

A WHISTLE-STOP TOUR TO STIR UP BUSINESS

MONDAY

NORMALLY I WOULD SPEND THE DAY IN the office but this was the start of a business trip to New Zealand and I was in Auckland. I had travelled over there as part of a group of UK tour operators, and we were to give a series of talks to travel agents during our stay.

That evening I was to make my first presentation to 160 travel agents and I was terrified so I worked on my talk for most of the day. When it was all over we went out for dinner by the waterfront. They decided on Italian which was a shame – I have been so spoilt by all the dishes I get to eat in Italy that nothing compares.

TUESDAY

I had a meeting with the editor of food magazine *Dish* in the morning and agreed they'd do a feature on our location in Puglia. I then went to meet the owner of The Italian Grocer, a trendy Italian deli on Ponsonby Road – a chic part of town. They are going to have a "Flavours" evening in February.

WEDNESDAY

I flew to Wellington to give a talk to about 50 local agents. I was well practised by this point so it went smoothly and we got some really good feedback. It was also Burns Night so, while I did get out of reciting poetry, I was expected to lead the celebrations and we all drank some malt whisky.

THURSDAY

We all flew on to Christchurch. It was a lovely sunny day so we decided to have lunch at a great restaurant down by the River Avon, which meanders through town. We had one or two more glasses of rosé than we should have but it was OK because by this point I knew my talk off by heart – presenting to 75 travel agents wasn't a problem.

Trips like these are great for making contacts and I started talking with another member of the group about a cooking exploration holiday to Morocco.



FRIDAY

The rest of the group left for Australia but it was time for me to return home so I hopped on my flight to Glasgow via Sydney and Dubai. I managed to fit in a swim during the stopover at Dubai airport, and a quick chat with one of my former colleagues who now lives there.

THE WEEKEND

I landed in Glasgow on Saturday morning and drove straight to my mother's house in Lanarkshire to get a big cuddle from my two-year-old son, Calum. I like to make the weekends about him so on Sunday, back in Edinburgh, I took him for a walk around Inverleith Park and Stockbridge, where we live.

On Sunday evening I had to do some work because I am in the middle of preparing a Food and Wine event at the Fruitmarket Gallery on 2 March. I want to entice as many people as possible to learn more about the culinary delights of this country so I am trying to come up with something a little bit special.

■ *Lorne Blyth, director of Flavours, an Italian cookery holidays company, was talking to Jessica Kiddle.*