



China's new face

Travellers more adventurous, arrivals for some markets soar

By Mimi Hudoyo and S Puvaneswary

CHINA is propping up demand in a number of South-east Asian markets, and suppliers report Chinese travellers are looking for experiences ranging from diving, to local homestays to trekking.

Bali has seen a more than 50 per cent increase last year compared to 2013 with 586,200 tourists in 2014.

Kariyana, corporate general manager, Komaneka Resorts, with four hotels in Ubud, said: "China contributes 17 per cent to our market mix and I am aiming to increase to 20 per cent." Chinese travellers who are in the 35 to 45 age group are interested in

adventure tours, spa experiences, and cooking classes, he said.

For Bali Hai Cruises the Chinese market grew 40 per cent last year compared to 2013, and Pande Ardika, director of sales, said a growing number of Chinese are now interested in local culture and taking village tours.

Zack Holtman, dive manager of Bali Hai Diving Adventure, commented the company has a special Chinese dive instructor, while Ellies Halim, director of sales and marketing, Jakarta Hotels & Resorts, added some groups are staying at its hotels in Lombok and (Labuan Bajo) in Flores.

Go Vacation Indonesia has

turned to China after the collapse of the Russian charter market and Marika Gloecklar, executive manager product and contracting, said upmarket travellers are heading to Bali with many looking to stay in luxury villas.

Cambodia is also targeting upmarket China FITs and Poleak Kim, co-founder and operation director of AST Asiatic Travel, said he is targeting special interest travellers. "There have been inquiries for small groups homestays and trekking. AST is planning to offer photography tours, cycling, and bird-watching.

Meanwhile, the number of arrivals from China to Malaysia registered a 5.9 per cent increase

in October 2014, having declined 11.2 per cent from January to October 2014 compared with the same period in 2013.

To boost recovery, Malaysia has announced Visa Fee-Free for China at the Malaysian Embassy in Beijing and the consulate-general office in Guangzhou, Kunming and Shanghai.

Leon Zhang, account manager, Helms Briscoe, Beijing, said it is a matter of time before arrivals from China fully recovers as Malaysia is an attractive medium-haul destination.

Andy Teh, group director of

sales and marketing at Eastern & Oriental Hotel Management in Penang, said the hotel is targeting Chinese FITs via booking engines such as Ctrip.com and eLong, and Tourism Terengganu's manager (promotion), Ahmad Fathil Abdul Ghani, said he wants to promote new destinations such as Kenyir Lake. "We are discussing with a private company in China to start charter flights connecting Ningbo with Kuala Terengganu. If all goes well, charter flights will commence in March and they may turn into scheduled flights.

GOASEAN TV to promote tourism

By S Puvaneswary

ASEAN tourism ministers at their meeting on Monday welcomed Malaysia's initiative to establish a homegrown English language ASEAN-focused TV travel channel for all member countries to promote the travel industry collectively.

GOASEAN will showcase content like nature-based tourism, shopping tourism, and food tourism, among others.

From June, GOASEAN will be aired only in Malaysia; by 2016, in the ASEAN region; and by 2017, to a global audience.

Ong Hong Peng, Malaysia's head of NTO, said the broadcasts will be available via platforms such as Free-to-Air, Direct-to-Home Satellite TV service, and pay TV.

The programme showcasing destinations and tourism products will be aired 24/7, on four-hour cycles of six loops, with concepts and content in formats to suit a variety of interests, from tourism trivia, travel news and documentaries to travel reality shows, as well as

incorporating social media.

The ministers also endorsed Malaysia's proposal for ASEAN NTOs to work closely with industry players in the region to create more ASEAN Tourism Packages online for promotion within South-east Asia and globally via the ASEAN tourism website.

Ong said: "Both initiatives are in line with ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan to promote ASEAN as a single tourism destination."



Ong: Promote via multiple platforms



President of Myanmar, Thein Sein, addressing the audience at the opening ceremony of ATF 2015 on Monday night



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Snapshots

Pomp and pageantry at ATF 2015 ribbon cutting

By Eugene Tang

Myanmar's travel trade, craftsmen, and performers were out in force at MICE 1 in Nay Pyi Taw to attend the ribbon cutting ceremony to mark the opening of ATF, which is being held in the country for the first time.



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News/Snapshots

Not all lost from the Russian fallout

ASEAN countries turning to other markets to fill the gap

By Greg Lowe

WHILE travel companies in Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia have been severely affected by the recent collapse in Russian tourism, some are already countering the shortfall with alternatives in place.

Attanai Loychusak, director of sales, Peach Group, which operates three hotels on Phuket in worst-hit Thailand, said: "About 50 per cent of our trade is from Russia, so we've seen a big effect." He added that while Chinese operators are able to take up the slack, Peach has targeted its promotions on higher-value Scandinavian markets.

"We've been working closely with charter operators (dealing with Scandinavia), so if they had empty seats on their flights

we could run a promotion. That means we were hurt, but have not been killed."

Go Vacation Indonesia, which has been handling the Russian market for the past few years, has suffered a drop of 85 per cent since the rouble collapsed in December. Its executive manager for product and contracting, Marika Gloeckler, said: "The FITs taking regular flights are still coming, but not the (groups arriving on) chartered flights."

While the bulk of Go Vacation's business is with German-speaking markets, Gloeckler said the company is looking to China to fill the gap.

Over in Malaysia, Gordon Yapp, deputy general manager, Sabah Tourism Board, said

while Russians "may choose to downgrade their accommodation (to reduce costs)", he remains confident trade from the country would continue to grow. The NTO will lead a delegation of inbound players from the state on a sales mission to Vladivostok, Sakhalin and Khabarovsk this March. It will also continue to work closely with charter companies.

Similarly, travel businesses in Vietnam are looking for other markets. Anton Walter Jurgens, general manager, Exo Travel Vietnam, said: "Exo does not target this market, and as such we feel it much less. However, there is always a knock on effect from situations like this and some services have dropped rates to attract business."

The collapse of the Russian rouble has caused more than 20 travel agencies in Russia to fold.



Yapp: Russians will spend less on travel

Open skies good news

By Hannah Koh

THREE multilateral agreements have been developed for ASEAN Open Skies and further goals being considered for the long-term, according to Win Swe Tun, director general, Department of Civil Aviation, Myanmar.

He was speaking at the ASEAN Tourism Conference yesterday on an overview and update of the ASEAN Single Aviation Market (ASAM).

The agreements are ASEAN Multilateral Agreement of the Full Liberalisation of Air Freight Services, ASEAN Multilateral Agreement on Air Services, and ASEAN Multilateral Agreement on the Full Liberalisation of Passenger Air Services.

Win Swe Tun said: "ASEAN Open Skies Policy or ASAM will create for airlines more market access rights to expand route networks; more operational flexibilities to deliver services, efficiently and economically, and opportunities to extend business to the other member states."

"For the public, it will mean better services and lower fares through increased competition, and for tourism and trade

ASEAN Open Skies is a boost to business."

He added that intra-ASEAN air travel grew at a compounded annual rate of 13 per cent. "In future, we expect even more growth."

Meanwhile, ASEAN is working with other regional partners for more air connections. The first meeting of the ASEAN-Japan Working Group on Regional Air Services Arrangements took place last October, and discussions with South Korea for an air services agreement will resume this year.

The regional association also organised the first ASEAN-EU Working Group Meeting last December to work on issues related to setting up a Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement.

Win Swe Tun said Myanmar's tourism, aviation and maritime sectors must collaborate and align their vision. He added: "This is a chance for investment, involvement and participation of other parties (in Myanmar's aviation sector)... Regionally or globally, we want to work together to build a new era for Myanmar and future generations."

Meet Malaysia's sellers

By Eugene Tang



Tourism Selangor's Nazri Tashriq and Yusri Abdullah



YTL Hotels Malaysia's Peh Ai Lin



Lexis Hotels & Resorts Malaysia's Steve Woon



Berjaya Hotels & Resorts Malaysia's George Wong



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34 YEARS OF ATF

THREE DECADES OF ACCOR IN ASIA

This is the 34th anniversary of ATF and coincides with Accor's 33rd anniversary of operations in Asia, since opening its first hotel in Singapore, the Novotel Orchid in 1982. The first meeting of ASEAN occurred in 1967 but it took till 1981 for the nations to decide on an annual tourism forum to ensure they could work together to initiate regional tourism projects.

Since that time, tourism growth in the ASEAN nations has been phenomenal, with 65,680,630 tourist arrivals in ASEAN nations in 2009 and a predicted 107,381,527 for 2015 according to a recent survey by ASEAN. Along the way, member nations have experienced enormous economic growth and increasing affluence thanks to rapid political and economic changes driven by continuing globalisation and increased trade and investment.

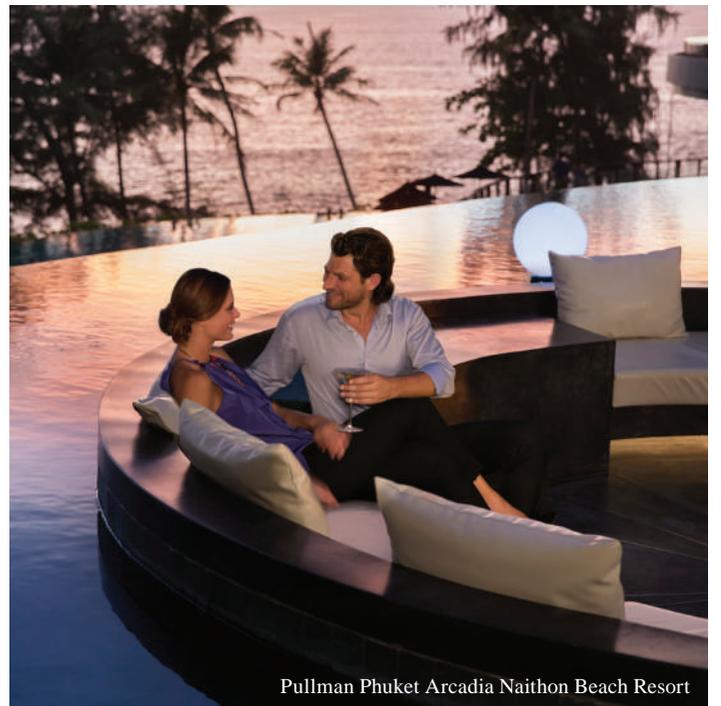
Accor has also grown enormously in the last 33 years, and has a strong hotel network in every ASEAN signatory country except Brunei. Accor currently has almost 200 hotels across Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines,

Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam and in coming years its network in those countries will expand significantly.

Accor shares the same goals as the ASEAN member nations in that it aims to promote tourism growth, increase intra-regional travel, support the development of world-class service standards and enhance the attractiveness of these key nations to the world.

Accor is also a leading hospitality school, with 17 campuses globally including several in Asia Pacific that provide a continued emphasis on training and educating staff to meet the demand for improved levels of quality, service and professionalism in the industry. This is a key factor in making ASEAN nations more attractive to the travellers from around the world.

It is also addressing sustainability concerns with its Planet 21 program which covers a wide range of areas including supporting indigenous populations, protecting and restoring natural habitats and providing benefits to the local communities surrounding



Pullman Phuket Arcadia Naithon Beach Resort

its hotels.

Of course today the founding nations which created ASEAN have partnered with other neighbouring countries including Japan, South Korea, China and India and in coming years we expect cooperation between these nations to expand. It is for this reason that we believe Asia Pacific will truly be the shining light on the global tourism stage in coming years. And Accor will continue to expand its operations and work to promote tourism in this region for decades to come.



Pullman Jakarta Central Park

ACCOR ON TARGET FOR 100 HOTELS IN INDONESIA BY 2015

More than two decades since launching in Indonesia, Accor has established itself as the country's largest hotel group with the most diversified brand portfolio and is on target to reach 100 hotels in Indonesia by the end of the year.

Last year Accor opened more than 30 hotels across Indonesia, including hotels in Jakarta, Surabaya, Samarinda, Padang, Bali, Makassar, Manado, Yogyakarta and Semarang. With at least 20 confirmed projects scheduled to open in 2015, Accor expects to operate at least 100 hotels in Indonesia by 2015.

"Accor is firmly committed to being a strong partner to our hotel owners, the tourism authorities and communities around us as we work to further develop Indonesia's burgeoning tourism sector," said Mr Gerard Guillouet, Senior Vice President for Accor Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. "Our unrivalled experience in the country's hospitality industry makes us very optimistic about the network's success here in Indonesia."

Accor's expansion plans include not only projects in first-tier destinations such as Jakarta and Bali, but also in second-tier cities, such as Palu in Central Sulawesi, Samarinda in Kalimantan and Padang in West Sumatera.

"Accor's development strategy in Indonesia has always been focused on establishing hotels in the major cities alongside secondary destinations where we see business opportunities in the medium-to-long term," said Gerard Guillouet. "Much of the expansion into second-tier cities will be of midscale and economy hotel segments which will enable us to grow faster and further throughout the country, strengthening our position as the leading international operator in Indonesia."

LOYALTY MEMBERS GET MORE CHOICE, MORE REWARDS AT MORE HOTELS

In the world of travel there are few words that people like to hear more than "upgrade" and the Le Club Accorhotels loyalty program is one of the best ways to upgrade your travel experience every time you stay with Accor. The program is free-to-join and provides a range of benefits and features that make every travel experience more enjoyable, from VIP check-in and welcome drinks to room upgrades and lounge access, all the way through to money-can't-buy experiences, depending on your level of status.

"When members stay with us we want to recognise and reward them for their faith in our hotels," said Javier Cedillo-Espin, Vice President Communications and Loyalty, Accor Asia Pacific. "We have introduced new generosity to our program and are working to increase the number of exclusive events and offers that our members can enjoy to really give them the best reward for their loyalty."

"Our aim is to personalise the experience for our members further and to get to know them better and focus on providing rewards that will be really meaningful to them."

Just some examples of exclusive events that

members have been able to enjoy include an evening with world tennis superstar Serena Williams; tickets to Justin Timberlake shows; and exclusive cooking masterclasses with world-renowned chefs.

"Our members are more privileged, more rewarded and freer than ever before thanks to a range of initiatives to make Le Club Accorhotels more attractive," said Cedillo-Espin. "Since July 2104 we have introduced 25% more points, which helps fast-track guests to higher levels of status and we continue to innovate with new offers and experiences for every stage of the customer journey."

Le Club Accorhotels is the only hotel loyalty program that enables customers to use their points anywhere in the world without any date or availability restrictions. For every €10 spent, members earn 25 points, and as soon as they reach 2,000 they can get a €40 voucher that they can deduct from their bill at a future stay in one of the group's hotels or convert into privileges with one of the program's many partners (airlines, car rental firms, etc.). The program is valid at more than 2700 Accor hotels globally.



DID YOU KNOW? Indonesians, Malaysians and Thais spend on average 4 hours per day online while they travelling – making them the highest online users in the region.

Source: Accor Asia Pacific Social Media Monitor 2014

Marketplace

Far East Hospitality

In June 2015, Oasia Suites, Kuala Lumpur will join Far East Hospitality's portfolio of over 80 hotels and serviced residences across eight countries. This year will also see the return of the Far East Heritage & Food Trail, an annual festival that brings travellers on a journey through the Singapore story via a range of cultural and heritage experiences, connecting them with authentic elements from the country's yesteryear.

Booth No. 2M-A27



Mövenpick Hotels and Resorts

Upscale hotel group Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts has added a new boutique property in Thailand to its portfolio. Opened in December 2014, Mövenpick Resort Laem Yai Beach Samui boasts 50 rooms, a beachfront restaurant serving international cuisine, sunset views, three outdoor pools and a 100 per cent natural Asian herbal spa. Located on the north-west coast of Koh Samui, the resort is 30 minutes from Samui International Airport.

It is Mövenpick's third property in Thailand alongside Bangtao and Karon Beach in Phuket, with a fourth poised to open in Pattaya in 2015.

Booth No. 2M-B23

Bandara Hotels & Resorts Group

Bandara Hotels and Resorts is adding another property in Thailand. In early 2015, it will open Bandara Villas, Phuket on unspoiled beach Yon Harbour. Most of the resort's 33 all-pool villas are one-bedroom villas, but there are also 10 duplex villas and a four-bedroom villa.

Bandara's other properties include the 27-storey Bandara Suites Silom, which is close to the city's major business, cultural and entertainment areas, as well as Bandara Resort and Spa, Samui on Koh Samui's Bophut Beach near the fisherman's village.

Booth No. 2A-B11

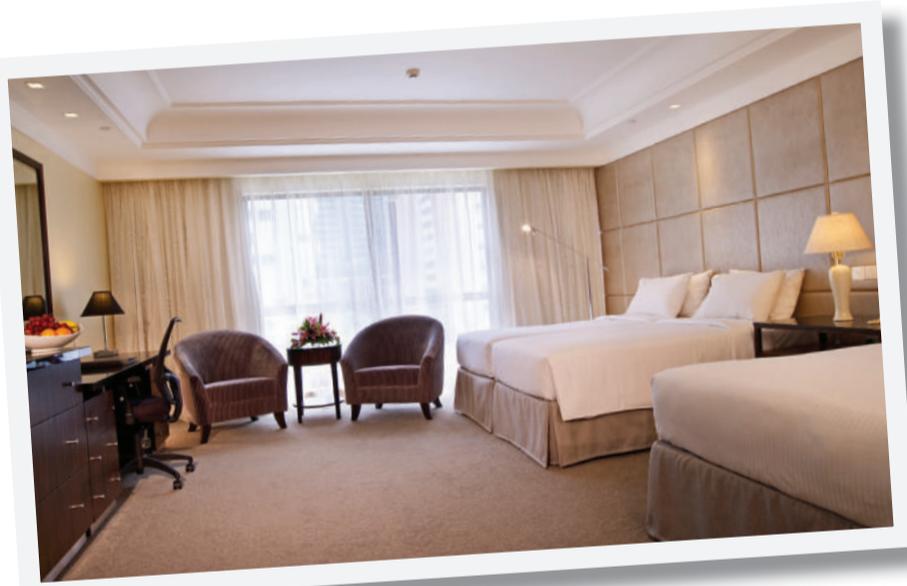
Cititel Hotel Management

Cititel Hotel Management (CHM), a subsidiary of IGB Corporation Malaysia, will add two new hotels to its portfolio, The Wembley – St Giles Premier Hotel and Cititel Express Penang, by 1Q2015.

It is also scheduled to open Pangkor Island Beach Resort in 2Q2017.

CHM currently manages hotels in key Asian cities: Cititel Penang; Cititel Mid Valley, Kuala Lumpur; The Gardens Hotel & Residences – St Giles Grand Hotel, Kuala Lumpur; The Boulevard – St Giles Premier Hotel, Kuala Lumpur; MiCasa All Suite Hotel, Kuala Lumpur; MiCasa Hotel Apartments, Yangon; St Giles Makati – St Giles Classic Hotel, Metro Manila; and Cititel Express in Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu.

Booth No. 2A-D14



York Hotel Singapore

Located just a stone's throw from Singapore's main shopping and entertainment belt of Orchard Road, York Hotel's brand-new Premier Rooms come with a king-sized bed and Hollywood twin beds to accommodate a family of four. There are also only four rooms to a level for maximum privacy. The property offers modern deluxe accommodation with its 407 guestrooms, while facilities include eight highly configurable function rooms, two F&B outlets, a fitness centre and an outdoor pool.

Booth No. 2M-D25



Philippine International Convention Center

The Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) will be launching a new meeting facility that can accommodate up to 1,200 people, and will be equipped with a stage, lounge area and a specialised lighting and sound system.

In preparation for APEC meetings that will be held in the country in 2015, PICC has also been making improvements such as structural retrofitting, security enhancement, restroom upgrades and perimeter rehabilitation. It is also planning to replace its tent venue with a permanent trade and exhibition hall in 2016.

Booth No. 2E-B01



The Old Phuket Karon Beach Resort



Rooms in the Sino Wing will undergo renovation, taking design inspiration from Sino-Portuguese architecture in a throwback to Phuket in the old days. Deluxe Rooms will be renamed Sino Deluxe Rooms, and are available from November 1 this year.

Located in central Karon, the resort is a few metres away from a private plaza, shopping and restaurants. The white sandy beach and crystal clear waters of the Andaman Sea are also just across the road.

Booth No. 2A-B22

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Destination Myanmar

New on the horizon

The Myeik Archipelago, a chain of islands in the Andaman Sea, is touted to become a major tourist destination as developers seek undiscovered shores in Myanmar, writes [Oliver Slow](#)



Unlike its more famous Thai island counterparts in the Andaman Sea, Myanmar's Myeik Archipelago remains virtually untouched by tourism

The Myeik Archipelago (also known as Mergui Archipelago), located in Myanmar's Tanintharyi Region near the Thai border, is developing as one of the country's most exciting tourist destinations.

Myanmar's emergence as a destination on the global tourism stage has been rapid, and professionals in the industry are beginning to look for opportunities away from the so-called "Big Four" destinations of Yangon, Inle Lake, Mandalay and Bagan.

As part of overall plans to expand Myanmar's tourism industry, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism has explicitly said that it plans to make the Myeik Archipelago one of its key areas for tourism growth. Authorities are also planning to develop a Marine Protection Area in the Myeik Archipelago, which consists of approximately 800 islands of various sizes located in the Andaman Sea.

"Under the previous military government, there were security concerns for people entering the area, but that has changed and now the new government is trying to encourage tourism, not just in this area, but all over, in order to improve the country's socio-economic situation," said Zeyar, deputy director of Myanmar tourism promotion and international relations under the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

Through special permits, it has been possible to access the area over the past decade or so, but it is only since the Myanmar government has eased access at the Thai border town of Kawthaung that the islands' reputation has emerged.

Although the archipelago has been tipped as a place with huge tourism potential in the future, the industry at the moment remains very much in its infancy. The only resort in the region, Myanmar Andaman Resort, is currently closed for renovation and visitors either come on

day trips or stay on liveboard boats.

There are currently no reliable statistics regarding the number of visitors to the archipelago, but Josep Niubo, director of Yangon-based travel agency Lotus Bonita, says that his company sends about 40 clients there each month, with all customers staying on liveboard boats, usually as part of chartered scuba-diving trips.

Private companies such as Burma Boating and Mergui Princess offer high-end charter boat trips around the islands, and some boat companies arrive there from Phuket, but there is scant tourism infrastructure currently.

For most tourists to the region, the activities are based around marine tourism, including scuba diving, snorkelling, kayaking and beach-hopping.

"The Myeik Archipelago is practically untouched by the tourism industry. There is not a great deal going on (in terms of tourism activities) but the main oppor-

Destination in numbers

1.6 million

Number of foreign arrivals in 1H2014, up 43 per cent year-on-year

70%

Percentage of Asians among the foreign arrivals recorded in 1H2014, with 17 per cent from Europe

1,019

Number of registered hotels in Myanmar recorded in July 2014, up from 960 in March

54%

Average occupancy at Yangon's upper-scale hotels in 2Q2014, down from 61 per cent a year before, according to a Colliers report

905 million

Amount of tourist earnings, in US dollar, that Myanmar expected for 2014

tunities are for the construction of hotels and more boat tour options. The main challenges will be government permission, costs of operations and, in the case of building hotels, access to fresh water and electricity," said Marek Lenarcik, general manager at Thahara, a Yangon-based tourism company.

"It is an absolutely beautiful place, but there is not much support in terms of infrastructure. Of course, if access improves there then I think it will boom as a tourist destination. The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is doing an excellent job of developing things in the area and protecting the wildlife there and I'm sure they are on the right track," said Niubo.

However, the region is also home to the Moken – also known as Salone or Sea Gypsies – one of Myanmar's most distinct ethnic groups. Having developed a livelihood based around the sea, the semi-nomadic Moken have become the masters of free diving. It may be possible for tour operators to organise visits to these villages, but these people have already seen some negative impacts of globalisation, and this should be managed in a sustainable manner.

HOW TO SELL

SEE As practically all the islands in the Myeik Archipelago are still untouched by tourism, **island hopping** is by far the most advised activity. Highlights include 115 Island for snorkelling and kayaking, Nga Mann Island for its beautiful beach, and Myauk Ni Island to see local fishermen at work.

DO The region is beginning to develop a reputation for great **diving** opportunities. The two main sites for this are Shark Cave and Black Rock, and some of the marine life includes blacktip sharks, bull sharks and manta rays.

STAY A number of new hotels are expected to open in the future, but the only accommodation option currently available are liveboard boats offered by private cruise company such as **Burma Boating**, which offer opportunities to sail the islands and meet the area's sea-faring Moken people.



VIEWPOINTS

What are your business prospects for 2015?

Josep Niubo, director, Lotus Bonita

I think there will be huge growth there (Myeik Archipelago) in the future, because it really is one of the most beautiful, unspoilt places. The ministry is doing a very good job and I think we will see it take off as a major tourist destination in three to four years.



Marek Lenarcik, general manager, Thahara

Myeik Archipelago is practically untouched by the tourism industry. The main opportunities are hotels and more boat tours. The main challenges will be government permission, costs and infrastructure.



WHAT'S NEW

1 Myanmar Airways becomes Myanmar National Airlines

Flag carrier Myanmar Airways has re-branded to Myanmar National Airlines (MNA) as it plans to begin operating international flights in 2015.

As part of the repositioning, MNA has also introduced a modern computerised management system, a new website that allows online booking and is also launching a modern check-in system in Yangon, with plans to extend to Naypyidaw, Mandalay and Nyaung U.

Than Tun, managing director, MNA, said that the airline plans to extend its operations this year to cover new destinations across Asia, including Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia and China. MNA currently flies to 26 domestic destinations in Myanmar.

The airline will also increase its fleet by adding an additional 10 Boeing 737 aircraft and six ATR72-600 aircraft this year.

The company will remain under the ownership of the government, but operate as a separate commercial entity under a new board of directors.

2 E-visas to be made more widely available

The Ministry of Immigration and Population is planning to roll out the electronic visa system at six additional locations after the scheme was successfully launched on September 1 at Yangon's International Airport.

The ministry said that the system will soon be extended to the international airports at Mandalay and Naypyidaw, as well as at the Thailand-Myanmar border crossings at Myawaddy, Tachileik, Kawthaung and Htee Khee.

For the process, applicants must complete an online visa form and make payment via a credit card. The turnaround for the process averages five days. The e-visa costs US\$50 and is valid for 28 days' travel in the country.

3 Sanctuary Ananda starts sailing along the Irrawaddy River

Sanctuary Retreats has launched a luxury sailing boat, *Sanctuary Ananda*, along the Irrawaddy River in November 2014. Custom built for Myanmar's rivers, including the Chindwin River, a tributary of the Irrawaddy, the boat offers 20 luxurious suites across three decks.

The boat offers a range of options, starting with a three-night trip between Bagan and Mandalay, a seven-night Mandalay-Bagan-Mandalay trip and an 11-night trip sailing between Mandalay, Bhamo and Bagan.

4 Bagan seeks UNESCO World Heritage Site status

The famed temples of Bagan could become Myanmar's second UNESCO World Heritage Site if the Ministry of Culture's efforts pay off.

Ministry sources told the *Daily* that discussions have already been held with UNESCO representatives, although the application process is likely to take about four years. Meanwhile, challenges include making a record of all of the pagodas at Bagan and enforcing stricter heritage laws.

According to reports, 200,000 people visited the destination in 2013, up from 160,000 the year before.

Three ancient Pyu cities in Myanmar were granted World Heritage status earlier this year.



From left: A temple in Bagan; Sanctuary Ananda



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Harnessing youth power

Young and big-hearted travellers are flocking to the Philippines, reports Rosa Ocampo



Willy's Rock in Boracay

The Philippines is trying to do more to grab a foothold in the youth market, which is seeing growing consciousness of experiential journeys and voluntourism.

One of the pioneers of such inbound travel is non-profit Gawad Kalinga (GK, meaning 'give care'), which achieved unprecedented success in harnessing Filipino and foreign volunteers from North America, Europe and Asia.

From initially helping to build houses for the poor, this was swiftly extended to other community-based projects and then to GK Enchanted Farm in Angat, Bulacan that nurtures social entrepreneurs and develops sustainable livelihood projects. Its Mabuhay programme has also evolved into a social enterprise creating tour packages for volunteers in GK communities.

The breadth of voluntourism was evident during the so-called Bayani Challenge 2013, when from April to June, GK mobilised about 1.2 million local and foreign volunteers to socio-civic projects throughout the Philippines.

At WTM London 2014, the Department of Tourism (DoT) also signed a pact with STA Travel Group to bring in young travellers and to promote the destination in the UK, Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria and Australia, giving a much-needed push to this segment.

Still, youth travel remains largely untapped. Recognising the gap in the market, Rajah Travel Corp is developing specific programmes for educational trips.

General manager inbound, Alberto Santos, said such programmes are sustainable as they appeal to schools whose curriculum requires overseas travel.

Route +63 Travels Philippines, formed two years ago, attests to the growing niche of youth travel. From a couple of foreign clients in 2012, this grew to about a hundred in 2013, enticed by programmes like the seasonal Bataan sea turtle conservation, Sagada coffee and ecotour, and Banaue cultural and volunteer tour.

COO Florence Adviento said that aside from its deal with AIESEC, the world's largest youth-operated organisation for student exchange programmes, Route +63 is also tapping the Filipino diaspora

in the US through a collaboration with non-profit Kaya Co.

It's also eyeing international ecotourism volunteer groups. "There are so many of them but the Philippines is not yet in the roster of their destinations," observed Adviento.

Inspired by the outpouring of international support for victims of typhoon Haiyan, I Can Fly Travel & Tours Corp was formed a year ago.

Noting that travel agencies are not making themselves relevant to young, Internet-savvy travellers, marketing director Romina Nanagas said the company is lining up unique, experiential vacations like a yoga retreat with mountain or beach settings, which can be more cost-efficient than flying to the Maldives or Costa Rica. It is also looking at homestays in areas where there are not enough hotels and where tourists can volunteer in local communities.

DoT too, is developing the homestay market in areas like Bohol, Aurora and Negros Occidental. In Negros Occidental, for instance, foreign students stay for up to 21 days. Part of their community experience includes sugar plantations and organic farming communities.

However, industry players opined that there needs to be more targeted efforts to grow the market be it youth-specific programmes or incentives.

More digital marketing is also needed nearer home, in Hong Kong for example where there is a sizeable market, including students who have returned after completing their studies overseas.

Another hurdle is the misperception that the Philippines is not safe, exacerbated by media hype and unfair travel advisories against the entire destination.

Rajah Travel's Santos found this the hard way when, in trying to sell General Santos in Mindanao, there was a misperception about this placid and beautiful destination.

He suggested that DoT issue an official advisory that will lend credence to the safety aspects of the Philippines.

Route +63's Adviento pointed out that his company avoids places that locals feel unsafe. "We make sure trips are coordi-

Destination in numbers

2.6%

Growth in tourist arrivals for January-September 2014 to 3,443,550 over the same period in 2013

8.2 million

Targeted tourist arrivals in 2015

2.2%

Year-on-year increase in ADR of Philippine hotels to 5,450.80 pesos (US\$122) for January to October 2014, according to STR Global. Occupancy rate also rose 4.5% during the same period to 66.9%

VIEWPOINTS

What are your business prospects for 2015?

Gordon Aeria, general manager, Hotel Jen Manila

We are cautiously optimistic. First, Pope Francis' visit in January is a great booster, with some tourists coming in from Europe and South America. The series of APEC meetings throughout the year will also give additional boost to the destination.



Lucas Nunag, chairman, Bohol Tourism Council

We are confident that tourism will pick up. All stakeholders especially the private sector are collaborating in a big way for *Visit Bohol 2015*. Foreign arrivals are recovering faster than domestic arrivals. Infrastructure is largely intact after the 2013 earthquake. Construction of the airport that can accommodate chartered flights will also begin in 2015.



HOW TO SELL

DO When **SMX Convention Centre Bacolod** was inaugurated in November 2014, we embarked on a tour tracing the city's past grandeur as the bastion of wealth and high society: heritage houses of Silay; muscovado mill operations at a sugar mill; artisanal shop of mask maker Jojo Vito; a rich collection of textiles from various countries at Museo Negrense; and The Ruins of a mansion whose history is intertwined with that of Negros.

SEE Held every October, **MassKara** is easily the best executed and most entertaining street festival in the Philippines. It can be traced back to 1980 when Negros reeled from the double tragedy of declining world prices of sugar – its main crop – and the collision of an inter-island ship and a tanker that claimed the lives of 700 Negrenses. Each year since then, locals don

smiling masks to revel, symbolising the lifting of human spirit when confronted with life's challenges.

EAT To indulge in Bacolod's best snacks or bring some home, go no farther than the ubiquitous stores at **BongBong**. Their easy-to-carry boxes can pack *piaya*, round unleavened bread with molasses filling; toasted muffins called *biscocho*; tarts and stuffed *empanadas*; biscuit rolls of *barquillos*; sesame cookies; plus a lot more pastries.

STAY L'Fisher Hotel, the biggest and oldest hotel in Bacolod, recently introduced its little brother, the 49-key **L'Fisher Chalet**, which is more budget friendly and has rooms for families. L'Fisher Chalet is connected to Tower 1 of L'Fisher Hotel by the ballroom and foyer area.



MassKara

WHAT'S NEW

1 Danjungan Island

Danjungan Island in Negros Occidental, known for its seven ecosystems and biodiversity of land and sea life, is now open to a limited number of visitors.

In 2015, the Society for Sustainable Tourism and Development is hosting marine and wildlife camps in January for adults as well as youth camps in April and May. The camps tackle conservation efforts and have eco-friendly elements like cabanas, solar-powered electricity, and communal meals based on native cuisine.

2 Ascott Bonifacio Global City

Ascott recently soft-opened 220 serviced apartment units at Bonifacio Global City and will launch in 2015 Citadines Millennium Ortigas Manila for the growing market of expatriates and business travellers. Earlier in 2014, it opened the 215-unit Citadines Salcedo Makati.

3 Sky Tower leisure complex

Solaire Resort and Casino has unveiled its lavish Sky Tower leisure complex, which boasts a 312-key hotel, with suites ranging from 124m² to 936m². Guests can also catch performances at The Theatre, a 1,760-pax venue with top-notch acoustics and lighting.

4 Visit Bohol 2015

Visit Bohol 2015 relaunches the province



as a major tourist destination after it was hobbled by a strong earthquake more than a year ago.

The campaign, which includes attractive discounts in accommodation, tours and lowest possible airfares to Bohol via AirAsia, also launches new products and attractions such as the powdery white sand beaches of Anda; Lamanok Mystical Island's burial caves; Banacon, Asia's largest mangrove forest; geo-science tours; two international music festivals; a dive festival; and an international triathlon.

5 City of Dreams Manila

Located within the Manila Bay area, Melco Crown Entertainment's integrated resort commenced operations in December 2014, with a grand opening planned before Lunar New Year in 2015.

Already operational are mass gaming areas, Nobu restaurant, a 365-room Hyatt hotel, and some F&B and retail areas. It will also be home to educational theme



Clockwise from top left: Ascott Bonifacio Global City, a suite at Solaire Sky Tower and The Ruins of Negros Occidental

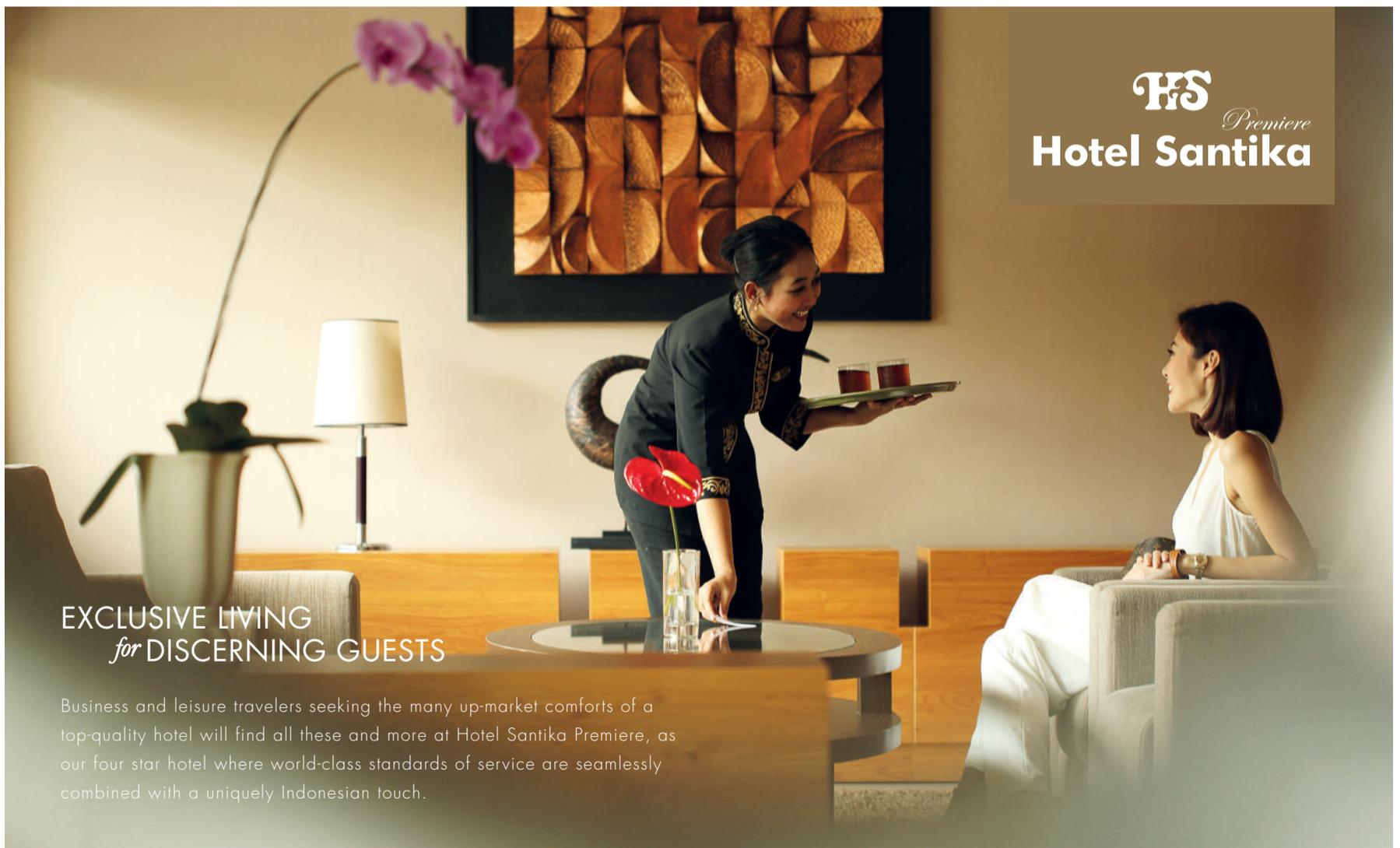
park DreamPlay by DreamWorks as well as two other hotel projects: a 321-key Nobu hotel and 260-key six-star Crown Towers. Touted as an industry first, Dre-

amPlay combines real-life and digital features, starring characters from movies including *Kung Fu Panda*, *Madagascar* and *Shrek*.



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In favour with the Russians

Despite the rouble's ongoing depreciation, deep-pocketed Russian travellers have found a new haunt in the Lion City, and hotels are rushing to serve the expanding market with customised services. **Paige Lee Pei Qi** reports



Ion Orchard, one of the many high-end options in Singapore's famous shopping belt of Orchard Road

The number of Russians choosing Singapore for vacation is on the rise, and they are staying longer and splurging on high-end accommodation and luxury items.

According to statistics from the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), almost 63,500 people from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which includes several countries such as Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, visited Singapore from January to August 2014 – a 20 per cent year-on-year increase.

Most of these visitors hailed from Russia, and in particular, the capital city of Moscow. The average Russian visitor was

aged between 35 and 44 years, stayed here for an average of four days and each spent an average of S\$1,456 (US\$1,101) per trip, making them one of the highest-spending tourists.

Chuck Abbott, regional vice president, South-east Asia, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, said: "Growing wealth in Russia and globalisation are contributing to rise of tourists from this region."

Abbott said while the number of Russian guests to all four Starwood hotels – Sheraton Towers, The St. Regis, The Westin and W Singapore Sentosa Cove – have "definitely grown" over the years, W Singapore in particular stood out with a 400

per cent year-on-year increase in 2013.

"The property (W Singapore) seems to appeal to the Russians who are attracted to its resort location and avant-garde design," he explained.

Abbott added that Russian guests tend to stay between five and 10 nights, the majority of them opting for the standard or executive rooms.

"However, we are also seeing an upward trend in the higher room categories, such as suites or even the presidential suite from this market," he said.

Over at Pan Pacific Singapore, director of sales and marketing Elaine Kum said the Russia market is one of the ho-

tel's fastest-growing, with a 70 per cent increase since 2012 and an average stay of four nights.

Kum said: "Russian guests typically opt for rooms and suites that include club access and located on the higher levels of the hotel for views of the Singapore skyline."

Likewise, at The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore, director of public relations and marketing communications Nathalyn Fong said the property has seen a 67 per cent year-on-year increase in Russian guests last year, a significant spike compared with the 20 per cent increase in 2013 over 2012.

Fong said: "Our Russian guests often opt for our club rooms and suites, which include exclusive benefits. They are also willing to splurge on dining and alcohol, and other luxury services such as spa treatments, butler-drawn baths and limousine transfers."

Services are also being tailored to the Russian market to better serve them.

Kum shared: "Apart from newly introducing Russian television programmes, we also recognise that Russian guests are most comfortable conversing in their mother tongue."

"To better understand the nuances of Russian travellers, the hotel has added a Russian-speaking associate as part of the guest services team to specialise in caring for our Russian guests."

According to Abbott, W Hotel and The St. Regis Hotel also offer Russian-speaking staff to welcome guests. In addition, The St. Regis is in the midst of offering the website in the Russian language as an additional option.

However, Judy Lum, vice president of sales and marketing for Tour East Group which specialises in the longhaul market, cautioned against setting an overly optimistic outlook for the Russian market.

Said Lum: "The Russian rouble has devalued to an all-time low since 1998 and this will affect the growth forecast for this market."

"Sanctions from Europe and the US is affecting the Russian economy and although the government is looking to Asia, the adverse economic impact will remain for a long while."

VIEWPOINTS

What are your business prospects for 2015?

Jaclyn Yeoh, director, Siam Express

The inbound business for 2014 was quite bad so I think 2015 will not be rosy for inbound travel consultants too – I would be lucky if I could maintain the same sales revenue.

I predict the main inbound market will still be driven more from China, Japan and niche markets such as Africa and Mongolia.



Judy Lum, vice president of sales and marketing, Tour East Group

I have just returned from World Travel Market in London, and the UK tour operators reported year-on-year double-digit growth in forward bookings. We are also seeing improvement in some parts of Europe. As our core markets are primary longhaul, this is good news for Tour East.



Destination in numbers

S\$221

RevPAR achieved from January to October 2014, a year-on-year drop of 0.8 per cent

January to October 2014, a year-on-year drop of 0.8 per cent

10.3 million

Number of international arrivals from January to August 2014, a year-on-year drop of 3.3 per cent

S\$258

ARR from January to October 2014, representing a mere 0.1 per cent year-on-year increase

22.8%

Share of tourists staying in Singapore for less than one day from January to June 2014, a year-on-year drop of 12.6 per cent

85.9%

AOR across all hotels in Singapore from

WHAT'S NEW

1 Changi Airport breaks ground for Jewel

The Changi Airport Group (CAG) broke ground in December 2014 for the construction of Jewel Changi Airport, a mixed-use complex featuring attractions, retail offerings, a hotel and facilities for airport operations.

Jewel is a result of the joint venture, Jewel Changi Airport Trustee, between CAG and CapitaMalls Asia. It will be developed in front of Terminal 1.

It will dedicate about 22,000m² of indoor space for plants, comprising the five-storey garden Forest Valley, four different gateway gardens each featuring unique landscaping elements, and the 40m high indoor waterfall Rain Vortex.

2 A new Jen-eration of hotels

Shangri-La International Hotel Management has launched a new brand of fuss-free mid-range hotels, with the first two properties located in Singapore.

Hotel Jen Orchardgateway Singapore opened in September 2014, offering 502 keys, dining outlets and technology-driven complimentary guest services such as free Wi-Fi, mobile charging stations throughout the hotel, iMac stations and a PressReader app with free access to 2,500 online publications.

The second Hotel Jen property occupies the former Traders Hotel Singapore



From left: Project Jewel; Hotel Jen Orchardgateway Singapore



on Cuscaden Road. The 546-room Hotel Jen Singapore has embarked on renovations in November last year in three phases, scheduled for completion in 1Q2016. The hotel will remain open throughout this period. Future rooms will feature modern, apartment-style furnishings and smart technology including interactive TVs with multi-device enabled streaming and in-room check-out.

3 Premier Inn debuts in Lion City

Premier Inn, the UK's largest budget hotel chain with over 670 properties globally, is expected to make its Singapore debut in mid-2016 with Premier Inn Singapore Beach Road.

Located within walking distance to the cultural districts of Haji Lane and Arab Street as well as the Marina Bay Sands business district, the 300-room Premier

Inn Singapore Beach Road will have 300 rooms starting from 18m². It will feature amenities like a swimming pool, gym and meeting room facilities.

Erik van Keulen, senior vice president for development, Asia-Pacific, said: "We want our hotels (in South-east Asia) to be looked upon as three-star properties rather than fully budget ones like our UK properties – which mostly have no additional amenities apart from rooms."

4 See the original works of Leonardo da Vinci

Original masterpieces from the world's most celebrated genius, Leonardo da Vinci, has made their South-east Asian debut at the ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands.

Da Vinci: Shaping the Future is a major exhibition exploring the life, work and

legacy of history's best-known artist and scientist. It presents 26 original pages of the *Codex Atlanticus*, da Vinci's largest notebook, a compilation of some of his most important drawings and writings. Also featured are six original paintings from the School of Leonardo.

The exhibition runs until May 2015.

5 Catch a retro cabaret show

Great World Cabaret reimagines yesteryear Singapore where sequin-clad dancing girls, hilarious comedians, death-defying acrobats and snazzy magicians ruled the nightlife with their glitzy performances.

Get ready to experience the heady buzz of nostalgia with familiar tunes like *Rose Rose I Love You*, *Sing Sing Sing* and *Bunga Melur*. The show, which is held at Resorts World Sentosa, runs from February 19 to March 17.

HOW TO SELL



The rooftop garden at Potato Head Folk

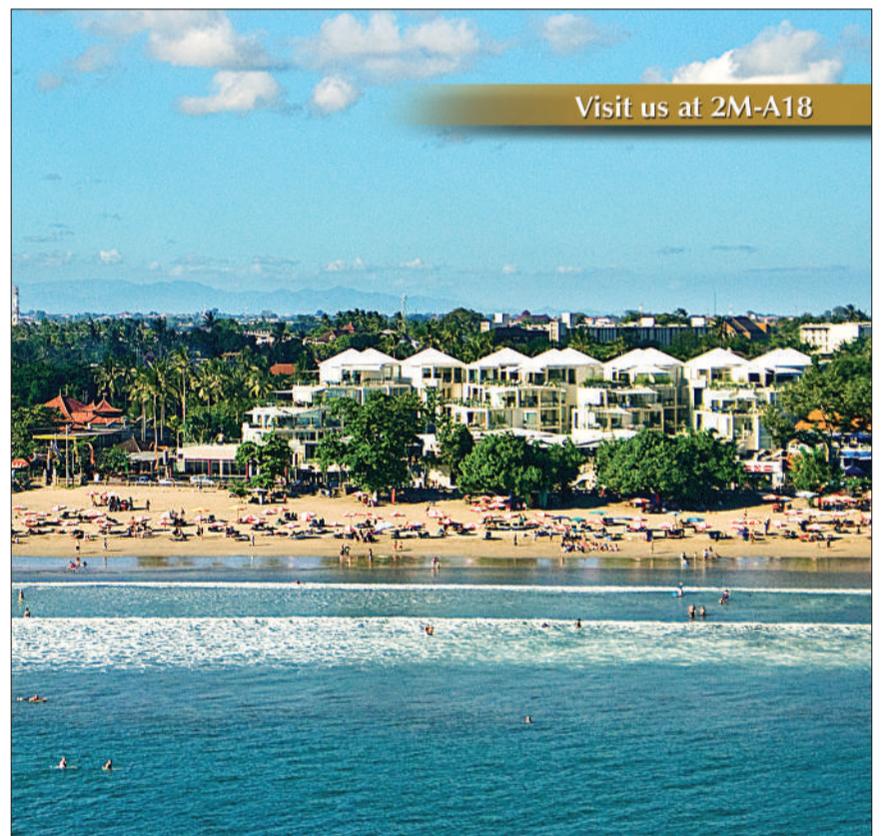
SEE Although Singapore is known for its skyscrapers, options are available for those seeking closer interaction with Mother Nature. Head over to the **MacRitchie Reservoir** for the TreeTop Walk, the highlight of several long hiking routes there. The first of its kind in Singapore and the region, the free-standing suspension bridge connects the two highest points in the reservoir and offers a bird's eye-view of the forest canopy.

STAY The revamped **Naumi Hotel**, which reopened its doors after a multi-million dollar renovation in 2013 is well dressed to impress. Its 73 guestrooms sport designer furnishings, functional work desks with built-in phone chargers, bath amenities from organic New York brand Malin + Goetz, free high-speed Wi-Fi, and Apple TV's AirPlay Mirroring, which lets guests play videos from their Apple devices on the in-room TV.

DO At the Singapore Flyer, the **flight simulator** will fully replicate a commercial jet to

induce a fully immersive experience as you take to the skies controlling a Boeing 737-800, in a fully enclosed cockpit with full functioning avionics and photo-realistic visuals. The simulator boasts features such as a 180-degree wrap-around screen projecting stunningly accurate visuals of scenery and terrain – think flying into Paris in semi-darkness at dusk or enjoying a bird's eye-view of picturesque Rome.

EAT **Potato Head Folk** at Keong Saik Road is the first international venture for Jakarta-based restaurant and lifestyle group Potato Head. Designed to be a home away from home, the central theme of fun, whimsical childhood fills the space through sculptures and murals on the walls. The four-storey project includes a restaurant boasting mouth-watering burgers, sides, sodas and cocktails. The building is also home to a lounge called Studio 1939 and a rooftop garden with a tiki bar, done in collaboration with Australian artist David Bromley.



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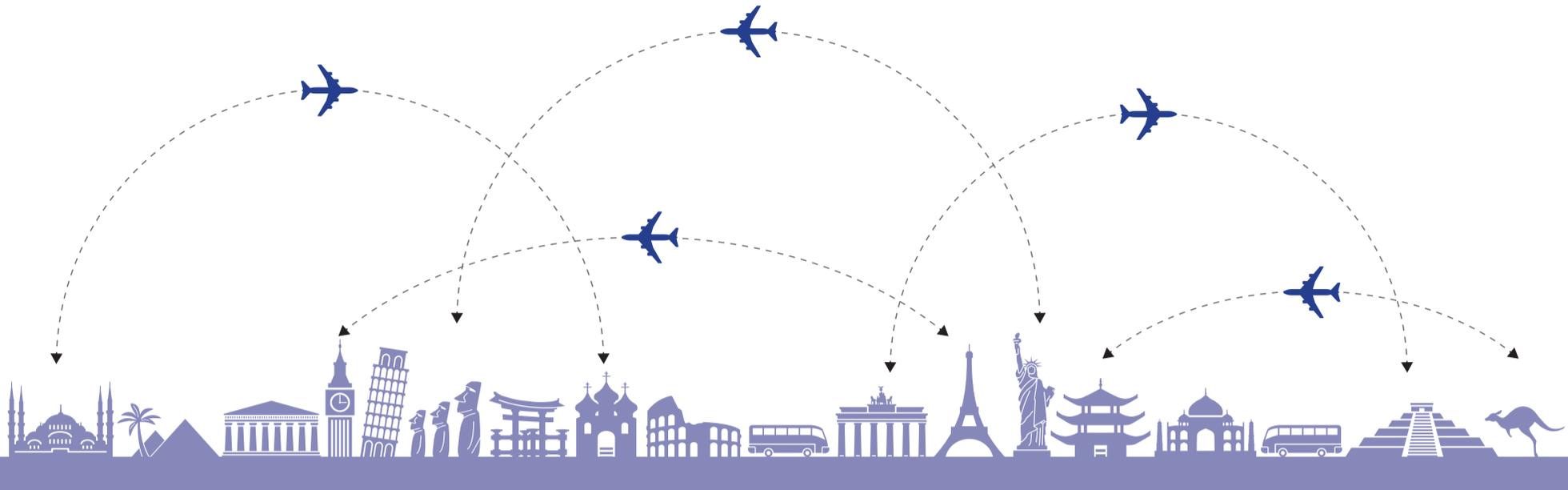
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Low-cost carriers



The pursuit of wider skies

LCCs have changed the game for the aviation sector in the last decade as they capture the region's growing appetite for air travel but their full-service counterparts are also gaining altitude in the battle for ASEAN's skies, writes [Sim Kok Chwee](#)

There is never a dull moment in ASEAN's dynamic LCC landscape. Today, LCCs are based in seven ASEAN countries – only Brunei, Cambodia and Laos do not have any home-based LCC.

LCCs have proven in the last decade to be nimble and exceptionally adaptable to changing market conditions. Ahead of the ASEAN Open Skies, Indonesia and Singapore have, in fact, proceeded to sign a more liberal air services agreement. With some member countries less willing than others to add signatures to the ASEAN Open Skies though, the arrangement is more likely to be a gradual process of liberalisation than à la Europe.

Hazem Hussein, Amadeus Asia-Pacific's executive vice president of commercial airlines, said: "The introduction of the Open Skies policy in 2015 will see competition among airlines in ASEAN increasing. LCCs in particular will see the need to evolve to drive competitive advantages and compete with full-service carriers."

In June 2014, Tigerair Mandala ceased operations – clearly a casualty of the strong competition posed by Lion Air and Indonesia AirAsia. But even with the failure of its Indonesian and Filipino outfits, Tigerair continues to grow its brand outside of the region, albeit with only a token 10 per cent stake in Tigerair Taiwan. With its less than sterling performance, Tigerair had to park several aircraft in Alice Springs, Australia and leased a dozen A320s to India's IndiGo. In an effort to rein in Tigerair and perhaps exercise greater control over the airline, Singapore Airlines has increased its stake in Tigerair to 56 per cent with the potential to up this to 70 per cent later.

Valuair, which only continues to exist for the purpose of operating Jetstar Asia's flights to Indonesia, has begun to disappear after Indonesia agreed to let Jetstar Asia operate its own flights.

Amid the roller-coaster ride, LCCs' market share in ASEAN has grown to nearly 50 per cent in Malaysia and Indonesia, and only a shade lesser in Singapore.

✈️✈️ New entrants

In an already crowded arena, new entrants – all of which offshoots of existing LCCs – have entered the fray. Thailand and Indonesia are the most sought-after markets, given the entrance of Thai AirAsia X, Thai Lion Air, Thai VietJet and Indonesia AirAsia X.

NokScoot, a joint venture between Scoot and Nok Air, has also been established in Thailand. Although it will only begin operations in North Asia sometime in 2015, it has supplemented Nok Air's services in December 2014 and January 2015 on the popular Don Mueang-Chiang Mai route. VietJet is also mulling a subsidiary based in Myanmar.

Malaysia Airlines, which currently operates Subang-based Firefly as its LCC subsidiary, is rumoured to be transforming its Kuching- and Kota Kinabalu-based full-service subsidiary MASWings into an LCC that will also operate international flights of up to four hours' flying time from both airports using B737-800s.

✈️✈️ Infrastructure

Kuala Lumpur opened klia2 in May 2014, a mega LCC terminal now utilised by carriers such as AirAsia, AirAsia X, Lion Air, Malindo Air, Tigerair and Cebu Pacific. The 257,000m² klia2 has 68 departure gates with an additional eight remote stands. With the ability to handle up to 45 million passengers annually, it is the largest dedicated LCC terminal in the world.

In Singapore, the Budget Terminal will be replaced by a new Terminal 4 and LCCs previously calling at the Budget Terminal have moved into Changi Airport's Terminal 2. Ironically, the first and hitherto only airline to confirm moving to Terminal 4 is Cathay Pacific Airways.

Airline	Main operational base	Fleet
Indonesia		
Citilink Express	Jakarta – Soekarno-Hatta Airport Jakarta – Halim Perdanakusuma Airport	Current: 31 x A320, 5 x B737-300 On order: 10 x A320, 35 x A320neo
Indonesia AirAsia	Jakarta – Soekarno-Hatta Airport Denpasar – Ngurah Rai Airport	Current: 30 x A320
Indonesia AirAsia X	Denpasar – Ngurah Rai Airport	Current: 1 x A330-300
Lion Air	Jakarta – Soekarno-Hatta Airport Batam – Hang Nadim Airport	Current: 2 x B747-400 (leased out), 2 x B737-300, 4 x B737-400 (inactive), 30 x B737-800, 71 x B737-900ER On order: 15 x B737-800, 56 x B737-900ER, 201 x B737MAX-9, 46 x Airbus A320, 109 x Airbus A320neo, 65 x Airbus A321neo
Wings Abadi Air	Jakarta – Soekarno-Hatta Airport	Current: 20 x ATR72-500, 10 x ATR72-600, 5 x MD-80 (inactive) 3 x Dash 3 Series 300 (inactive) On order: 56 x ATR72-600
Malaysia		
AirAsia	Kuala Lumpur International Airport	Current: 68 x Airbus A320 On order: 78 x Airbus A320, 264 x Airbus A320neo
AirAsia X	Kuala Lumpur International Airport	Current: 18 x Airbus A330-300 On order: 41 x Airbus A330-300, 10 x Airbus A350-900, 50 x Airbus A330-900neo
Firefly	Kuala Lumpur – Subang Skypark	Current: 12 x ATR72-500, 4 x ATR72-600 On order: 19 x ATR72-600
Malindo Airways	Kuala Lumpur International Airport Kuala Lumpur – Subang Skypark	Current: 2 x B737-800, 6 x B737-900ER, 11 x ATR72-600 On order: 3 x ATR72-600
MASWings	Kuching International Airport Kota Kinabalu International Airport	Current: 10 x ATR72-500, 4 x ATR72-600 Planned: 12 x ATR72-600, B737-800
Myanmar		
Golden Myanmar Airlines	Yangon – Mingaladon Airport	Current: 1 x Airbus A320, 1 x A320 (damaged and inactive) 2 x ATR72-600

✈️✈️ Connectivity

With LCCs establishing operations in various short- and medium-haul markets, the potential for connectivity has grown significantly. AirAsia X's passengers originating in Australia could book travel beyond Malaysia to other destinations in South-east Asia, North Asia and India. Lion Air Group carriers similarly offer connecting flights across much of Asia. Jetstar Asia is able to extend its reach to more destinations in Japan via gateways

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ENDLESS CELEBRATIONS DURING MALAYSIA YEAR OF FESTIVALS 2015

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This year, we celebrate our harmonious diversity with Malaysia Year of Festivals 2015 (MyFEST 2015) – a year-long calendar of cultures, traditions, festivals and celebrations, the Malaysian way! From Aidilfitri (Eid ul Fitr), to Chinese New Year, to Deepavali, to Hari Gawai, there is always something to celebrate, an apt reflection of the theme for the year, “Endless Celebrations.”

A total of 50 key events and exciting celebrations have been identified to showcase Malaysia's cultural roots, our love for food, our unique past-times and hobbies, music and more.

Tourists can look forward to the Malaysia Open House celebrations during six major holidays in the year, i.e. Chinese New Year (Feb), Tadau Ka'amatan (June), Gawai Dayak (June), Aidilfitri (Aug), Deepavali (Nov) and Christmas (Dec). These are open-air public celebrations of the country's important religious holidays where Malaysian food, culture and entertainment are shared in the spirit of friendship and peace among all races.

The Mah Meri Ancestors Day Festival at Pulau Carey in March is a celebration of Malaysia's indigenous group during their ancestral day of worship, while Silat Nusantara Carnival in April showcases Malaysia's traditional self-defence art with seminars and martial arts demonstrations.

In Sabah, the Regatta Lepa in April pays homage to the traditional single-mast sailing boat of the Bajau people in Semporna with a parade of colourful boats on water along with cultural performances.

Music fans will not be disappointed with International Drum Festival (Mar), Malaysian Dance Festival (June), Sunset Music Fest (June), Rainforest World Music Festival (July) and World Gamelan Festival (Nov).

For a unique taste of Malaysian cuisine, feast on events such as Nasi Ambeng Festival (Apr), Penang Durian Festival (July), Moon Cake Festival (Sep) and Malaysia International Gourmet Festival (Oct).

For further details, download a copy of the Malaysia Mega Events and Festivals 2015 Calendar from tourismmalaysia.gov.my – a great reference for all tourists who wish to immerse themselves in the cultures and traditions of Malaysia, Truly Asia.

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YEAR OF FESTIVALS**

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in Bangkok, Manila and Taipei.

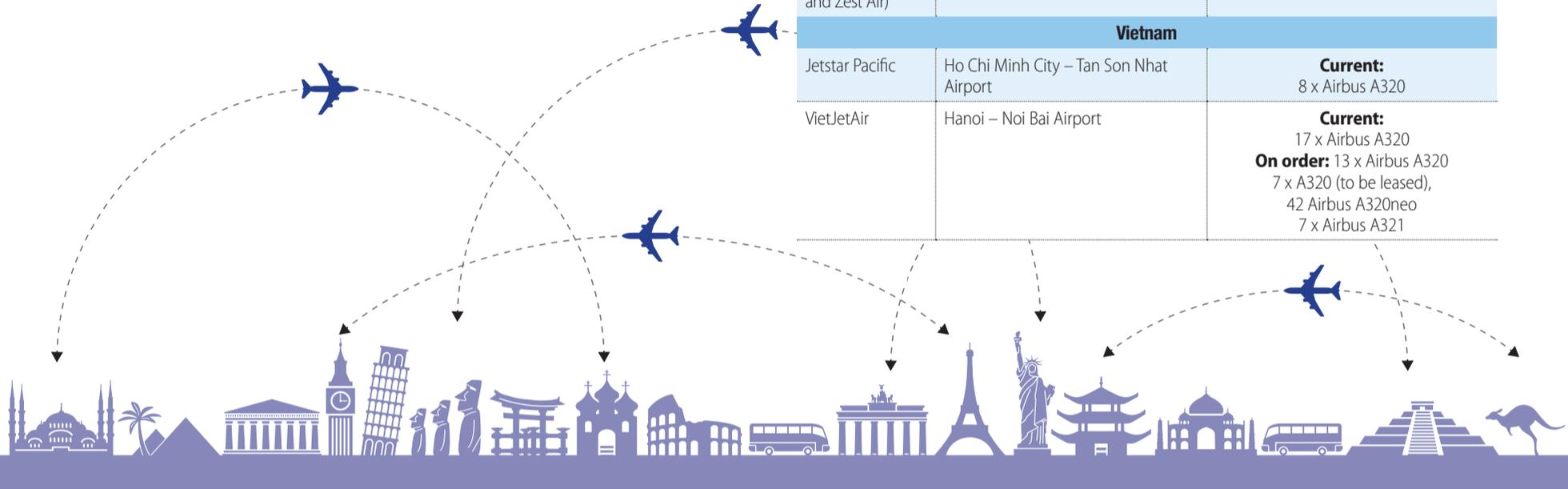
Scot and Tigerair have a partnership to facilitate connection between their flights and with Singapore Airlines owning Scoot and potentially as much as 70 per cent of Tigerair, both LCCs will further deepen their partnership and boost connectivity between them. The same connectivity is likely to be facilitated between Scoot, NokScoot and Nok Air at Bangkok's Don Mueang Airport. VietJet, meanwhile, has expanded its network to Russia's Vladivostok.

However, Campbell Wilson, Scoot's CEO, noted that third- and fourth-freedom point-to-point traffic still produce higher yield than fifth- and sixth-freedom connections. This February, Scoot will introduce its first B787-9 Dreamliner and in late-2015 will also take delivery of the smaller B787-8 for the Singapore-Melbourne route, due to launch in November.

✈️ Challenges

With massive aircraft orders in the last few years, LCCs in ASEAN are now faced with inevitable oversupply of capacity. At the same time, desirable slots at popular airports

Airline	Main operational base	Fleet
The Philippines		
Cebu Pacific Air	Manila – Ninoy Aquino International Airport	Current: 10 x Airbus A319, 25 x Airbus A320, 5 x A330-300, 8 x ATR72-500 On order: 9 x Airbus A320, 30 x Airbus A321neo, 2 x Airbus A330-300, 1 x ATR72-500
PAL Express	Manila – Ninoy Aquino International Airport	Current: 1 x A330-300, 14 x Airbus A320, 4 x Dash 8-300, 5 x Dash 8-400
AirAsia-Zest (Merger of AirAsia Philippines and Zest Air)	Manila – Ninoy Aquino International Airport Mactan-Cebu International Airport	Current: 4 x Airbus A320
Vietnam		
Jetstar Pacific	Ho Chi Minh City – Tan Son Nhat Airport	Current: 8 x Airbus A320
VietJetAir	Hanoi – Noi Bai Airport	Current: 17 x Airbus A320 On order: 13 x Airbus A320, 7 x A320 (to be leased), 42 Airbus A320neo, 7 x Airbus A321



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Low-cost carriers

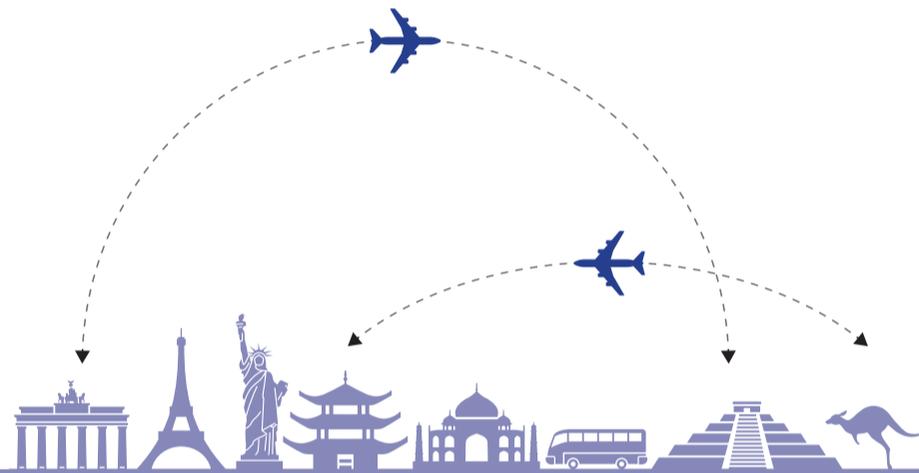
Airline	Main operational base	Fleet
Singapore		
Jetstar Asia	Singapore – Changi Airport	Current: 16 x Airbus A320
Scoot	Singapore – Changi Airport	Current: 6 x Boeing 777-200ER On order: 10 x B787-9 Dreamliner 10 x B787-8 Dreamliner
Tigerair	Singapore – Changi Airport	Current: 2 x A319 (inactive) 24 x Airbus A320, 3 x A320 (leased out) 6 x A320 (inactive) On order: 6 x Airbus A320, 37 x A320neo
Thailand		
Nok Air	Bangkok – Don Mueang Airport	Current: 18 x Boeing 737-800 2 x ATR72-500, 4 x Dash-400 On order: 2 x Dash 8-400, 7 x B737-800 8 x B737-MAX8
NokScoot	Bangkok – Don Mueang Airport	Current: 1 x B777-200ER
Orient Thai	Bangkok – Suvarnabhumi Airport Bangkok – Don Mueang Airport	Current: 2 x Boeing 747-400 (leased out), 1 x B767-300ER (leased out), 1 x B737-300 (leased out) 3 x B767-300, 6 x B737-300, 2 x B737-400
Thai AirAsia	Bangkok – Don Mueang Airport	Current: 40 x Airbus A320 On order: 2 x Airbus A320
Thai Lion Air	Bangkok – Don Mueang Airport Hat Yai Airport	Current: 8 x B737-900ER, 1 x ATR72-600
Thai AirAsia X	Bangkok – Don Mueang Airport	Current: 2 x A330-300
Thai VietJetAir	Bangkok – Suvarnabhumi Airport	Current: 1 x Airbus A320

are becoming increasingly difficult to secure, while full-service carriers are also increasingly mimicking LCCs, selling unsold seats in last-minute promotions and unbundling specific services to grow ancillary revenue.

Meanwhile, the growing strength of the US dollar will also be of significant concern to LCCs based in Malaysia and Indonesia. While a significant portion of revenue is ringgit- or rupiah-denominated, much of its expenditure and new aircraft cost are denominated in the US dollars, further inflating operational costs and new fleet investment.

It has become increasingly necessary for LCCs to move from a pure-LCC to a hybrid model in which travellers pay more to change bookings, secure seats with better access and legroom, enjoy inflight meals, and bring more hand-carried and checked luggage. In essence, some of these are exactly what their full-service counterparts are doing and the lines between LCCs and full service carriers are now more blurred than ever before.

The establishment of subsidiaries in various ASEAN countries is one way for LCCs to take advantage of traffic rights available in those foreign markets. Along with the liberalisation of flights under the ASEAN Open Skies, this will have the cumulative effect of expanding the market size.



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Lionel Chan, group CEO and MD of Far East Orient Singapore, reveals the challenges and opportunities of the travel trade.

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BEST WESTERN PREMIER The Haven Ipoh, Ipoh

Explore Magical Malaysia with Best Western

Malaysia is a land of many contrasts. With two distinct regions separated by the South China Sea, the country is inherently diverse, with a wide variety of cultures, customs, landscapes and languages.

And at Best Western, we celebrate this rich diversity with a range of hotels that captures the vast array of unique attractions Malaysia has to offer.

There are now five Best Western hotels in Malaysia that cover five distinct destinations, from Kota Kinabalu and Sandakan in the eastern state of Sabah, to the up-and-coming cities and lush green highlands of Peninsular Malaysia.

And with a choice of classic midscale BEST WESTERN and luxury BEST WESTERN PREMIER hotels to choose from, there is truly a hotel to suit all types of visitor to this magical country.

In Sabah, the 121-room BEST WESTERN Kinabalu Daya Hotel and 180-room BEST WESTERN Sandakan Hotel & Residence bring contemporary comforts and modern amenities to this remote region's east and west coasts.

Ideally positioned in the fast-emerging satellite cities of Selangor state, with quick access to several international airports, BEST WESTERN i-City Hotel Shah Alam and BEST WESTERN Petaling Jaya add more than 500 comfortable, convenient rooms to these fast-emerging centers of trade and tourism.

Finally, in the lush, jungle-clad highlands of Ipoh, BEST WESTERN PREMIER The Haven provides a luxurious sanctuary where guests can relax and unwind in the cooling hills, away from the heat of the city.

And whichever hotel you choose, guests are guaranteed Best Western's global brand promises of excellent service and free Wi-Fi.

Best Western has a vision to offer a collection of quality, international standard hotels in Malaysia. And with firm plans for at least eight more properties across the country, including new locations in Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Port Klang and the Genting Highlands, guests will soon be able to sample Best Western's legendary service and style in even more parts of this rich and rewarding country.



BEST WESTERN Kinabalu Daya Hotel, Kota Kinabalu



BEST WESTERN Sandakan Hotel & Residence, Sandakan



BEST WESTERN i-City Shah Alam, Shah Alam

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Product news

Myanmar showcases village life, luxury

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

MYANMAR is offering two new attractions that give visitors authentic experiences.

Khiri Travel Myanmar has launched a series of off-the-beaten-track excursions. General manager Edwin Briels said: "Clients are desiring more than the usual sightseeing and are now more interested in experiencing local village life and participating in interactive excursions.

"A trip in Myanmar is more than taking pictures of monuments. It's about the interaction with the locals, whose friendliness makes the country special."

Last December, Khiri launched day excursions such as a trekking tour to visit the Pa-O tribes near Inle Lake, kayaking along Inle Lake surrounded by rural villages, and a cooking class in a traditional Shan house.

A trip's programme, for instance, during the kayaking expedition, will have guests paddling past farms filled with potatoes, rice, sugarcane, tomatoes, garlic and peanuts. In between, they

will stop at a traditional Shan or Intha village that rarely sees foreign visitors – a good opportunity to take a rest and meet locals in their homes to learn about their lifestyles.

Briels said: "Myanmar gives our clients the chance to really explore new paths, and to be welcomed by the locals as the first-ever visitor. That's what makes the country so unique.

"Travellers realise visiting Myanmar is not about pampering themselves in five-star hotels but about the luxury of being able to personalise a trip and discover new places on their own."

Meanwhile, luxury boutique river cruiser *Sanctuary Ananda* from Sanctuary Retreats set sail on its maiden passenger cruise last November on a four-night cruise on the Irrawaddy River from Mandalay to Bagan.

The ship, which accommodates 48 passengers, exudes Myanmar flavour with its interiors that incorporate local fabrics, lacquerware and even traditional parasols showcasing rich local



A market in a traditional village

heritage of arts and crafts.

Marco Rosa, senior vice president, Sanctuary Retreats Hospitality, said: "We are excited to introduce a new level of luxury to the rivers of Myanmar. Our custom-built all-suite ship features the largest suites in Myanmar, with floor-to-ceiling windows and full balconies."

There are six itineraries of three-, four- and seven-night cruises with passengers' choice of excursions and cultural experiences. Longer 10- and 11-night itineraries on the Chindwin River to Homalin, the Upper Irrawaddy to Bhamo, and sailings between Yangon and Mandalay will begin later this year.

Brunei's rainforest draws

By S Puvaneswary

BRUNEI-BASED Freme Travel launched two attractions, the Adventure Course and refurbished Rainforest Lodge, in the Sultanate's Temburong National Park on January 15.

The lodge accommodates about 40 people in new wooden bunker beds and a further 15 in large tents. It also boasts a new terrace dining area and kitchen. It employs more than 10 full-time local Temburong guides, boatmen, and a caterer known for his signature lobster dish.

Highlights of the new adven-

ture course includes a 15m flying fox, a high rope bridge course, a hanging bridge across the river, a canopy platform for bird watching and a tower for viewing.

Freme Travel's chairman P M Shariffuddin said safety and environmental issues are upmost on the agenda, and that special attention is paid to sanitation, waste disposal, and risks of water pollution. He said: "We'll ensure the environment and welfare of our visitors are not compromised. We also have a crisis management programme for unforeseen situations."

Cruise in style in Nha Trang Bay

VIETNAM'S Nha Trang Bay will welcome a new series of five-star cruises to be launched by Luxury Travel and Emperor Cruises.

The operators will start sunset, dinner and charter cruises of the bay aboard a luxury junk, the first such vessel to join Emperor Cruises' fleet, from March 15.

Pham Ha, founder and CEO, Luxury Travel, said ATF 2015 provides an ideal platform for profiling new products in Vietnam's expanding luxury market.

Valerie Gardelle, marketing manager, Emperor Cruises Nha Trang, said: "By end-2015, Emperor Cruises will also launch overnight cruises in Nha Trang Bay on an eight-cabin vessel, followed by an 18-cabin vessel a year later, complete with butler service. Emperor Cruises, will be the first cruise operator providing overnight cruises in world-famous Nha Trang Bay, named one of the 29 most beautiful bays in the world." – Greg Lowe



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Snapshots

Sellers ready to do business

By Eugene Tang



Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources' Pehin Dato Yahya (centre) and the Brunei delegation

(Above) Tourism Malaysia's Abdul Ra'uf Abu Hassan and Syed Yahya, Iskandar Regional Development Authority Malaysia's Mohammad Rosly Md Selamat, and Tourism Malaysia's Mohd Akbal Setia



Ministry of Tourism Indonesia's Arief Yahya (seated third from left) with members of the trade



Mozaic Hotels & Resorts Singapore's Agnes Tan, Bintan Resorts Singapore's Asad Shiraz and Jan Moo, and Bintan Resort Cakrawala's Lydia Novirawati Kairupan

Jayakarta Hotels & Resorts Indonesia's Ellies Halim and Made Pudjayanti



Special moments

Myanmar president Thein Sein gave the welcome address, and the ASEANTA Excellence Awards for Best ASEAN Travel Article, Marketing and Promotional Campaign, ASEAN Airline Programme, ASEAN Cultural Preservation Effort, and Best ASEAN Conservation Effort were presented at Monday's opening ceremony. Lonely Planet Traveller recognised Myanmar with the Best in Travel – AEC Country Award.





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Brunei Tourism

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E-mail: info@bruneitourism.travel

Palawan

Above ground and underground



The Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's New 7 Wonders of Nature. It is teeming with life - over 150 animal species and over 800 plant species, including 300 types of trees.



Getting There:
Accessible via air from Manila, Cebu, Iloilo, and Davao



More Things to Do:

- Go island hopping in Honda Bay.
- Try spelunking at Ugong Rock.
- Take a mangrove paddle boat tour in Sabang.
- Be enchanted by fireflies on the Iwahig River Cruise.
- Visit one of the country's last tribes at the Batak Cultural Village.



MALAYSIA YEAR OF FESTIVALS 2015

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JAN — MAR

THROUGHOUT 2015
Tasik Putrajaya, Putrajaya
SKYRIDE FESTIVAL PARK

29 — 31 January 2015
Kg. Juara, Pulau Tioman,
Pahang
**TIOMAN INTERNATIONAL
CLASSIC SURFING**

11 — 15 February 2015
Bukit Layang-Layang,
Pasir Gudang, Johor
WORLD KITE FESTIVAL

26 February 2015
Johor Bahru, Johor
CHINGAY PARADE

28 February 2015
Teluk Intan, Perak
**MALAYSIA CHINESE NEW YEAR
OPEN HOUSE CELEBRATION**

March 2015
Throughout Malaysia
MALAYSIA GP SALE

5 March 2015
Esplanade, George Town,
Penang
CHAP GOH MEH CELEBRATION

7 March 2015
Mah Meri Cultural Village,
Pulau Carey, Selangor
**MAH MERI ANCESTORS
DAY FESTIVAL**

14 — 15 March 2015
Stadium Sultan Muhammad IV Grounds,
Kota Bharu, Kelantan
INTERNATIONAL DRUM FESTIVAL

17 — 21 March 2015
Pulau Langkawi, Kedah
LIMA'15 TOURISM CARNIVAL

27 — 29 March 2015
KLCC, Kuala Lumpur
FORMULA ONE FESTIVAL

27 — 29 March 2015
Sepang International Circuit,
Selangor
**FORMULA 1 PETRONAS
MALAYSIA GRAND PRIX**

APR — JUNE

April 2015
Homestay Banghunis,
Sepang, Selangor
NASI AMBENG FESTIVAL

3 — 5 April 2015
PWTC, Kuala Lumpur
**MALAYSIA INTERNATIONAL
SHOE FESTIVAL**

5 April 2015
Millennium Monument,
Precinct 2, Putrajaya
IRONMAN '70.3 PUTRAJAYA

6 — 7 April 2015
MPKB-BRI Hall, Kelantan
KARNIVAL SILAT NUSANTARA

11 — 12 April 2015
Quarry Park,
Penang Botanic Gardens
**PENANG WORLD MUSIC
FESTIVAL 2015**

18 — 30 April 2015
Istana Budaya, Jalan Tun Razak,
Kuala Lumpur
GREASE THE MUSICAL

24 — 26 April 2015
Federal Territory of Labuan
**LABUAN NATIONAL
WATER FESTIVAL**

24 — 26 April 2015
Semporna, Sabah
REGATTA LEPA

25 — 30 May 2015
Pantai Genting Tumpat,
Kelantan
**KELANTAN INTERNATIONAL
WAU FESTIVAL 2015**

28 — 31 May 2015
Marina Putrajaya, Putrajaya
MAGIC OF THE NIGHT 2015

30 — 31 May 2015
Penampang, Kota Kinabalu,
Sabah
**TADAU KA'AMATAN —
HARVEST FESTIVAL**

31 May 2015
Penang Botanic Gardens,
Penang
PENANG FLORA FESTIVAL

June 2015
Precinct 4, Putrajaya
**PUTRAJAYA FLOWER &
GARDEN FESTIVAL**

1 — 7 June 2015
Auditorium DBKL,
Kuala Lumpur
MALYSIAN DANCE FESTIVAL

5 — 6 June 2015
Tip of Borneo,
Tanjung Simpang Mengayau,
Kudat, Sabah
SUNSET MUSIC FEST

6 June 2015
Ranau, Sabah
**MALAYSIA TADAU KA'AMATAN
OPEN HOUSE CELEBRATION**

7 June 2015
Kuantan, Pahang
KUANTAN CENTURY RIDE

12 — 14 June 2015
Fraser's Hill, Pahang
**FRASER'S HILL INTERNATIONAL
BIRD RACE**

June 2015
Kuching, Sarawak
**MALAYSIA GAWAI DAYAK
OPEN HOUSE CELEBRATION**

18 June — 17 July 2015
Kuala Lumpur
FESTIVAL RAMADHAN

FESTIVAL

July – August 2015
Throughout Malaysia
**1 MALAYSIA MEGA SALE
SHOPPING CARNIVAL**

July 2015
Times Square, Penang
PENANG DURIAN FESTIVAL

1 August 2015
Rembau, Negeri Sembilan
**MALAYSIA AIDILFITRI
OPEN HOUSE CELEBRATION**

20 – 23 August 2015
Kg. Genting, Pulau Tioman,
Pahang
START IN TIOMAN

September 2015
Kuching, Sarawak
REGATTA SARAWAK

11 – 13 September 2015
Pantai Bernas, Kuala Rompin,
Pahang
**ROYAL PAHANG BILLFISH
INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE**

14 – 20 September 2015
Malaysia Book Village,
Langkawi, Kedah
**MALAYSIA BOOK VILLAGE
FESTIVAL 2015**

26 September –
4 October 2015
Putra Stadium, Kuala Lumpur
**MALAYSIA OPEN
KUALA LUMPUR 2015,
ATP 250 WORLD TOUR**

September –
November 2015
Throughout Malaysia
**1 MALAYSIA CONTEMPORARY
ART FESTIVAL (1MCAAT)**

OCT – DEC

1 – 31 October 2015
Selected hotels in Kuala Lumpur
**MALAYSIA INTERNATIONAL
GOURMET FESTIVAL 2015**

October 2015
Sepang International Circuit,
Selangor
**MALAYSIAN MOTORCYCLE
GRAND PRIX**

13 – 21 October 2015
Tow Boo Kong, Burmah Road,
Macallum Street Ghaut,
Jelutong, Noordin Street,
Farlim, Butterworth,
Bukit Mertajam – Penang
**NINE EMPEROR GODS
FESTIVAL**

29 October –
1 November 2015
Dataran Putrajaya, Precinct 3,
Putrajaya
**PUTRAJAYA INTERNATIONAL
ISLAMIC ARTS AND CULTURE
FESTIVAL (PIAGUF)**

October 2015
CIMB CLASSIC – PGA TOUR

November 2015
Throughout Terengganu
WORLD GAMELAN FESTIVAL

11 – 12 November 2015
Pulau Indah, Port Klang, Selangor
**RAJA MUDA SELANGOR
INTERNATIONAL REGATTA**

21 November 2015
Sungai Petani, Kedah
**MALAYSIA DEEPAVALI
OPEN HOUSE CELEBRATION**

November –
December 2015
Throughout Malaysia
1 MALAYSIA YEAR END SALE

26 December 2015
Portuguese Settlement,
Melaka
**MALAYSIA CHRISTMAS
OPEN HOUSE CELEBRATION**



All information is correct at the time of printing. All dates are subject to change without any prior notice.

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BACK TO BACK EXCITING EVENTS ARE WAITING FOR YOU IN MALAYSIA. ENJOY.



1Malaysia GP Sale • March 2015

Held in conjunction with the annual Formula 1 Grand Prix, the 1Malaysia GP Sale is especially felt in the Klang Valley where shopping malls and departmental stores hold great bargains. Tourists coming to enjoy the F1 race can arrive a little early or stay on after the race for the added shopping.



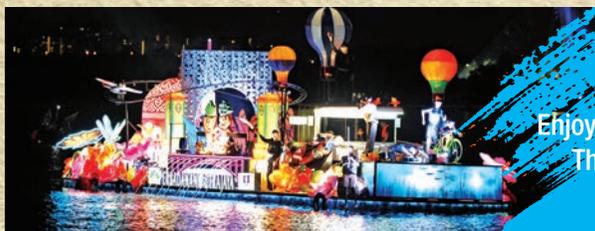
Formula 1 Petronas Malaysia Grand Prix • 27 - 29 Mar 2015

Watch adrenaline-pumping action at one of the most awesome tracks in the world. With its extreme hot and wet conditions, Sepang International Circuit is a challenge even for the finest drivers in the world. Don't miss this exciting race.



Borneo Jazz Festival • 8 - 9 May 2015

The inaugural Borneo Jazz Festival was held in 2006, with the vision of being the leading music festival in the region while promoting tourism to Miri and Sarawak's northern regions. Not only would visitors have a fun-filled and entertaining experience, the annual event also showcases Miri as a truly cosmopolitan city with fascinating cultural attractions.



1Malaysia International Tourism Night Floral Parade - 'Magic of the Night' • 28 - 31 May 2015

Enjoy a dazzling evening with the glittering lights of decorated floats brought in from every state in Malaysia. This event features Malaysia as one of the world's top tourist destinations. Enjoy a grand showcase of the country's flora and fauna as well as the attractions found in the different states in Malaysia.



The Colours of 1Malaysia • 22 - 24 May 2015

Make a date with Colours of 1Malaysia. Get to know Malaysia through the traditional dance performances. Then be mesmerized by visiting the attractions nearby. It'll be a date you'll never forget.



1Malaysia Mega Sale Carnival • July - Aug 2015

Shopaholic alert! One of the three major shopping seasons in the country is back with mega shopping excitement, dining options, endless entertainment and fun-filled activities!



Malaysian Motorcycle Grand Prix • Oct 2015

This is the premier event of motorcycle racing. Catch the action of the world's top racers in this exciting event. Held at one of the most challenging circuits in the world, the race is a must-watch for those who love full throttle action.



Fabulous Food 1Malaysia • Oct - Dec 2015

Bring a huge appetite with you where delicious Malaysian classics will make your mouth water. Always make room for seconds, thirds and even, fourths. Because more food beckons elsewhere.



1Malaysia Year-End Sale • Nov - Dec 2015

From trendy malls to open-air markets, the atmosphere is vibrant with the mood for the best shopping and leisure experiences ever, as only year-end sales can offer. Yes, the fabulous 1Malaysia Year-End Sale is back – bigger and better, events and happenings in hundreds of shopping outlets all over the country for nearly two months. Put your best foot forward and step into the New Year in style and glamour.

For more information and travel ideas on Malaysia, visit www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my

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