



The Age - Travel

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ROOM SERVICE

There's something fishy at the Sebel

DR JERRY SCHWARTZ has a thing about water and fish. Nothing strange about that - it's quite normal for an Australian.

But Schwartz is not your average Australian. He owns eight hotels - six in NSW, one in Melbourne (the Victoria in Little Collins Street) and one in Canberra - which makes him the largest private owner of hotel rooms in Australia.

Schwartz also likes to inject his own tastes and interests into his properties, which is fair enough because there are more than enough bland hotels in this country.

So in each of his hotels you will find a fish tank. But when it came to the \$20 million renovation of the Sebel Surry Hills Sydney, Schwartz went one step further.

"Fish tank" goes nowhere close to describing the lobby of the hotel in Albion Street.

Aquarium is a more apt description and this one is set into the floor.

The hotel's general manager, Michael Sheridan, says it has created much interest among guests, often unsure whether they should tread lightly on the aquarium or even step on it at all.

"It is quite a unique sensation standing on the aquarium watching the fish swim around below your feet," he says.

The aquarium is home to 20 rare and expensive Japanese koi carp, including the hotel's mascot, Albi. (Get it? The hotel is on Albion Street.)

See sebelurryhills.com.au.

A choice of Peppers

THE Peppers group opened Peppers Coral Coast Resort at Airlie Beach yesterday.



Walk on water ... the in-floor aquarium at the renovated Sebel Surry Hills Sydney.

With 102 one- to four-bedroom apartments, it is the group's first mainland Whitsunday resort.

Only a couple of months ago, the group opened Peppers Palm Bay on nearby Long Island.

That property is a much more intimate affair, with 24 secluded cabins, bungalows and bures. Still, that's a lot of accommodation to fill in difficult times.

But if the rates are any indication, the two resorts are aimed at different markets.

The starting price for cabins at Peppers Palm Bay is \$460 a night, including breakfast, up to \$800 for the platinum suite. Peppers Coral Coast Resort's apartments have a special tariff of \$179 a night for a one-bedroom apartment.

The deal is valid until November 30.

See peppers.com.au.