



US outbound strikes back

Travel consultants report double-digit growth figures, China and Indochina are happy recipients

By Linda Haden

THE US outbound engine is revving up once again, after having suffered heavy blows in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, with several buyers at the PATA Travel Mart 2012 reporting a surge in bookings to Asia.

“Traffic from the US is bouncing back. Rosier economic prospects, coupled with mounting trade with Asia and air capacity increases of around 30 to 40 per cent between Asia and the US, have played pivotal roles in bolstering the US outbound sector in the last 12 months,” said M Zaki, travel consultant with RZ Travel US. The California-based firm recorded a 100 per cent rise in booking volume from the US to Asia so far this year, compared to 2011.

Russell Oquist, president, MG



Oquist: Asia on bucket lists

“China and Indochina, particularly Myanmar and Cambodia, were experiencing the strongest uplifts, US buyers pinpointed. Oquist said: “China has long been a must-see destination for

US travellers, but Myanmar and Cambodia have just gotten on the to-do list, and consequently, there’s been a dramatic upswing in bookings there.”

Swedish Swe Myint, managing director, Legendary Myanmar Travel and Art, observed: “As the US gradually lifts sanctions to Myanmar, US travellers have started to flow in. Some 70 per cent of our tour bookings are now made by US travellers, compared to 30 per cent last year.”

So far this year, double-digit growth from the US to Indochina has been recorded by Khiri Travel, said Cambodia general manager, Jack Bartholomew. “Cambodia now features in 80 per cent of our tours...We envision the upward trend to Cambodia will continue into 2013, as there’s so much pent-up demand.”

Statistics from the US Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, however, revealed that US traffic to Asia rose by only nine per cent between January and July.

Some observers suggested that this inconsistency could be attributed to the fact that the bulk of growth from the US to Asia derives from the upper-middle to luxury-end of the market, which comprises a small proportion of the US outbound market.

New York-based Wendy Clayton, vice president of sales of Remote Lands, which has seen a 300 per cent hike in bookings in the last two years, said: “The top-end never really took a hit in the 2008-09 crisis and business is now better than ever. In fact, we are now receiving 10 times more enquiries than we did last year

and we’ve seen a rise in forward bookings.”

While generally optimistic about the future prospects of the US outbound market to Asia, some buyers had doubts about how long this recovery would last, particularly for the budget to middle-end of the market.

Said Oquist: “The US market is fragile. Most US travellers are timid, and any perceived threat to security, whether from a terrorist attack or a health scare, could deter them from travelling altogether.”

“Nonetheless, travel consultants who deal with the higher-end of the market need not fret as much as US travellers in the luxury spectrum tend to be more experienced, and are less likely to cancel trips just because of an unconfirmed threat.”

PAL unveils future plans

By Marianne Carandang

PHILIPPINE Airlines’ (PAL) vice president for marketing support, Felix Cruz, has clarified marketing directions for sister carrier, Airphil Express, while reiterating plans to relook existing routes as well as start new services to Australia and the Middle East.

“We are taking a second look at how we can improve the Delhi

fly to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. “We have the traffic rights, the electronic presence and the infrastructure there with our general sales agents... The major traffic is Filipino,” he said.

Meanwhile, Airphil Express will be rebranded as PAL Express, with PAL still operating domestic routes, but on a code-share arrangement with Airphil Express, Cruz clarified.

Although reluctant to disclose whether PAL would join global alliances anytime soon, Cruz admitted PAL would be revising its Sabre reservations system. “By October 28 we will be (implementing) it, which will prepare us for alliances,” he added.

Plans for a new airport would be handled by San Miguel Corporation, said Cruz, but he refused to divulge further on the proposed location except that it would be “near”. PAL’s existing hub in Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 2 might also be expanded over the recently closed Nayong Pilipino property.

PAL is currently road-testing a new reservations kiosk system that would be placed at selected Petron gas stations throughout the country, with one machine in operation in Manila. “We’re giving passengers a (wider) choice,” Cruz explained.

“PAL will still be operating domestic routes, but on a codeshare agreement with Airphil Express.”

Felix Cruz

Vice president for marketing support Philippine Airlines

route before we go to other places,” Cruz said, acknowledging that ticket pricing was an issue.

PAL will continue to push to launch a route to Darwin, he affirmed, despite talks with Australia being bogged down by the issue of fifth-freedom rights. The Philippine government has rescheduled talks with Australia in February 2013.

Plans are moving for the Middle East, where PAL is the only Philippine carrier with rights to

Hot off the press

Just off hot the press is TTG Asia Media’s new baby, *TTG Asia Luxury*, which will be officially launched and distributed next week at IT&CMA in Bangkok.

“The launch of this publication is in response to the growth of the Asian luxury market and the rise of travel companies in the region who are eager to add value and tap the market,” said Darren Ng, TTG Asia Media’s managing director.

The bumper first issue packs both style and substance, designed to guide premium buyers of leisure travel and luxury meeting planners on market trends, latest products and new ideas. It includes several insightful guides, including a Top 40 list. “This is the first time the voice of Asian travel buyers is heard on which hotel brands they perceive as most luxurious and prestigious. The list was compiled based on an online survey conducted on www.ttgasia.com,” said TTG Asia Media’s senior editor Raini Hamdi.

There is also a guide to purpose-driven travel, in recognition of an increasing mood among luxury clients for meaningful and responsible journeys. Other highlights include market reports on rising affluence in China and India, and updates on how Asian destinations Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand are changing as luxury playgrounds.

The magazine will be distributed free of charge to a circulation base compiled by TTG Asia Media. Luxury travel buyers at PATA Travel Mart who would like to receive a copy of the first issue can email their contacts to ttgnewsdesk@ttgasia.com.



Clarification



IN OUR article ‘China boycotts travel mart’ yesterday, we regret that the headline might have painted an inaccurate picture of Chinese official presence at PATA Travel Mart 2012. The China National Tourist Office in Singapore for ASEAN Countries is represented at the mart. We are sorry for any inconvenience caused.

China is also looking forward to hosting PATA Travel Mart 2013, which will be held in Chengdu.

www.ttgasia.com



Log on to our site to grab more live coverage of PATA Travel Mart

Indonesia spells out 16-16-7

Tour operators applaud efforts to develop alternative destinations beyond Bali

By Brian Higgs

INDONESIA has embarked on an ambitious initiative that will see the country concentrate on 16 core markets, 16 tourism destinations and products, and seven special interest segments from now till 2014.

Nia Niscaya, director of international tourism promotion, Ministry of Tourism & Creative Economy, told the *Daily* that infrastructure and transportation networks would be enhanced across 16 areas designated as National Tourism Strategic Sites. Of these, five have been earmarked for priority development next year, namely Bromo-Tengger-Semeru, Komodo, Wakatobi, Toraja and Sanur.

Roads, seaports and airports will be spruced up or built, while tourism villages will be constructed in selected areas. Destination Management Organisations will also be appointed to coordinate improvement works, and to educate local communities on the benefits of tourism.

"While Indonesia is blessed to have Bali, we believe that



Niscaya: more combi packages

Bali already has enough draw power and doesn't need additional promotions. We want to develop and promote other products and destinations in Indonesia beyond Bali," said Niscaya.

"By making it more convenient for tourists to visit these areas, we hope to increase the variety of choices available and boost visitors' experience in Indonesia. Hopefully, they will be encouraged to extend their stay beyond Bali, while tour operators will be keen to launch more packages combining multiple destinations within the country."

Armed with a US\$53.7 million marketing budget for 2012 – more than double of what was formerly allocated – the ministry will focus its overseas promotional efforts in the 16 key sources of Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, China, Taiwan,

Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, the Middle East, the US, the UK, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Russia.

The destinations under development will be highlighted at various travel tradeshows and sales missions, while fam trips for travel consultants and media will be organised. The ministry will also ramp up marketing efforts through traditional and social media channels.

Seven special interest segments have also been previously identified: culture and heritage; nature and ecotourism; recreational sports such as diving, surfing, sailing, trekking, hiking and golf; cruises; culinary and shopping; health and wellness; and MICE.

Indonesian tour operators welcomed the move to develop alternative products besides Bali.

Fernando Sutanto, inbound supervisor, Mitra Global Holiday, said: "There are many Indonesian cities that are interesting, such as Jogjakarta, which is similar to Bali. For the Philippine market, we are currently only

able to sell Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Bali and Jogjakarta, since we are hampered by limited flight connectivity. The Philippines and Indonesia also tend to be quite similar in terms of shopping and nightlife, so being able to highlight something different, such as tradition and culture, would appeal to Filipinos."

Herman Rukmanadi, managing director, Bhara Tours, said: "I encourage potential clients to visit destinations such as Sumatra or Sulawesi before heading to Bali to end off their visit. (However), these (destinations) mostly entail special interest tours in authentic natural surroundings, so visitors can't expect luxurious accommodation."

While Umberto Cadamuro, director of operations & business development, Pacto, said the company had already begun tapping the beyond-Bali market since 2005, he said the additional exposure would be crucial. "Areas such as Sumba, Sumbawa, Komodo Island, Flores and Kalimantan are operating way below their potential," Cadamuro said.

SWISS starts S'pore-Zurich

NATIONAL carrier Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS) will begin daily non-stop flights between Singapore and Zurich in May 2013.

Departing Singapore at 23.05, the plane will land in Zurich at 06.10 the following day. The flight leaves Zurich at 22.45 to reach Singapore at 17.10 the next day on the return leg.

The 219-seater Airbus 340-300 will service the route. Flights will be available for booking on SWISS' website and all further reservations channels and outlets from October 8 onwards.

"Singapore is one of Switzerland's most important intercontinental markets, and one that has seen constant growth over the past few years. By providing our new daily service to Singapore, we aim to meet this substantial demand," said Magdalene Ong, country manager Singapore, SWISS.

Switzerland Tourism has also recognised the importance of South-east Asia and Australia, and has strengthened its presence in the region by opening a Singapore office in June, and placing representatives at embassies in Jakarta and Malaysia.

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Asia high on Phil's radar

By Marianne Carandang

ASIAN destinations continue to command high interest among Philippine tourists, with Hong Kong and Singapore at the top of the list.

"The mainstream destinations are Hong Kong and Singapore, simply because of flight frequencies," said Tim Tio, sales and outbound marketing manager, Travelite Travel & Tours Philippines.

Philippine arrivals to Hong Kong grew 15.6 per cent year-on-year from January to July 2012. Singapore welcomed 677,681 Philippine visitors in 2011 – slightly more than Hong Kong's 659,829 – and has 154 flights from the Philippines compared to Hong Kong's 148 as of last month.

According to Philippine travel consultants, Resorts World Sentosa and Universal Studios were Singapore's main drawcards in 2011, while the new Legoland in Johor Bahru and the upcoming Hello Kitty attraction also provide selling points.

"I am already selling Legoland tours through my Singapore operator, and transfers can be done from any hotel in Singapore to Legoland and back," said Alex Divinagracia, general manager at GlobalWings Travel & Tours, Philippines.

However, a 25.6 per cent drop in Philippine arrivals to Malaysia in 2011 –

362,101 – has prompted Tourism Malaysia (TM) to adopt a more aggressive stance this year by launching product seminars in Manila, Clark, Cebu and Davao, as well as tactical promotions for the F1 Malaysia Grand Prix and MICE groups. Numbers seem to be bouncing back: Philippine arrivals to Malaysia reached 43,423 in June 2012 versus 26,493 in June 2011.

New airlines and higher frequencies have also helped, said TM marketing executive, Katrina Bianca Tamayo. Airphil Express, Zest Air and SEAair started flying to Malaysia this year, while Cebu Pacific Air is launching flights from Cebu to Kuala Lumpur in December.

Meanwhile, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is attracting ecotourists from the Philippines to areas like Krabi, Khao Lak, Koh Chang and Koh Kood.

According to Kanok Kittika Kritwutikon, TAT director for the Philippines and Singapore, a six-agency consortium was formed last year to sell Krabi, while this year's strategy is to position Thailand as a gateway to Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. TAT also works with the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau to woo the golf segment.

Thailand's arrivals from the Philippines grew 8.9 per cent from 2010 to reach 268,375 visitors last year.

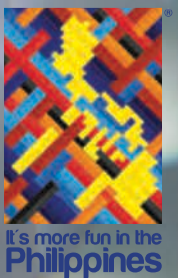
"The number one destination (for Filipinos) is still Hong Kong because of advertising and promotions, especially for first-timers and children – who always want to go to Disneyland."

Alex Divinagracia

General manager, GlobalWings Travel & Tours Philippines

Clowning around. More fun in the Philippines

Basura dive site in Anilao, Batangas
Photo courtesy of the 6th Celebrate the Sea Festival



Keeping up the momentum

PATA Travel Mart's second day continues to see a flurry of exchanges on the floor. Photos by Patrick Tan



Seri Pacific Hotel Kuala Lumpur's Mohan Bhanu and Eva Cheong



Above: Hong Kong delegates



Themed Attractions Malaysia's Olivia Ooi and Wan Mahsuri Wan Ahmad Kamal

Right: (seated) Great Destinations US' Nancy Gimblin, Toshali Tours and Travels India's Harihar Patra, and Nathalie Bossant; (standing) Odisha Tourism's Vanna Rodrigo, Nikhil Bansal, Regine Ann Reveche and Jitendra Mohanty



As the first five Star luxury resort in Labuan Bajo-Flores, The Jayakarta Suites Komodo-Flores offers a beautiful beach on one side and an amazing mountain scenery on the other side. Labuan Bajo, Flores is a gateway to the Komodo island, one of new seven wonders of the world.

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Best Western Premier F1 Hotel Philippines' Jim Eric Cristobal, Westchester Travel US' Luisa Yu and Best Western Phangan-buri Resort Thailand's Purimprach Sangkaew



Megatrade Hall (MH) Philippines' Thel Gomez, High Flyer India's Shrvan Bhalla and MH Philippines' Alphonse Estacio

Below: Egyptian Tourism Office's Adel El Masry, TTG Asia Media Singapore's Katherine Ng and Nature Travel Egypt's Gasser Anwar Riad



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River of tourism dreams

Kuching's push to invigorate its waterfront has boosted its destination appeal, writes **S Puvaneswary**

The Kuching Waterfront, along the Sarawak River that flows through the heart of the city, was recently given a RM14 million (US\$4.5 million) makeover by the Tourism Ministry.

Completed early this year, the extended Kuching Waterfront is now 2km long, with a new 380m walkway linking the Riverbank Suite condominium on one end to the musical fountain on the other.

The revitalised waterfront has spurred several riverside properties to embark on similar renovation projects.

The Riverside Shopping Complex (RSC), built in 1993, underwent a overhaul in November 2011 to "enhance the shopping experience", said Talib Zulpilip, chairman of Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), whose subsidiary Sara Urusharta manages the mall.

SEDC has also upgraded other properties in its portfolio, including the five-star Riverside Majestic Hotel and the four-star Grand Margherita Hotel, which unveiled a new outdoor bistro, Macam Macam, earlier this year.

Hilton Kuching, another stalwart on the city's hospitality scene, also renovated its rooms and meeting facilities last year.

The improvements to the Kuching

Waterfront would help in selling the destination to international tourists, said Diethelm Travel (Sarawak) assistant general manager P Panch, while the refurbished hotels would also appeal to MICE organisers who are particular about the proper maintenance of facilities, rooms and meeting spaces. "If (the hotel standards) are not up to their expectations, they will choose another destination."

He added: "Macam Macam Bistro and other eateries along the waterfront provide alternative dining spots for MICE delegates, especially when not all meals are provided by the organiser."

Borneo Convention Centre Kuching's (BCKK) CEO, Paul D'Arcy, revealed that the jetty currently being built near the centre was scheduled to be completed by this year-end. Once ready, delegates can travel by river taxis from their waterfront hotels to BCKK.

D'Arcy said: "It will be a novelty. The short boat ride of less than half an hour will provide a scenic view of the city and (a peek into) the lifestyles of the locals."

Meanwhile, Sarawak River Cruise's 39m boat has been revamped to include more amenities, including a bar on the lower deck.

Viewpoints

Malaysia

Compiled by
S Puvaneswary



Philip Schaetz
Senior vice president,
sales & marketing
Kosmopolito Hotels International

We will raise our average rates to counter the slight expected dip in occupancy. Asian travellers comprise 60 per cent of our business, so we are less dependent on other feeder markets. We are cautiously optimistic of growing our RevPar.

Our rates can be optimised further, through a strategic shift of business to direct channels that deliver bottom-line savings and have positive impact on our average rate.

We will be subjected to potential cost-cutting by our corporate clients and leisure consumers. Human resource will continue to be a challenge as talents in our sector are in high demand. Natural disasters and epidemic outbreaks will impact our industry but these lie beyond our control.



Brendan Wong
Director of sales & marketing
Melia Kuala Lumpur

After a very slow start to the year, things have started to pick up in June and July. As for the next six months, we remain optimistic that business will continue to improve.

Rates will remain the same as most contracts are already locked in until March 2013.

Human resource is a key issue – we do not have enough skilled manpower. Each time a new hotel opens, musical chairs will start and new staff will have to be hired and retrained. Malaysians are also less keen on labour-intensive jobs such as waitering and housekeeping.



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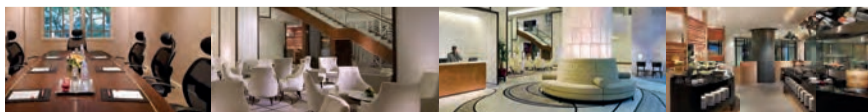
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What is your biggest concern in the next six months?

What would you like to see happening to rates in the next six months?

What is your business outlook for the next six months?

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KL Tan
Managing director
Borneo Trails

It will not be as good as 2011. The continued volatility in Europe, the slow recovery of the US economy and the slow-down in East Asian economies, among others, will impact tourist arrivals to Malaysia.

All stakeholders, from airlines to hotels to tour operators, should look into tactical and promotional rates to stimulate the market.

The implementation of the RM800 minimum wage from January 1, 2013 will adversely affect all service providers. Employers will need to restructure remuneration packages while ensuring the destination remains competitive compared to neighbouring countries at the same time.



Arokia Das Anthony
Senior manager
Luxury Tours Malaysia

3Q2012 will be sluggish while the momentum will step up in the last quarter. The Indian inbound market will do well as Malaysia Airlines has added more flights to Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru.

I would love to have rates increase by at least 15 per cent as Malaysia is generally undersold.

Staffing and air access are my major worries. Getting experienced staff with good work ethics and a 'can do' attitude is tough. Malaysia Airlines and AirAsia X had suspended some international flights early this year to stem losses, and that was a great let-down for me and the travel trade in general.

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Rising with the cruising tide

Cruise is one of Indonesia's tourism pillars, and Benoa will be the centre of it. **Mimi Hudoyo** reports

Cruise has been designated as one of the special interest tour segments by Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, and Bali's Benoa Harbour is at the heart of these developments.

Bali welcomed its first large ship when the 264m long Legend of Seas made a call last January. However, "There were other large ships...but they were unable to berth as the channel was not wide or deep enough for the ships," said Pelindo III Benoa Port Authority general manager Iwan Sabatini.

But the winds of change are blowing in Bali. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and port authorities are laying the ground to make Benoa Harbour a turnaround destination.

On the importance of cruises, Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Mari Elka Pangestu said: "Cruise tourism has grown rapidly in the last four years. We are optimistic that the



Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy

Benoa Harbour is being expanded to cater to bigger ships

trend will continue."

Work is now underway to widen the Bali channel to 150m and deepen the channel and the basin (berth depth) to LWS (lower water shallow) 12m, said Sabatini. Rocks surrounding the entry channel of Buoy III, are also being removed to allow large ships of more than 265m to pass

safely. "We expect that in 2013 we will be able to accommodate bigger ships here," he said.

Benoa currently has two wharfs, with the 295-metre East Wharf equipped for cruise ships including a 1,300m² passenger terminal. The South Wharf, originally a cargo wharf, can also be set up for a cruise ship if two

ships called at the same time, said Sabatini.

A four-trillion rupiah (US\$425.5 million) project is also in the works to develop the marina to accommodate up to 200 yachts per day, and recreational facilities such as swimming pools. Covering an area of 180,000m², the marina is expected to begin operations in 2013.

Of all the port calls in Indonesia, Bali makes up about 40 per cent of cruise passenger traffic and 24 per cent of cruise calls.

There was a total of 176 cruise calls and 112,882 passengers in Indonesia last year. This year the number is up at 199 calls and 118,834 passengers.

Bali Prestige Tours & Travel Specialists president director, Elly Malaihollo, said: "Bali is definitely the number one destination for cruises in Indonesia and cruise operators have been waiting for facilities and regulations for a turnaround port to be ready."

Destination Asia Indonesia managing director, Sediya Yasa, said that having turnaround cruises would be good for the hotel market, which had seen a rapid growth in the number of rooms, while visitors would also get to see more of Bali.

Groundhandlers expect the Australian market to boom with it. According to Pangetsu, Australia contributes some 40 per cent of cruise calls to Indonesia and is projected to reach one million by 2020.

"So this is a big market and there is a bigger potential to be tapped," she said.

Commenting on the possibility of overcrowding in Bali, Yasa said the Ngurah Rai airport is being expanded, and a toll road connecting Nusa Dua-Airport-Benoa is expected to be finished in 2013.

"By the time facilities in Benoa are done, Bali will also be ready to accommodate cruise passengers," he said.



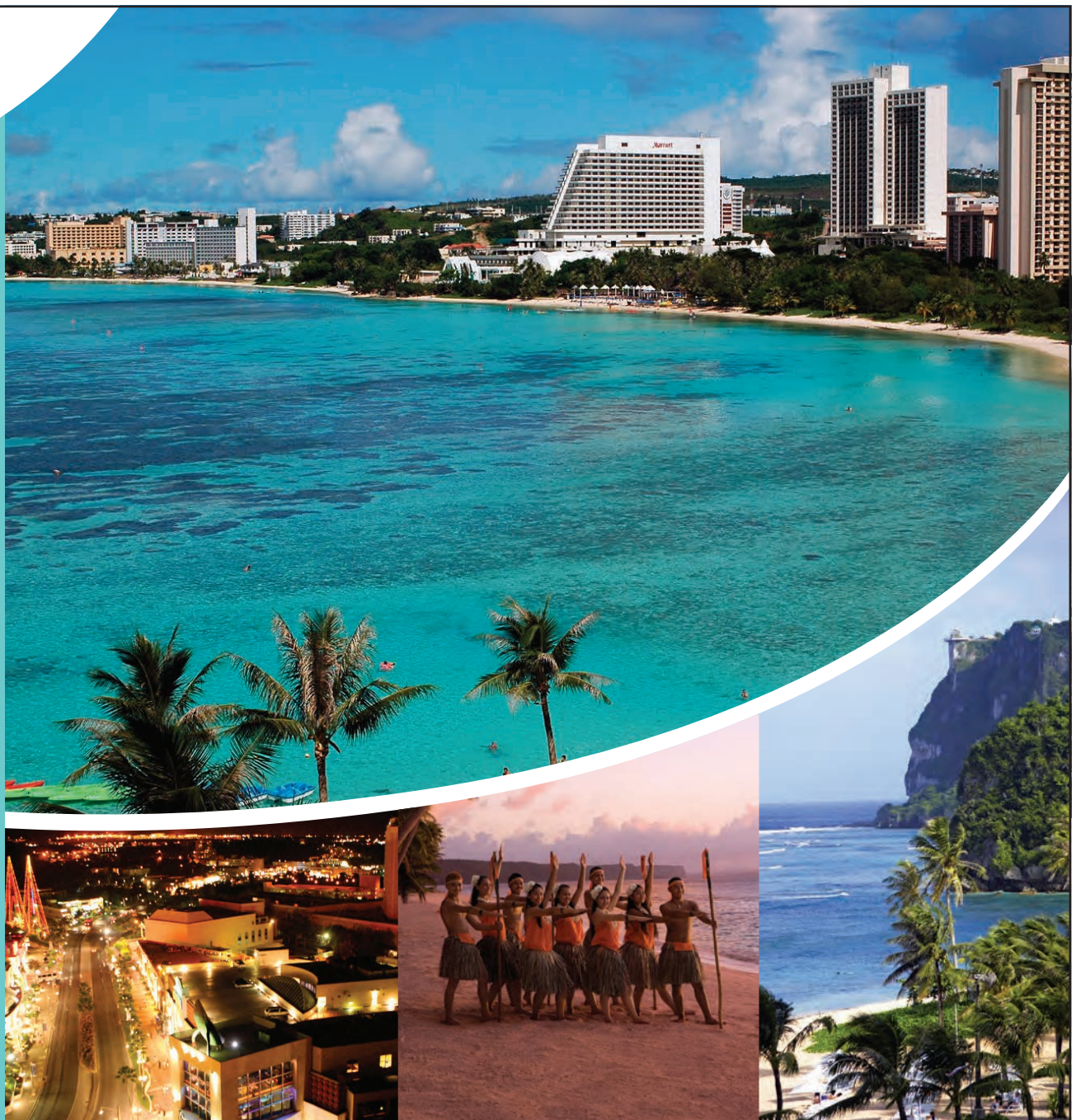
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VISITGUAM.ORG



Viewpoints

Indonesia

Compiled by
Mimi Hudoyo



Marc Steinmeyer
President director
TAUZIA Hotel Management

What is your business outlook for the next six months?

We will be launching a new brand at ITB Asia, and opening more Pop! Hotels and Harris Hotels. By end 2012 we will have 19 in operation and 66 under construction under TAUZIA, and probably a first Harris brand in KL.

What would you like to see happening to rates in the next six months?

I expect a slight drop in rates of between five and ten per cent, especially in Bali, and maybe a drop in occupancy due to new supply coming online. (The latter) can further impact (rates) in 2013.

What is your biggest concern in the next six months?

Decreases in rates and occupancy while the cost of human resource rises. However, we remain confident that demand will catch up over the next two to three years. We will stick to maintaining brand consistency and quality of service.



Keith Bell
General manager
Sanur Paradise Plaza Hotel & Suites

The outlook is strong for Sanur Paradise Plaza Hotel & Suites. We have received a lot of MICE bookings, leisure markets in the region are doing well, and Europe is doing surprisingly well.

Our hotel still stacks up very well against our competition in Bali in terms of value for money. Furthermore, Bali has so much to offer for guests from all parts of the world.

There is a lot of infrastructure improvement going on at the moment – the airport expansion and two large bypass and toll way road systems. These will have a positive impact (on tourism) upon completion next year. Inconvenience to visitors has been limited thus far.



Ismail Ali
Executive director
Marintur Indonesia

We hope to see more business in the next six months. Business from Europe is up, the Middle Eastern market should improve, and incentive movements from ASEAN, India and Pakistan markets are doing well, especially for Bali.

Rates will stay as contract rates for 2012 are valid until October. We expect a normal increase of five to eight per cent for 2013 but with more hotels are coming up in Bali, rates may remain unchanged.

We've been talking about accessibility, and more airports are being built, but how many airlines has that drawn in? The government should appoint several main gateways and stick to really developing facilities as hubs to the surrounding areas.



Adjie Wahjono
Surabaya operations manager
Aneka Kartika Tours & Travel Services

The second half of the year looks fine. We anticipate bleak outcomes from our traditional European market and intensified marketing and promotions in the region. Additional routes by South-east Asian airlines have created new markets.

Rates are high in big cities with strong domestic and MICE markets, but it is now easier to find rooms in new hotels in smaller cities. More capacity and new properties mean competitive rates and services.

The government may stop subsidising fuel (which they have delayed since last April). Fuel costs will increase and impact our tour operating costs, as the (selling) price has already been set until March 2013. We will need to be prudent in managing costs.

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ADVENTURE TRAVEL

Sick of run-of-the-mill, same-old itineraries, experience-seeking Asian travellers are snapping up action-packed holidays that deliver on novelty and give them bragging rights.

At the PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart 2012 in Bhutan in February, the US-based Adventure Travel Trade Association reported that international adventure tourism was valued as a US\$89 billion industry in 2010, growing at an estimated 17 per cent a year versus just four per cent for mainstream tourism.

Europe and the US still constitute the bulk of adventure travellers globally, but there are clear indications that a small but mushrooming number of seasoned Asian travellers now desire such trips.

"There is certainly huge potential in the Asian market as we're currently seeing double-digit growth in the region," said G Adventures Canada managing director Australia and New Zealand, Pete Rawley.

One reason was the rise of a media- and travel-savvy generation that must be kept excited, said Cathy Thang, managing director, Green Island Tours Singapore. She explained: "Exposure to traditional media and other



Explore new frontiers

Adventure travel is taking centre stage, as travellers are embarking on exotic journeys and cultural experiences instead of seeking mass tourism, discovers **Linda Haden**

new media creates a multiplier effect, motivating experienced Asian travellers to look for new, exciting destinations to explore, particularly where they can recharge their batteries and reconnect with nature."

While Asia still remains the most popular for such ventures, there is also demand for destinations farther afield.

According to Mr Rawley, 40 per cent of the firm's Asian clients travel within the region, with Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia being particularly popular; another 30 per cent head to Latin America; and the rest are spread equally across Europe, Africa and North America.

A spokesperson for Intrepid Travel Australia added that the top three choices for Asian adventure travellers were India, Nepal and Peru.

Sunil Sakya, chairman, KGH Group of Hotels, Resorts and Travels Nepal, told the *Daily* that Asians preferred "softer activities such as hiking, canoeing and visiting cultural or religious sites, although some might opt for short treks lasting one to two days and easy river rafting". Stays tend to be in luxurious properties at one fixed location, with an average duration of seven days.

He added that business volume from Asia grew by 15-20 per

towards
new altitudes



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cent in 2011 compared to just 10 per cent for both Europe and the US.

Willem Niemeijer, co-founder and CEO of Khiri Travel Group Thailand, underscored that in order to nurture a love for adventure holidays among Asians, educating customers about new destinations outside the main tourist trails was essential. Operators should also develop itineraries that offer “a combination of sightseeing to religious and cultural sites and soft adventures like zip lines that give Asian customers the adrenaline rush, but without the worry (of safety hazards),” he said.

G Adventures’ Rawley believes that clients need to know that adventure travel is not just about extreme activities such as long treks and bungee jumping.

Eco Adventures Worldwide Singapore managing director, Timothy Tan, noted that a big plus point about the market was its general immunity to economy fluctuations. Decisions were based on “the potential and ability of a destination to ignite positive, emotive connotations”, he explained.

Said Tan: “Adventure travellers are a psychographic group and thus cannot be defined by demographic parameters alone. (Travel providers should focus

on) a brilliant portfolio of products that captures the romance of travel.”

Who's up for an adventure?

Japan

Emerging as a key market for adventure travel in the 90s, Japan remains a major Asian source today.

Freme Travel Services Brunei’s manager inbound & MICE division, Sugumar Nair, said the company handled 3,000-4,000 Japanese visitors every year and this was expected to grow by 20 per cent this year, as there had been talk of new flights between the two countries.

“Soft ecotourism, encompassing trekking and rafting are high on the agenda for Japanese adventure travellers to Brunei, and most prefer mid- to high-end accommodation,” he explained, saying that they favoured customised itineraries.

Masaru Takayama, president, Spirit of Japan Travel said he would send out some 200 pax on such trips each year, with last year seeing a 25 per cent jump, driven partly by the appreciation of the yen.

He explained that because



Chan Brothers Travel

Japanese-speaking guides were necessary for such trips and not all destinations were able to provide this, itineraries were limited.

“By and large, the Japanese prefer Asian destinations including Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand,

Borneo and Indonesia. Their stays last for about four to five days on average, and most prefer upmarket accommodation. Activities carried out (by the Japanese) are overwhelmingly soft, such as short treks and rafting.”

Singapore

A growing interest in authentic adventure holidays among Singaporeans has caught the attention of even mass-market out-bound travel companies.

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franchise last year selling an array of adventure-oriented itineraries, Chan Brothers Travel had seen brisk business so far, said its director of business development, Mary Kheng. Sales are expected to rise by 50 per cent this year.

Chan's World Holidays has introduced a 13-day Trans-Siberian Experience featuring three nights onboard the longest railway in the world; a 10-day Antarctica Adventure which includes a cruise; and a range of cycling packages in Taiwan, Cambodia and China lasting from six to eight days.

Eco Adventures Worldwide Singapore managing director Mr Tan said cycling, diving and gentle rafting topped the wish list of travellers.

Singaporeans, he said, were heading to the Himalayas, Indonesia and Christmas Island.

His company has gone from fewer than 50 bookings five years ago to around 300-400 bookings annually now.

"The majority of my clients are well-travelled. For them, going on (adventure) trips is not

about cultivating status at all. Singaporeans who seek adventure simply want to immerse themselves in new experiences that they can take back with them," said Mr Tan.

China

Chinese travellers are increasingly opting for adventure packages, although the trend is still in its infancy.

Jens Thraenhardt, president of digital marketing agency Dragon Trail China and PATA China Board chairman, observed: "Unlike Western adventure travellers that are motivated by the cultural and activity possibilities in a destination, Chinese adventure travellers are still overwhelmingly motivated by status. That is, travel that bestows bragging rights."

However, he added that individuals from the top-tier cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou were becoming "more aware of adventure and ecotourism", making them potential sources of future adventure tourists.

In a report published by Xola Consulting in 2008, the firm suggested that travel consultants



should consider developing itineraries incorporating food- and shopping-related activities, led by Chinese-speaking guides.

India

Despite its mammoth potential, India continues to lag behind

more mature markets when it comes to taking adventurous journeys.

Khiri Travel co-founder and CEO Mr Niemeijer, said: "There is some demand from Indians, but this is growing at a slow pace."

"Overall, about 20-25 per cent

of our Indian market goes for an adventure-type activity during their trip.

"However, this is often only for a day."



Undiscovered places offer sense of adventure, novelty



Darren Ng

Bhutan

The exclusive Kingdom of Bhutan is working towards transforming itself into a year-round destination, while encouraging tourists to venture beyond the well-worn trails surrounding Thimpu, Paro and Punakha, especially to rural areas in the south and east.

Star-rated hotels and more airports are being developed across the country, making the kingdom more accessible. Two domestic airports – Yonphula in Tashigang, east of Bhutan, and Bathpalathang in Bumthang, central Bhutan – have opened. They are served by national airline Druk Air and the country's first private airline Tashi Air, both of which commenced operations to the airports last December. Tashigang is known for its traditional arts and crafts, while Bumthang Valley is the spiritual hub of the nation and is home to its oldest Buddhist temples and monuments.

International visitors currently arrive during a five-and-a-half-month period, with the US and European markets more interested in Bhutan's treks and Asian ones attracted by its cultural offerings. Most tourists arrive in Paro, a small frontier town lying in Paro valley dotted by quaint villages. Paro is also the gateway to Bhutan's most prominent structure, Taksang Monastery (pictured), which is perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the valley floor.

The Trashi Chhoe Dzong (Fortress of the Glorious Religion) in enigmatic Thimpu, Bhutan's capital, is another must-visit. This imposing building, decorated with elaborate carvings and Buddhist symbols, now houses the offices of the king. – **Linda Haden**



La Verita Geographical Explorations of 2011 and City Government of Puerto Princesa, Aurkio and Picturserver

Palawan, Philippines

Once a backpackers' retreat, infrastructure improvements and a recent award achievement have helped the province find its way into travel guidebooks.

Three areas are popular: Busuanga, known for its limestone formations and shipwreck diving; Taytay, with its beach resorts; and Puerto Princesa, home to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed underground river (pictured), which created a buzz when it was named one of the New7Wonders of Nature in January.

Palawan's main airport in Puerto Princesa now has a dozen daily flights – up from one previously – while plans are in the pipeline to turn it into an international airport. The city also received its first four-star hotel last year, and more inventory will be added soon.

The area around the Puerto Princesa Underground River is a protected national forest park with a mountain-to-sea ecosystem of its own. Visitors will encounter a thick mangrove cover, karst limestone formations and emerald crystalline waters.

Up to two hours away is Sabang town, where the eight-kilometre long river is located. The cave offers views of stalactites and stalagmites and a rich eco-habitat with unique living species. Trips to the underground river are increasingly in such high demand that advance bookings are required due to a newly-imposed cap of 1,000 visitors a day.

Puerto Princesa offers supporting attractions such as a crocodile farm, a butterfly garden and zip lines. Honda Bay, with its unspoilt white sand beaches, six islands and dolphin watching possibilities, also deserves a day tour. – **Marianne Carandang**

ADVENTURE IN KUALA LUMPUR

Kuala Lumpur has some pretty well-kept secrets when it comes to adventure in the city. If you're pining for some thrilling action, here are our top picks:

Rock Climbing at Batu Caves

One of the most famous Hindu shrines in the world outside India, the Batu Cave temples attract millions of Hindu devotees during the annual Thaipusam festival. Yet, on the weekend, Batu Caves entices a different kind of devotee – rock climbing enthusiasts. Located just 13km north of Kuala Lumpur, climbers favour this 400-million-year-old limestone outcrop for its challenging cliffs and close to 200 routes, which have a whole range of difficulty-levels, and are perfect for all types of climbers, from novices to masters.

For information on climbing at Batu Caves, please visit www.vertical-adventure.com/batu-caves-selangor.html



ROCK CLIMBING: Challenging rock surfaces for all levels of skill.

Hiking up Mount Nuang

Towering at just above 1,490 metres, Mount Nuang has several entry points leading to its peak. Weekend warriors may choose to ascend from Hulu Langat, Janda Baik (Bukit Tinggi), or take on the popular Kemensah trail from Gombak, near Kuala Lumpur.

The hike is a five- to six-hour journey in good weather, but with significant rainfall, the trek takes longer over areas that have turned into muddy tracks, making it a difficult scramble up, or, if on the way down, one giant mudslide. For those inexperienced with tropical showers, this will be quite an eye-opener!

Still, Mount Nuang remains one of the more challenging routes, and a good way for visitors to familiarise themselves with the beauty and challenge of the Malaysian jungle terrain.

For more information, please visit <http://www.naturemalaysia.com/gunung-nuang.html>

Hiking up Bukit Tabur

Want to break a sweat and be back before lunchtime? Then take a hike at Bukit Tabur. Located at Taman Melawati, just a stone's throw away from the city centre, Bukit Tabur is part of the Klang Gate Quartz Ridge, which is also the biggest pure

quartz dyke in the world.

It's a picturesque hike with panoramic views of the city and a stretch of lush green jungle, brilliantly mirrored against the reservoir below. It's even more beautiful at sunrise!

Parts of the trail can be dangerous,

demanding hikers to do a little bit of unassisted rock climbing over visibly deep plunges – but with a healthy dose of caution, Bukit Tabur can be a short, yet thrilling hike.

For more information, please visit <http://www.vertical-adventure.com/hiking-bukit-tabur.html>

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MOUNTAIN CLIMBING:

The granite peak of Mount Kinabalu, Sabah.



JUNGLE TREKKING:

Canopy walk at Taman Negara National Park, Pahang.



CAVING:

The magnificent formations at Gunung Mulu National Park, Sarawak.

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Birth of a tourism giant

Marianne Carandang tracks the progress of the country's latest tourism gem, Entertainment City

The first of four integrated resort (IR) projects at the highly anticipated Entertainment City – a 961,937m² complex located along Manila Bay and the largest privately funded project of this scale in the Philippines – is getting ready to open in early 2013, in what is seen as a serious jumpstart for the destination's leisure tourism and MICE development.

According to Philippine Gaming and Amusements Corporation (PAGCOR) vice president for gaming and licensing development, Francis Hernando, Bloomberry Resorts expects to open Solaire Manila by the end of 1Q2013 – or as is rumoured, by Chinese New Year in February – with 495 luxury rooms, a casino, and a portion of its retail space.

Late last year, PAGCOR raised the minimum investment and hotel room requirements to US\$1 billion and 800 rooms, respectively. The upgrade in "critical mass" was needed to compete



Solaire Resort & Casino

Solaire Manila, one of the projects in Entertainment City

with regional players such as Macau and Singapore, he said.

The new requirements delayed at least two of the four projects – Bloomberry's Solaire Manila and Belle Entertainment's Belle Grande Manila Bay. The latter appeared ready to open first by mid-2012, with plans for 1,100 rooms across six hotels by end 2013, together with 19,626m² of casino space. Last July, it agreed to finalise a partnership with Macau-based Melco Crown En-

tertainment, which may bring in up to US\$580 million in investments to its venture.

Meanwhile, Bloomberry has renegotiated terms, and PAGCOR has met them halfway. "We've given Bloomberry permission to open, and have asked them to accelerate their plans to complete the additional rooms (required)," said Hernando. An all-suite complex is in the conceptualisation stage, to be built alongside Solaire's existing hotel

tower over the span of another 12-18 months.

"Given the entry of new investors, we expect (Belle) to also open by end 2013 or early 2014," Hernando added.

Kazuo Okada's US\$2.3 billion Manila Bay Resorts project under Universal Entertainment Corp is expected to come online by 2014, with 2,050 keys and 28,000m² of gaming space, while Travellers International plans to open the 2,800-key Resorts World Bayshore by 2015 or 2016.

Concerns linger about the country's capacity to absorb tourists because of flight congestion issues at Manila's international airport and a lack of hotel rooms. Under the Department of Tourism's (DoT) 2012-2016 National Tourism Development Plan, 50,867 rooms are needed to accommodate the NTO's target of 10 million visitors by 2016.

But DoT is optimistic about the boost the IR will provide. "When you look at the success that Resorts World Manila (the

city's first IR, which opened in August 2009) has generated, you can imagine the success of Entertainment City, and what it can offer as a must-see destination," said DoT assistant secretary for tourism planning and promotions Benito Bengzon, Jr.

Arnie Bayag, managing director at Blue Horizons Travel and Tours, said that the rise of Entertainment City would improve Manila's overall image and attract more people to the country.

Marlene Insigne, tours division manager for Southeast Travel Corp, looks forward to the addition of six- and seven-star hotels. "Some US and European guests say that the deluxe property we put them in is not 'deluxe' enough," she said.

"We expect to deliver 3,500-5,000 rooms to serve one million when Entertainment City is ready," Hernando said. "(This will) cover 10 per cent of the arrivals target by 2016, and provide up to 10 per cent of new rooms needed by 2016."

Viewpoints

Philippines

Compiled by Marianne Carandang



Cristina Ong-Cruz
Director of marketing
The Peninsula Manila

Although the market remains price sensitive, due to the EU monetary crisis and the China-Philippines territorial dispute, the outlook for the next six months shows growth, as investments flourish. As the host for the PATA Travel Mart, the country is positioning itself as a major MICE destination to improve the MICE market.

Room rates have been healthy and we would like this to continue. I think hotels will look at increasing rates by at least five per cent to cover inflation. Hotels look at at RevPar as a true measure of growth. Our hotel year-to-date RevPar achieved a 8.7 percentage change versus last year.

We have three main concerns: increasing electricity costs, as it affects our bottom-line revenues; talent acquisition, as talents move to join the competition with the opening of other hotels; and sustaining market share, as most corporate offices mandate cost-cutting.



Anna Maria Dolor-Fernandez
Director of sales and marketing
Oakwood Premier Joy~Nostalg Center Manila

We are optimistic as we are entering the peak period from October onwards. There has been a slight drop in the long stay segment for Q3, but our short stay business remains consistent. Several conventions have been booked in the Ortigas Business District area from October onwards, and this will surely boost occupancy in the area.

Our property was successful in increasing our average rate by 10 per cent from last year and we would like to hold on to the same rate increase in the next six months.

There will always be concerns and challenges affecting our business. One concern which can affect business is the Scarborough Shoal standoff with China. If China continues stand firm and does not agree to settle the dispute, then this will definitely have a negative effect on the business climate.



Cesar R Cruz
President
T.R.I.P.S. Travel

Still good – we are keeping the momentum we've established over the last five years. The DoT should be going more full-blast with their media campaign anytime now. We expect this to be a good year for us.

There are a lot of emerging properties in Manila, and an increase in room capacity is good for the leisure market. If we have a higher room capacity, our rates might become more competitive in relation to our ASEAN neighbours.

Hopefully, additional international flights, the progress (we're witnessing) in Congress regarding the common carrier tax issue, and the upgrading of our airports will address one of our biggest setbacks – accessibility. If there's an increase in flight capacity, this year's arrivals target for the Philippines is achievable.



Arnie Bayag
Managing director
Blue Horizons and Travel

We are on target with our budget for this year. We expect a few surprises, maybe an improvement in our forecast, if the travel advisory in China (against the Philippines) is lifted. We are doing well in the Russian market.

We would like them to remain steady. Hotels are not likely to increase them by the end of the year so there aren't likely to be any changes. Gas and electricity prices are going up, but I think hotels will maintain their rates because of the increased competition. Many hotels have just opened.

Well, if the weather situation we experienced in early August – the rain and flooding – persists, that would be a big concern for us. Otherwise, everything seems on the right track – new hotels are coming up; our tourism campaign is doing well. Things look very positive.

What is your business outlook for the next six months?

What would you like to see happening to rates in the next six months?

What is your biggest concern in the next six months?

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Meet the buyers



DMASIA
Bastiaan Bruning
Director

Who are you? Bastiaan Bruning, director at dmASIA. I'm from the Netherlands and I've been in Asia for four years now.

What do you do? We aim to lead the Asian luxury travel industry to a higher service and quality level.

What are you shopping/looking for at the show this year? I hope to meet potential local groundhandling suppliers in

India, learn more about destination India, its possibilities, and see what the current status of luxury inbound travel is.

What is your pet peeve at trade shows? Exhibitors who don't do research before their pre-scheduled appointments (PSA). Also annoying: paper! We live in the digital age, trade shows should be paperless. Save the forests!

MONTREAL EVENT PLANNER



Daniela Caputo
Founder and owner

Who are you? My name is Daniela Caputo, founder and owner of an incentive and corporate events agency called Montreal Event Planner.

What do you do? We are a full-service special events agency, focusing on corporate and celebratory events, for which we provide logistical support.

What are you shopping/looking for at the show this year? We hope to connect, expand, explore and rediscover strategic partners.

What is your pet peeve at trade shows? When booths are not clearly marked or easily identified.

SHAM TOURS



Ousama Al-Hosni
General manager

Who are you? Ousama Al-Hosni from Sham Tours, Kuwait.

What do you do? We are a retail travel agency.

What are you shopping/looking for at the show this year? I hope to meet tour operators, groundhandling agents and hoteliers, and find out what's recent in travel, and tourism and new destinations.

What is your pet peeve at trade shows? None.

LAC HONG VOYAGES



Robert Tan
Marketing development director

Who are you? I am the marketing development director of Lac Hong Voyages, Robert Tan.

What do you do? Our agency specialises in inbound, outbound, ticketing, land arrangements and MICE.

What are you shopping/looking for at the show this year? New products such as eco-tourism and new places of interests. I also want to meet new service suppliers.

What is your pet peeve at trade shows? People who waste our PSA time and who aren't serious about the discussion.



Juanita Collins, Sales Manager.
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Meet the sellers



Ministry Of Tourism And Creative Economy, Republic Of Indonesia

MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CREATIVE ECONOMY, REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

What are you promoting at the mart this year: As an NTO, we will be collaborating with Indonesian tourism entities for PATA 2012 to offer packages and products for our 13 new Destinations Beyond Bali: Medan-Toba, Jakarta-Kepulauan Seribu, Borobudur-Jogjakarta, Bromo-Malang, Bali-Nusa Lembongan, Lombok-Gili Tramen, Komodo-Ruteng, Kelimutu-Maumere, Palangkaraya-Tanjung Puting, Toraja-Lore Rindu, Manado-Bunaken, Kendari-Wakatobi, and Sorong-Raja Ampat.

What's your booth number: D1

DANDARYI TRAVEL & TOURS, YANGON, MYANMAR

What are you promoting at the mart this year: Myanmar is a country overflowing with attractions — a history dating back centuries, rich cultural heritage, warm and friendly people and awe-inspiring natural beauty. Buddhism, the predominant religion, is reflected in the magnificent pagodas including the world famous Shwedagon Pagoda which contains the sacred hairs of Buddha.

Dandaryi Travel offers nature, culture and pilgrimage tours, adventure tours, trekking, diving and golf tours.

What's your booth number: A9



THE FARM AT SAN BENITO, BATANGAS, PHILIPPINES

What are you promoting at the mart this year: The Farm at San Benito specializes in a variety of Healing Retreats, such as Environmental Detox and Integrative Cancer Therapy. These week-long transformative and life-enhancing programs are supervised by highly-qualified experts in preventive health care, including integrative doctors and living food chefs, and are tailored to the individual guest, to help achieve optimum health, spiritual wellbeing and mental clarity. Visit www.thefarm.com.ph

What's your booth number: E5



THUNDERBIRD RESORTS, PHILIPPINES

What are you promoting at the mart this year: As a hospitality service provider in Asia and Latin America, we invite you to "Experience the Extraordinary" — mountains, beaches, golfing and gaming.

What's your booth number: E12



RESORTS WORLD MANILA, PHILIPPINES

What are you promoting at the mart this year: Remington Hotel at Resorts World Manila offers superb accommodation, great proximity from NAIA terminal 3, a winning location, and maximum fun.

What's your booth number: F9



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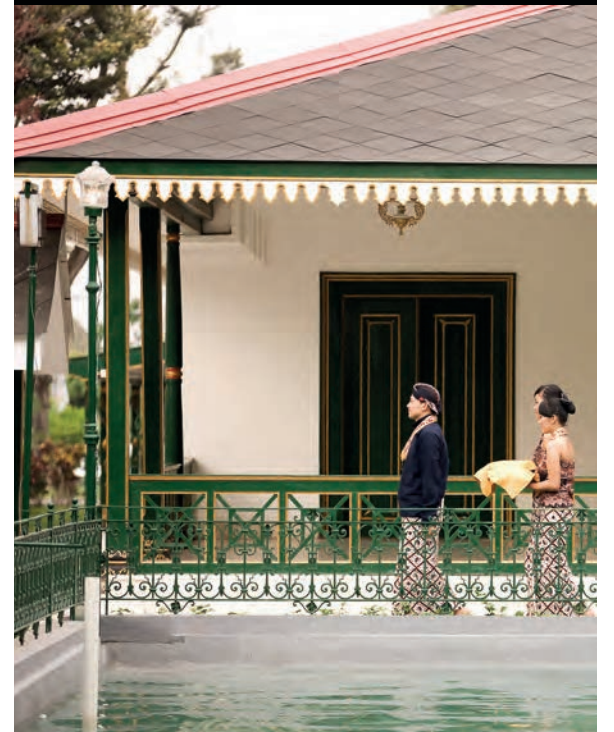
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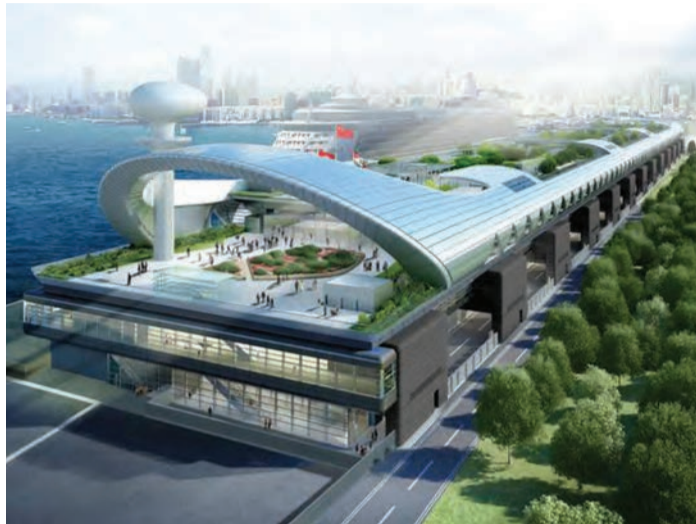
The new Kai Tak terminal fronts Hong Kong's ambitions to be a leading cruise hub. By **Prudence Lui**

Come mid-2013, the completion of the first berth at Kai Tak Cruise Terminal in East Kowloon is poised to strengthen Hong Kong's position as a regional cruise hub, as the new facility will be able to accommodate the world's largest cruise ships while heralding new business opportunities.

For 2012-2013, Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has allocated HK\$15.5 million (US\$2 million) to promote cruise tourism, a significant increase from the HK\$5.3 million budget in 2011-2012.

According to HKTB executive director, Anthony Lau, the board will rev up its cruise tourism promotion in the coming months, with the aim to further grow the potential of this sector.

He added: "We will cultivate the South China market, which has great potential (family and senior segments), and step up fly-cruise promotions in key source markets like the US and Australia."



Kai Tak Cruise Terminal is due to open in mid-2013

Momentous Asia's general manager, Doris Lam, hoped to see the creation of more new itineraries with the launch of the Kai Tak terminal. "The choice of routes has stayed the same over the years, either sailing south to Yalong Bay and Vietnam or up north to Xiamen and Shanghai. Unlike the Caribbean and the

Mediterranean where you can visit different places every day, the choices (here) are limited," she said.

MCI Hong Kong operations manager, Howard Chan, urged HKTB to drum up the visibility of the new terminal. "No news have been announced pertaining to (Kai Tak's) facilities, not

even updates about the appointment of new cruise operators. As cruise companies plan their routes one to two years in advance, HKTB should recruit more cruise professionals to build this business and kick off more incentives to draw traffic."

Addressing this issue, HKTB will facilitate itinerary development by organising a cruise forum and inviting key cruise executives to Hong Kong. The board will also establish new land tours and upgrade hospitality programmes, as well as to capitalising on major events and develop experiential activities such as art related walks and market hopping for cruise visitors.

Some trade players are optimistic that the new terminal will lift cruise tourism business.

Thrice the size of the existing Ocean Terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui, Kai Tak Cruise Terminal can berth mega cruise liners of over 150,000 tonnes, Regal Hotels International's area general manager (Hong Kong), John A

Girard, pointed out.

He said: "(Kai Tak) certainly gives Hong Kong an (added) opportunity to sell itself as a hop-on and hop-off destination for cruise passengers extending their pre- or post-cruise stays in Asia, as well as paving the way for Hong Kong, Macau and even Shenzhen to be promoted as joint stopover destinations."

"Each vessel brings in an average of 4,000 passengers, thus giving rise to pre- and post-cruise demands for hotels and daily land excursions."

Regal Oriental Hotel, the biggest property in the Kai Tak area, plans to leverage on its proximity to the new facility. In anticipation of the increased demand, the hotel's 439 guestrooms were recently given a makeover, while two extra floors of new guestrooms were added, said Girard.

Regal Hotel Group has also started discussions with HKTB, cruise companies and land operators for stays in 2013 and beyond, he added.

Viewpoints

Hong Kong

Compiled by Prudence Lui

What is your business outlook for the next six months?

What would you like to see happening to rates in the next six months?

What is your biggest concern in the next six months?



Thomas Ng
Director of sales & marketing
Crowne Plaza Hong Kong Kowloon East and Holiday Inn Express Hong Kong Kowloon East

Our outlook is positive. While arrivals from mainland China grew 21 per cent year-on-year from January to May 2012, Hong Kong will gain less from the positive Chinese arrivals in the second half, as arrivals will be boosted by the upcoming tradeshows and developing inbound markets like Russia.

Rates will go up reasonably when the corporate business season arrives, which brings different major trade events such as Hong Kong Electronics Fair in October and Cosmoprof Asia in November.

Staff recruitment is always a concern but we have had excellent results. Besides finding the right candidates with positive attitude, we offer them comprehensive job-related training programme. We also stress the importance of personal growth and career advancement, as we believe our staff drives the success of the hotel.



John A Girard
Area general manager (Hong Kong)
Regal Hotels International, and general manager of Regal Airport Hotel Meeting and Conference Centre

We are optimistic. The peak holiday season in July and August has boosted occupancy rates, while the trade fair season in September and October will benefit hotel business in Lantau, as many events are hosted at HKCEC and AsiaWorld-Expo. Long and shorthaul arrivals are likely to stay strong.

We expect strong longhaul and shorthaul arrivals to continue in the next six months, which will push hotel rates up by 10 per cent.

Finding the right talent is always a challenge. We believe that human resources play an important role in our hotel's success. This year we participated in the Hong Kong International Airport Job Expo 2012 to seek out more local talents.



Wing Wong
Managing director
W Travel Service

Growth will be maintained, with 2Q2012 performing better than the first half because of the traditional trade fair season through December. However, traffic for both longhaul and shorthaul leisure markets will be quieter as hotel rates are set to rise amid higher business travel demand.

While F&B prices remain stable, hotel rates have been fluctuating. Hopefully the situation will improve with hotels releasing contract rates in advance, as clients tend to book with short lead time nowadays.

Inflation incurred by fluctuating hotel rates. A key component of our tour costs, hotel rates are expected to increase by double digits to make up for their loss in 1H2012, which did not record good results. Hence, we encourage our clients to confirm their hotel bookings well in advance.



Michael Wu
Managing director
Gray Line Tours of Hong Kong

Both India and Taiwan may see a slight dip due to the sudden drop in air capacity from India while intensive cross-strait flights between China and Taiwan have affected Taiwanese traffic to Hong Kong – hopefully the impact will lessen with the launch of the visa-free policy for Taiwanese this month.

I hope hotel rates would not fluctuate so much like seafood prices. With more hotels opening in the near future, demand and supply will be more balanced. The slight drop in hotel rates for 1Q2012 has indicated a downward trend, so it would be nice to see rates going down further.

Manpower is my biggest concern. New hotel openings in recent years have tightened the labour pool as other tourism stakeholders like tour guides, retail and F&B firms are also competing for talent. Frankly, I sensed a drop in the city's service standards and if we do not take in new blood, we cannot maintain our world-class reputation.



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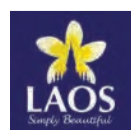
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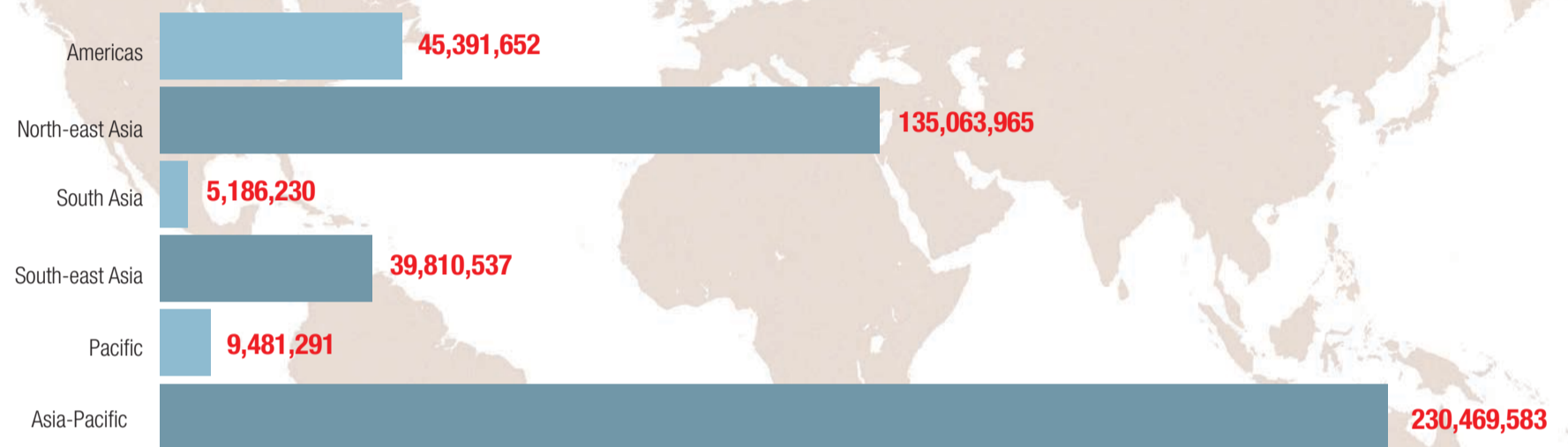
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Pacific Asia travel: the state of play 2012

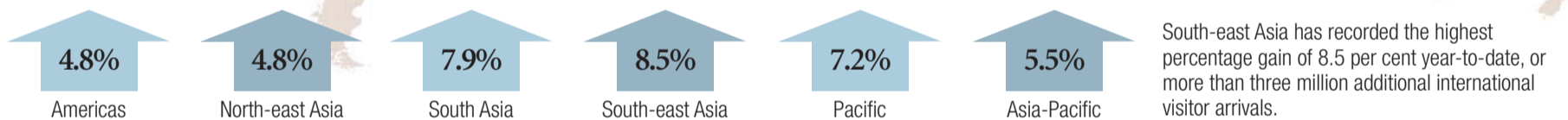
International arrivals within the region indicate that PATA's 2012 forecast is likely to hold true, analyses **John Koldowski**, special advisor to the CEO, PATA

Table 1: International visitor arrivals numbers 2012 (Year-to-date)



Source: PATA

Table 2: Percentage increase in arrivals by sub-region (year-to-date)



Source: PATA

At the time of writing, some 39 Asia-Pacific destinations have reported their international inbound performances. The tables above aggregate those figures into the sub-regional components that constitute the PATA area.

It should be noted that different destinations have reported at different periods to date, and even while there is no real uniformity in the reporting period, the data as collated above does represent a real year-on-year comparison.

Across all the destinations reporting arrivals year-to-date, year-on-year growth at 5.5 per cent relates positively to the PATA forecasts of four to five per cent growth in the region this year. This level of growth translates into almost 12 million additional international visitor arrivals (IVAs) for this period.

There are significant changes within this grouping however, with a particularly strong performance by the Pacific sub-region. At 7.2 per cent the Pacific is well above the overall Asia-Pacific average at this point in time.

Of the 15 destinations in the Pacific sub-region reporting on their IVAs during 2012, seven reported double-digit growth, with Vanuatu by far the strongest, recording a 38.6 per cent gain over the first four months of 2012.

The only destination to report a decline in IVAs so far this year is the Marshall Islands, which has seen a drop of 868 international air arrivals. Unfortunately, because of the low visitation base generally, this translates into a decline of around 36 per cent.

However, South-east Asia tops the entire region with year-to-date growth of 8.5 per cent – that translates into a gain of more than three million IVAs.

Of the nine South-east Asian destinations covered, Myanmar is showing the strongest growth (+35.9 per cent), with Cambodia not far behind (+26.8 per cent). All in all, six destinations within this sub-region have reported double-digit growth so far this year. Not one is showing a contraction.

South Asia is also displaying strong year-on-year growth with a gain of 7.9 per cent to date – an

increase of more than 380,000 additional IVAs. Of the five destinations providing arrivals data, all are showing gains, with Bhutan leading with growth of 30.5 per cent. Nepal and Sri Lanka

Greater footfalls

5.5

The percentage growth of international visitor arrivals in destinations that constitute the PATA area in 2012

are similarly seeing double-digit growth, while India and the Maldives remain positive, but at single-digit levels.

The six destinations in North-east Asia with 2012 data report an aggregate gain of 4.8 per cent

so far this year, but because of the enormous numeric base of arrivals, this actually equates to an additional six million-plus IVAs for the period.

Within this sub-region are some very solid performances led by Japan (+44.2 per cent) and followed by Taiwan (+25.5 per cent), South Korea (+21.7 per cent) and Hong Kong (+15.2 per cent). Even with the exceptional showing by Japan, the volume of IVAs is still around four per cent less than the same period in 2010, showing that while recovery is evident, it is still taking longer than needed.

China is the only destination within North-east Asia to report a decline (-1.4 per cent), but this is for all inbound border crossings. The result for overnight international arrivals is positive (+1.9 per cent) as it is for foreign arrivals both at the total and overnight levels (+3.2 per cent and +2.8 per cent respectively).

The Americas (North America plus Chile) has produced a collective year-to-date result of 4.8 per cent growth, realising a gain of almost 2.1 million addi-

tional IVAs in the process. Chile is the growth leader so far (+15.0 per cent), with the US (+6.3 per cent) and Canada (+5.0 per cent) trailing. Mexico, at 0.2 per cent growth, is largely stagnant. The US is the largest volume player across this group of destinations accounting for over half (55.4 per cent) of all IVAs to date, and generating 7.2 per cent of the additional 2.1 million IVAs to this sub-region.

Overall, it is evident that despite the volatile international economy, IVAs to the Asia-Pacific region remain, for the most part, very solid. To some degree this is due to an increase in intra-regional travel over that of extra-regional and while this will help the industry in the short-term, there is no room for complacency. As long as Europe and the US remain sluggish in terms of economic growth there is the very real possibility that sooner or later, we will feel the impact of their economic malaise.

Nevertheless, it still appears as if the Asia-Pacific region is on track to achieve PATA's forecast of 20 million more IVAs in 2012.



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Hot leads

Golf packages in Yangon
YANGON-based Dandaryi Travel & Tours is offering golf packages for the first time at PATA Travel Mart. Targeted at Asian golfers and corporate event planners, the customised packages will encompass accommodation, transfers, domestic flights as well as green fees. Clients can choose from a host of golf courses, including Pan Hlaing and Da Nyin Gone, both located in Yangon. Contact Su Myat Htet at (95-1) 297-995 or dandaryi24su@gmail.com. – **Linda Haden**

New hotel in Amphawa
COME 1Q2014, Thailand-based Unique Luxury Hotels of Asia will debut Chuchai Buri Sri Amphawa Hotel in Samut Songkhram, an hour's drive from Bangkok. Located 1km from the popular Amphawa floating market, the 76-room European-inspired boutique hotel will feature a Thai restaurant, a wine bar, a swimming pool, a spa as well as an exhibition and convention centre. For enquiries, contact chairman, Dhammaras Kasem, at dhammaras@sdrvoriental.com. – **Liang Xinyi**

Sleepy Laos to change

Destination shoots for more marketing, which has been weak

By Linda Haden and Liang Xinyi
DESPITE its rising prominence as destination host for a number of key events, tour operators say Laos is not seeing huge growth, partly because of its muted marketing. The NTO, on the other hand, acknowledges the need to go beyond traditional sources.

Laos' Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism (MICT) is looking to beef up its marketing budget in 2013 by 10 per cent to US\$2.8 million to square up with its neighbours.

If the proposed budget is approved next month, the extra monies will be channelled into initiatives such as tradeshows and media fam trips aimed at capturing new target markets, including Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Australia.

Sengsoda Vanthanouvong, director, tourism promotion division, MICT, said: "Laos is virtually unknown by markets outside of our traditional sources including France, the UK, Germany and other ASEAN nations. Hence, there's long been a



Vanthanouvong: new markets

real need to explore new markets." MICT's 2013 marketing thrust will focus on three key areas – nature, history and culture. Vanthanouvong added that Lao embassies would also distribute marketing collaterals and spread the word about new developments, such as Vientiane New World, a mixed-use project comprising hotels, entertainment venues and retail and F&B outlets, due for completion in 2017.

However, several challenges remain on Laos' path, tour operators pointed out.

Said Jason Rolan, Laos sales manager of Khiri Travel, whose company recorded a five to 10 per cent increase in Laos bookings last year, said: "More Western branding is needed to promote the country better. The authorities missed a window of

opportunity for the Visit Laos Year 2012 – there was a lack of promotions and clear targeted markets.

"Furthermore, Laos is often perceived as a secondary destination as part of multi-country tours. It doesn't have anchor icons like Angkor Wat in Cambodia to pull in tourists."

Expressing similar sentiments, Asian Trails deputy managing director, Claudio Kellenberger, said: "Unlike regional countries which have double-digit growth, Laos sees a steady growth of demand, averaging five to eight per cent per year for us."

While urging for more support from the NTO and better coordination among tour operators, Kellenberger continued to be upbeat about tourism prospects, as Lao Airlines' launch of its Vientiane-Singapore service in late-2011 has helped to boost capacity.

In 2011, Laos welcomed 2.7 million arrivals, an increase of eight per cent over 2010. Some 2.2 million were from ASEAN.

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NZ unveils halal guidebook

By Brian Higgs

TOURISM New Zealand and Christchurch International Airport have jointly launched a first-ever culinary tourism guidebook targeted at Muslim travellers from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and India.

New Zealand – A Cultural Haven for Muslims provides a list of over 100 halal-classified F&B outlets – from those that are halal-certified to those that offer vegetarian dishes or vegan cuisine – and descriptions of the main regions throughout the North and South Islands.

Tony Everitt, general manager-Asian markets, Tourism New Zealand, said the new guidebook would enhance New Zealand's position as a destination for emerging Muslim markets.

"The Muslim market presents an enormous opportunity for the New Zealand tourism industry," he said. "Indonesia and Ma-

laysia are two of our key growth markets and have been identified in the top 10 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation countries

"The Muslim market presents an enormous opportunity for the New Zealand tourism industry, but Muslim travellers do have specific requirements."

Tony Everitt

General manager-Asian markets, Tourism New Zealand

for Muslim outbound tourism expenditure. There are also identified Muslim tourism market opportunities for New Zealand in India and Singapore."

Mischa Mannix-Opie, regional manager South & South-east Asia, Tourism New Zealand, said the ramped-up focus on Muslim travellers was in response to encouraging arrivals growth from Muslim markets, rather than to shore up inbound numbers from traditional markets hit by the global financial crisis.

For the year ending August, New Zealand received 29,712 visitors from India (+4 per cent year-on-year), 12,784 from Indonesia (+8.7 per cent), 34,480 from Malaysia (+15.8 per cent) and 38,416 from Singapore (+15.7 per cent).

The guide will be distributed internationally to travel trade partners and their customers, New Zealand embassies, and to travel consultants at events attended by Tourism New Zealand. An online version will be also published on the NTO's consumer and trade websites.

Nepal adopts new MICE thrust

NEPAL Tourism Board will set up a new department by year-end dedicated to the MICE market, while it continues to dish out incentives to meeting organisers.

Nepal Tourism Board public relations & publicity department director, Aditya Baral, said the kingdom is comfortable with group sizes of 500-700 meeting delegates.

He said: "The main MICE markets we attract are India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka due to the short flight time and direct flights. Our secondary targets are South-east Asia – Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand – also because of direct flights."

As a reward for meeting organisers, the government provides a grant of Rs500,000 (US\$9,348)

for those with groups of at least 100 foreign passport holders.

Shangri-La Hotel & Resort Nepal's senior general manager, Raju Bikram Shah, applauded the decision to set up a MICE department. He said: "The yield from MICE will be at least double that of leisure tourism. Nepal is also oversold for trekking." – **S Puvaneswary**



Ulun Danu Temple at Beratan Lake

China now no. 2 in Bali

CHINESE arrivals to Bali are now just behind Australia's, with hotels keen to tap the burgeoning market that is growing at a phenomenal pace.

Sanur Paradise Plaza Hotel & Suites director of sales & marketing, Pratiwi Tjahja, said the hotel had seen a 100 per cent year-on-year growth from the Chinese market, dominated by FIT travellers, honeymooners and couples. She added that this was a year-round market, with stays averaging three to five nights.

Her hotel is in the process of constructing a website in Mandarin, and this is scheduled to be completed by early next year.

Rudi Gillespe, marketing executive, A True Balinese Experience, said the adventure company had also seen a 20 per cent year-on-year growth from China, and that clients were mainly from the big cities of Guangzhou, Beijing and Shanghai.

He said: "They tend to stay in remote, non-branded villas away from the crowd and they tend to go for lower-end hotels."

Indonesian hotel group Jaya-

karta Hotels & Resorts recently too started tapping China for its nine properties, according to The Jayakarta SP Jakarta Hotel & Spa general manager, I Gusti Rai Tantra.

"China is a new market for us. We will be attending the China International Travel Mart (in November) and inviting travel (consultants) from China to visit our properties," he said.

For the chain's 340-room property in Bali, The Jayakarta Bali, Beach Resort, Residence & Spa, the hotel is targeting FIT and small groups.

Based on visitor numbers, Bali has seen double-digit growth from China last year and its ranking had moved from third place in 2010 to second place in 2011, after Australia.

Bali Government Tourism Office, head of tourism marketing division, Nyoman Wardawan, said since there were no direct flights from China, many tourists arrived via Cathay Pacific, which has direct, daily flights to Denpasar. Charters are also a source of arrivals. – **S Puvaneswary**

Gunning for bigger business

Sellers put their best foot forward as buyers make their rounds. **Patrick Tan** pays a visit to their booths



Asia Holidays Italy's Luigi Petrosillo, The Samaya Seminyak Bali's Virgi and The Samaya Bali's Ray Clark



PATA Chinese Taipei Chapter's Stephen Chang (centre) with Taiwan delegates



Korea Tourism Organization's Seong Jae Kang



Happy Trails Malaysia's Gerald van Amerongen and Bali Garden Beach Resort's Adrian Forsyth

Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) Singapore's Asogan Jaganathan, New Poland's Beata Ozga, RWS' Amanda Aw and Sophiya Travel & Tours Cambodia's Leng Pagna



The Haven Seminyak Bali's Ratna Indah and The 101 Legian Bali's Rai Swadarma

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