



## From the west with love

Savings from weaker Asian currencies, attractive products keep South-east Asia cities hot for longhaul travellers

By S Puvaneswary and Mimi Hudoyo

THE appeal of South-east Asia continues to hold strong in the hearts of longhaul travellers, said buyers at this year's PATA Travel Mart, who added that the region is now more enticing due to new products and cheaper rates resulting from weaker Asian currencies.

For longhaul travellers from countries whose economies have yet to recover from the global financial crisis, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are top favourites.

United Tours Brazil's director, Jorge Barbosa Elias, told the *Daily* that the Brazilian real has devalued drastically against the US dollar in the past year, forcing Brazilians to look for cheaper alternatives to the US for their holidays.

The real had fallen an astounding 62.7 per cent against the greenback from a year ago and 14 per cent over the past six months.

Elias said: "Hotel rates in Bangkok and Bali are very good. They are at least 40 per cent cheaper than rates of similar class hotels in the US. In addition,

Qatar Airways and Emirates Airlines are also offering attractive rates.

"Next year we have three incentive groups combining Bangkok and Bali. Each group will have around 20 people."

He added that Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia hold particular appeal to his clients as they are "very new destinations".

He urged the NTOs of these destinations to do more marketing in Brazil, especially in promoting their value-for-money packages.

Ben Gosman, managing director of FreeStyle Incentives based in Amsterdam, has observed a 10 per cent year-on-year increase in leisure traffic to Indonesia and Thailand, while the growth in corporate incentives to the two destinations is just under 10 per cent.

Gosman said both Thailand and Indonesia are seen as value-for-money destinations and the devaluation of the local currencies have helped drive demand.

"The euro had devalued earlier so Thailand and Indonesia were very expensive to us, but not anymore. Demand is good and the destinations are selling

by themselves because the Dutch are well informed about what Thailand and Indonesia have to offer," he added.

Ekaterina Milosh, deputy director of Tour Prestige Club, Russia also finds Asia becoming more attractive for rich Russians.

She said: "The weak rouble has affected the middle-income market. The upmarket travellers, however, are still travelling. For them, Asia is becoming more interesting because airfares to that region are sometimes cheaper than Europe."

Milosh identified Thailand, Vietnam and Bali as being most popular among her travellers.

These destinations have luxury hotels and coaches, private jet services, many attractions and excellent airlinks from Russia, she explained.

"Russians like to fly to destinations that require only two transits at most," she added. As such, Bali is the best selling destination in Indonesia, while little attention is paid to other less accessible destinations in the country.

However, not all longhaul travellers are drawn to the South-east Asia because of the favourable currency exchange.

Although the Mexican peso had fallen in the past year, Reuven Sagi, president of RAS International Tours in Mexico, said demand for Bali is still good as "honeymooners are less price-sensitive because it is a special occasion (for them)."

Jeff Roberts, founder of Global Pursuits Services in the US, said young Americans who are travelling to Asia for the first time are keeping demand strong for Thailand.



## SETTING THE STAGE FOR A SUCCESSFUL SHOW

Government of India's Mahesh Sharma extended a warm welcome to delegates of PATA Travel Mart 2015 on Sunday's opening ceremony at the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre. Guests were treated to an evening of enthralling traditional dances and music, as well as a sumptuous buffet dinner.

This year, the mart saw representation from 456 sellers from 28 destinations, and 242 keen buyers from 233 organisations.

### TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

#### PTM Talks

Lessons learned from community engagement. By Amy McLoughlin (Wild Asia) and Chananya Phataraprasit (Asian Oasis)  
11.10-11.30  
Hall 1, BIEC

#### PTM Talks

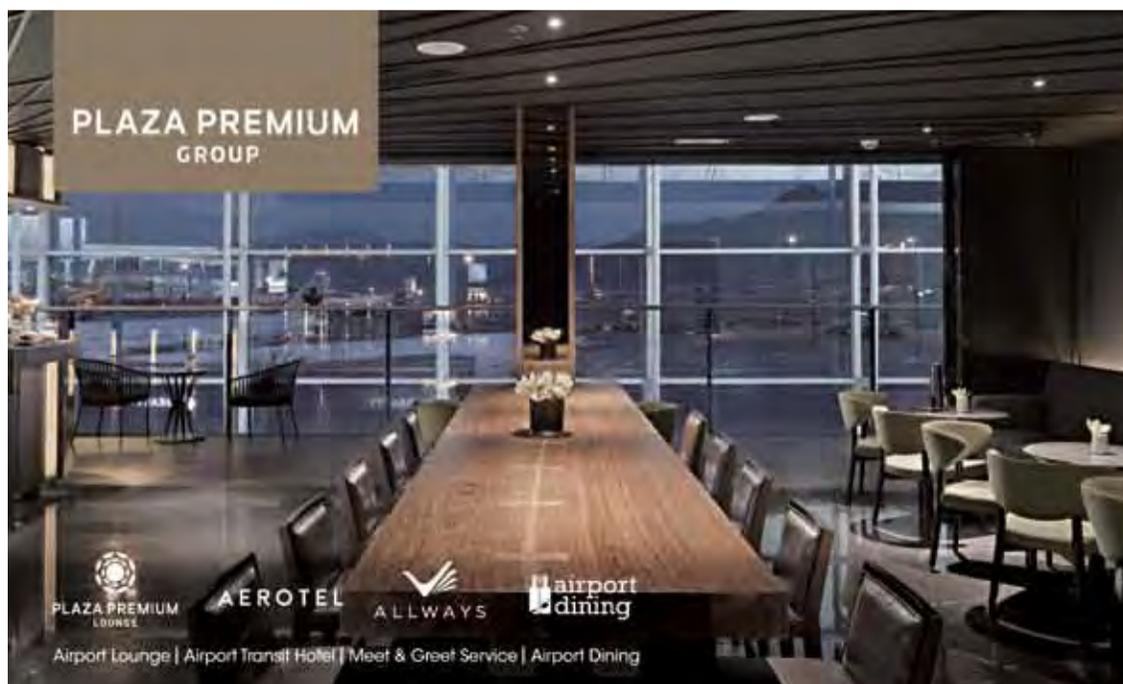
Social innovation in responsible tourism. By Amy McLoughlin (Wild Asia) & Yurie Nagashima (Kinzei/Soksabike)  
15.30-15.50  
Hall 1, BIEC

#### 2015 PATA Gold Awards

Hosted by Macau Government  
Tourist Office  
12.45-14.15  
Jacaranda and Gulmohar, Conference Center, BIEC

#### PTM 2016 (Indonesia) Dinner Reception

Hosted by Ministry of Tourism, Indonesia  
19.00-21.30  
Vivanta by Taj – Yeshwantpur



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# Online bookings up

But hoteliers say offline agencies are still valued partners

By Rohit Kaul

INDIAN consumers are increasingly going online to research and book travel, and even more are expected to do so according to a study by consultancy firm Phocuswright.

The research, which was published earlier this year, involved 2,500 travellers from higher income groups across 25 cities in India. They were required to have taken at least one overnight holiday.

Speaking to the *Daily* on the sidelines of the PATA Technology Forum on Sunday, Phocuswright's research analyst, Asia Pacific, Chetan Kapoor, said, "Forty per cent of travel bookings in India are now made online. Consumers have become confident and are embracing the Internet as a means to discover prices and information. We expect the share to reach 50 per cent in the next four years."

Sharing more details on the study, Kapoor said online travel agencies (OTAs) are top choices for travel information and two out of three travellers are buying pre-packaged tours online.

Offline travel consultants in India are however, not perturbed by the shift in

buying behaviour and growing share of the online travel segment, believing that the market is big enough for everyone.

Deepak Narula, managing director of Aman Travel Group, said: "Indian travel business is growing so there is room for both online and offline agencies. Indian travellers want excellent services and competitive prices. An offline consultant who can provide these will survive."

Recognising that "online business is a reality that offline consultants cannot ignore", Ranjan Kumar Mishra, managing director of Odisha-based Eastern Voyage, advised small-sized tour operators to "focus on alternative revenue streams such as travel insurance to survive".

Some hoteliers have also told the *Daily* that offline agencies remain a key channel for their business and will continue to be so in the coming years.

"We have tie-ups with many OTAs and generate good business through them. However, offline agencies are giving us healthy MICE business. Furthermore, hotels must depend on different (channels)," said Debashis Dutta, associate director, sales & marketing with The Golden Palms Hotel & Spa, Bangalore.



Kapoor: online usage will rise

# Smarter use of limited budget

TOURISM Malaysia has restructured its advertising and promotional activities this year due to a 25 per cent or RM50 million (US\$11.56 million) slash in budget, a result of tumbling oil prices which had forced the Malaysian government to trim its expenditure.

Azizan Noordin, Tourism Malaysia's deputy director-general (promotions), told the *Daily* that a third of the NTO's activities had been affected.

While advertising frequencies and activities will be cut, Azizan said Tourism Malaysia will continue to promote in all key markets.

He added: "We will maintain our presence at main travel tradeshows but will go slow on consumer fairs. The money we save will be used for tactical campaigns."

"We will also go for quick wins by organising B2B roadshows overseas and invite the private sector to join us. Since June we have done roadshows in Singapore, Indonesia, Beijing, Xi'an, Batam, Medan, Lombok and Bengaluru. We hope things will get better by this year-end, and regain the budget that had been frozen."

The ongoing *Year of Festivals* campaign is expected to help Malaysia achieve its 2015 target of 29.4 million arrivals and RM89 billion in tourist receipts. — S Puvaneswary

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**A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR THE TRAVEL TRADE**

PATA's Kevin Murphy, Government of Karnataka's Sri R V Deshpande, Ministry of Tourism Indonesia's I Gde Pitana, and Government of India's Mahesh Sharma open the Mart on Monday with a lamp lighting ceremony

## IN BRIEF

### An energetic promotion

Kazakhstan Tourism Department is at PATA Travel Mart for the first time, determined to raise awareness of its tourism draws and the upcoming Expo 2017 in Astana from June 10 to September 10.

Head of division, Zhanat Kazkenova, said Asian markets take priority in its marketing plans, while Europe comes next.

Elaborating on Expo 2017, Kazkenova said: "This will be the first Expo for Kazakhstan and we hope to attract five million visitors from over 100 countries."

### Glam camp

The Ultimate Travelling Camp invites travellers to see India through a luxurious mobile excursion. Travellers will stay in

lavish tents that measure from 39m<sup>2</sup> and be served by personal butlers. The Ultimate Travelling Camp is now at Chamba Camp in Thiksey, Ladakh until September 30, and will move to Kohima Camp in Nagaland from Nov 29 to Dec 12.

### New place for adventures

A new company BaliXtreme Adventure, is rolling out adventure programmes at a new site east of Bali in the Yeh Poh Village, Karangasem.

Managing director, I Ketut Ardana, said: "The village is particularly interesting because of its land contours, making it suitable for dirt-biking, ATV rides, trekking and cycling."

Travellers will also have a chance to visit temples, rice fields and see locals going about their daily activities.

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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

# What a fantastic fairground

Eugene Tang checks out the show floor where enthusiastic sellers are bringing a lively buzz to PATA Travel Mart



Tourism Malaysia's Azizan Noordin (fifth from left) leads a strong team from Malaysia



The Jayakarta Lombok Beach Resort & Spa's Ida Bagus Okayana and The Jayakarta Bali's I Ketut Budha give a thumbs up to buyers at PATA Travel Mart 2015



The delegation from Plaza Premium Lounge – Prakash Harpalani, Narasimha Murthy, Pauline Cheung, Kay Chow, Pallavi Verma and Edward Cheng are ready to showcase the company's collection of quality airport products and services



Dorsett Hospitality International Malaysia's David Teoh, Dorsett Hospitality International Hong Kong's Philip Schaetz and Dorsett Hospitality International Malaysia's Angie Ng



Ministry of Tourism Indonesia's Dody Prianto, Jasa Ekatama Buana Convex Indonesia's Nining Phoa, and Ministry of Tourism Indonesia's Vinsensius Jemadu, Nailis Saadah and Indra Eka Permana



Indochina Tourist & Trade Vietnam's Luong Tien Dung, Hanoi Red Tours' Vu Hong Lien, APT Travel Vietnam's Nguyen Hong Dai, Vietnam National Administration of Tourism's Nguyen Thi Thanh Huong and Ngo Hoai Chung, Danang Culture, Sports and Tourism Department's Ngo Thi Hoang Anh, Indochina Tourist & Trade Vietnam's Huynh Xuan Hai and Luxury Travel Vietnam's Nguyen Cuu Hung



Head of the Johor Tourism delegation, M Asojan, presents the destination's top draws with his colleagues



Shun Tak-China Travel Ship Management Hong Kong's Alcuin Li



Department of Tourism Philippines' Gerard O Panga along with the destination's DMCs

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# Magic carpet or rollercoaster ride?

Harry Potter, Hello Kitty and Mickey Mouse have found homes in Asia as the region's growing middle class fuels a boom in theme park attractions. Will the burgeoning options park attendance or lead to consumer fatigue?



### SINGAPORE By Paige Lee Pei Qi

Often a highlight in travel itineraries for Singaporeans, theme parks appeal to all age groups and families in particular, as they bring out the inner child in everyone and offer the experience of escaping into another world.

Moreover, the fun atmosphere in theme parks is itself a source of entertainment. The plethora of ride options also cater accordingly to an individual's appetite for adventure, offering something for everyone.

Travel consultants will often design theme parks within the programmes, especially in destinations with Disneyland or Universal Studios like Japan and Hong Kong. The upcoming theme parks in Asia are expected to help consultants provide more variety in their itineraries and further boost interest into the destination.

Singaporean travellers typically do not mind paying the admission fees for theme parks, which is just a small additional charge compared with the cost of the entire holiday.

Theme parks across the world are constantly reinventing themselves by rolling out new attractions and capitalising on current trends to draw new and repeat travellers.

An example is the Frozen Ever After ride, which will debut at Walt Disney World in Orlando in 2016. Leveraging the popular animation film *Frozen*, this new attraction will feature a snow-filled boat ride that will take visitors straight into a winter wonderland.

*The following people were interviewed for this article: Marshall Ooi, director, Nam Ho Travel; Clifford Neo, managing director, Dynasty Travel; Anthony Chan, group managing director, Chan Brothers Travel*

*Singapore; Shannon Hee, marketing and communications manager, ASA Holidays; and Sylvia Tan, vice-president of marketing and public relations, CTC Travel*

### MALAYSIA By S Puvaneswary

As competition intensify in Asia, the use of iconic figures and movies such as *Harry Potter*, *Transformers* and *Shrek* in theme parks appeal to Malaysian travellers as they are able to identify with these characters.

While popular tourist magnets, theme parks are not the sole attraction for holidaymakers when picking a destination. Trade players believe that a destination's overall offerings is more important than the theme park and that a new park built in an out-of-the way location without supporting tourism infrastructure will not attract Malaysians.

Outbound travel consultants in Malaysia also urge theme park operators overseas to provide training and marketing support for them to better promote and divert traffic to theme parks. To capture the interest of the Muslim market, consultants also need to know if there are halal-certified food outlets within the theme park.

As well, the consultants also agreed that the weak ringgit is currently putting a damper on outbound travel demand. Some industry members expect travel demand and visits to theme parks to continue falling until the ringgit strengthens.

On the other hand, as theme parks are still a draw for families with children below 15, such packages continue to sell well during school holidays.

*The following people were interviewed for the article: Hamzah Rahmat, director, Be-*

*star Travel Centre; Cooper Huang, CEO, Malaysian Harmony Tours & Travel; Adam Kamal, CEO, Rakyat Travel; Abdul Rahman Mohamed, deputy general manager – channel management, Mayflower Acme Tours; and John Chan, business consultant, Kris International Traveltours*

### INDONESIA By Mimi Hudoyo

Theme parks are a big draw for Indonesian holidaymakers, especially among families with young children and teenagers. During school holidays, up to 90 per cent of travellers are families and the majority of them take up holiday packages inclusive of theme parks.

Many parents prioritise the interests of their children to visit theme parks during holidays; however, a theme park session is just one of the many activities in the travel package, which also include culinary experiences, shopping and sightseeing.

While entry fees to theme parks may be high, Indonesians are willing to pay for the experience, attracted by the rides, well-known characters and technology which offer them different experiences.

Furthermore, new theme parks in a destination or new attractions in an existing park offer the opportunity to attract travellers, both first-timers and repeats.

An example would be Universal Studio Japan's The Wizarding World of Harry Potter – many Indonesian families are flocking to the park even though they may have visited the destination before, therefore highlighting the need for existing theme parks to constantly come up with new attractions.

Theme parks also have the potential to attract new travellers to a destination.

Legoland in Johor Bahru, for example, has become a popular destination not only for travellers from Jakarta, but also other Indonesian cities like Surabaya, Bandung and Medan.

Likewise, Indonesian travel companies have started including Pattaya in family packages since the opening of Cartoon Network Amazone Waterpark in the city.

*The following people were interviewed for the article: Yongky Yanwintarko, managing director, Sun Tour Surabaya; Rery Sankyo, vice president leisure operations, Panorama Tours Indonesia; Dharmawan Rahardja, owner, Genta Tour Jakarta; Yento Chen, CEO, Destination Tour; and Yekti Suradji, president director, Kencana Tour*

### THE PHILIPPINES By Rosa Ocampo

As the Philippines still does not boast attractions the likes of Disneyland and Universal Studios, Filipino travellers still have to head overseas to get a dose of theme park fun.

Shopping and sightseeing are must-dos for Filipinos during their holidays overseas, with food, culture and theme parks also high up on the agenda, especially for families travelling with kids.

Filipino travellers are also willing to pay for entry to theme parks which they regard as "special", even if the costs are high.

To remedy the issue of costly entrance fees for walk-in tourists, theme parks have partnered with travel agencies in the Philippines to offer special rates incorporated in the tour package price.

There are also special passes combining two or more theme parks, like Sanrio Hello Kitty Town and The Little Big Club in Johor Bahru or Universal Studios Japan and Tokyo's Disneyland and DisneySea.

Visa rules also play a role in determining an attraction's appeal. For instance, theme parks in Hong Kong and Singapore, which offer visa-free entry to Filipino visitors, are often deemed more accessible than those in Japan and South Korea.

For many Filipinos, however, the novelty of visiting a theme park is increasingly replaced by a been-there, done-that sentiment as the existing theme parks in Asia are perceived as offering similar rides and attractions.

A growing number of travellers are also opting for activities like adventure travel and destinations off the beaten track during their holidays.

*The following people were interviewed for this article: Jaison Yang, general manager, Travel Warehouse; Simon Ang, managing director-operations, Celebrate Life Travel & Leisure; Kat Cruz, team leader, meetings and events, American Express Transnational; Arwin De Castro, outbound supervisor, Mango Tours; Arvill Masalta, assistant supervisor, Rajah Travel; and Kristine Mariano, sales and marketing supervisor, Amkor Travel and Tours*



20th Century Fox World, Malaysia

# Asia's new wonderlands

## Planet J, Macau

by Raini Hamdi

**Opening date & location** Opening this summer, Planet J is located in Sands Cotai Central, Macau.

**Target Asian markets** China, Taiwan and South-east Asia.

**USPs** Ever imagined playing an RPG online game physically? Planet J is the world's first player-centric Live-Action-Role-Play theme park.

"At Planet J you won't find a rollercoaster, but out-of-the-world role-playing games, where players can physically act out the actions of fantasy characters, pursue goals and interact with other adventurers between realistic and virtual settings," explained a spokesperson.

Connecting the players with the park is a mobile device called Magic Scroll, a personalised mobile gear that connects to over 200 whimsical games. Blending state-of-the-art technology and experiential storytelling, it will take players into a total immersive experience, from exhilarating quests for individuals to dazzling group challenges.

## Shanghai Disney Resort

by Paige Lee Pei Qi

**Opening date & location** Opening in spring 2016 in Pudong, Shanghai.

**Target Asian markets** China in particular, plus Asia.

**USPs** Shanghai Disney Resort will be a world-class family vacation destination that combines classic Disney characters and storytelling with the uniqueness and beauty of China.

The resort's vision is to build an "authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese" destination with unique architectural features. It also targets to provide unique content and experience to mainland Chinese visitors and international guests by introducing Chinese elements in various aspects like festivities, dining and entertainment.

## Movie Animation Park Studios, Perak

by S Puvaneswary

**Opening date & location** Opening mid-2016 in Perak, Malaysia, Movie Animation Park Studios (MAPS) will be located along the North-South Expressway and a 20-minute drive from Ipoh city.

**Target Asian markets** Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, China and India.

**USPs** Poised to be Asia's first animation theme park, MAPS will be one of the most unique and exciting projects underway in the leisure tourism landscape in Malaysia, according to Darren McLean, co-founder and CEO of MAPS.

There will be more than 40 attractions in six themed zones. Highlights include a car and bike live stunt show, DreamWorks Animation Adventure Zone featuring themed attractions such as *Mr Peabody & Sherman*, *The Croods* and *Casper The Friendly Ghost*; South-east Asia's first *Smurfs* live animation attraction; and the world's first *BoBoiBoy* animation attraction.

## 20th Century Fox World, Malaysia

by S Puvaneswary

**Opening date & location** Opening by end-2016 as part of Resorts World Genting.

**Target Asian markets** South-east Asia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and India.

**USPs** Chow Wei Heng, vice president of marketing, Resorts World Genting, said: "This will be the world's first 20th Century

Fox World theme park. We are bringing the rich heritage of 20th Century Fox movies and television from the screen to be experienced on the ground.

"We cover a wide range of entertainment of family-themed attractions like *Ice Age*, sci-fi films such as *Alien vs Predator* and global blockbusters like *Night at the Museum*."

## Shanghai Haichang Polar Ocean Park

by Prudence Lui

**Opening date & location** Scheduled to commence operation in 2017, it will be situated on the north-western side of Dishui Lake in Shanghai. The park is a 30-minute drive from Pudong International Airport and an hour's drive from downtown Shanghai.

**Target Asian markets** East Asia.

**USPs** Haichang Holdings aims to create a world-class marine park with the largest number of marine species on exhibition. It also seeks to display the animals innovatively while providing entertainment through marine animal shows, in addition to having a diverse range of science-themed educational programmes.

## IMG Worlds of Adventure, Dubai

by Feizal Samath

**Opening date & location** Opening end-2015 on Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Road.

**Target Asian markets** The Asian market as a whole, in line with the Dubai Corporation of Tourism and Commerce Marketing's global strategy.

**USPs** According to Lennard Otto, general manager, IMG Worlds of Adventure: "As the world's largest indoor temperature-controlled theme park at 140,000m<sup>2</sup>, we will offer guests a year-round attraction that is insulated from the Gulf's typically very hot and humid summer months.

"Partnerships with globally renowned brands such as Marvel and Cartoon Network will result in a unique mix of exciting themed rides and attractions catering to a wide range of ages and nationalities."

## Dubai Parks & Resorts

by Feizal Samath

**Opening date & location** October 2016. The 232ha destination is located on Sheikh Zayed Road close to the Palm Jebel Ali.

**Target Asian markets** China, Hong Kong, India and South-east Asia.

**USPs** Vinit Shah, chief destination management officer, said: "Dubai Parks & Resorts will comprise three separate theme parks: Motiongate Dubai, a Hollywood-inspired theme park concept; Legoland Dubai, the first Legoland theme park in the Middle East; and Bollywood Parks Dubai, a first-of-its-kind entertainment destination that will showcase the Bollywood movie experience."

The multi-themed complex will also feature Lapita Hotel, a Polynesian-themed hotel operated by the Marriott Group, and Riverland Dubai, a waterfront entertainment, retail and dining destination connecting the theme parks.



Characters from Planet J, Macau



## JAYAKARTA HOTELS & RESORTS

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## Destination Singapore

# Singapore's Golden Jubilee

Hotels and travel companies are marking Singapore's 50th anniversary with a multitude of related products and offers



Local businesses have much to celebrate and promote for the nation's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, writes **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

In a bid to reverse slowing visitor figures, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has launched a S\$20 million (US\$14.8 million) global marketing campaign to ride the wave of international interest on the nation's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

From May to December 2015, visitors will be offered a range of promotional airfares, hotel stays, retail offerings, dining deals and discounted admissions to attractions. The campaign will be marketed in key countries like Indonesia, China, India, the Philippines, Japan and Vietnam.

Lynette Pang, assistant chief executive of STB's marketing group, said: "2015 is not only a tremendous milestone for Singapore, but also an opportunity for STB to leverage the international attention to ramp up marketing efforts for destination Singapore."

"SG50 is a once-in-a-lifetime event for

Singapore and has caught the interest of the world, placing us on numerous lists of top places to visit. With the exciting Golden Jubilee campaign, we look forward to celebrating this milestone with both locals and international visitors," Pang added.

Hoteliers are also leveraging this historic milestone in their push for more tourists. More than 35 hotels, including Park Hotel Group and Sheraton Towers Singapore, have already committed to offering a Pay Two, Stay Three offer, while children will have complimentary access to several Singaporean attractions.

The Pan Pacific Hotels Group (PPHG) has launched a SG50 promotion at its two Pan Pacific and three Parkroyal hotels in Singapore to offer selected travel consultants who book through the group's website 50 per cent savings.

Timur Senturk, PPHG's vice president, operations, ASEAN, said: "With many large-scale celebratory events planned throughout the year, we see SG50 as a great opportunity to heighten awareness and excitement of Singapore."

"We will be unveiling more exciting rooms and dining promotions throughout the year that can be enjoyed by both Singaporeans and visitors to the country," he added.

Over at the Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore, a new Celebrate Singapore, Celebrate You room package was rolled out at the beginning of the year "to leverage the jubilant nationwide atmosphere", said director of public relations & marketing communications, Nathalyn Fong.

The package includes overnight accommodation, buffet breakfast, S\$50 dining credit, a bottle of champagne and a limited-edition Ritz-Carlton Singapore 50 lion beanie memento.

Judy Lum, Tour East's group vice presi-

## VIEWPOINTS

How are you leveraging SG50 to sell Singapore?



**Timur Senturk,**  
vice president,  
operations, ASEAN,  
Pan Pacific Hotels  
Group

We want to honour the meaning of SG50, which is about celebrating the pioneering spirit and Singapore's past achievements, so we are also looking at heritage-themed promotions and packages that encourage both locals and visitors to journey through its history and rediscover Singapore.



**Selina Chavry,** regional  
director, Asia, Pacific  
World

Singapore may be short in history but the country has succeeded gloriously in its development during its 50 years of independence. We can explore bringing the group through the transformation of Singapore by highlighting housing from a kampung slum in Pulau Ubin to a cosmopolitan city in The Pinnacle@Duxton.

dent of sales and marketing, said: "SG50 gives us a great reason to tell the Singapore Story from the past 50 years to present-day Singapore and to the future."

"We are currently looking at reiterating SG50 to give it a strong significance and convey the message that some packages come once in 50 years," Lum added. For instance, tourists would be more compelled to retrace the Singapore history during the World War II with visits to the Changi Chapel and Museum and Kranji War Memorial.

## PRODUCTS

### 1 Universal Studios Singapore

Hop on the world's first Puss In Boots' Giant Journey suspended coaster and join Puss and Kitty on this anti-gravity, swashbuckling adventure in search of the legendary golden eggs. With a maximum speed of 36km/h and a minimum height requirement of 100cm, this two-minute ride promises to entertain both adults and children alike.



Puss In Boots at Universal Studios Singapore

### 2 DreamWorks Animation: The Exhibition

DreamWorks Animation is, for the first time in Asia, giving the public a peek into what goes on behind the scenes in making some of its biggest blockbusters like *Madagascar* and *Kung Fu Panda*.

DreamWorks Animation: The Exhibition will feature 31 films and some 400 displays, allowing visitors to experience how these animations make the leap from initial sketches to the big screen. The exhibition will be held at Singapore's ArtScience Museum and feature concept drawings, storyboards and reconstructions of DreamWorks' real-life workspaces.

### 3 Bread Street Kitchen

Celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay has brought his culinary magic to The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands. Set in an industrial warehouse-designed restaurant, the two-storey Bread Street Kitchen is modelled after its London counterpart and serves a British European menu.

Signature dishes include pork belly, shepherd's pie, roasted veal carpaccio and



Gordon Ramsay's Bread Street Kitchen

the BSK burger, which features melted Monterey Jack cheese and spicy sriracha mayo in a brioche bun.

Opened since June, the restaurant boasts a total seating capacity of 149 including a 14-seater private dining area.

### 4 Saturday Night Fever The Musical

The acclaimed *Saturday Night Fever The Musical* will hit Singapore shores from September 25 to October 4 at the MasterCard Theatres at Marina Bay Sands.

Packed with slick dance moves and dazzling choreography, this hit musical that features the iconic Bee Gees soundtrack will bring retro back with '70s anthems like *Stayin' Alive*, *Night*

*Fever*, *You Should Be Dancing* and *How Deep is Your Love*. Tickets are on sale and start from S\$95.

### 5 Grand Hotels International

Grand Hotels International is gearing up to open two new properties in the city.

Both located on the corner of Cavenagh Road and Kramat Lane, the 488-room Hotel Chancellor@Orchard soft-opened in May while the adjacent 264-room Hotel Grand Central will be ready by October.

At Hotel Chancellor@Orchard, there are four meeting rooms available while Hotel Grand Central has two board meeting rooms. Room rates for both hotels will start from S\$180.



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## Destination Indonesia

# Waking up from hibernation

Peace has descended and Toraja is luring tourists back with agro-tourism and cultural experiences. By Mimi Hudoyo



Tongkonan traditional houses in Toraja, South Sulawesi

**T**oraja in South Sulawesi is striving to put itself back on the international tourist map after lying dormant for some 15 years.

Death is celebrated with much excitement and festivities for the Torajans, who practise elaborate funeral rites and carve burial sites into rocky cliffs. This unique culture and tradition had been a major draw for Western tourists who dominated arrivals to Indonesia in the 1990s.

However, following the race riots in Indonesia and the Poso riots in Central

Sulawesi in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the European market dipped and Toraja was scrapped off from tour operators' itineraries, wiping the destination off the tourism map.

Toraja also subsequently failed to attract the rising domestic and regional markets, partly because of the sensitivity of some markets towards death-related attractions.

In 2012, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy established the Toraja DMO, a destination revitalisation pro-

gramme, with the assistance of Swisscontact. Toraja DMO is now leading the developments taking place in Tana Toraja Regency, the southern part of Toraja.

Tri Laksono Juliharto, project officer for destination development at Swisscontact, said: "Currently, only 30 per cent of tourist attractions in Toraja is in Tana Toraja, while the rest are in North Toraja. This gives a chance for Tana Toraja to develop nature-based tourism products. While culture is its major attraction, our survey showed that nature is also a strong attraction of the destination."

Luther Barrung, chairman of Toraja DMO, said: "The southern part of Toraja, which has large plateaus surrounded by mountains, has great potential to develop agro-tourism.

"Pango-Pango, for example, is developed for agro-tourism around tamarillos, passion fruits and vegetables while Sarambu Assing is known for its waterfalls and coffee plantations. Toraja arabica coffee is internationally known and we want to develop an attraction around there," he added.

In the North Toraja Regency, where most attractions are located, upgrading of the infrastructure and facilities such as food and drink stalls, and public toilets will be rolled out over the next five years.

Juliharto said Swisscontact was assisting the destination in creating a campaign that will change its image, highlighting not only "the other side of Toraja" like Tongkonan – a Torajan traditional house – but also the philosophy behind it.

"Today, there needs to be more interaction between travellers and the local people. (By) experiencing their daily lives, (visitors can better) understand the culture," Juliharto said.

Barrung agreed: "We are developing homestays, so that travellers can stay and experience the local culture and way of life, while the local people will benefit directly.

"Torajans produce palm wine called *ballo*. The Ministry of Tourism has started providing technical assistance for the locals to produce *ballo* in a more hygienic way. Visitors will be able to visit the plantation, learn about the winemaking process and enjoy the drink," he added.

Meanwhile, Yohan Tangke Salu, chairman of Indonesia Hotel and Restaurant Association (IHRA) North Toraja Chapter, is encouraging hotels to relaunch in Toraja.

"A lot of people have left tourism business since the industry declined...With the entry of fibre optic to Toraja, we are training hoteliers about Internet usage and channeling them to OTAs. We have started to see some results."

A new airport with a 2.4km runway is being built in Buntu Kunyi. Slated to open in 2017, the airport will help to improve accessibility to Toraja, as the nearest airport in Makassar is an eight-hour drive away. Tourism stakeholders are also talking to Garuda Indonesia and Citilink to launch services from Makassar to Lagaligo Airport in Bua, Palopo, which is about a two-hour drive away to Toraja.

## PRODUCTS

### 1 Four Seasons Resort Jimbaran Bay

Both Four Seasons Resort Jimbaran Bay and TropicSurf have launched luxury surfing holidays in Bali.

With a strategic location at Four Seasons' Coconut Grove on Jimbaran Beach, TropicSurf's Ticket to Ride programme caters for all levels and provides convenient access to the island's breaks.

For beginners, the gentle beach break directly off Coconut Grove is the perfect learning ground, and TropicSurf's provides personalised guidance for a maximum of four people per class. Experienced surfers can take advantage of TropicSurf's boat to surf at Airports, the Uluwatu peninsula, Nusa Dua and Sanur.

### 2 Bena flyboard

Bena Flyboard is a new attraction at Bali's Whacko Beach Club.

Flyboarding is where a rider stands on a board connected by a long hose to a jet ski. Jet nozzles underneath a pair of boots thrust the rider 15m into the air or dive headlong in the water down to 2.5m.

The package is available for a 15- or 30-minute ride, and includes transfers from hotels in the Nusa Dua and Kuta areas.

### 3 Alila Solo

In October, Alila Hotels & Resorts will open Alila Solo, the first luxury property of international standard in the city. All



From left: Surfing holiday with Four Seasons Resort Jimbaran Bay; Alila Solo

255 rooms and suites showcase an exclusively commissioned batik design, and have city views.

The hotel is home to rooftop bar Agra, a lifestyle venue to wine, dine and socialise over tapas and cocktails. Public facilities includes a relaxing space on level six called Largo, where the swimming pool, Spa Alila, two-storey Gym Alila, and children's pool and club are located. The hotel has two ballrooms that can accommodate up to 3,500 people and 15 meeting rooms.

### 4 Surf & Turf

Tjendana Corporation, Bali has launched a new beach club and amusement water park, Surf & Turf, at Nusa Dua Beach.

This park offers the first surf rider in



Bali along a thrilling space bowl and 6m-tall water slides. The park also has a two-storey fusion restaurant and bar that serves European and Asian cuisines.

### 5 Aston Anyer Beach Hotel

In April, Archipelago International marked its 100<sup>th</sup> property in Indonesia with the opening of the 101-room Aston Anyer Beach Hotel near Anyer, a small town situated on the edge of the Sunda Strait.

For business travellers, the hotel provides MICE facilities such as a conference centre with three auxiliary meeting rooms with ocean views. The smallest room can hold up to 85 people while the largest has a maximum of 400 pax.

## VIEWPOINTS

What must be done to sell South Sulawesi as a tourist destination?



**Ng Sebastian,**  
managing director,  
**Incito Tour,**  
**Makassar**

Many travellers, even from neighbouring countries, do not know where we are and what we have to offer. Before we participate in travel marts and sell the destination, we need to create awareness. This is something that the regional government and private sector cannot do alone. We need the central government to conduct fam trips for tour operators and the media from different countries to visit.



**Ilsa Sopamena,**  
general manager,  
**Caraka Travelindo**  
**Tour & Travel**  
**Services, Makassar**

In the past, we used to rely on (longhaul) inbound tourism alone. We should develop new products beyond Toraja. Around Makassar alone, we can promote the TransStudio theme park, water parks, Samalona Island where you can snorkel and dive, and the Karst Maros, the second biggest karst area in the world.

## Destination Hong Kong

# Getting creative with tours

As more FITs make footfalls in the city, tour experiences are becoming more diverse and localised. By Prudence Lui



Tour operators are rolling out more localised experiences to attract FITs

Eager to tap the growing FIT trend in Hong Kong, both the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) and tourism trade have been striving to promote new experiences and tour ideas to woo visitors.

In 2012, the HKTB introduced the New Tour Product Development Scheme (NT-PDS) to encourage local travel agencies and tour operators to develop new and creative tours, subsidising up to a maximum of HK\$500,000 (US\$64,507) for marketing the products.

In 2015, the HKTB boosted the NT-PDS portfolio to 24 with the addition of five new tours, ranging from a three-hour walking tour in town to a six-day personalised package in Hong Kong and China.

Anna Cheung, trade development manager, HKTB, said: "All these tour experiences are encompassed by Explore Hong Kong Tours, which aim to showcase lesser-known facets of the city. They are available to B2B and B2C markets. For instance, the four-hour Tai Po Market Foodie Tour takes visitors to discover local snacks, while the Good Evening Kowloon walks visitors into the Yau Ma Tei area to explore local entertainment and culture."

Likewise, tour operators also see potential in attracting travellers with unique dining experiences. Said Uni Tours' managing director David Luk: "We partnered with hotel chefs to create fantastic tasting menus. After the meal, the chef would come out and present a certificate to din-

ers who have eaten at the chef's table. This certificate is a memorable gesture which allows visitors can show to their friends at home and provides a word-of-mouth promotion.

"Instead of five-star premises, we opted for mid-scale hotels so prices would be reasonable. So far, we have worked with Prudential Hotel in Tsim Sha Tsui whose executive chef is a member of La Commanderie Des Cordons Bleus," he added.

Also jumping on the creative experience bandwagon is The Peninsula Hong Kong have, which through its Tradition Well Served programme seeks out artisans of disappearing crafts in Hong Kong and takes guests to meet them. Guests are exposed to masters of art forms such as bamboo and flower displays, shadow puppetry and lion dancing. These interactive workshops are available in full- or half-day formats.

Sightseers (HK) managing director

Linda Yuen believes that such tours help to diversify the city's offerings. She said: "Guests enjoy a localised experience and as a cruise (consultant), I always share these new ideas with excursion managers onboard."

CTS International Science-Technology and Culture Exchange, director, Ng Hion, agreed: "However, it's hard to say if these new ideas really help because I don't know whether the traffic volume is huge. The government's support is vital as the city needs to explore more new attractions beyond Disneyland."

On the other hand, TourAsia, managing director, Alan Wu, is more ambivalent. He remarked: "These tour ideas are just old wines in new bottles. The walking tour in New Territories, for instance, has been done before."

"While HKTB keep pushing (consultants) for new ideas, our expensive hotel rates scare visitors away. Therefore, it doesn't work," he added.

## VIEWPOINTS

What initiatives would you suggest to attract more FITs to Hong Kong?



Wing Wong, managing director, W Travel

There is no doubt that our variety of hotels and culinary excellence appeal to FITs. However, transportation remains an issue. I would suggest the government or HKTB to set up sit-in/sightseeing bus routes to shuttle FITs back and forth. That's what Taiwan is doing right now, which eases visitors' access to sightseeing points.



Daisy Leung, director of sales and marketing, Holiday Inn Golden Mile

We support Hong Kong International Airport's proposal to expand aviation service into a three-runway system to meet future air traffic growth. We believe this will further consolidate Hong Kong's status as an international and regional hub to welcome and attract FITs.

## PRODUCTS

### 1 LEVELthirty Lounge & Bar

In July, the property opened LEVELthirty Lounge & Bar. Spanning the 30<sup>th</sup> floor, the rooftop venue offers panoramic views of Sha Tin Racecourse and Tolo Harbour.

There is a choice of outdoor and indoor seating with happy hours spanning from 17.00 to 20.00 daily. Food-wise, it excites guests with a menu that features Asian and Western tapas, and 10-inch pizzas made with sumptuous toppings.

### 2 Cathay Pacific's The Pier

Cathay Pacific has reopened The Pier lounge for its First and Business class passengers in June 2015. Located at Gate 63 in the Northwest Concourse of Hong Kong International Airport, the revamped 2,061m<sup>2</sup> lounge can accommodate 231 guests and features a dining room with

à la carte dining, a full-service bar, showers and eight day suites.

### 3 Etihad Airways

On June 16, Etihad Airways introduced a daily Hong Kong-Abu Dhabi service. Using a two-class Airbus A330 aircraft, this new route offers a total of 3,620 seats per week between the two cities.

Etihad Airways has also expanded its codeshare agreement with Hong Kong Airlines, placing the HX flight code on its flights between Hong Kong and Abu Dhabi, and Abu Dhabi to Madrid.

### 4 Mickey and the Wondrous Book

To celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Hong Kong Disneyland will begin the new *Mickey and the Wondrous Book*

stage show in November 2015, featuring never-before-seen Disney characters such as Merida from *Brave*, and Baymax and Hiro from *Big Hero 6*. The show will be launched in the new 1,400m<sup>2</sup> Disney's Storybook Theater.

### 5 The Cityview

The Cityview has rolled out new Premier rooms and Premier Suite in May 2015, as part of its first-phase refurbishment project. The initial phase involved 40 Premier guest rooms while an additional 116 rooms are slated to be unveiled by September 2015.

With an average area of 24m<sup>2</sup> for a Premier room and 50m<sup>2</sup> for a Premier Suite, the rooms are equipped with amenities like 3G Internet access and free local/IDD call service to selected countries.



From left: LEVELthirty Lounge & Bar at Courtyard Hong Kong Sha Tin - Marriott; Cathay Pacific's The Pier lounge; an Etihad Airways aeroplane

## Destination Japan

# Getting on the right track

The oft-overlooked Hokuriku region is now more accessible thanks to a new Shinkansen route, reports [Julian Ryall](#)



A World Heritage Site, Gokayama, in Toyama Prefecture, is famed for its historic farmhouses

The advice that “If you build it, they will come” worked for Kevin Costner’s character in *Field of Dreams*. And it’s working in the Hokuriku region on the northern coast of Japan, where the country’s

newest Shinkansen line started operation in March, opening up an area that was previously neglected by travellers from both the domestic market and further afield.

The Hokuriku Shinkansen Line heads

north-west out of Tokyo before traversing the mountainous spine of the country and emerging on the coastal plains of Toyama Prefecture. The new 328km line, from Nagano to Kanazawa, in Ishikawa Prefecture, opened on March 14 this year, with a further 121km extension to Tsuruga due to complete by April 2023. The impact on the tourism sector for cities on the new route has been instantaneous.

“With the opening of the Shinkansen, access has improved and people feel closer to Toyama,” said Hitoshi Mizouchi, director, international tourism section, Toyama Prefectural Government. “More visitors are now coming to experience Toyama’s superb natural environment, fresh seafood and food from our mountain regions, as well as to relax in our hot springs.”

The hot springs of the famous Unazuki district have seen a 50 per cent increase in visitors during the April to May period from the previous year, while the Fugan Suijo Line cruise ship firm has seen bookings up 10 per cent and visitors to Zuiry-ji Temple up 140 per cent.

Thanks to concerted promotion efforts, the majority of the visitors are from other parts of East Asia, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, China and South Korea, Mizouchi said. “Recently, the number of visitors from South-east Asian countries, such as Thailand and Indonesia, is increasing, although travellers from Europe and North America represent a relatively small share of the market,” he added.

One of the most famous tourist destinations in Toyama – and, arguably, one of the top sights in the country during winter – is the Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route. Visitors use cable cars, buses and ropeways on different stretches of the route, climbing some 1,975m over the length of the 25km route from Tateyama, Toyama Prefecture to Ogizawa, Nagano Prefecture.

The highlight of the route is the stretch of road with towering 20m-high snow walls on both sides. Known as the Yuki-no-Otani – the Great Snow Canyon – the route opens in April and closes again when it snows in November.

According to Hiroshi Tanaka from the international sales centre of Tateyama Kurobe Tourism Corp, some 375,400 visitors explored the Alpine Route between April and June this year, an increase of eight per cent, or 26,300 visitors, from the same period in 2014.

“About 36 per cent of our visitors are from abroad and so far this year, we have had 136,300 foreign tourists, up from 6,400 last year,” he said.

On July 1, Japan Railways introduced a new service, providing a package of tickets on the Shinkansen, local buses and accommodation in Gokayama. Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, many of the traditional houses are 300 years old.

With new infrastructure and improved connectivity, a tourism boom is clearly just around the corner for the region.

## VIEWPOINTS What is being done to attract more overseas visitors to the Hokuriku region?



**Hitoshi Mizouchi, director, international tourism section, Toyama Prefectural Government**

We have already invited foreign travel (consultants) to come to the region to see what we have on offer and we are working with them to draw up new travel plans for their clients. We are also proactive in taking part in travel fairs and exhibitions in Japan and overseas, and we believe that will be effective. The other approach is to work with the media to get the region’s name better known.



**Kiyonori Ogawa, director, inbound promotion department, Japan National Tourism Organisation**

We are making a great deal of effort to promote Hokuriku among foreign visitors and are working very closely with representatives of the region to get our message across. The Alpine Route was already well-known among foreigners, but since the new Shinkansen route opened earlier this year, we have seen a surge in interest. We are looking to build on that and hope that people take away great experiences to tell their friends.

## PRODUCTS

### 1 Hokuriku Shinkansen extension

In March, the Hokuriku Shinkansen was extended from Nagano – site of the 1998 Winter Olympic Games – to Kanazawa, with the Kagayaki express linking Tokyo to the coast in a mere two hours. The service also stops at Toyama, gateway to Japan’s famed Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route.

### 2 Mitsui Outlet Park Hokuriku Oyabe

Mitsui Outlet Park Hokuriku Oyabe, the first large-scale retail park in the region, opened on July 16 this year.

Boasting 173 shops, including 10 outlets opening in Japan for the first time, the mall has everything from domestic and foreign fashion brands to sporting equipment, toys, electronics and shops selling local products from the Hokuriku region. With overseas visitors in mind,



Toyama, one of the stops on the Hokuriku Shinkansen, is the gateway to the Alpine Route

the park has a prayer room, free Wi-Fi hotspots, foreign currency exchange machines and multilingual aids.

### 3 Bus trips to Shinminato and Himi

Daily bus trips are available from Toyama

to the twin port towns of Shinminato and Himi. If visitors arrive early enough, they can see the ships’ holds being emptied of tuna, amberjack, crab, eel and other species of fish that make excellent sushi.

Reservations are not required and the

price from Toyama Station to the harbour market at Himi is 1,000 yen (US\$8) one way.

### 4 Hokuriku Area Pass

In May 2015, local railway operator JR West introduced a Hokuriku Area Pass for travellers holding foreign passports.

Valid for four consecutive days, it costs 5,500 yen for adults and 2,750 yen for children when purchased in Japan. Ticket holders can enjoy unlimited travel on unreserved seats in the region just by showing it at the ticket barrier.

### 5 Nixs Sports Academy

Nixs Sports Academy is the largest dedicated skate park in Japan. Just 30 minutes from Toyama Station by bus, it has all the curves, embankments and rails necessary for extreme sports.



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## Destination Philippines

# Missing the luxury connection

A lack of promotion and limited funding inhibit the country's luxury market growth, reports Rosa Ocampo



Night view of Makati, Metro Manila's business district that is home to upscale hotels and shopping centres

When a group of travel consultants took up the cudgels and organised the Asia Premium Travel Mart (APTM) – the first high-end B2B tourism event in the Philippines – in May, it exposed major hurdles in harnessing the destination's immense potential as a luxury destination.

First and foremost was the lack of knowledge on the Philippines, which was what prompted Fe Abling-Yu, president of S8 Exhibition, to organise APTM.

"We have been attending luxury travel

market shows abroad. The closest one in Shanghai is a huge show, but there are no Philippine sellers except (for) Eskaya, which is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World and the Manila Peninsula, part of the Peninsula Hotels group," said Abling-Yu.

"We tell buyers to bring their clients to the Philippines and they ask, 'Where's the Philippines?'" she added.

However, owing to limited government funding, the private sector was forced to rely on themselves and pooled their own resources for APTM, according to the

show organisers.

"We lack government support," lamented Edwin Villanueva, director of S8 Exhibition, who added that despite being a Johnny-come-lately in the luxury market, the Philippines has huge potential to tap the luxury leisure, MICE and wellness segments.

On his part, Philippine Tourism Promotion Board (TPB), COO, Domingo Ramon Enerio III explained to the *Daily* that they had supported APTM financially.

The NTO chief is also in agreement

with private sector sentiments that more marketing is needed when he said: "We have to be more aggressive with our combined efforts (on) the premium markets."

On a more positive note, travel consultants observed that the country is fast catching up in its cache of luxury developments, despite ongoing challenges such as the need for more infrastructure and upmarket properties outside of popular destinations like Manila, Boracay, Cebu and Palawan.

International luxury hotel brands like City of Dreams, Conrad, Shangri-La, AccorHotels are coming into the country. "(These companies) won't be investing here if they didn't think that the country is ripe for premium travel," Abling-Yu pointed out.

Wilson Techico, vice president - business and product development of Uni-Orient Travel, which has been offering customised services for high-end travellers, is confident that given time, the Philippines will develop as a premium destination. "We now have luxury hotels, resorts and facilities that were absent five or 10 years ago," he said.

A growing number of destinations within the country are now becoming accessible, thanks to helicopter services and airlines like Skyjet and Air Juan which are targeted at high-end travellers.

Targeting premium travellers, who spend more and stay longer than average visitors, also reap higher dividends for tour operators, noted Shan David, president, Corporate International Travel.

Current luxury trends now include beach, culture and shopping sprees. Also becoming popular are men's leisure golf and gaming, especially with the opening of the two integrated resorts, Solaire Resort & Casino and City of Dreams Manila, observed trade players.

## VIEWPOINTS

What is currently being done to position the Philippines as a premium destination?



**Cesar Cruz, president, Philippine Tour Operators Association**

We have luxury properties coming into Metro Manila, Cebu, Boracay and Palawan. The airports are a setback but hopefully these will all change starting this year. Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport will soon finish its

refurbishment, while Mactan airport in Cebu will build a resort terminal. Caticlan airport in Boracay is also upgrading its capacity, and the airport in Busuanga (Palawan) is also being expanded. Tour operators are also introducing thematic tour packages for luxury, adventure and wellness travel.

**Cheanne Lopez, marketing officer, Hotel Celeste and Best Western Boracay Tropics**

The Philippines has no peg as a luxury destination. The Department of Tourism's marketing and promotions are very broad-based... Maybe it has to tweak its strategy to boost specific market segments like the luxury market. APTM helps to boost this market.



## PRODUCTS

### 1 DreamPlay

Family travel is boosted with the recent opening of fun interactive and educational attractions at DreamPlay in the City of Dreams Manila. The DreamWorks-themed play centre boasts activities like wall-climbing and a challenging rope course, based on the studio's animated hits like *Shrek*, *Madagascar* and *How To Train Your Dragon*. There is also a DreamTales Library, DreamStudio and 4-D DreamTheatre.

### 2 Increased flight connectivity

More airlines have blazed new routes to the Philippines, improving the country's accessibility.

Ethiopian Airlines started flying from Manila to Addis Ababa via Bangkok in July while Turkish Airways is planning to turn its thrice-weekly Istanbul-Manila route – recently launched in March – into a daily service.

Cebu Pacific now flies from Australia, Doha and Dubai and there are plans for a new service to Guam while Garuda Indonesia inaugurated a four-times weekly service from Manila to Jakarta in August 2015.

### 3 Discovery Primea

Ideal for long-stay corporate travellers, Discovery Primea is the newest luxury residential address in the Makati CBD. It offers spacious suites ranging from 40m<sup>2</sup> to 125m<sup>2</sup>, with all the amenities and comfort of a luxurious home.



Paradise Garden Boracay Resort and Convention Centre

### 4 Henann Resort Alona Beach Panglao

Launched in August 2015, the sprawling beachfront Henann Resort Alona Beach Panglao in Bohol has 400 keys and three huge swimming pools. An adjoining convention centre, the first in Bohol, can cater up to 1,000 pax.

### 5 Paradise Garden Boracay Resort and Convention Centre

This resort is the first and only halal-certified resort in the Visayas. Aside from a central kitchen serving halal food, it has a prayer room and guestrooms with Korans, prayer mats and *kiblat* (arrow) pointing to Mecca.

With halal certification from the Islamic Da'Wah Council of the Philippines, the Boracay resort has Muslim staff and has even created a halal committee to be in charge of halal requests, needs and concerns.



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## Marketplace

### Maya Ubud Resort & Spa

Maya Ubud Resort & Spa sits between the Petanu River valley and the verdant rice fields of Peliatan. The 10ha of tropical gardens host 108 architect-designed thatched private pool villas and luxury guestrooms. Travelling time from Bali's international airport is around one hour.

Nestled along the riverbank, The Spa at Maya has private double and single treatment pavilions, offering sensory journeys and revitalising treatments that refresh body and soul.

Dining includes the all-day Maya Sari, Asiatique for regional cuisines from Thailand, Japan, Chinese, India and Indonesia; the River Café, with a menu that includes healthy spa cuisine and snacks; Bar Bedulu, which is a breezy bar off the main lobby; and the open-air Purnama Theatre, which presents cultural performances and dinner.

Among the many recreation facilities at Maya Ubud are two swimming pools, tennis courts, pitch and putt, a yoga pavilion and a gym. Activities include nearby village trekking, nature excursions and mountain biking. A complimentary shuttle bus service operates between the resort and the Ubud township.

**Booth No: D48**

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

**Email: [infor@mayaubud.com](mailto:infor@mayaubud.com)**



### 2015 Discover Thainess

This year, international tourists worldwide are being invited to experience the Thai way of happiness in Thailand. We are promoting the *2015 Discover Thainess* campaign to highlight the priceless treasures of Thailand, which gives Thainess its charm, makes us unique as a people, society and culture. Tourists can experience the Thai way of life, culture and hands-on Thai activities such as Thai boxing, Thai massage, Thai cooking, Thai classical dance or even Thai meditation. Also, we have designed a number of activities for the entire year so visitors can fully experience Thainess, which is all about warm hospitality, *sarook* or enjoyable fun.

Moreover, as part of our *2015 Discover Thainess* campaign, we are recommending *12 Hidden Gems*, emerging destinations that tourists must not miss, especially repeat travellers. All these places are renowned for their unique history, culture and lifestyle and they are located near the main provinces.

To discover and take delight in our Thai handicraft demonstration, please visit Thailand pavilion booth C29 or [www.tourismthailand.org](http://www.tourismthailand.org).

**Booth No: C29**

**Website: [www.tourismthailand.org](http://www.tourismthailand.org)**

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



### Tourism Malaysia

Malaysia is a country of diverse cultures, ethnicities and religions, blessed with a wide range of natural assets – this combination makes Malaysia a great tourist destination. At PTM this year, Tourism Malaysia together with Malaysian tourism industry players are offering tailor-made packages to cater to the specific needs and wants of leisure tourists seeking niche holiday experiences in Malaysia. Learn more about our tourism products that embrace the concept of luxury through our exotic islands and beaches, memorable wedding and honeymoon destinations, as well as exciting theme parks holiday experiences.

We will also introduce the Experiential Shopping packages, which encompass culinary delights, entertainment, places of interests and recreation for the whole family. Tourism Malaysia also invites you to experience the *Endless Celebrations* through its *Malaysia Year of Festivals (MyFest) 2015* campaign, which is designed to give tourists an amazing holiday experience, with an emphasis on the cultural aspect of the many different festivals celebrated by Malaysia's multicultural society. Please visit our booth at D49 and experience first-hand the uniqueness of batik canting/drawing and the exciting Malaysian tea, *teh tarik* demonstration.

**Booth No: D49**

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

**Email: [enquiries@tourism.gov.my](mailto:enquiries@tourism.gov.my)**

### Trans India Holidays

At Trans India Holidays, we have always specialised in providing tailor-made bespoke touring through India, Nepal and Bhutan, and we of course continue to research and promote new destinations and experiences in the subcontinent.

At PTM, we are trying to promote family-friendly holidays, which is a set of unique holiday packages designed specially for families with young and teenage children. These holidays have activities and experiences that youngsters would enjoy, such as hot-air balloon rides, safaris in national parks, canoeing in the backwaters, etc. In addition, we are promoting sustainable holidays with products such as village walks in the Himalayas, treks in north-eastern of India and in several undiscovered parts of Nepal. Trans India Holidays has been an active member of PATA, and a regular exhibitor at PTM for almost 10 years, which in itself shows that we value PTM as a forum.

**Booth No: C19**

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

**Email: [kgoswamy@transindiaholidays.com](mailto:kgoswamy@transindiaholidays.com)**

### Tourism Promotions Board Philippines

The trade fair will provide an avenue for Philippine travel and tour operators to discuss and generate business among foreign buyers, persuade foreign organisers to include the Philippines in their tour programmes and generate exposure for specific Philippine destinations. Tourism Promotions Board's (TPB) participation this year will highlight Bicol in the Philippines' booth, and will also feature Manila, Cebu and Bohol as top destinations.

We are also bringing in six travel agencies who are all members of the PATA Philippine Chapter. James A Sy, officer-in-charge of the ASEAN & the Pacific Division of TPB and Gerardo O Panga, secretary general of the PATA Philippine Chapter will be at PTM.

**Booth No: D21**

**Website: [www.tpb.gov.ph](http://www.tpb.gov.ph)**

**Email: [info@tpb.gov.ph](mailto:info@tpb.gov.ph)**



## News/Snapshots

# More fun in 2016

Philippines is riding the success of its 2015 campaign to bring another year of tourism growth through perks aimed at repeat travellers

By Mimi Hudoyo

A SUCCESSFUL year-long campaign in 2015 has inspired the Philippines' Department of Tourism (DoT) to extend another year of welcome to overseas travellers.

The *Visit the Philippines Again* (VPA) 2016 campaign will focus on travellers, especially those who have had a great time in the destination before, with lures being exclusive travel deals, discounted air fares and hotel stays.

Explaining the campaign's extension, Gerard Panga, tourism attache, Market Development Group of the DoT, said: "It is to continue the momentum that we are having, despite challenges in the region. We are still seeing a good increase of eight per cent in arrivals, so we are on target to hit



Panga: more reasons to return

5.2 million footfalls for 2015."

Tourism data shows 2.6 million tourist arrivals in 1H2015, with most coming from North Asia such as South Korea and Japan.

China, in particular, registered strong growth of 59 per cent month-on-month in July after the Chinese government did away with its travel ban on the Philippines.

"Tour groups have started to pour in. At the moment, we have 14 direct flights to destinations such as Boracay and Cebu from all over China," Panga said.

DoT's decision to boost tourism through repeat travellers is based on findings that 60 per cent of visitors to the Philippines have toured the country before.

The tourism board also intends to drum up interest among

specific groups of travellers with its array of events next year. Such events include the ASEAN Tourism Forum and Routes Asia 2016 for business people; Madrid Fusion Manila 2016 for foodies; and 2016 Ironman 70 for music and concert lovers.

Supporting the DoT's tourism goals, the government will address a route development programme to encourage more flights into the country and lower the barrier of entry for foreign visitors.

Panga said: "Last year we came up with a policy allowing Indian passport holders with (visas from) the US, Japan, Australia, Schengen states and the UK to visit the Philippines and stay for seven days, extendible to 21 days, without a visa."

He told the *Daily* that this move has resulted in a 27 per cent increase in Indian arrivals "so far".

## Jakarta takes host city status for 2016

JAKARTA will welcome the world's travel fraternity next year when it hosts PATA Travel Mart 2016, an event that the travel trade association expects will showcase the Indonesian capital's leisure appeal while at the same time, promote other regions in the country for tourism.

To be held September 7-9 at the Jakarta Convention Center, the mart will be Jakarta's first. The last mart in Indonesia was held in Bali in 2007.

Commenting on PATA's decision to take the mart to Jakarta, PATA CEO, Mario Hardy said the city satisfied the key requirements for hosting the event – it has the right venue with hotels in the surrounding area.

While Hardy pointed out that Jakarta "has some attractions like the Old Town (with) colonial buildings, and great shopping", he admitted that PATA would face challenges in promoting the city as a leisure destination "and give reasons why people should come".

"Jakarta is (mainly) known as a business centre and not for tourism," he explained.

But PATA Travel Mart 2016's spotlight will not solely be on Jakarta. "Although the mart will be in Jakarta, we are promoting the entire country. We want the host country to invite participants from (all regions in Indonesia) and make that the selling point," Hardy said.

Meanwhile, efforts to promote the annual trade event have begun.

Poernomo Siswoprasetyo, CEO of PATA Indonesia Chapter, told the *Daily*: "We have started our roadshows (across Indonesia) and invited regional governments and trade players to participate."

Siswoprasetyo noted that participation in an international tradeshow is a new concept to many Indonesian industry members. To get local stakeholders onboard, Siswoprasetyo said "training on product packaging and sales" would be provided because PATA and the local tourism authority "want to make sure that Indonesia will be well represented". – Mimi Hudoyo



Ministry of Tourism's Vinsensius Jemadu welcomes buyers to the next PATA Travel Mart

## Karnakarta offers more to boost tourism



KARNATAKA Tourism is planning a host of activities to promote tourism in the state. Development of a one-stop portal for travellers, deployment of individuals who will assist tourists and ensure their safety, and promotion of wellness and heritage circuits are part of its strategy.

Currently under development is a one-stop tourist portal, a site that will hold information on attractions, routes and tour packages. This website is aimed at helping tourists plan their holidays, while offering a platform for stakeholders to market their products.

As for enhancing the safety of tourists, the state will introduce *Tourist Mitras* in the next three months. These personnel will be deployed at all major tourist destinations, where they will patrol, assist and keep tourists safe.

Karnataka Tourism is also

looking to develop Mysore and Bengaluru for wellness and medical tourism.

"Mysore and Bengaluru are perfectly placed as they provide state-of-the-art facilities at reasonable prices compared to other countries. (Key) target markets will be the Middle East and Russia," elaborated R V Deshpande, Karnataka's tourism and industries minister.

The department is also looking to partner companies in the private sector to develop infrastructure at tourist sites like Hampi, Badami and Bijapur. Deshpande said: "We are the first state in India that has a scheme where corporates can adopt and maintain tourist sites as part of (their) corporate social responsibility."

In total, 319 tourist sites have been identified and will be developed in phases. – Rohit Kaul

## TAT celebrates return of the Indians

AFTER witnessing a decline of about five per cent in Indian arrivals last year, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has finally recorded a rebound of 30 per cent growth in the market.

From January to August 2015, about 700,000 Indians visited Thailand, and Sugree Sithivanich, TAT deputy governor for marketing communication, is "surprised with this kind of growth".

Sithivanich elaborated: "Factors like political stability, coupled with marketing efforts by our offices in India and the enhanced connectivity through Air Asia's new five-weekly flights between New Delhi and Bangkok, are among the key reasons behind the spike in arrival figures."

Most of the demand has been generated by families, weddings, honeymooners and shoppers. Sithivanich also commented that TAT saw an increase in demand for beauty treatments among female travellers from India. As such, TAT intends to "focus on (the wellness segment) in the coming months".

TAT expects 1.02 million Indian arrivals by the end of 2015. – Rohit Kaul

## PATA World Congress to raise Sri Lanka's profile

SRI Lanka's successful bid to host the PATA World Congress in 2017 will propel the country into international spotlight, boosting tourism awareness for the destination.

Ruan Samarasinghe, chairman of the PATA Sri Lanka Chapter, said: "Sri Lanka has developed a lot (since the end of) the civil war in 2009 and we are now on a level playing field (in terms of tourism) with other developed countries.

"Even better, (Sri Lanka is) a unique destination that can offer sea, mountains,

wildlife parks and cultural draws all at once. Not many other (countries) can do that," he added.

According to Samarasinghe, the congress will welcome over 600 global industry leaders to Negombo, and will help to showcase to the world that the country is ready for business and leisure travel.

Negombo, north of Sri Lanka's largest city Colombo and a 15-minute drive from the international airport, is ready for world events. It has more than 2,000 hotel rooms today, making up 10 per cent of the

country's total 22,800 keys.

While the current top source markets for the country are China, the UK and India, Samarasinghe said there is a lot of untapped potential from South-east Asia.

Bhagaban Shrestha, managing director of Himalayan Holidays in Bangkok, who has up to 400 pax travelling to Sri Lanka on five- to seven-day packages every year, commented: "Sri Lanka appeals to the religious in Thailand because of its temples and pagodas. We also have direct air connections so it is convenient."

Earlier in May, the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau announced that it had secured a Rs3.4 billion (US\$51 million) promotions budget for 2015 to fund trade fairs, roadshows, advertising and fam trips for 280 travel consultants and 280 journalists this year.

These efforts are expected to help Sri Lanka hit 2.5 million arrivals in 2016. – Paige Lee Pei Qi



Samarasinghe: ready for big things

## Snapshots

# Selling season is upon us

Destinations and travel specialists are out in full force, offering the hottest deals. Photos by Eugene Tang



Macau Government Tourist Office's Vic Lam, MGM Macau's Paul Chung, Macau Tower Convention & Entertainment Centre's Simon Chow, Shun Tak-China Travel Ship Management Limited Hong Kong's Alcuin Li, Macau Government Tourist Office's Shikha Lal and Alorino Noruega, Wynn Macau's Gordon Ho, HS Travel International Hong Kong's John Mong and Macau Government Tourist Office's Varun Mehta



Guam Visitors Bureau's Colleen Cabedo and Regina Nedlic, and Palau Visitors Authority Kadoi Ruluked



Forte Hotel Group Taiwan's Crystal Lee, Taiwan Visitors Association Singapore's Amy Huang and Arthur Hsieh, China Airlines India's G F Hao, Tourism Bureau Ministry of Transportation and Communications Taiwan's Wayne Liu, PATA Taiwan's Stephen Chang, Howard Hotels Resorts Suites Taiwan's Benjamin Liao, International Cruise Council Taiwan's Matthew Wu, Travel King Taiwan's Crystal Lin and Fiona Chen



Madhya Pradesh Tourism's Rajesh Shrivastava, M.P. State Tourism Development Corp India's Mini Thomas, Madhya Pradesh Tourism's Vivek Mathur, M.P. State Tourism Development Corporation India's Deepika Roy Choudhury, M.P. State Tourism Dev Corp India's Neeraj Soni



Nepal Tourism Board's Archana KC Rana, PATA Nepal's Suresh Singh Budal, Explore Himalaya Travel & Adventure Nepal's Suman Pandey and Nepal Tourism Board's Ujjwala Dali



Government of Karnataka's R V Deshpande

Macau Tower Convention & Entertainment Centre's Simon Chow

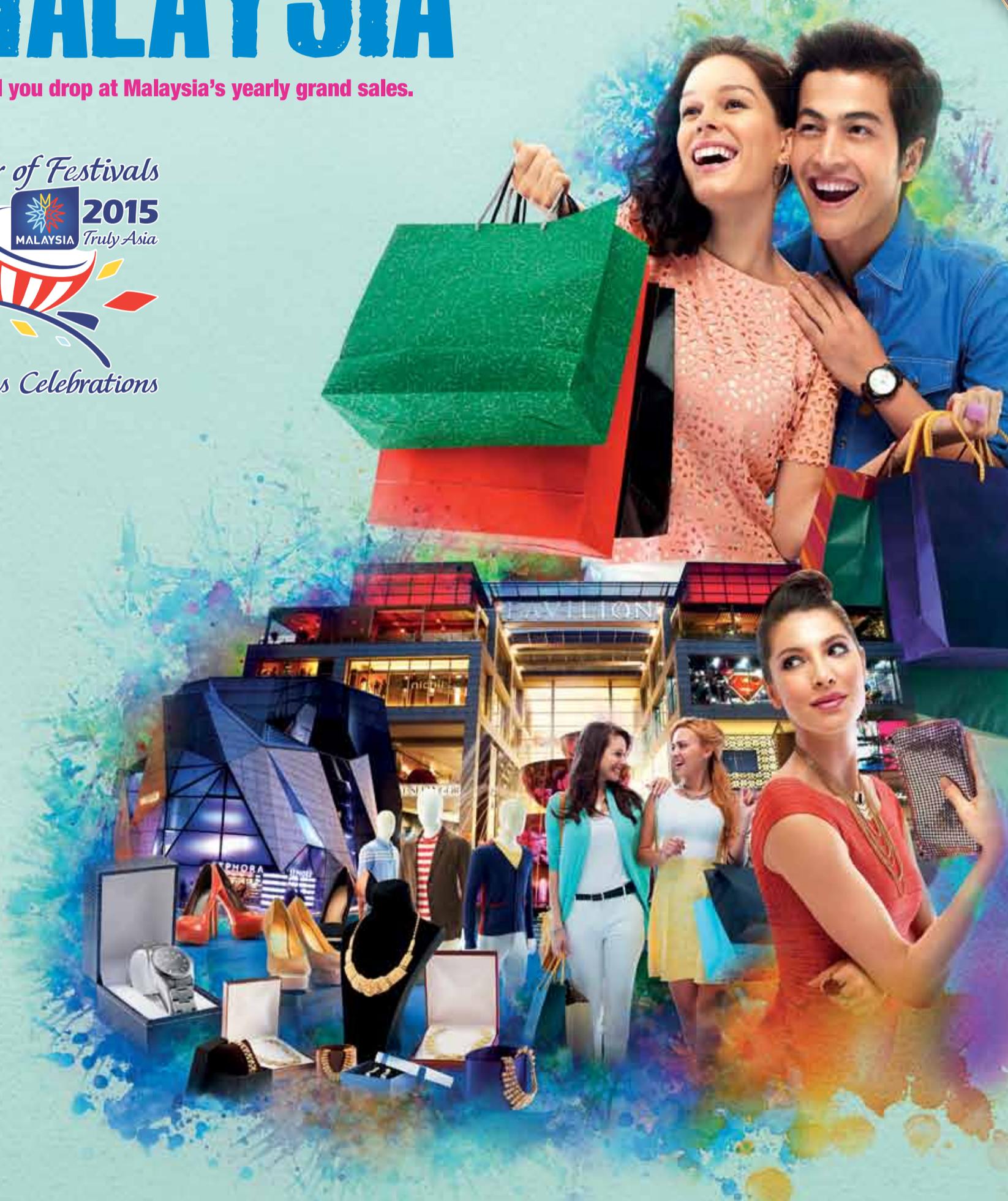


Tourism Selangor's Zaimi Bin Shari and Nazri Tashriq, Tourism Malaysia's Azizan Noordin and KPJ Healthcare Malaysia's Zalifah Yasmin Ibrahim

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Yakshagana Art Forms

## Hearty welcome to the Delegates!

