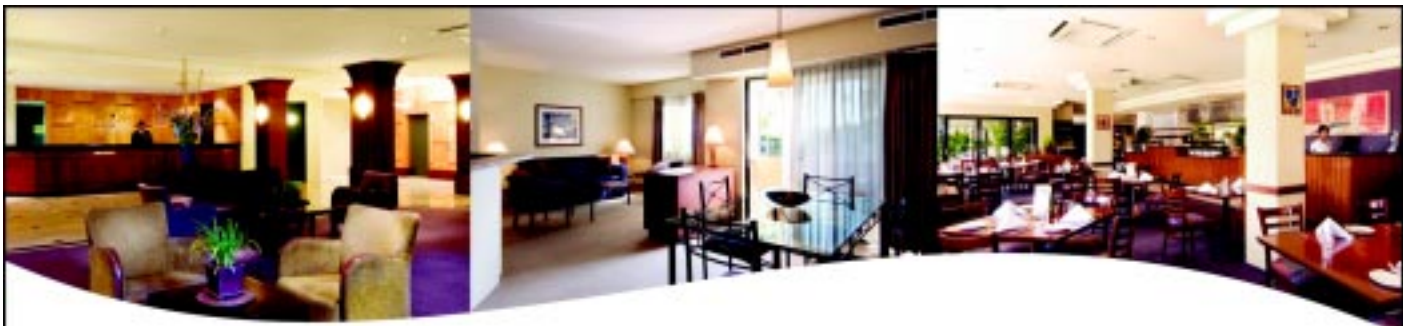
Each apartment has a media desk, with high-speed broadband internet connection, premium DVD/CD player, television with cable channels, hands-free speakerphone plus an ergonomic chair, making the working environment familiar and comfortable. Also, follow-



ing customer research, each room has a king zipper bed that can transform from a king bed to two single beds, allowing for visitors.

The apartments are supported by Star City's new state-of-the-art Business Centre offering office facilities plus secretarial support during business hours. There are also fully equipped meeting rooms, boardrooms, and a convention centre for large-scale business gatherings.

Apartment guests also have complimentary access to Turbines Health Club, which has a heated 25-metre indoor/outdoor pool featuring panoramic views of the city, a sauna, two spas (indoor & outdoor) and a wide selection of the latest gym equipment. For further information visit www.starcity.com.au



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Bangkok: the choice widens

IT WASN'T all that many years ago that we felt moved to report on the opening of serviced apartments for short-term corporate visitors to Bangkok because the concept was still quite novel. There have been big changes in those few years: Bangkok is now among the best endowed of Asian cities when it comes to serviced apartments.

Among the many options - readily booked through your normal travel agent, via online reservations services or direct to property websites - are the President properties in the Sukhumvit district of central Bangkok.

This is a pleasant area because it's heavily residential while being close to the centre of business and with easy access to Skytrain and other transport systems.

The Royal President, President Park, President Solitaire and Grand President are all managed by CB Richard Ellis Asset Management (Asia Pacific), one of the market leaders in this field.

The Royal President Serviced Apartments, to take one property as an example, claims to be "where a quieter, more peaceful and more soothing world awaits".

It offers 186 apartments in various configurations, each with kitchenette, maid and linen service, laundry service, cable TV, 24-hour concierge and security, swimming pool, sauna, well-equipped health club, a games room, business centre, restaurant, mini-mart and more.

A complete set of chinaware, glassware and cutlery is on hand in each apartment.

Special facilities vary between properties in the group. The President Solitaire, notably, incorporates an Ananda Spa, an operator brand whose services can always be relied on for top, consistent quality.

Some of the apartments in the President group veer towards the ultra-sophisticated which may be a little over the top for you. Unless you're the chief executive, of course, and your expenditure is not being monitored by a shareholder watchdog committee.

ON THE WEB:

www.royalpresident.com

www.presidentpark.com

www.president溶itaire.com

www.grandpresident.com



It's just like being at home...

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your apartment). Suggestions are exchanged about interesting restaurants nearby or specials at a wine shop down the road (always a point of interest with me).

On occasions I've gone to dinner with other short-term apartment dwellers, something much less likely to happen in hotels. A group of us once even went on a Sunday picnic which turned out to be both enjoyable and a surprisingly useful networking session.

If you travel with your family, as I used to at least a few times a year (they're too busy to travel with Dad nowadays!), a serviced apartment can truly be a home from home, including a secluded area functioning as an office so you can get on with business while the family take it easy.

It's a good idea to check out apartments online or to ask friends and colleagues. It's a horses for courses situation — your choice should factor in location, whether you're looking for utility or luxury, the size (one bedroom is my preference), the type of facilities to hand.

I was what the marketing research geeks call an early adopter in the trend to serviced apartments. I had stayed in American all-suites hotels which had given me a new angle on apartments; the serviced holiday apartments of the 1960s and 1970s in Australia and New Zealand were a world away from this.

Mentioning to a colleague in Sydney how living in hotels was making me jaded brought the suggestion of trying out the Medina Apartments in Elizabeth Bay. A whole new world opened up, although the supply of serviced apartments in some Australian cities was rather slow in evolving.

Medina was small in those days. It had started, as I recall, in Randwick. Its creators had seen the opportunities earlier than most.

I remember one morning, ironing my shirt in the laundry, when a pleasant woman arrived to check something out. A polite discussion morphed into a fascinating lecture about the future for serviced apartments.

It wasn't until months later I realised my teacher was Catherine Vidor who was, along with husband Ervin, one of the pioneers of serviced apartments in Australia.

Another of the pioneers who deserve all the tributes they have received in more recent times — because not everyone agreed with them back then - is Paul Constantinou of Quest.