



Brisbane

# Capital city between Gold and Sunshine Coast

One of just three opportunities worldwide to scale a bridge up its mighty steel girders is provided by Story Bridge. The capital of Queensland already ranks second among Australia's airports. And more and more prominent congresses are taking place in the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre.

A fresh breeze cools your flushed face. Your hair blows in the wind. Right up on the apex of the 80 metre-high arc of Brisbane's Story Bridge you can begin to understand something of the feeling that James Cameron immortalised in a key scene of his legendary blockbuster Titanic. Leonardo di Caprio and Kate Winslet are stand-

ing at the bow of the luxury liner, the endless ocean roiling below. At that moment pedigree, past and future are irrelevant. What counts is only the minute, the here and now.

Of course, Brisbane River isn't the ocean and Story Bridge not the Titanic. But the view from the mighty steel bridge, far below it the highway threading across the river, glistening water to the left and right, is also spectacular at such giddy heights. Apart from Sydney and Auckland, the capital of Queensland is only the third city in the world able to offer visitors such a fascinating experience. Dispelled – or at any rate suppressed – are the very last concerns that perching so far up at the highest point of the bridge

on a narrow metal catwalk might not be all that safe after all.

Scaling such heights takes time. The Bridge Climb, complete with the obligatory safety training, takes around two and a half hours. Participants must first take a breathalyser test and learn in a simulator how to climb the steep steps and ladders. Flip flops, high heels and high-heeled boots have to stay down in the locker room, where you change into a pair of casual overalls rather reminiscent of the working kit favoured by Captain Kirk and Lieutenant Uhura on the Spaceship Enterprise. Sturdy climbing shoes are also provided if necessary. Mobiles, earrings and cameras have to be given in. Bespectacled participants secure their glasses with a cord.

These precautions are down



BCEC: South Bank Function.

to experience. This way nothing can be dropped that might cause traffic accidents on the six-lane highway. To prevent falls, the climbers themselves are securely attached to a static steel cable snap-hooked to a metal harness running along the entire climb at about hip height. You have to grip the cable, making you feel a little as if you were taking yourself for a walk between heaven and earth. A complicated system of catwalks, ladders and steps slowly winds its way up the massive steel girders. It used to be the exclusive province of the workmen whose job it is to service the bridge. Bookings for the tour are made with Story Bridge Adventure Climb.

The tour starts out at Kangaroo Point, at the base of the bridge, heading across the eastern cantilever arm to the first observation platform 80 metres up, then down again and on to the second platform at the same

height. Participants are rewarded for their exertions

with a unique panoramic view over the city across to the Glasshouse Mountains in the north and Lamington National Park in the south. Below you can see the Kangaroo Point Cliffs near the city centre. The Riverlife Adventure Centre there offers climbing and abseiling on the steep volcanic rocks and sightseeing tours by kayak, giving the best view of Brisbane's skyline.

The capital of Queensland has changed enormously over the past 20 years. The construction boom took off in



Moreton Island, whose special attraction is wild dolphins.

the 1980s when the Commonwealth Games were held there, followed shortly afterwards in 1988 by the World Expo, which drew 14 million visitors from all over the world to the site on the south bank of Brisbane River. The cityscape makes a correspondingly modern and elegant impression with stylish boutiques, trendy street cafés and tasteful shopping centres on Queen Street Mall, the central pedestrian zone.

With almost two million residents, Brisbane is the political, business and cultural heart of Queensland. Meanwhile the flourishing metropolis

ranks second among Australia's airports, behind Sydney but – surprisingly – ahead of Melbourne.

Expansion of the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC) is therefore almost the next logical step. The extension is budgeted at around AUD 100 million, work having been entrusted to a company already responsible for designing the congress centres in Singapore, Sydney und Cairns. The construction plans schedule eleven additional meeting rooms, including two auditoriums, the ap-

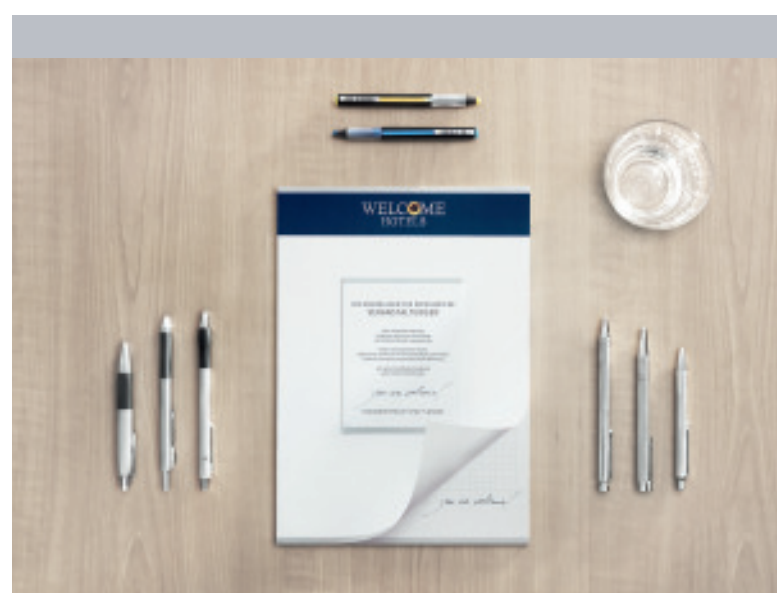
propriate breakout areas, foyer areas and banquet facilities.

This investment became necessary even though the BCEC's existing Great Hall seating roughly 8,000 people can already boast the greatest plenary capacity in Australia. But the projected new

auditoriums will cater chiefly to needs for greater flexibility, enabling more events to be held side by side, and to increasing demand for congresses and conferences with between 400 and 600 delegates. The extension is scheduled for completion by mid-2009, because demand is growing steadily.

In the past few months, for example, the BCEC's International Bidding Team netted no fewer than ten major international congresses for Brisbane, bringing the number of national and international conventions captured last year up to an all-time re-

## The Story Bridge Adventure Climb



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cord of 77. The ten newly signed-up congresses alone will attract around 11,500 delegates to Brisbane and represent an economic gain of AUD 28 million for Queensland. "With advance bookings at record level – the BCEC has roughly 1,000 events on its books up to 2012 – and financial results to match we are looking to a period of sustained and ongoing growth," is the upbeat take on the future by Robert O'Keefe, general manager of the BCEC. Other recently awarded congresses include the 20th International Maritime Pilots' Congress 2010, the IFIP World Computer Congress 2010, the Asian & Oceania Congress on Child Neurology 2011 and the International Council of Archives Congress taking place in 2012.

At present Brisbane is attempting to land one of the biggest top international congresses. In a joint effort the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, the Australian Dental Association, the government of Queensland and Brisbane Marketing are bidding for the FDI Annual World Dental Congress 2013. The four-day event is the world's biggest meeting of dentists, to which some 8,000 delegates and their partners are expected. Were the congress to be awarded to Queensland, it would channel additional revenues of more than AUD 16 million into the state coffers. The CEO of the Australian Dental Association, Robert



The Riverlife Adventure Centre (above) and Conrad Treasury.

Boyd-Boland, considers Brisbane a promising candidate for the prestigious gathering, which Sydney captured once before in 2003. "Australia is highly regarded internationally, it can point to numerous successfully handled big events, and last but not least it also enjoys an excellent reputation for its high standards of dentistry."

Brisbane's increasing appeal is importantly fostered by its privileged situation between two holidaymakers' paradises, the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast, to the south and north of the state borders. The Sunshine Coast begins an hour's drive north of Bris-

bane and extends for about 60 kilometres between Caloundra and Cooloola. The mild climate all year round, pristine beaches, lakes, rivers, mountains and rain forests along this section of the coastline and the dramatic backcloth of the Glasshouse Mountains, ten unusually shaped elevations of volcanic origin, exert a real pull on visitors. Also located there is the

## Brisbane is the business heart of Queensland

Australia Zoo run by the famous recently deceased crocodile hunter Steve Irwin, housing 550 species of typically Australian animals.

The Gold Coast south of Brisbane is the most popular holiday resort on the east coast. The 57 kilometre-long sandy beach is much favoured not only by surfers and lovers of water sports. Golfers can

choose from a whole string of world-class courses there, for example. In the green hinterland about an hour from the coast lies Australia's biggest nature reserve lush with subtropical rainforest, Lamington National Park. Koalas, kangaroos, numerous species of birds and one of Australia's biggest glow worm colonies can be seen in the National Park, which is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

And just over an hour's drive from Brisbane is Moreton Island, whose special attraction is wild dolphins. Every evening they visit the Tangalooma Wild Dolphin Resort and there, in the shallow waters lapping the beach, they seek out human company and can be hand fed under supervision. Between July and the end of October humpback whales can also be observed as they pass by on their way south. Tangalooma is an expression from the language spoken by the aboriginals that once lived on the island and means "fish meeting place".

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