



**PATA**<sup>®</sup> PATA Travel Mart  
Pacific Asia Travel Association September 7, 2015

Issue

# 2



## Yuan down? No problem

Chinese are still game for vacations, buying up nearby destinations in Asia

By S Puvaneswary, Mimi Hudoyo and Paige Lee Pei Qi

CHINESE consumers are not depriving themselves of overseas holidays despite reduced buying power as a result of a depreciating Chinese yuan and emerging cracks in their national economy.

Buyers from China who are here at PATA Travel Mart 2015 said their customers are still

booking travel packages in earnest and the weak Chinese yuan, which has fallen four per cent against the greenback since August, is having minimal impact on outbound business.

Shanghai-based outbound specialist, Alex Zhang, regional manager for Thailand and South Asia department, Spring Tour, said: "My company has seen a

year-on-year increase in bookings to popular destinations such as Thailand, India and Sri Lanka. These destinations are inexpensive for the Chinese."

He added: "Sri Lanka, India and Nepal have also risen in popularity among smaller groups (of eight to 10 people) that are without a tour leader. Such groups comprise friends and family members who are keen on exploring different cultures together."

Also observing a pick up in Chinese demand for Sri Lanka is Romeo Luo, FIT specialist with Spring Airlines Chongqing business office & Chongqing International Travel Service.

"The demand is up especially from honeymooners who are drawn to beach resorts (which Sri Lanka has aplenty)," Luo said.

Travel trade from the Mekong region also revealed that Chinese demand is holding strong.



Poe: business as usual from China

Ronald Poe, managing director of Yangon-based Asia Global Travels & Tour, said the Chinese are drawn to Myanmar as it is a "newly opened destination".

Hui Seila, deputy director of marketing & promotion department, Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia, told the *Daily* that "Chinese arrivals to Cambodia are still strong due to the close proximity (of the countries)."

## Reduced KL-Delhi links will dent Indian business: trade

MALAYSIA Airlines' decision to halve frequencies of air services between Kuala Lumpur and Delhi since September 1 has travel consultants in Malaysia and India fretting over the possible loss of business.

The beleaguered flag carrier, which had on August 28 undergone a rebranding and is being restructured into a new company, now flies daily on this route, down from twice-daily services previously.

Nanda Kumar, managing director of Hidden Asia Travel & Tours Malaysia, said this would slow corporate incentive and group travel segments down be-

cause clients would not be able to get seats for the entire group.

"Clients can still travel to Malaysia on premium airlines, via Singapore and Bangkok, but they may cut short their time in Malaysia. For instance, they may choose to stay two to three nights, instead of four," he said.

Ganneesh Ramaa, manager at Luxury Tours Malaysia, is bracing for a drop of at least 10 per cent in Indian arrivals from Delhi this coming travel season, which runs from mid-September to the year-end.

He said: "If clients cannot get seats on Malaysia Airlines, they

will simply go elsewhere. Singapore and Thailand will benefit."

With capacity down, Rajesh Sethi, managing director of Carnation Holidays in Delhi, warned of likely fare hikes by Malaysia Airlines for this route.

There is, however, a spark of optimism in this situation, arising from Malindo Air's plans to launch twice-weekly flights between Malaysia's Penang and India's Tiruchirappalli come September 26. As the only service that connects Penang with an Indian city, it is expected to boost Indian interest in Malaysia's northern region and mitigate a major loss of Indian traffic to Malaysia.

Travel consultants from both lands told the *Daily* that they

are eager to create new itineraries that leverage the new airlink.

Kumar said: "We will combine Penang with Bukit Merah Laketown Resort in Perak, and Penang with Langkawi."

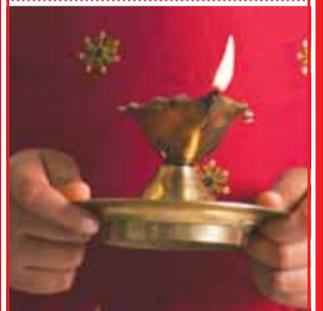
Arokia Das, senior manager at Luxury Tours Malaysia, said: "There are now options to do tours in the north or to sell Penang as a mono destination as it offers many attractions in the city, on the hills and along the beach that appeal to Indians."

Meanwhile, Chennai-based Holiday 18 Leisure Services' director & CEO, K Gia, is looking for Malaysian partners from Penang to work with him to build new programmes, as "suppliers from Kuala Lumpur charge more". —S Puvaneswary



Das: Indian interest in Penang will go up

### TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS



**PTM2015 Lamp Lighting**  
10.00-10.15  
Hall 1, BIEC

**PTM Talks**  
Embracing Disruption: Navigating Changing Travel Consumer Perceptions and Behaviours. By Oliver Martin: Principal, Twenty31  
11.05-11.25  
Hall 1, BIEC

**PTM Talks**  
Top 5 Trends in Technology for Tour Operators, Wholesalers & DMCs. By Phil Napleton: Senior VP of Products & Professional Services, Open Destinations  
15.15-15.35  
Hall 1, BIEC

**Dinner Reception**  
Hosted by the Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka  
19.30-21.30  
Hall 3, BIEC



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## Oh, what a night!

Sri Lanka Convention Bureau, SriLankan Airlines get the party going for PATA delegates. By **Eugene Tang**



Sri Lanka Convention Bureau's Vipula Wanigasekera



Sri Lankan Airlines India's Rajesh Kumble, S K Mittal, Smitha D and Sharon Prabhakar



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## Indonesians review travel plans as rupiah weakens

Preference for shorter vacations closer to home

By **Mimi Hudoyo**

THE weakening rupiah against the greenback has put a damper on Indonesian consumers' travel desires, causing outbound tour operators in the country to report a 20 to 25 per cent dip in travel bookings so far this year.

Rudiana, WITA Tour's director of sales and marketing, told the *Daily* that recent travel offers by airlines and tourism boards had failed to elicit much interest from customers.

Citing an example, Rudiana said a package to Japan, a hot favourite among Indonesian holidaymakers, did not hit booking targets set by his company.

"Singapore Airlines and Garuda Indonesia will hold their travel fairs this month and they are the industry benchmark, so results from these shows will paint (for) us a clearer picture of how Indonesia's outbound leisure market will perform the rest of the year and during 2016's low season," commented Rudiana.

However, with the rupiah now valued at 14,000 to US\$1, the lowest ever since 1998, Rudiana is bracing for poor outbound business, especially as consumers wait for the currency depreciation to stabilise.

Exacerbating the cautious buying sentiments among Indonesians is the new government regulation for all transactions and prices to be in rupiah.

"Travellers who are used to buying their trips in US dollars are taken aback by the number of digits represented in rupiah. It affects them psychologically," he said.

Smiling Tour's president and CEO, Anthony Akili, has also observed a change

in travelling patterns. "(The poor economic situation today) isn't stopping travel altogether, as Indonesians regard travelling as a need. There is however, a shift in travel patterns. Those who have budgeted for their trips will still travel, but they are choosing either to shorten the vacation or head to a destination closer to home," Akili explained.

As such, Akili expects domestic and regional travel to do well while longhaul demand will languish.

But Rama Tirtawisata, group managing director of Panorama Leisure Group, has found a silver lining in the cloud.

Tirtawisata said: "The strengthening of the US dollar has affected many countries, and data from Bank Indonesia shows that there are many currencies that have dipped deeper than the rupiah."

Bank Indonesia's 52-week data compilation on currency performance since June 30, 2014 reflected a 49 per cent decline in the Russian rouble against the greenback, a 27 per cent dip in the Turkish lira, and a 22 per cent fall in the Australian dollar. Some European currencies like the Swedish krona and the Danish krone were down between 19 and 22 per cent.

"The rupiah was down 14 per cent so it is stronger (than these currencies), which makes travelling to these countries cheaper," said an optimistic Tirtawisata, who revealed that Panorama Tours Indonesia will focus on promoting these destinations with special packages soon.

"We will also allocate more budget for promotions and educate the market which is currently in shock," he added.

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# Time for Macau!

The first and last European colony in China continues to impress with its unique mix of heritage and glitz. With some of its most iconic events scheduled to take place in the coming months, there is no better time to plan a visit to Macau, one of *Lonely Planet's* Best Travel Regions of 2015.

Selected by *Lonely Planet* as a "Top 10 Regions Best in Travel 2015" destination along with such inspiring regions as Rocky Mountain National Park (USA), Northern Norway, and Copper Canyon (Mexico), Macau — described by the travel guide as a "glitzy boomtown with cultural mix" — will be buzzing with some of its most iconic festivals and events in the coming months.

**ACTIVITIES GALORE**  
 But high-profile events

will not be the only thing capturing visitors' imagination. Culture — both ancient and contemporary — features prominently too. Here in Macau, you can start the day by visiting a Chinese temple, then go bungee-jumping, shop for local delicacies, enjoy a fusion cuisine in a stylish restaurant in the evening, attend a blockbuster theatre performance, then go for a late night Chinese snack from a street-side vendor. And that's just for one day!

## Major upcoming events

- **Macau International Fireworks Display Contest** September 5, 12, 19, 27 and October 1, 2015
- **Macau International Music Festival** October 4 - November 1, 2015
- **13th Macau A-Ma Cultural & Tourism Festival** October, 2015
- **18th Lusofonia Festival** October 23-25, 2015
- **15th Macau Food Festival** November 13-29, 2015
- **Macau City Fringe Festival** November 1-15, 2015
- **62nd Macau Grand Prix** November 19-22, 2015
- **Macau International Marathon** December 6, 2015
- **2015 Parade through Macau, Latin City** December 6, 2015

Steady hotel and integrated resort developments in the last few years have added tremendous variety and competitiveness to Macau's room inventory. While large, integrated resorts lure visitors with their modern shopping, dining and entertainment attractions, Old Macau continues to charm. Visit the Ruins of Saint Paul, Senado Square and St Lawrence Church and get a sense of Macau in its old-world splendour.

### LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment, shopping, culture and heritage are all part of Macau's exceptional appeal nowadays. And new tourism developments are certainly

The Broadway features Macau's first hawker-style street market, 40 local and first-in-Macau food brands and Michelin-star rated restaurants. Throughout the day, it is animated by live street performances.

Galaxy's Phase II also includes the opening of two major hotels: The Ritz-Carlton, Macau, the first all-suite hotel for the brand, and JW Marriott Hotel Macau, Asia's largest for the brand with 1,015 rooms and suites.

The Hollywood-inspired destination resort Studio City will open in October 2015, promising more luxurious hotels and glamorous shopping, dining and entertainment. It will also be home to Asia's highest ferris wheel as well as DC Comics' Batman Dark Flight, the world's first Batman film franchise ride.

### BETTER ACCESS

Citizens from 75 countries now enjoy visa-free travel to Macau. Getting there has never been easier, via land, sea and air. Macau International Airport is connected to 35 destinations in Mainland China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam.

Visitors also have the option of flying into Hong Kong, then hop right on to a ferry at the airport's Sky Pier and be in Macau in an hour. There are also frequent ferry services from Hong Kong, such as the high-speed TurboJet service which operates 24-hours a day.

Macau itself is very compact — nowhere is more than half an hour away!



keeping Macau in the spotlight.

Recently opened are Galaxy Entertainment Groups' two major projects — Phase II of its flagship integrated resort Galaxy Macau (including the world's largest wave pool and rooftop aquatic ride) and its new entertainment and shopping district called The Broadway.



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# Snapshots

# A dynamic sharing platform

Delegates listen in on how to harness the power of travel technology at this inaugural event. By Eugene Tang



# Are you ready for blast off?

PATA's opening day saw numerous eager faces all charged up for the three-day show. By Eugene Tang



Asia Pacific International Travel Company Vietnam's Nguyen Hong Dai and Cathy, and Starlight Cruises Vietnam's Chi Bui



TM Thai Marketing Thailand's Nawarat Thongnak, SunTrips Reisen Thailand's Euum Akapatangkul and Marwin Travel Thailand's Sirinun Tavichankun



JSC National Company Kazakhstan's Saule Bulebaeva



Nisco Travel Thailand's Narierut Pantong



Weltstudio Italy's Mariagrazia Crotti



Big Apple Corporation Japan's Yutaka Motomura and SporTourism21 Korea's Jung Sik Sim



The Jayakarta Bali's I Ketut Budha and The Jayakarta Lombok's Ida Bagus Okayana



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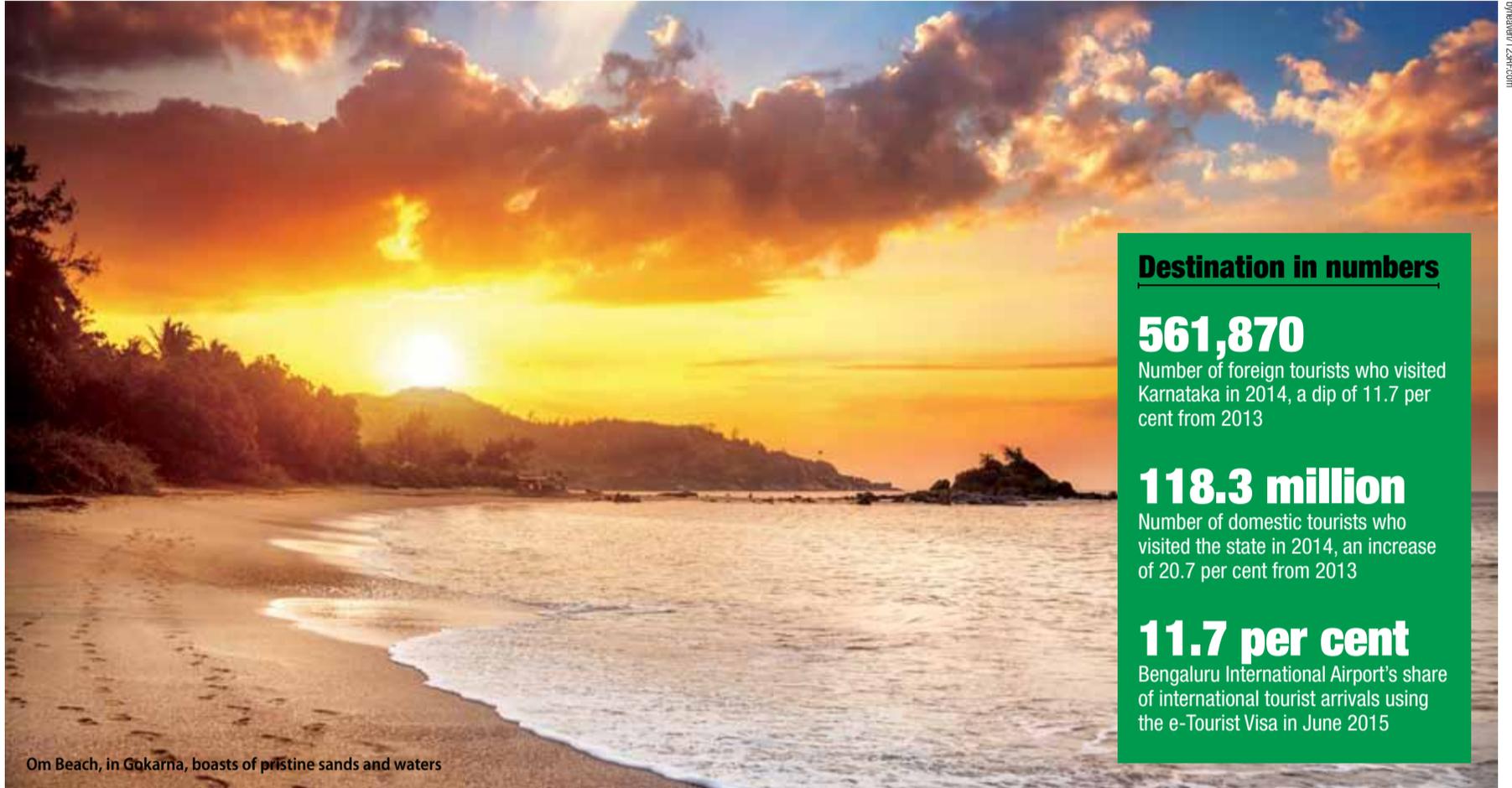
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## Host city

# Shoring up support for tourism

Development of Karnataka's virgin beaches is hindered by poor infrastructure and stringent rules. **Rohit Kaul** reports



Om Beach, in Gokarna, boasts of pristine sands and waters

### Destination in numbers

**561,870**

Number of foreign tourists who visited Karnataka in 2014, a dip of 11.7 per cent from 2013

**118.3 million**

Number of domestic tourists who visited the state in 2014, an increase of 20.7 per cent from 2013

**11.7 per cent**

Bengaluru International Airport's share of international tourist arrivals using the e-Tourist Visa in June 2015

With a coastline spanning over 320km, Karnataka is keen to position itself as a beach destination to compete with popular Indian coastal states like Goa and Kerala.

Although Karnataka boasts around 87 beaches like Gokarna, Murudeshwar and Kudle; however, most of them lack infrastructure to become tourist hotspots. At present, heritage and wildlife tourism

remain the major attractions for international visitors to the state.

Chender Baljee, managing director, Royal Orchid Hotels, said: "Unlike Kerala and Goa, Karnataka has not been able to do much in (connectivity development). The segment will grow only if there is a major focus on developing beach destinations in the next five years."

S Mahalingaiah, chairman, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) Kar-

nataka Chapter, agreed: "The demand for beach tourism is still limited in Karnataka. We have the largest coastal belt and virgin beaches but we don't have connectivity and accommodation at these places.

"If the necessary infrastructure for tourists comes up in coastal areas, it will help (to increase) international tourist arrivals to the state."

Recognising that infrastructure development is key to develop the state's nas-

cent coastal tourism sector, the department of tourism has allocated Rs. 50 crore (US\$7.7 million) to build basic amenities like seats, toilets, changing rooms and food shacks at 23 beaches identified for their tourism potential, according to G Sathyavathi, director, department of tourism, Karnataka.

Under the Indian Ministry of Tourism's Swadesh Darshan scheme, which includes coastal development as one of its five core

## ■ BENGALURU SPOTLIGHT

### Traditional handicrafts

Bengaluru is home to numerous swanky shopping malls that carry a large range of international brands.

The city also has many options available for street shopping. If you are looking to buy traditional handicrafts, head towards MG Road. Other popular shopping destinations include Brigade Road, Residency Road and Commercial Street.

### Lalbagh Botanical Garden

The Lalbagh Botanical Garden in Bangalore was started as a private garden by Hyder Ali, one of the most famous rulers of old Mysore in 1760. Take a stroll in this 98ha park, which is home to India's largest collection of rare tropical and subtropical plants, as well as many centuries-old trees. The garden also contains a lake, topiary park, charming wooden bandstand and a glasshouse modelled after London's Crystal Palace.

### Alternate healing treatments

Karnataka offers different streams of healthcare at good and reasonable prices. People seeking alternate healing like Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Naturopathy and spas will find numerous options in the capital city. Some prominent centres include the Ayurvedagram Heritage Wellness Centre, Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala and Orange County Resorts & Hotels.

### National Gallery of Modern Art

This historic mansion was transformed from a residence into a 1,550m<sup>2</sup> museum, with a new gallery block that adds an extra 1,260m<sup>2</sup> to house paintings, sculptures, prints and drawings from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. There are also works by famous Indian artists like Raja Ravi Varma and Rabindranath Tagore, in addition to works by international artists. It is also equipped with a refurbished auditorium, library, cafeteria and shop.

### ISKCON Temple

Inaugurated in 1997, the Krishna Temple is one of the largest International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temples, blending modern technology and spiritual

harmony. Visit the cultural complex to experience the devotion of the religion's followers. The temple hosts festivals and events throughout the year, showcasing India's vibrant culture and traditions.

### Jawahar Lal Nehru Planetarium

Explore the mysteries of the universe at Jawahar Lal Nehru Planetarium. At night, the planetarium is perfect for stargazing. Catch The Sky Theatre Show that seeks to unfold the marvels of the universe, planets and the solar system.

### Alto Vino

Taste authentic Italian cuisine at Bengaluru Marriott Whitefield hotel's Alto Vino restaurant. Done up like a modern *trattoria*, the restaurant is warm and inviting, perfect for romantic dinners and casual gatherings.

### Karavalli

If you are looking to savour authentic South Indian dishes, Karavalli at The Gateway Hotel is the perfect place. The seafood delicacies from the coastal belt of Karnataka are recommended. This 18-year-old joint is popular among locals as well.



Lalbagh Botanical Garden

areas, Karnataka is also looking to develop five ports that can handle cruise vessels, she added.

The state tourism department has also floated tenders to prepare the Coastal Tourism Master Plan for the districts of Uttar Kannada, Udupi and Dakshina Kannada.

These beach destinations also received a major push with the recently unveiled *Karnataka Tourism Policy 2015-20*, which aims to facilitate private investments and encourage corporates to develop facilities and infrastructure at tourist destinations in return for tax concessions and rebates.

However, the Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) regulation – which forbids any construction within 500m of the high-tide zone – has been a source of contention among trade members.

Prashant Narayan, COO and head leisure travel inbound business, Thomas Cook India, said: “(Bengaluru) has many beautiful destinations like Mysore that are popular among foreign tourists. If (the) CRZ guidelines are revisited (while) keeping in mind the environmental issues, it will help Karnataka attract more foreign tourists.”

To this end, Karnataka Department of Tourism has been seeking permissions from the Ministry of Environment & Climate Change to relax the stringent CRZ rules for tourist projects in coastal areas, informed Sathyavathi.

On the other hand, a section of tourism stakeholders opine that revisiting CRZ guidelines is not helpful as the state needs road connectivity in place before hoteliers would be attracted to establish projects along the coastal belt.

Besides coastal tourism, trade players are hopeful that new source markets and sectors will help to raise Karnataka's profile on the international stage.

“Japan is a new market for the state thanks to around 300 Japanese companies that are now operating in Karnataka,” said Royal Orchid Hotels' Baljee. “(Bengaluru) is also developing as a medical tourism destination as a lot of medical tourists are coming from Africa and Middle East for treatment.”



Tiger Trail

**Tiger Trail**

Located at Royal Orchid Hotel, Tiger Trail serves authentic meat dishes like kebabs that hail from north-west India. Enjoy your meal at the restaurant surrounded by manicured greens, under the open sky with lanterns and gazebos.

**HOW TO SELL**

**DO** Karnataka offers excellent birdwatching opportunities as it is home to over 500 varieties of birds such as herons, eagles and woodpeckers. Head to **Bandipur National Park, Rajiv Gandhi National Park** and **BR Hills Sanctuary** for some birdwatching action.

**SEE** Built in the Indo-Saracenic style, **Mysore Palace** is an example of architectural magnificence. Admire its ornate ceilings, grand corridors, vivid paintings and memorabilia – such as the

jewelled throne – of the royal family of Wadiyar.

**STAY** Located on Residency Road in the heart of downtown, the 277-room **The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore** combines traditional and contemporary designs. The property features a Jaali design from the Mughal era, complete with pointed archways and white marble reminiscent of the Taj Mahal. The centrepiece of the hotel is an impressive marble staircase, and in

the hotel's possession are 1,280 pieces of contemporary paintings and sculptures from prominent artists.

**EAT** Relish your meal at Hyatt Place Hampi's all-day-dining restaurant, **Gallery**. Open 24 hours, the multi-cuisine restaurant on the lobby level boasts beautiful views of the hotel gardens. The open kitchen design allows guests to interact with the chefs and express their preferences. With a seating capacity of 120 guests, the Gallery also offers two private dining rooms to celebrate special occasions and conduct private corporate meetings.



Mysore Palace



Hyatt Place Hampi's Gallery

**VIEWPOINTS**

What does Karnataka need to become a major beach destination in India?



**Vineet Verma,**  
executive  
director,  
Brigade  
Hospitality  
Services

Some of Karnataka's pristine palm-fringed beaches, especially those in places like Karwar, have the potential to be an excellent alternative to Goa's beaches. Beach tourism in Karnataka is grossly under-exploited. Improvement in infrastructure and connectivity will certainly help attract a much larger tourist traffic. A more pragmatic review of CRZ guidelines will certainly help release parts of these beaches from restrictions and open them up for development as tourist attractions.



**Arun Anand,**  
managing  
director,  
Midtown Travel

Beach destinations like Goa have become overcrowded, so a large number of tourists will be interested to visit the virgin beaches of Karnataka. However, this will only happen if tourist facilities and factors like connectivity and accommodation are taken care of. This, combined with focused marketing activities, will help the state to promote its beach destinations.



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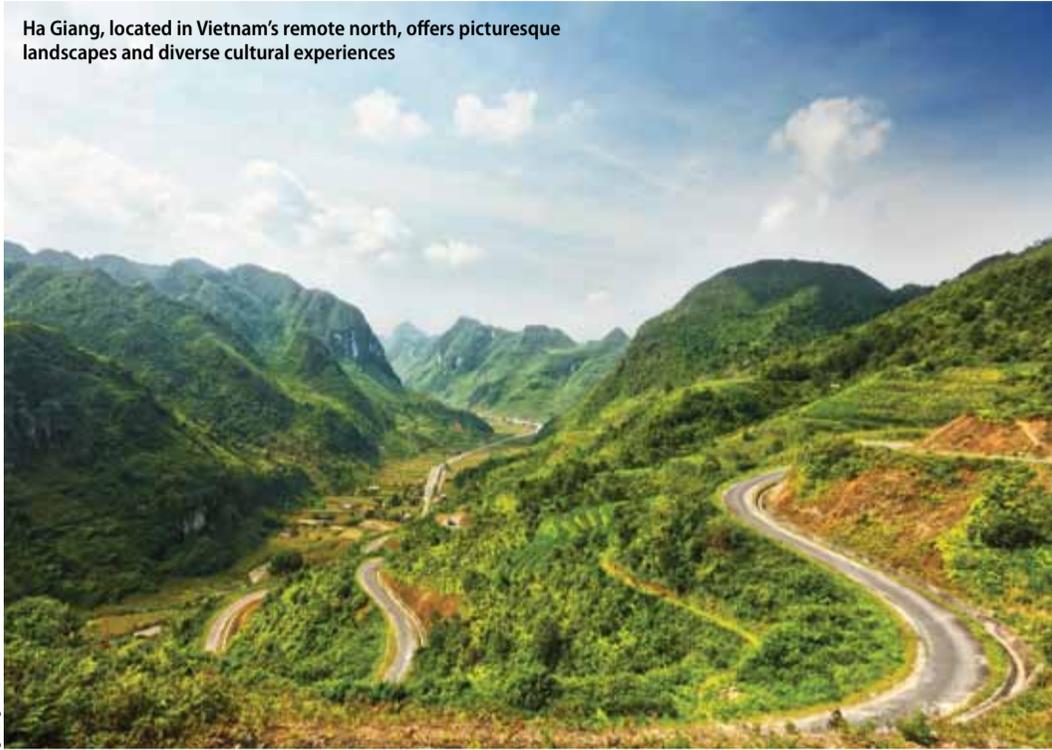
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## Destination Vietnam

# Paving for immersive travel

Tour operators need to look beyond marketing mainstream destinations in the country, writes **Greg Lowe**

Ha Giang, located in Vietnam's remote north, offers picturesque landscapes and diverse cultural experiences



Developing customised, immersive travel experiences remains a relatively niche segment in Vietnam's tourist industry that remains focused on mass-market group tours. Nevertheless, companies personalising trips to the country say doing so is not only more profitable, it is essential to building a more sustainable industry.

While itineraries covering key sites in the country continue to

be the mainstream, those seeking to create memorable experiences for visitors are starting to send clients to less-travelled places like the Central Highlands, Sapa, Ha Giang and Cao Bang, as well as incorporating visits to ethnic communities, food tours and homestays.

"Customised travel has been around in Vietnam for quite a while and is continuing to develop," said Andy Carroll, global head of sales and marketing,

Exotic Voyages. "However, the number of Vietnamese travellers who go on tailor-made trips is still very small. We would love to see more Vietnamese travellers choosing customised and private tours instead of group tours as this would definitely help develop sustainable tourism in the future."

According to the Vietnam National Tourism Administration, international arrivals dropped 12.3 per cent in 1H2015, in part

due to the collapse of the Russian market.

Do Nguyen Phuong, director of Tourism Culture People which is behind Slow Travel Hue, urges tour operators to sell the country differently instead of as a single package. "One way would be to split the country in two, with tourists spending 10 days in the north or 10 days in the south. That way, they will have more time to explore each destination, experience more activities and contribute to the local economy."

Even popular destinations such as Hue, a former royal capital and UNESCO World Heritage Site, suffer from the industry's mass-market focus.

"Hue is a very interesting destination, but it is sold for one to two nights max," Do said. "Clients really only have one full day (in the city). They visit the citadel, the royal tombs and that's it. There are interesting things to do, but tour operators are reluctant to change or add another night."

Promoting newer destinations in more remote parts of Vietnam, which offer a diverse array of cultural, nature and activity-based experiences, is far more challenging due to poor access, limited accommodation and infrastructure, said Thuy Tien, managing director of Asia Trails Vietnam.

"For example, Ha Giang in the

far north is remarkable, has wonderful scenery and local culture," Thuy said. "The problem is you can only market it to clients who are prepared to accept an eight-hour drive to get there."

Poor access typically raises transport costs while accommodation and other facilities in such destinations tend to fall short of client expectations.

While tailoring travel experiences is nothing new, companies that want to create unique itineraries for clients face a number of challenges like weak infrastructure and excessive red tape.

Jack Bartholomew, regional director Indochina at Khiri Travel, agrees that DMCs need to develop more of their own immersive tours and experiential products. "There are plenty of interesting places to visit, but you face constant challenges such as ensuring the product is sustainable, that it's properly set up and that you have all the right documents, licenses and approvals."

Although Khiri has been developing new products in the Central Highlands, Bartholomew said the key issue is to create a better overall experience in Vietnam.

"At the end of the day, if you want people to come back, then you need more than nice things to see. You need immersive experiences that people find personally gratifying."

## VIEWPOINTS

What is the Vietnam National Tourism Administration (VNAT) doing to support customised travel in Vietnam?



**Do Nguyen Phuong, director, Slow Travel Hue**

I don't have a clear view of what VNAT is doing to promote customised travel. VNAT should encourage tour operators to stop selling jam-packed itineraries and to promote

Vietnam as a place that has a variety of experiences. It is healthier (for the industry) and will encourage travellers to come back.

**Andy Carroll, global head of sales and marketing, Exotic Voyages**

VNAT is very supportive in helping travel companies which provide customised trips as they know how important the private sector is to this market. But I think Vietnam has to be portrayed more as a diverse destination. When people around the world know that Vietnam has a bit of everything, from beaches and mountains to old towns and cities, they will be more likely to purchase customised trips.



## PRODUCTS



From left: Sophie's Art Tour; Rice & Rural Life cycling tour with Slow Travel Hue

### 1 Sophie's Art tour

Sophie Hughes drew on her experiences and knowledge as a gallery manager to develop this unique tour of Ho Chi Minh City's art scene. The art tour provides insight into the worlds of art, popular culture and local history. It also takes clients through private collections, museums and contemporary art spaces. Itineraries can be customised upon request.

### 2 Central Highlands Jarai Music tour

This three-day trip by Khiri Travel takes visitors to the hill-tribe villages of Kon Tum and Pleiku in the Central Highlands, which borders southern Laos and north-eastern Cambodia.

Part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, travellers will visit places that played a role in the Vietnam War and soak in the local culture by visiting coffee plantations, eating with locals and visiting traditional Jarai

stilt houses. The area is also home to Phu Cuong waterfall and Bien Ho lake, the flooded crater of a volcano.

### 3 Triip.me

This Vietnamese tech start-up connects locals who are passionate about their towns and cities with travellers passing through; it also has B2B services. These locals provide insights into their hometown and tours range from visiting local markets or going on a night tour of Ho Chi Minh City.

### 4 Rice & Rural Life tour

Slow Travel Hue's Rice & Rural Life cycling tour to Thanh Toan village – which dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century – offers visitors an insight into the role rice plays in Vietnam's culture. Groups rub shoulders with villagers as they spend a day experiencing the local culture by working as a farmer, rowing a sampan and walking through local fields.



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## Destination China

# Mapping a new Silk Road

China is shining the spotlight on the ancient trade route with fresh tourism strategies. *Caroline Boey* reports



China has begun a campaign this year to attract more visitors to the legendary Silk Road

route is Xi'an-Gansu-Xinjiang and most travellers are from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong," he said.

Wang also remarked that Gansu and Xinjiang still have to improve service quality and add high-end international hotels, while local tourism bureaus need to invest money to promote the Silk Road to targeted markets.

Sharing similar sentiments, Linda Wang, managing director of Destination Asia (China), said the popularity of Silk Road tours have led to many products on the shelf although the infrastructure in some places is "not ready" especially for high-end travellers.

The unrest in Xinjiang, for example, limits tours from Beijing to Xi'an to as far as Jiayuguan, the first pass at the western end of the Great Wall of China in Gansu province, she added.

Meanwhile, the launch of high-speed trains to the region is giving DMCs like Asian Trails China the impetus to market Silk Road programmes more aggressively.

Said the company's managing director, Kris Van Goethem: "European travellers can fly direct to Xi'an with Finnair from key cities in Europe via Helsinki and travel on the high-speed train during the day to visit karst formations in Zhangye, the Great Wall near Dunhuang, the Mogao Caves,

view the Hexi Corridor between snow peaks and the Gobi, go to the lost cities near Turfan and make an extension to Kashgar to complete the experience.

"We are promoting travel on the high-speed trains all over the world and are seeing quite a bit of interest this year," he added.

Furthermore, the similarity of Silk Road food to Middle Eastern cuisine – which Asian Trails China's main customers from the UK, Italy, Spain and France are more familiar with – as well as the opening of a Radisson Blu in Kashgar in Xinjiang province also boost the region's appeal, Van Goethem shared.

On the other hand, dining could pose a challenge for travellers who do not eat lamb or beef or are vegetarians, observed Hope Xu, deputy general manager, Xi'an Daymaker MICE Company.

"It is especially challenging catering to vegetarians from India outside of five-star hotels," he said. "In the more remote areas, the quality of the produce may not be up to international standard and the solution for vegetarians from India is to bring in their own cooks.

"Xi'an has the best infrastructure in terms of good hotels, F&B and entertainment. The farther away you go, adventure and culture have to be the focus," Xu added.

Since Chinese president Xi Jinping laid out plans to establish the Silk Road Economic Belt as part of China's *One Belt, One Road* strategy in 2013 and the Chinese government last year set up a US\$40 billion Silk Road fund to improve infrastructure, the region has received considerable attention.

The China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) has earmarked this year *Beautiful China, 2015 – Year of Silk Road Tourism* and mounted a three-year tour-

ism cooperation and development strategy. The NTO led a delegation of tourism departments and companies from 13 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities to participate in trade and consumer activities in cities overseas including Berlin, Moscow and Taipei, before culminating in a grand launch at Expo Milano 2015 where China was the biggest exhibitor.

He Wei, director, Gansu Provincial Tourism Bureau, said the CNTA's Silk Road initiative presented "rare opportunities

for local tourism organisations along the Silk Road to boost their profile and develop inbound tourism.

Steven Wang, director of sales and marketing, The Westin Xian, agreed that UNWTO's efforts to promote Silk Road tourism have likewise generated a lot of buzz for the region on the international arena.

"Tourism will develop because of the government's support and because the Chinese are now willing to spend money on travel. So far, the most popular

## VIEWPOINTS

What initiatives are helping the development of Silk Road tourism?



**Steven Wang, director of sales and marketing, The Westin Xi'an**  
The *One Belt and One Road* strategy of China's central government is definitely raising the profile of Silk

Road tourism and it has the potential to become a tourism product that can be positively promoted to the international tourism market.



**Kris Van Goethem, managing director, Asian Trails China**  
The launch of a high-speed train service between Lanzhou and Urumqi in January is a breakthrough especially for

the European market and we are now offering 11- and 15-day itineraries with daytime travel on high-speed trains. Travel from Lanzhou to Urumqi is now in less than 12 hours, compared with 24 hours in the past.

## PRODUCTS

### 1 Asian Trails China's Silk Road tour

Asian Trails China is offering a five-day trip from Xining in Qinghai to Dunhuang in Gansu.

The route follows a southern branch of the Silk Road north of the majestic Qilian mountains to descend upon the Hexi Corridor, a narrow stretch of fertile land between mountain and desert.

Travellers will be taken to Buddhist caves, a hanging monastery, the ancient Great Wall in the desert and ruins of lost oasis strongholds.

Depending on the group size, the ground handling package price per person on a twin-sharing basis ranges from RMB7,350 (US\$1,148) to RMB9,840 with a single supplement of RMB1,295. Prices are valid from November 2015 to end-October 2016.

### 2 China Southern Airlines

The airline commenced direct flights between Urumqi in Xinjiang to St Petersburg in July. Operated on a Boeing 757 with 380 seats, the service is available on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. This new service makes Urumqi China's second-biggest hub for flights to and from Russia, second only to Beijing.

### 3 Forbidden City

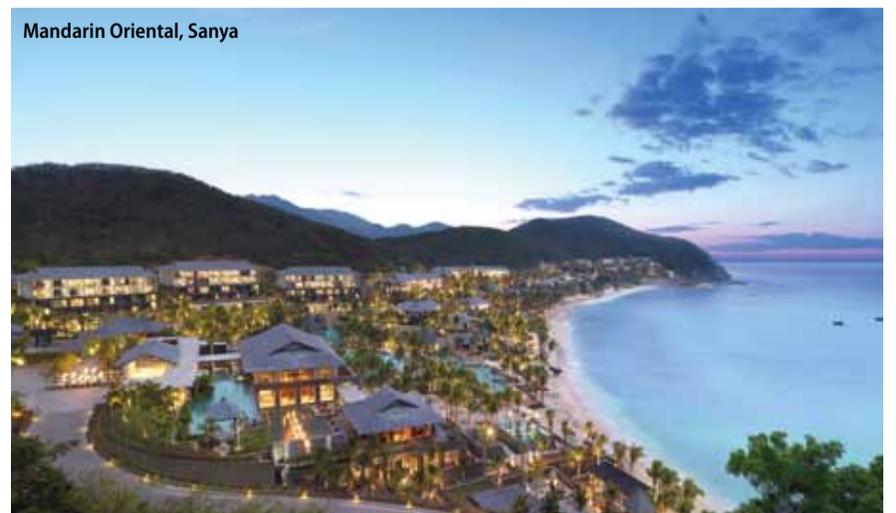
To protect the Beijing icon, the Forbidden City – also known as the Palace Museum – has introduced a daily limit of 80,000 people. During the peak summer season, early warnings will be issued to visitors when the number exceeds 64,000.

When off-season begins in November, the attraction will offer visitors who book tickets online a 50 per cent discount, and all travel agencies are now required to book tickets online.

### 4 Mandarin Oriental, Sanya

From now until December 31, 2015, guests staying in the Ocean Breeze Pavilions, Ocean Front Pavilions with Plunge Pool, suites, villas or who book the Best Available Rate at Mandarin Oriental, Sanya can test-drive the limited-edition Mini Inspired By Goodwood.

Only 1,000 such cars have been produced in collaboration with Rolls-Royce Motor Cars.



## Destination Malaysia

# A bargain hunter's paradise

The weakened ringgit and nationwide sales are compelling reasons for visitors to Malaysia, writes [S Puvaneswary](#)



Bukit Bintang is a major shopping area in Kuala Lumpur

To leverage the love for shopping among Asians and Middle Eastern travellers, which made up 91.2 per cent of Malaysia's tourist arrivals in 2014, the government and private sector have rolled out a slew of initiatives to encourage higher visitor spending.

The chief reasons that make Malaysia a value-for-money shopping destination is the weakened ringgit against major currencies as well as a hassle-free tourist refund scheme implemented at eight international airports since April 1, 2015. There are also duty exemptions on a wide range of merchandise like jewellery, cosmetics, fragrances and computers.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture has timed three sales periods to coincide with peak travel periods in Malaysia, namely the week when the annual Formula 1 Petronas Malaysia Grand Prix is held in April; the Middle East summer holidays (around mid-year); and the year-end holiday season. These nationwide sales periods are promoted by Tourism Malaysia to overseas markets.

Travel consultants too are benefiting from the nationwide sales periods.

Adam Kamal, CEO of Rakyat Travel, has created shopping packages that coincide with the 1Malaysia GP Sale, 1Malaysia Mega Sale Carnival and Malaysia Year-end Sale (from mid-November to January).

He said: "Tourists from the Philippines, Indonesia and Brunei have been very receptive to these three-day, two-night packages. We offer a range of accommodation in the Bukit Bintang area and airport transfers. Those who buy our packages come here only to shop, as savings can be as much as 70 per cent off normal retail prices."

Ally Bhoonee, executive director of World Avenues, a big player in the Middle East inbound market, said: "This recognition has helped the tourism industry to promote shopping more aggressively and especially now the weakened ringgit provides more bargains and reasons for tourists to visit Malaysia. At the same time, it brings in more revenue to the country."

To make shopping in major areas more conducive for pedestrians, Kuala Lumpur City Hall built covered walk-

## VIEWPOINTS

How important is the proximity of shopping malls to hotel businesses?



**Peter J Hourigan, vice president of operations, Saujana Hotels & Resorts**

Shopping malls are a great asset to have, especially for Asian tourists. While we don't have a shopping mall within walking distance to The Saujana Kuala Lumpur, we provide a complimentary shuttle service to Citta Mall. Paradigm Mall and Sunway Pyramid mall are also a few minutes' drive away. While some people love to shop, they prefer to stay in accommodation that is a little away from the hustle and bustle. In that manner, we complement some of the busier malls.



**Eric Tan, general manager, Pullman Kuala Lumpur Bangsar**

Close proximity between a shopping mall and a hotel is important if the hotel is targeting leisure travellers, as they will often consider accessibility to attractions and shopping malls when selecting their accommodation. However, a hotel that is not conveniently located near shopping malls can always provide a shuttle service.

ways linking shopping malls in the Bukit Bintang area with its surrounds in late 2014. Shoppers can now walk in comfort through a 4.5km covered elevated pedestrian walk that links Berjaya Times Square mall to Pavilion Kuala Lumpur through Sungei Wang Plaza mall.

Overseas visitors will also benefit from the Super Pass, a travel guide-cum-discount booklet. It was published in April and acts as a discount voucher book with savings of up to 70 per cent on retail, attractions and F&B.

Noraza Yusof, head of tourism, Kuala Lumpur City Hall, said City Hall is also looking at introducing shorter sales periods that coincide with international brands to increase sale impact. This will further cement Kuala Lumpur's position as a preferred shopping destination with a strong value-for-money proposition, she added.

## PRODUCTS

### 1 The St Regis Langkawi

Scheduled to open its doors in November 2015, The St Regis Langkawi is situated within an idyllic cove close to Kuah town, Langkawi's shopping and commercial centre, and is approximately a 20-minute drive from Langkawi International Airport.

The resort will include 85 suites and three water villas, each boasting a spectacular view of the Straits of Malacca. Each guestroom will also feature the signature St Regis Butler Service.

Facilities include a spa, swimming pool and gym, with access to expanded meeting facilities at Langkawi International Convention Centre.

### 2 Mud: Our Story of Kuala Lumpur

*Mud: Our Story of Kuala Lumpur* is a musical celebrating the spirit of the Malaysian capital and her people who built it with hopes and dreams. This 50-minute live performance is shown twice daily at 15.00 and 20.30, except on the second and

fourth Monday of every month. The show will run until April 2017.

Tickets are available for purchase online or over the counter at Panggung Bandaraya theatre.

### 3 KL Horse & Carriage Ride

Provided for by Kuala Lumpur City Hall, KL Horse & Carriage Ride features open-air carriages drawn by beautiful Friesian horses. Beginning and ending at KL City Gallery, the 20-minute ride will take visitors past the old parts of the city where buildings date back to the 1800s. Each carriage can accommodate up to four people.

### 4 District 21

District 21 is a 6,500m<sup>2</sup> post-apocalyptic themed action adventure park that opened early this year. Located within IOI City Mall's air-conditioned atrium in Putrajaya, it comprises 11 adventure attractions and eight function rooms. It is an ideal venue to hold corporate team build-



The St Regis Langkawi

ing functions, school groups and birthday parties.

### 5 Jump Street KL Trampoline Park

Jump Street KL Trampoline Park is an urban playground for adults and children alike. Located in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, the indoor playground boasts 145 interconnected trampolines from the floor right up the walls.

The venue also caters for corporate

events of up to 500 people, such as team-building activities, product launch parties or family outings.

### 6 Opium KL

This bar-cum-restaurant located on Changkat Bukit Bintang is designed to resemble a Chinese opium den in the olden days. The 100-seater restaurant serves fusion cuisine such as tuna sashimi pizza, wagyu beef *rendang* and prawn curry spaghetti.

## Destination Thailand

# Community takes centre stage

A growing interest in sustainable tourism and authentic experiences is driving Thailand's CBT initiatives. By [Greg Lowe](#)

CBT projects in Thailand include communities such as the Moken (pictured), who are known as the Sea Gypsies of the Andaman Sea



Travel consultants are incorporating more community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives in their Thailand itineraries, driven by increased demand for more authentic cultural experiences from clients as well as a growing interest in sustainable travel.

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is also bringing increasing support to the CBT sector. Part of its 2015 *Discover Thainess* campaign focuses on the so-called 12 Hidden Gems, provinces renowned for their unique history, culture and lifestyle, which includes projects such as Ban Nam Chiao Community in Trat, Klong Rua Community in Chumphon, Klong Noi Community in Surat Thani and Ban Bang Phlab Community in Samut Songkhram.

TAT has expanded its support for CBT beyond marketing to include a number of other initiatives. Its Green Community (under the *7 Greens* project) and Thailand Tourism Awards have been developed to encourage entrepreneurs to improve product standards. The NTO has also set up the Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute to help establish guidelines for related products, which a spokesman said was key to the sector's development.

CBT projects should be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure the sustainable development of the local communities, said Graham Read, sustainability and responsible tourism manager at Khiri Group.

"Many products in Thailand are mar-

keted as CBT, but aren't at all. Just because tourism occurs in a community doesn't mean it's CBT," he said.

"There is confusion that CBT is 'responsible tourism'. CBT can be 'responsible' but this is not always the case. The quality of CBT should be judged by the quality of the product and the benefit to the community as a whole."

Another core challenge is navigating the fine line between providing an authentic experience of traditional life in a community and supporting a product which could actually hinder local development, said Soren Wettendorff, product development director, Destination Asia Thailand.

"In many people's view, not least some NGOs, CBT has to be a primitive experience, almost like an expedition into the agonising everyday life of poor people," he said. "(Too many people think) if it does not look poor and worn out it is not CBT. To me this (perception) is like trying to keep the population underdeveloped."

Successful CBT projects should become financially sustainable and self-funding after their set-up phase, he elaborated, and both the industry and tourists alike should become more accepting of local communities achieving the aspirations of the wider society at large.

Many DMCs and travel consultants, including luxury specialists, are currently marketing CBT as elements of an itinerary rather than the focus of an entire trip. The trade also needs to be selective about the

source targets and demographics to which it markets such products.

"CBT in Thailand is becoming more popular, but not for all markets," said Read. "For Khiri Travel, CBT is generally more popular with the young European market (Millennials) interested in soft adventure; it's less popular with the American market. There also tends to be a perception amongst baby boomers that CBT cannot be associated with 'comfort'."

Wettendorff said community initiatives focused on wildlife and nature are often more successful and easier to sell than those offering cultural experiences. "When it comes to direct interaction with local communities, I find that it's a lot harder for people in general to handle," he said. "The guests are afraid of being annoying to the local people and locals being afraid about not pleasing their 'donors' in the right way."

Yann Gouriou, founder and managing director of Unicorn Hospitality, which manages Maekok River Village Resort in northern Thailand, said using a more conventional business, such as a hotel which works with the wider local community can be effective for developing CBT.

Maekok River Village Resort, in part due to its relatively remote location, has always worked closely with the local community "both as (a place of employment for locals), an education centre and a resort offering tours and educational programmes for students and hotel guests alike," he said.

The property has also helped support local schools, raising more than 20 million baht (US\$568,700) for some 150 projects over the past 11 years, and has developed strong links with a weaving cooperative run by Shan women in the nearby village of Ban Mai Mok Cham.

## VIEWPOINTS

What are the challenges and opportunities in community-based tourism?



**Sugree Sithivanich, deputy governor for marketing communications, Tourism Authority of Thailand**

In enabling rural communities to develop tourist attractions, it is pivotal that their operations are constantly monitored to ensure (high) standards as well as to prevent unsustainable overexposure. This goes back to our ongoing activities to promote the *7 Greens* and the Thailand Tourism Awards, as well as the activities under the Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute.

**Graham Read, sustainability and responsible tourism manager, Khiri Group**

CBT projects are often set up with a lot of funding and goodwill. However, when the funding and technical support discontinue, the project will not survive if it isn't in demand. Having the private sector involved in the set-up can dictate how desirable they are in the future... Most CBT projects are located in rural areas where hospitality and business skills may be lacking, therefore many initiatives lack a solid business plan as well as marketing expertise.



## PRODUCTS

### 1 Moken experiences at Koh Surin

Andaman Discoveries runs a number of tours involving the Moken ethnic community living in and around Koh Surin National Park. The business works with the nomadic community to provide education, fun-packed trips around the area, all of which present the unique culture and craft traditions of the Moken. Proceeds from the private tours are donated to the Moken Community Fund to help fund com-

munity improvements, health emergencies and elderly care.

### 2 Maekok River Village Resort

This family-friendly 36-room ecolodge located a couple of hours outside of Chiang Mai provides a window into rural life along the Maekok River. The resort also features an education centre and arranges a number of eco and cultural activities involving local communities. Camping is available for larger groups and school trips.

### 3 Ban Bang Phlab Community

Winner of the Thailand Tourism Awards in 2010 and 2013, this agro-tourism project offers daily activities and homestays. Located in Samut Songkhram, the traditional village of teak houses surrounded by fruit orchards is a short drive from the popular Amphawa floating market.

The local women have become famous for their homemade herb sweets. More importantly they are pioneering organic farming methods and

the village is famous for its rare fruits species. The village and surrounding historical sites can be explored on foot or bicycle.

### 4 Baan Mae Kampong

This community initiative near Chiang Mai was started in 1999, mainly due to the decline in demand for fermented tea production. Since then, the number of homestays has expanded from five to 12 properties. A host of activities for day-trippers and overnight groups of up to 60 pax



Maekok River Village Resort

are available, including locally-guided treks, cultural shows and village sightseeing.



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## Destination Sri Lanka

# Fighting for tourism dollars

A new chapter of economic and tourism development is taking place in Jaffna in the post-war era. By Feizal Samath

When the 500-seater train from Colombo pulls into Jaffna railway station every afternoon, some 50 to 75 foreign backpackers usually get off.

"The morning train to Jaffna has a sizeable number of western tourists," Vipula Wanigasekera, general manager and CEO of Sri Lanka Conventions Bureau told the *Daily*. "These FITs normally explore the city using a motorcycle hired in Jaffna."

That is a sharp contrast to the Jaffna barely six years ago, where tourism in this war-torn region was almost non-existent. Located in Sri Lanka's far north, Jaffna was once the epicentre of the country's decades-long ethno-political conflict, enduring bombardments and heavy loss of life and property.

Now the historic Tamil city is waking up to a different picture. The heritage-rich city is receiving growing attention from intrepid travellers and foreign backpackers. Roads, malls and guesthouses have also sprung up since the civil war ended in 2009.

The city's infrastructure and accommodation, though still not up to international standards, have improved from a few rooms a decade ago to some 500 rooms now.

Malraj B Kiriella, director general of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, said the government is working on an integrated plan to develop and improve accommodation and attractions in Jaffna. "When required, we have facilitated investments in new hotels and guesthouses in the city," he said.

The authorities are currently planning to transform the city's military-controlled airport to a civilian facility with flights



Travellers are starting to venture into Jaffna, a city in Sri Lanka's north

from southern India, which is less than an hour away.

Meanwhile, the city's first high-class property, the 55-room Jetwing Yarl from the Jetwing chain, is due to open in December. "(Jaffna) is becoming a popular destination but may need a little more promotion," said Hiran Cooray, chairman of Jetwing Hotels Group. "Economic activity will soon take off and draw many travellers."

To some extent that is already happening. Large DMCs like Aitken Spence Travels are urging foreign tour operators to include Jaffna in their Sri Lanka brochures, while foreign travel consultants have started visiting Jaffna and the north

to familiarise themselves with the region's facilities and sights.

"The industry wants to popularise Jaffna as it is a new destination and something different from the other often-visited locations," said Nalin Jayasundera, managing director of Aitken Spence Travels, which handled 300-400 foreign visitors to Jaffna from March 2014 to April 2015.

Jaffna's star attractions are its beautiful beaches, rich tapestry of food and culture, decades-old Hindu temples, Keerimalai natural water springs and Jaffna Fort built by the Portuguese.

The city is also well known for local wines prepared from large vineyards – a particular draw for French tourists. Telson

Fernando, general manager at STP Holdings, which owns two boutique hotels in Jaffna under the Heritage brand, said: "French visitors are keen to see vineyards during the season."

S Hariharan, managing director at the 30-room Subhas Hotel, the city's oldest hotel, said that many tourists also visit the nearby Delft island to "look for the history of their ancestors". The island has an abundance of Dutch-period artefacts and 1,000 wild feral ponies.

Even surrounding areas like Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Mannar are considered new attractions in Sri Lanka, many of which are unexplored territories for both foreigners and locals alike.

## VIEWPOINTS What can be done to entice more travellers to visit Jaffna?



### A M Jaufer, president, Chamber of Tourism and Industry Sri Lanka

There is a need to identify and develop the potential areas for tourism in Jaffna. However, the most important aspect is in educating the local community on how they can earn and improve livelihoods. It is important that steps are taken to ensure the community benefits from tourism before actively promoting the destination.



### S Paramanathan, president, Travel Agents Association of Sri Lanka

The standard of hotels needs to be improved. There are accommodation facilities with 10 to 20 rooms, and while the rooms are decent, they are not as good as in Colombo. Foreigners are seeking hotels with facilities and services similar to what is available in the capital or close to these standards.

## PRODUCTS

### 1 Garton's Ark

Boat restaurants have become a new fad in Colombo with the latest entry of Garton's Ark, an air-conditioned floating restaurant with an open deck. Catering up to 70 pax, it offers five-star buffet meals and can be hired for a party inclusive of a two-hour ride along a canal in Nugegoda, a Colombo suburb.

### 2 Good Market

The Good Market is Colombo's first organic market. Open every Saturday from 08.00 to 20.00, there are organic vegetables, books, curios, handicrafts, vegan desserts, bottled chutneys and cotton clothing on offer.

Located at the popular Colombo Race-



From left: Galle Face Green; Sri Lankan spices at Good Market

course, the organisers also have a Good Market organic and natural food shop nearby.

### 3 Galle Face Green

The Galle Face Green is Colombo's popular seaside promenade developed during



British colonial times more than a century ago. To experience the local lifestyle, make your way to the Galle Face Green in the evening and watch kids flying kites, people playing cricket or families on a day out. There are also numerous food stalls along the seafront.

### 4 Nelum Pokuna Art Street

The Nelum Pokuna Art Street is the capital's only space where artists are allowed to display their paintings on the pavement along a tree-lined avenue beside Viharamahadevi Park. Look closely and there are some great works of art with prices ranging from between 2,000 Sri Lankan rupees (US\$15) to 20,000 rupees.

### 5 Pinnawala Open Air Zoo

Sri Lanka's first open air zoo recently opened at Pinnawala near Kandy, about 75km east of Colombo. The zoo is also close to the popular Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage. The 17.8ha site has leopards, bears, deer and crocodiles, along with many other native animals.



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## Marketplace

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Lying just south of the equator, 160km north of Australia, Papua New Guinea is part of a great arc of mountains stretching from Asia, through Indonesia and into the South Pacific. With a vibrant and colourful culture, more than 600 islands and 800 indigenous languages, Papua New Guinea is made up of four regions with 20 provinces.

Papua New Guinea is full of interesting attractions, magnificent natural scenery and diverse cultural heritage. Spend your holiday trekking remote jungle tracks, cruising the mighty Sepik River, surfing the waves of New Ireland, fishing around the fjords of Tufi, viewing our world-famous birds of paradise in the Highlands or diving among the coral reef coastline.

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### Macau Government Tourist Office

Despite being only 28.5km<sup>2</sup> big, Macau has an abundance of historical buildings, beaches, gardens, museums, spas, shopping malls, dazzling shows and activities ranging from golf to bungee jumping. It is a city of world heritage stature that boasts one of the world's most spectacular and modern skylines, offering diversified tourism products such as iconic cultural attractions, entertaining shows, thrilling activities, sensational events and festivals, luxury and affordable shopping as well as a various dining options.

Macau also offers a wide variety of accommodation ranging from international-class modern hotels and resorts to affordable hotels providing comfort along with quality service standards. The city is becoming one of the world's top culinary destinations following an influx of internationally renowned restaurants brands from around the world. Not forgetting the blend of Portuguese and Chinese culture that has produced a visually unique and splendid experience for visitors to the destination.

**Booth No: E22**

**Email:** [sammiet@macautourism.gov.mo](mailto:sammiet@macautourism.gov.mo)

### Plaza Premium Group

Headquartered in Hong Kong, Plaza Premium Group is the pioneer and industry leader in providing premium airport services, with a collective goal of "making travel exceptional". The group comprises four core airport services, including premium airport lounges branded as Plaza Premium Lounge.

From September 6-8, 2015, exhibitors and visitors can enjoy 30 per cent off by simply presenting their PATA badges at any Plaza Premium Lounge at Kempegowda International Airport. Come and experience our premium airport lounge services today!

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**Email:** [india@plaza-network.com](mailto:india@plaza-network.com)



### Rembrandt Hotel Bangkok

Rembrandt Hotel Bangkok is a modern, stylish hotel centrally located in the Sukhumvit area of Bangkok. Guests may access our hotel either from Sukhumvit Soi 18 or Sukhumvit Soi 20 as our property extends the length of the block. The hotel is conveniently located, only 10 minutes away from Asoke BTS Skytrain Station and Sukhumvit MRT Station. Guests may also ride on the complimentary 24-hours tuk tuk shuttle service to Sukhumvit Road. The Rembrandt Hotel Bangkok's location offers its business and leisure guests easy access to all central business districts, major shopping attractions, public parks, city landmarks and vibrant nightlife spots.

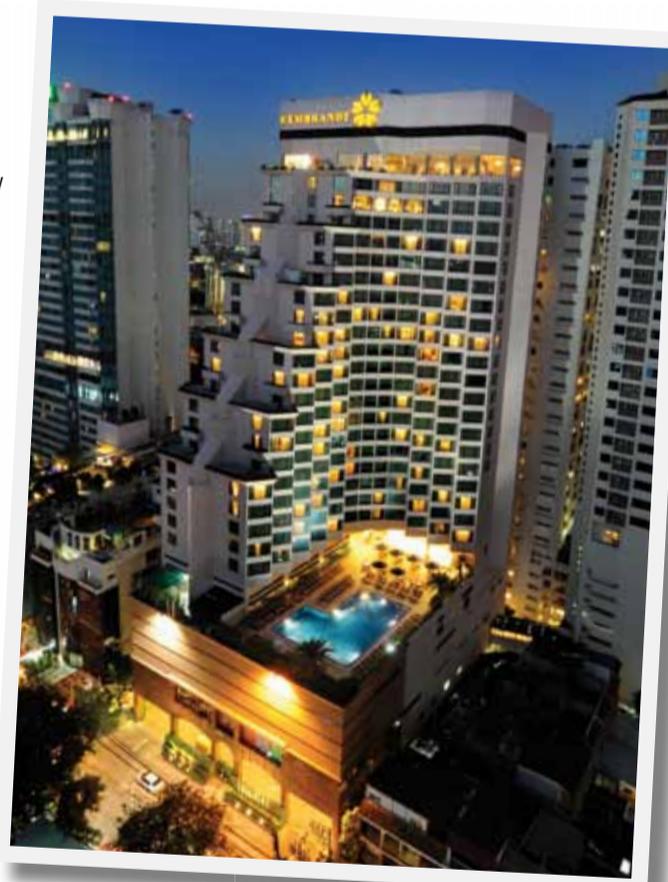
The Rembrandt Hotel Bangkok also offers a wide variety of services to guarantee guests an unforgettable stay. A sanctuary wellness and spa, a fully equipped fitness centre, an outdoor L-shaped swimming pool, a pool bar and international standard restaurants are just some of the unique services that provide our guests with an unrivalled vacation experience.

Another facility in demand by all international travellers these days is free high-speed wireless Internet access, which is available for all guests throughout the hotel.

**Booth No: C40**

**Website:** [www.rembrandtbkk.com](http://www.rembrandtbkk.com)

**Email:** [info@rembrandtbkk.com](mailto:info@rembrandtbkk.com)



### Tourism Selangor

Selangor is not all about city life, busy areas and crowded towns. Away from urban centres, a different and more refreshing scene of rural villages and serene coastlines quickly unfolds. On its north and south sides, Selangor is dominated by fishing villages on the coast and the kampung inland. Heading east from Kuala Lumpur, lush greenery form hills and forests.

Fondly known as the "Gateway of Malaysia", Selangor offers you a complete experience from outdoor adventures of rock climbing and whitewater rafting to the scenic nature of jungle tracks and magnificent waterfalls; the fun and excitement of glorious theme parks to sandy beaches along coastal shores; from the terrific hours of non-stop shopping to the colourful diversity of people, cultures and backgrounds; and last but not least, the abundant choices of food from the multicultural influences awaits anyone who cares to explore the beauty that is uniquely and truly Selangor.

2015 was elected as *Visit Selangor Year*, specifically to promote Selangor both locally and globally to boost the state's economy and provide returns of investments to all key industrial partners. *Visit Selangor Year* will also set the bar and standards in the state's tourism industry to further improve products and services.

**Booth No: C50**

**Website:** [www.tourismselangor.my](http://www.tourismselangor.my)

### Travel Motivations

Travel Motivations invites travellers to travel to Thailand and global destinations by cultivating their natural senses through wedding, honeymoon, spa and wellness, diving, golf, film, and medical tourism-themed packages. As a boutique DMC with prestigious memberships in Tourism Authority of Thailand and PATA, Travel Motivations offers travel services and destinations in a unique way, serving both domestic and international sectors.

**Booth No: G11**

**Email:** [amit@travelmotivations.com](mailto:amit@travelmotivations.com) (Amit Kar, managing partner)

## News

# Nepal is back in business

Asian markets will drive recovery for the Himalayan destination's tourism sector

By S Puvaneswary and Paige Lee Pei Qi

IMPROVED air links to India through Nepal's national carrier, Nepal Airlines, which connects Kathmandu to Bengaluru on September 1 and to Mumbai from September 5 – both twice-weekly, are very much welcomed by Nepal's trade players who are hoping for a good peak season this October.

Basant Raj Mishra, executive chairman of Temple Tiger Group of Companies based in Nepal and PATA's secretary and treasurer, said: "Just months after the earthquake, we know we cannot expect a total recovery of the US and Europe markets for the peak seasons as travellers from these markets book a year ahead.

"So, Nepal players are targeting more Asian markets such as China, India, Singapore, Thailand and Japan as travellers there do not book so far in advance."

Phurba Sherpa, group sales and marketing manager at Shangri-La Kathmandu and Shangri-La Village Pokhara, said: "The new flights have made Mumbai and Bengaluru new incentive markets for us to tap."

William Ma, CEO and founder of

Kathmandu-based Asian Encounters, told the *Daily* that he is encouraged to court FIT travellers from both Indian cities.

Inbound and outbound travel consultants interviewed at PATA Travel Mart 2015 have observed a slow but certain recovery in business.



Mishra: Nepal is safe to visit

Raj Shahi, managing director of Rama Tours Nepal, said: "Bookings are finally picking up this month because people are starting to realise that the country is safe for travel as not every part was destroyed by the earthquake.

"We are reaching out to our travel agent partners overseas through emails, newsletters with pictures, and videos to prove to them that Nepal is ready for tourism. We will also arrange fam trips."

According to a press release from Nepal's tourism bureau, tourist destinations such as Chitwan and Pokhara escaped damage, as well as well-known temples such as Pashupatinath, Annapurna and Everest trekking routes are also declared safe and open.

Director general of the Department of Tourism of the Government of Nepal, Govind Bahadur Karki, said: "Almost 80

per cent of the country was not (affected by the earthquake)."

According to Mishra, Nepal's biggest challenge lies in correcting the misperception of post-quake damage.

"Many people (who read news reports) think that the whole country was affected by the earthquake. Our group lost about US\$275,000 in April and May due to cancellations of confirmed bookings," he added.

Trade players believe that clear communications will resolve this issue.

M Zaki, president of RZ Travels, Los Angeles, said: "Our partners in Kathmandu keep us updated on what is happening on the ground, allowing us to inform our clients. This month we have seen demand return for the coming peak season. They are mainly FITs and family groups. Our hotel partners in Kathmandu are also offering 20 per cent discount on rates to help drive (recovery)."

Miikka Ukkonen, operations director of Helsinki-based Mandala Travel, said he had been promoting Nepal to his clients after personally visiting the destination and was assured that it is safe for travel. He added: "Nepal needs tourists to help it recover."

## IN BRIEF

### All ready for business events

Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru, which is ready to open its doors on September 24, will boast the largest room inventory in the city with 397 keys.

Jens Corder, the hotel's general manager, said: "This opening date coincides with the busy quarter for the city as (it is when) Bengaluru hosts its fair share of large international meetings. (It is also) the beginning of the wedding season.

"With the largest room inventory, backed by the city's largest ballroom and seven function rooms, we are well positioned to attract these events," Corder added.

The hotel's grand ballroom can accommodate up to 900 guests in a theatre setting, while guest room sizes start from 41m<sup>2</sup>. Complimentary Wi-Fi access will be offered throughout the premises.

Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru will also boasts the city's largest range of F&B options. Its eight outlets serve up Indian, Japanese, Chinese and Mediterranean cuisines.

According to Corder, the domestic market will be the hotel's key source of business but with Bengaluru hailed as a "popular international business destination", an global clientele is expected.

– Paige Lee Pei Qi

## TripAdvisor to bring instant booking feature to Indian travellers

By Rohit Kaul

INDIAN consumers will soon be able to book hotel stays on TripAdvisor, a feature that has all along been available in the US and UK markets.

The company is currently testing the instant booking feature and has refrained from confirming the launch date.

"We will launch instant booking in India when we are ready with the perfect product and system," said Helena Egan, director of industry relations, TripAdvisor. "We are hoping to be live in more markets very soon and in most of the 48 domains we have across the globe."

Egan added that the product is slated to be available on mobile or desktop platform, or both.

TripAdvisor is in talks with

hotel chains in India for possible tie-ups.

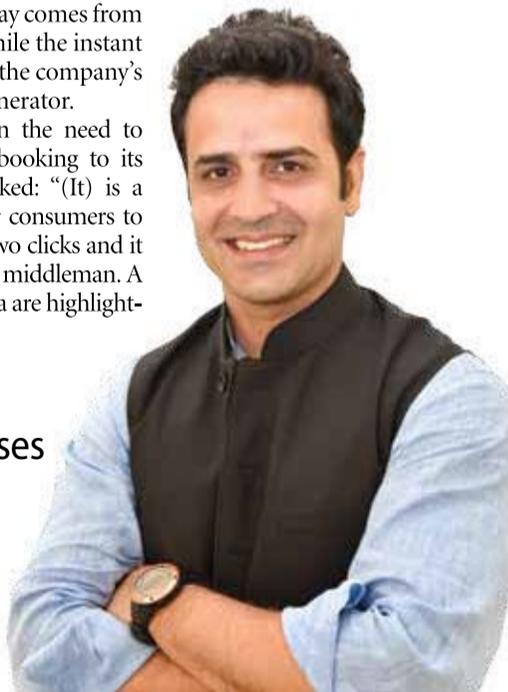
"We have received positive responses and feedback from the hotels in India. We are studying the needs of Indian consumers and may customise the product to suit their requirements should there be a need," added Nikhil Ganju, the company's country manager - India.

About 70 per cent of the company's revenue today comes from advertisements, while the instant booking feature is the company's second revenue generator.

Commenting on the need to introduce instant booking to its users, Egan remarked: "(It) is a frictionless way for consumers to book (a hotel) in two clicks and it does away with the middleman. A lot of hotels in India are highlight-

ing that owning the consumer is important for them as some platforms only provide the names of the consumers, and details such as their emails and physical addresses are not shared."

TripAdvisor is also looking to roll out this instant booking feature to other Asian countries, especially key markets like China and Japan.



We have received positive responses and feedback from the hotels in India (about this decision).

Nikhil Ganju

Country manager - India, TripAdvisor

## HOT LEADS

### Culture and entertainment wanted for Indian clients

Owner of Madhya Pradesh-based Transworld

International Tours & Travels, Amit Dang, is on the hunt for new and interesting cultural and entertainment activities that can cater to over 100 pax in Vietnam

and Cambodia. These will be offered in his tour packages for Indian travellers.

Reach out to Dang at titt106@yahoo.com.in.

## More visa-free entry points across Indonesia soon

Indonesia is authorising more gateways across the country to offer visa-free entry to eligible travellers.

Coming into effect on September 4, the new gateways are the seaports of Nongsa Terminal Bahari, Marina Teluk Senimba and Citra Tri Tunas – all located in Batam; Bandar Bentan Telani Lagoi and Bandar Seri Udana -Loban in Bintan; and Tanjung Balai Karimun in the Karimun Islands.

These seaports join other visa-free gateways that were announced earlier in June. They are Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, Bali's Ngurah Rai Airport, Surabaya's Juanda International Airport, Medan's Kualanamu International Airport, and Batam's Hang Nadim Airport, as well as the seaports of Sri Bintan, Sekupang and Batam Center.

Travellers will be allowed to enter and exit from these gateways, as part of the Indonesian government's efforts to boost visitor traffic.

Supporting this development is the government's move to grant visa-free entry come October to 47 more countries including India, Australia and Taiwan. There are 45 countries now accessing this facility.

Rizal Ramli, coordinating minister of Maritime and Resources Affairs, said the batch of 30 countries that were given visa-free permits in June were ex-

pected to generate a 15 per cent growth in arrivals between June and July.

"This proves that granting free-visa entry is the fastest way to boost tourist arrivals," he remarked.

Rizal added that latest implementation of visa-free permits to 47 countries will help Indonesia boost arrivals during the year-end holiday season.

While Indonesian travel trade players welcome the initiative, they hope to see more gateways in popular destinations on the list.

I Ketut Ardana, managing director of Bali Sunshine Tours and Travel as well as chairman of the Association of the Indonesian Tours and Travel Agencies Bali Chapter, told the *Daily*: "It is common for travellers to arrive in Bali and leave from Jogjakarta or Lombok, and the latter two are not on the list of visa-free gateways. In such cases, travellers will still need to pay for visa-on-arrival."

Ismail Ali, executive director of Marintur Indonesia, remarked: "I wish the government would open up more entry and exit points that are served by direct flights from neighbouring countries.

He added: "We have been promoting destinations beyond the major ones, such as Yogyakarta and Lombok which are accessible by low-cost carriers, and are also maximising the capacity of regional airlines."

– Mimi Hudoyo

# Snapshots

# All fired up for a good show

Eugene Tang captures delegates all prepped and ready to talk about all things travel on PATA's first day



Shangri-La Nepal's Phurba Sherpa, Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu's Samba Bikram Shah, Asian Encounters Nepal's William Ma, Rama Tours Nepal's Raj K Shahi



Westchester Travel The US's Luisa Yu



Explore Himalaya Travel and Adventure Nepal's Suman Pandey

Tourism Selangor's Zaimi Shari and Nazri Tashriq



Right: Wuzhen Tourism's Qiu Lan and Cherry Wang



Freme Travel Services Brunei's Faith Leong



Kash' Venture Travels India's Mohan Tickoo and Arvind Tickoo



Turan Asia Kazakhstan's Gulgaisha Kassenkhanova, DT Almaty City Kazakhstan's Darya Vinogradova and Department of Tourism Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan's Zhanat Kazkenova



Y S Travel The UK's Yusuf Seedat and Airlines Travel Centre Malaysia's Harminderjit Singh



Voyage Vasco Boisbriand Canada's Micheline Hardy



China International Travel Service's Christina Liu Yixi, Wang Suqi and Zhang Dong Hui



Dimerco Travel Agency Taiwan's Wu Chia-Lin and Perfect Tours Taiwan's Julianna Yang



Cosmopolis France' Guillaume de Vaudrey and Privilege Events & Communication Switzerland's Monique Petrus with companion

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Sept 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> 2015 at  
Bengaluru International Exhibition Center (BIEC)



Hearty welcome  
to the Delegates!

[www.karnatakaturism.org](http://www.karnatakaturism.org)

[www.pata.org](http://www.pata.org)

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