



#ICA24 HOUSING UPDATE

The #ICA24 hotel block is at 80% capacity; **it is not sold out. Peak nights at Star in some room types - and rooms at other properties in the block - are still available (see detail below).**

Maritz is awaiting word from the Star on releasing 14 rooms to clear waitlisted nights for #ICA24; waitlists should clear in the next 48hrs. We have also requested additional inventory: hotels hold on to their rooms to sell at a higher rate to tourists, so they will not release additional rooms until we sell through the first block (we always book the maximum they will sell us). **We understand that this can be stressful, but waitlisting is a normal process across the hospitality industry.** If you don't see this at other conferences, it's likely due to one of these factors:

- they overbook and then risk paying \$40-80,000 in attrition for unused rooms (that they make up by charging higher fees the next year)
- they may not be as in-demand as the ICA conference is, or
- the hotel was willing to give them more nights because they didn't negotiate as much of a discount. *A hotel always wants to charge the most it can for its rooms* – they don't want to promise their rooms to us at the deeply discounted rate we have negotiated if they can get double that from transient guests.

Maritz sends a daily message to the hotels with an update on capacity and asks for a specific number of new rooms as needed; we then are at the mercy of the hotels (and the time zone difference) to hear back. Once the hotel says "yes, you can have 14 additional rooms on Tuesday 18 June," for instance, Maritz *immediately* adds those to inventory and those nights "clear," confirming your entire reservation.

Peak night availability is different from shoulder availability as all room blocks are booked on a bell curve. If we need 1000 rooms on the peak nights of Thursday/Friday/Saturday, that often means that we'll book only 750 nights on Wednesday and Sunday, and only 400 on Tuesday and Monday nights. SO if you're staying a long time, the inventory becomes scarcer. This is just an example, we base our actual numbers on decades of data on attendee booking patterns, and

tweak things based on distance traveled (so Wednesday is a peak night in Australia, for instance, because over half of the attendees will be dealing with jet lag and want to get in earlier in order to acclimate).

Current capacity on Wednesday, 6 March is as follows:

Sofitel: There are still **151 rooms available** on the peak nights (Wed/Thu/Fri/Sat)

Star Grand: 106 Superior Deluxe rooms & eight corner balcony rooms left on peak nights (more to be released in coming days)

Star Residences: 45 condos available on peak nights, with some waitlisted nights on the earliest days that are being cleared now

If you've booked a room but it says "WAITLISTED": We know it's stressful not to have confirmation of all your room nights *right away*, but we ask for your patience as you await word from Maritz that your earliest or latest nights are cleared (as mentioned in the email and on the website, "waitlist" typically does not refer to your entire reservation, it is just the first or last night, typically, that needs to be released from the hotel).

IF YOU'RE TRYING TO BOOK:

- If your preferred length of stay appears to have no rooms available, you can try to shorten it and ask for additional nights in the comments of the reservation (you could book a different stay outside the block for the first two or last two nights just in case if you want, of course).
- You can book a property elsewhere as a backup just in case (be sure to check that their cancellation policy allows you to cancel with no penalty if your preferred spot at the Star gets cleared).
- You can keep checking back – people book rooms and then change nights sometimes, so sometimes rooms can pop back into inventory.
- You are more than welcome to book via Airbnb or some online booking system like booking.com or Travelocity.

Please know that we negotiate the block to grab the most affordable rate, four or more years in advance of the conference, and save it for our attendees. **If there was no block, the Star would have been filled with tourism bookings by now and you'd be in a worse situation with either nowhere to stay or a room that costs you more than AUD \$600.** The block allows us to:

1. Secure the **best rooms** for you so you can all be in one or two central locations, **walkable** to the venue
2. Negotiate a very **favorable rate** that is much lower than the hotel's rack rate

3. Get “credit” for booking the hotel’s sleeping rooms, so that they give the conference **free meeting space** - this saves hundreds of thousands of dollars that otherwise would have to be covered in some other way, including raising registration fees
4. Ensure you are **safe** in properties with good customer service, clean water, proper bedding, etc – *we visit every property and look at all room categories before contracting*
5. **Protect you from cancellation penalties** if the conference is canceled – in 2020, when we had to cancel the first attempt at the Gold Coast due to the pandemic, we were able to simply expunge all reservation data from our Maritz system so that those who had booked in the block paid nothing: no penalties, no hassle. Those who booked off-block were stuck, in many cases, with large, non-refundable deposits.
6. Protect you from showing up, far from home, only to find you have nowhere to stay because your Airbnb has been canceled, or the door lock doesn’t work and the property manager is unreachable, or the water in the faucets is brown, or there’s no hot water – *these are actual examples from ICA attendees* (we were fortunately able to find them a cancelled reservation in the block and accommodate them each time, but that isn’t always going to be possible).

A majority of respondents to the post-conference survey last year said that they do value having a housing block, so we will keep providing one...but **if the whole process stresses you out and you’re willing to take on the risks of offsite properties enumerated above, there are no hard feelings if you book outside the block. Do what is best for you!**

Either way, we look forward to seeing you at the beach!

The ICA Conference Team