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3

Maldives goes on sale

Hotels and resorts launch tacticals to regain its biggest market, the Chinese

By Mimi Hudoyo

THE political shake-up in the Maldives is causing ripples in the Chinese market – its biggest arrivals source – and triggering concerns in traditional markets such as Europe and Japan, with the real impact to be seen only after the country's low season ends in May.

The Maldives has shown up at ITB Berlin in full force, with 200 delegates representing 65 companies in the hope of sending a strong message to buyers that it is now safe to visit.

Let's Go Maldives managing director, Mohamed Riyaz, said his company had seen 12

per cent of its Chinese bookings wiped out.

"The Maldives gets between three and five charter flights from China every day, so if we lose one or two flights that means we lose quite a large volume."

Maldives Marketing & PR Corporation deputy director, Ibrahim Asim, said the China market was "quite sensitive about political issues".

"Buyers (from other markets) at the show have also shown concern, but we have not seen a significant impact from the other markets so far," he said. "Having said that, we are putting together plans to minimise the impact,

and we expect to launch these by the end of this month."

Asim added that the NTO had also started inviting tour operators and media, especially from China, for fam trips.

According to Riyaz, these seem to have worked, as charter flights from China were scheduled to return to normal by April.

He pointed out that while resorts in the Maldives were holding their rates, they had introduced tacticals such as stay-four, pay-three-night packages, although this was not unusual in the low season which runs from March to May.

Exciting Maldives Holidays

director sales and marketing, Ing Jakub Urbanek, said: "I think (resorts) will wait and see. If the market does not pick up by the peak season, they might come up with other promotions."

Thulhagiri Island Resort & Spa sales and reservations manager, Ismail Areef, said the resort had introduced special promotions such as a 20 per cent discount on rates or complimentary excursions to stimulate the Chinese market.

"The good thing about the (Chinese) is that they decide to travel at the last minute, and a short-period promotion can really boost volume," he explained.

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However, Areef was confident that the European market would do well during the peak season, based on feedback gathered from buyers at ITB Berlin.

China is a new but very fast-growing market for the destination, totalling 198,655 arrivals last year. This represents 21.3 per cent of overall arrivals.

Push for visa facilitation

By Brian Higgs

THE World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) are joining hands in a bid to convince world leaders of the need for advancing travel facilitation through improving visa application and processing formalities.

"Complicated, lengthy and overpriced entry formalities are making it extremely difficult for tourists to travel, especially (those from) emerging economies which are leading growth in terms of outbound markets," said Taleb Rifai, secretary-general, UNWTO.

The two global bodies have commissioned a study exploring potential economic models if visa policies in each of the

G-20 group of major global economies were relaxed, either through making it easier to obtain visas, the use of e-visas, or even opening borders altogether.

"Travel facilitation is closely interlinked with tourism development and can be key in boosting demand," said Rifai. "This area is of particular relevance in a moment in which governments are looking to stimulate economic growth but cannot make use of fiscal incentives or public investment."

The results of the study are due to be presented to the G-20 heads of state at a meeting in Mexico on May 16. The G-20 counts the US, China, Japan, South Korea, India, Indonesia, France, Germany, the UK and Australia among its members.



Indonesia invests in the next ITB Berlin

Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy is pumping in at least 700,000 euros (US\$928,356) to be the official partner country for ITB Berlin 2013. Apart from taking a bigger space to showcase more sellers, it will use culinary diplomacy to entice international buyers and the media.

Vietravel guns for growth

VIETRAVEL is looking to raise its status as one of Vietnam's leading inbound agencies to one of Asia's top operators.

To achieve that, it will expand into four new markets this year with the establishment of offices in France, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore over the coming months.

The new offices will join Vietravel's existing offices in the US, Thailand and Cambodia, and bring it closer to its target of 15 international offices by 2015.

Vietravel had remained strong despite economic troubles, reg-

istering business growth of over 30 per cent in 2010 and 2011. It raked in more than VND2,000 billion (US\$96million) in revenue last year.

Traditional markets in Southeast Asia, as well as Japan, South Korea, China and Europe are on the company's radar. There are also plans to explore Australia and Africa, which are seen as potential growth markets for the agency.

A target of 500,000-600,000 visitors and at least VND5,000 billion in revenue has been set for 2015. – Duncan Forgan

By Brian Higgs

A NEW brand campaign, *We're Egypt*, has been rolled out to portray the country as a safe and welcoming destination for international tourists, and to restore confidence in traditional source markets following the revolution in February last year.

The campaign depicts locals enjoying themselves in their own country, thereby sending a message to inspire travellers to spend their holidays in Egypt.

Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour, Egyptian Minister of Tourism, said: "The main issue for Egyptian tourism today is the perception of security in the country."

Participating at ITB Berlin in the capacity of official partner country, Egypt is aiming to double international arrivals to 30 million by 2017, compared to 14.8 million last year and 20 million in 2010, according to Abdel Nour.

He said: "Europe will continue to be our top source market, but growth will come from China, India and South Korea, among others. We will also diversify our products by promoting religious and cultural attractions and ecotourism."

To meet arrival targets, the Egyptian Tourist Authority will intensify its partnerships with

tour operators and airlines through organising fam trips, co-funded marketing activities and above-the-line advertising campaigns.

An online training course for travel consultants selling Egypt is being planned, as well as more activities through travel expert networks and associations.

EgyptAir is also attempting to restore direct air connections from Japan, China and India to Cairo.

Meanwhile, the tourism ministry is in talks with Messe Berlin to host a Middle East & Africa variant of the ITB travel trade fair in 2013/2014.

Egypt on recovery mode

Lombok wakes up

Massive tourism developments draw mixed expectations

By Mimi Hudoyo

THE tranquil island of Lombok will see its southern area buzzing with a large integrated resort development as early as 2015.

The Mandalika Resorts Lombok, which will cover an area of 1,175 hectares, is part of a special economic territory programme established to develop West Nusa Tenggara as a tourism hotspot.

The site is geared to become an event-based destination and will be located 15 minutes away from Lombok's new international airport.

Bali Tourism Development Corporation (BTDC), the state-owned company which manages Bali Nusa Dua area, has been appointed developer and manager of the site.

BTDC director of development, Edwin Darmasetiawan, said: "We want the resort to complement Bali instead of competing with it. Therefore, the product will be very different from Nusa Dua in terms of its type of attractions.

"Bali is (strong with) culture, while Mandalika's products will

be more futuristic."

Facilities earmarked for the integrated resort include an F1 race track, an integrated theme park, an underwater marine museum, an eco park, meeting spaces and a concert hall. The developer also plans to invite Disney to "be a part of" the theme park.

Hotels, apartments, low-density residences and a golf course are also on the cards.

Seventeen major Indonesian companies including Lippo Group, MNC Group, Gobel International and Rajawali Group have signed Memoradums of Understanding with BTDC for various developments.

"We are now finalising the environmental impact analysis, which we expect to be ready by May or June. Road construction will then be followed by five hotel developments and an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus golf course this year," he said.

These, forming the first phase of the project, are expected to be ready within three to five years. Attractions and more hotels and residences will be developed in

the second stage.

Commenting on the project, Panorama Destination managing director, Rocky Praputranto, said: "The development will change Lombok, which is known as a tranquil, laid-back island. Do the people in Lombok, who are more conservative (than the Balinese), want this? Are they ready for the change?"

"As a tour operator, I cannot combine Bali and the future Lombok the same way as I do today because the destinations will attract different travellers."

ITB buyer Tischler Reisen president, Thomas Tischler, agreed, saying that his European clients would not be attracted to the new Lombok.

However, Bidy Tour Lombok managing director, Yandianto Hamidy, welcomes the change and believes the destination will draw a wider range of markets in the future.

"I don't think we will lose the traditional market as Mandalika is a new area in the south, while Senggigi and Rinjani will remain the same," he said.

China rolls out the red carpet to medical tourists

By Karen Yue

CATERING to the rising level of interest in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), China's National Center for TCM, a first-timer at ITB Berlin, has started to promote medical tours.

An entity under the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine that is responsible for TCM quality standards among practitioners, the centre has started to arrange medical programmes for both life-saving and rejuvenation treatments, as well as study tours that range from two weeks to several years.

Joan Ye, project director (international cooperation department) of the organisation, told the *Daily* that it had taken two years to prepare for its foray into TCM tourism.

She said: "We started out handling TCM-related programmes

last year, targeting only trade groups from Asia. They visited TCM hospitals, clinics and institutions. We understand that many Europeans are also interested in TCM. By personally arranging these tour programmes for European groups we can ensure that they visit qualified

"Many Europeans are interested in TCM... foreigners are also increasingly enrolling in TCM courses."

practitioners and institutions."

"It is also increasingly common for foreigners to enrol in TCM courses in China, and we have connections with reputable outfits that can provide these

training courses and hospitals that can later facilitate internship programmes," said Ye.

"Beijing, Shanghai, Shandong and Xi'an are better known for TCM, so we will recommend tours to those areas. However, we can develop programmes to other parts of China according to the needs of European groups."

Joan Ye

Project director (international cooperation), National Center for TCM





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String of new attractions for Malaysia

Khazanah to develop theme parks and destination resorts in Desaru, Johor and Kuala Lumpur

By Brian Higgs

MALAYSIA'S government investment arm Khazanah Nasional is on a drive to expand its hotels and attractions portfolio across the country, with its crown jewel being the Desaru Coast Integrated Tourism Destination that will include upscale resorts, golf courses and theme parks.

A 30-minute ferry ride away from Singapore, which is envisioned as the main gateway for visitors, the revamped Desaru will target well-heeled Malaysians as well as families from existing core markets such as Singapore, the Middle East, South Korea and China.

Scheduled to open in 2014, it will feature a marine life park offering dolphin encounters, a water theme park, a golf club with 18-hole and 27-hole courses designed by Vijay Singh and Ernie Els, a Riverwalk Dining & Retail Village, and hotels including Aman Country Club and Villas (50 rooms and 50 villas), Sheraton Desaru Resort (357 rooms) and a five-star resort (60 suites and 40 pool villas).

There will also be 5,000m² of exhibition and conference space, including a 1,000-pax hall and four breakout rooms.

Undertaking the development are two wholly-owned subsidiaries of Khazanah, Destination Resorts and Themed Attractions Malaysia, both present at ITB to kickstart marketing for the project and establish partnerships with airlines and operators in Singapore and Malaysia.

Eliena Ahmad Gaman, director, corporate strategy, Destination Resorts, said: "It's a repositioning for Desaru, which

has been sleeping and undermanaged for some time. We realised a fresh coat of paint wouldn't be enough, so we decided to alter the product mix and add new accommodation options."

Raja Zafura Raja Zain, senior vice pres-

ident marketing, sales & communications, Themed Attractions Malaysia, added that the goal was "to create a reason for families to spend extra days in the country".

Besides Desaru, family-friendly theme parks and attractions such as KidZania

Kuala Lumpur, as well as Johor's Legoland Malaysia and Puteri Harbour Indoor Entertainment Theme Park have either opened or are scheduled to open this year. Another integrated cultural attraction will also be launched in the capital in 2014.

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Numbers that matter

1 International travellers are expected to surpass one billion for the first time this year, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

2.8 The percentage of growth expected to be seen in the global travel and tourism industry in 2012, based on research by the WTTC, marginally faster than the predicted global rate of economic growth of 2.5 per cent.

6.5 The amount, in trillion and US dollars, that the travel and tourism industry is forecasted to contribute to the global economy when the wider economic impacts are taken into account. The industry is expected to directly contribute US\$2 trillion to the world economy, reported the same WTTC study.

6.7 The percentage growth anticipated for North-and South-east Asia in 2012, driven by countries such as India and China where rising incomes will generate an increase in domestic tourism spend and an upturn in capital investment, as well as Japan's recovery.

0.3 The percentage decline in travel and tourism contribution to the European Union expected this year, as austerity measures kick in. However, current forecasts suggest a 0.3 per cent increase in travel and tourism direct GDP for overall Europe, propped up by newer economies, such as Poland and Russia.



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Alliance for growth

Jin Jiang partners Meliá to reach European markets

By Karen Yue

CHINA'S Jin Jiang International Management Co has formed a marketing alliance with Meliá Hotels International as part of its marketing blitz to support an upcoming rebranding exercise.

The alliance will see Jin Jiang properties being promoted at six selected Meliá hotels in China and Europe.

Cinn Tan, senior vice president marketing & sales of Jin Jiang International Management Co, told the *Daily* in an interview that the alliance would be mutually-beneficial.

Tan said: "Jin Jiang will tap into Meliá's well-established distribution and network in Europe, while Meliá will benefit from our expertise and reach in China."

"This works for us as we are looking to bring the Jin Jiang brand and property portfolio beyond China, while Meliá wants to strengthen its presence in China."

Tan said exact collaboration details were being worked out. "Information on Jin Jiang properties could be included in

Meliá's website and provided to guests of the six Meliá hotels. Joint dining promotions at Meliá hotels led by a visiting Jin Jiang chef may be explored," she said.

Details on Jin Jiang's plan

"It is not cheap to participate at (ITB Berlin), but it is an investment the company is keen to make because it can take a Chinese brand farther."

Cinn Tan

Senior vice president marketing & sales, Jin Jiang International Management Co

to expand its portfolio beyond China were still undisclosed, although Tan said the company intended to "leave footprints in every major city in the world".

Apart from its partnership with Meliá, Tan said the company would be investing "quite a lot" on marketing in the lead-up to the unveiling of a series of new brands. Two of the new brands – six-star J and business class Marvel – have already made their debut. The rest will be announced within this year.

Jin Jiang's participation at ITB Berlin this year – first for the company – is one such investment. "It is not cheap to participate at this show, but it is an investment the company is keen to make because it can take a Chinese brand farther," she explained.

Meanwhile, massive renovations have been planned for some of its hotels, such as Jin Jiang Hotel and Park Hotel in Shanghai. The company is also continuing its domestic expansion with two new management contracts. One is for a castle-like hotel in the upcoming Hello Kitty Land theme park in Zhejiang's Anji county and the other is a five-star property in Hangzhou. Both are slated to open by 2015.

Travelport's hotel offensive

By Gracia Chiang

HAVING aggressively grown its hospitality division last year, Travelport continues to expand its non-air offerings on the core GDS and its Rooms and More booking engine.

Launched last year, Rooms and More has signed up over 5,000 travel consultants, with Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia holding three out of five top spots in terms of production.

Niklas Andréen, group vice president hospitality and partner marketing, said the next step was to evolve the product with added

functionalities such as the ability to incorporate an agency's GDS negotiated rate and to book multiple rooms at one go, the latter an important feature for Asians.

The product is available in 70 countries, and there are 13 aggregators offering up to 300,000 properties, with some 20 more aggregators scheduled to go live.

Andréen added that star ratings were also being created for all properties on its GDS, while it is also using analytics to understand the difficulties agencies face in trying to book a hotel on the GDS.



Hard Rock Hotel Penang's Betty Lim and Penang Global Tourism's Evelyn Toh and Neoh Chee Lin



Bali Garden Beach Resort's Stefan Mueller, Nikko Bali Resort and Spa's Jean-Charles Le Coz, Fox Vakanties' Mathilde Saahoff, Nikko Bali Resort and Spa's Joy Cartwright Gartner and Fox Vakanties' Silvie Sweegers



Thomas Cook Canada's David Boigne and Penny Mastrogiannis with Panorama Destination's Rocky W Praputranto (centre)

Doing brisk business

Buyers and sellers round up productive discussions. **By Patrick Tan**



Prazsky Klub Czech Republic's Martin Eger and Pacto Indonesia's Ade Rachmadi and Freddy Rompas



The Andaman Langkawi's Simone Gross



Chaba Thailand's Tharniwarn Obpathamnithikul and Sofitel Thailand's Thatthep Kevin Yang and Anthony Slewka-Armfelt



Hotel Equatorial Malaysia's Ricky Ang, Collin Chan and Mario Indran

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Danang centre stage

Danang has stepped into the tourism limelight as a much sought-after destination for both holidaymakers and investors.

The resort's pristine beaches and the trio of UNESCO World Heritage Sites just a daytrip away – the former imperial capital of Hue, the ancient 'Silk Road' trading port of Hoi An and the Hindu temple complex and former spiritual centre of the Champa civilisation at My Son – have made Danang an attractive proposition for both.

The destination's department of culture, sports and tourism said that as of October 2011, there were 278 hotels and resorts offering 9,185 rooms – more than 3,000 of which were new additions.

Among these new properties, eight were five-star establishments with 1,835 rooms, twice as many as in 2010. New properties in other categories included three four-star hotels, 29 three-star and 238 others, offering 496, 1,657, and 5,179 rooms respectively.

As *TTG Asia ITB Daily* went to press, many projects were coming on-line – five five-star hotels with 1,235 rooms, two four-stars with 296 rooms and 15 three-stars with 872 rooms, according to the municipal tourism promotion agency. The department expects another 39 projects with 1,100 rooms to be added in 2012.

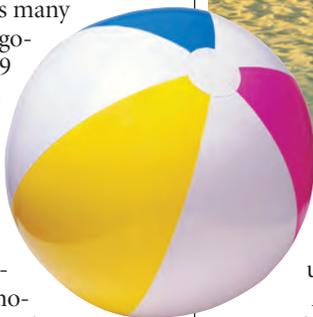
By the end of 2011's third quarter, the number of visitors staying in Danang's hotels had reached more than 1.2 million, a year-on-year increase of 54 per cent on 2010.

The number of international and local visitors had increased by 68 per cent and 51 per cent respectively.

In the first three quarters of 2011, total visitor num-



Courtesy of Nam Hai Danang, Vietnam



bers neared two million, up 33 per cent on the same period in 2010.

Danang is currently the second-most popular destination for domestic tourists.

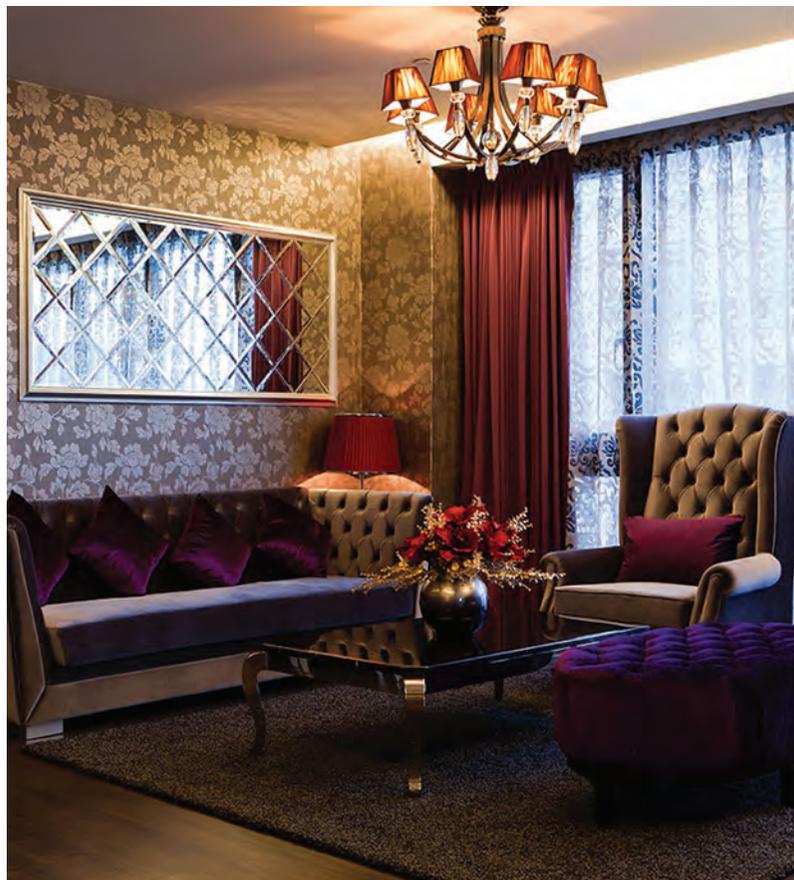
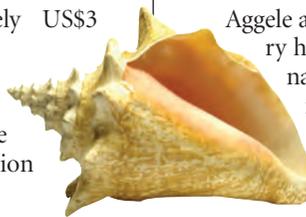
A report from property consultants CBRE noted 55 ongoing tourism projects with total capital investment of approximately US\$3 billion.

The past two years have seen the completion of many luxurious projects along the coastline with names such as Hyatt, The Nam Hai, Accor, InterContinental and Fusion Maia entering the market.

Marco van Aggele, CEO at Serenity Holding, the developer behind Fusion Maia Danang, said: "Danang is already oversupplied and it is harder to enter the market. In order to survive the competition you have to provide a whole new level of values to a new generation of travellers. But it surely is a very exciting time."

Aggele also reported an increasing interest in luxury holidays from the domestic market. A Vietnamese middle class has emerged rapidly and now wants to holiday in high-end resorts.

Fusion Maia Danang had received unexpectedly high numbers of local holiday-makers, he said. – **Chi Mai**



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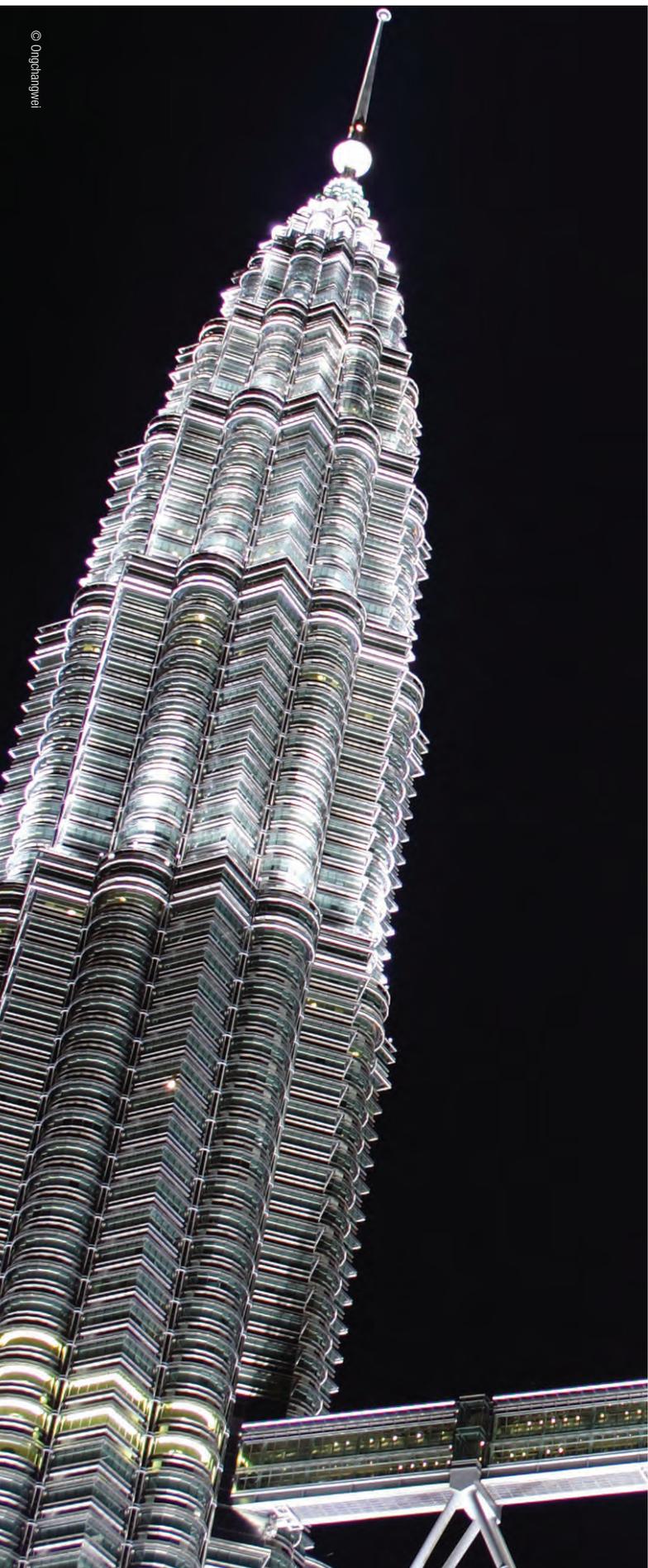
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An Award Winning Brand





Malaysia

Malaysian travel experts predict tough times ahead but major efforts are being put into attracting German travellers. **N. Nithiyanthan** reports

Arrival numbers from Europe in general, and the German-speaking market in particular, took a hit in 2011.

Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel managing director, Yap Sook Ling, said: "The numbers have definitely dropped, if we compare 2010 to 2011.

"The fall was between 20 and 30 per cent and forward bookings are not convincing.

"In fact, I foresee 2012 will be an even harder year as it will bear the real impact of the economic crises in Europe and the US, which will affect the big economies such as China and India too."

This sentiment was echoed by Asia Experience sales head, Clement Ho.

Ho said: "Our German arrivals dropped by approximately 20 per cent compared to a year ago due to the challenging economic situation in Europe."

Ho added: "Travellers are so selective and careful with their travel budgets."

Robert Lim, senior vice president of Holiday Tours & Travel, said that aggressive marketing by both Singapore and Thailand tourist boards was another factor affecting German visitor numbers to Malaysia.

Yap said: "The strategy for the German-speaking market is definitely to focus on getting new accounts and more potential business.



"In the short term, we can only stimulate the market with our tactical initiatives and incentives, but this depends on the numbers. We will maintain the affordability for travellers but will focus on better margin through enhanced services."

Yap Sook Ling
Managing director
Asian Overland Services
Tours & Travel

"We are trying to win as many new accounts, series and groups as possible so that when the economic situation gets better, we have all these agencies booking through us."

Ho said Asia Experience's strategy for 2012 would be to make "more efforts to attract niche market operators that promote travel to higher-end clientele who can afford to travel during the difficult times".

Lim said that among the improvements that had to be made, Malaysia needed more "German-speaking guides for tours and transfers".

These travel consultancies also planned to look at other markets and focus on staff development.

"We also hope that by venturing into other destinations, besides Germany, they can cover the drop that we have from the German market," Yap said.

"Meanwhile, as we had done during SARS, in 2002, which was one of the most difficult times for us, we will not cut staff numbers.

"We will focus on training and upgrading the product knowledge of our staff."

She said that the company's short-term tactical initiatives and incentives depended on the numbers of people travelling but prices would be kept down despite the tough market conditions. Asian Overland would concentrate on enhancing its services and achieving a better margin.

Tourism Malaysia on direct hard sell to win more Germans

By N. Nithiyanthan

THE German-speaking market – Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands – continues to be a high priority for Tourism Malaysia and a number of strategic and tactical campaigns are aimed at it for 2012.

"Plans for 2012 include participating in more consumer events to promote and hard sell Malaysia directly to people," said Tourism Malaysia acting director general, Azizan Nordin.

In January, Malaysia participated as a host country in the CMT Stuttgart 2012 exhibition.

Other strategies include maintaining and intensifying joint promotions with trade partners, including tour operators, travel consultants, airlines and the media.

"In line with this strategy, we plan to expand cooperation with Malaysian hotel representatives and embark on



Azizan: hey, big spenders

joint tactical campaigns with airlines and tour operators for consumers," Azizan added.

The overall thrust would be themes of nature and ecologically-orientated products, cultural tourism and responsible/sustainable tourism.

The high-end market segment is the apple of Tourism Malaysia's eye.

"This segment includes the high-yield or big spending tourists, and those in the senior age group – 50 plus," Azizan explained.

While promotional activities focusing on existing products would be intensified, niche products would be highlighted and aggressively promoted to the German-speaking market.

Azizan said: "These include home-stays – Malaysia My Second Home, golf, diving, fly-drive, spa and wellness, luxury tourism and volunteer tourism."

Digital and social media would be given high priority and be used as channels of communication.

"Tourism Malaysia plans to extend digital and social media promotions. This includes hosting a new, attractive and interactive website in German," Azizan added.

"For Switzerland in particular, we will extend our e-learning programme," he said.

Azizan said future arrivals from the German-speaking market would "depend very much on the situation in the eurozone".

However, he added: "We hope to receive 300,000 tourists from the market, an increase of about five per cent from 2010 arrivals."

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German business travel expected to grow

Hotels report that German corporate travel market has increased and expect further rises

By N. Nithiyanthan

Some leading hotels claim a modest rise in numbers from the German-speaking and other European markets, despite major inbound tour operators suffering a hit in 2011.

Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur general manager, Stephen Cokkinias, said: "Numbers from the German-speaking market have seen an approximately five per cent increase year-on-year between 2010 and 2011. This rate is expected to continue into 2012."

The German market accounts for approximately seven per cent of Ritz-Carlton's total annual arrivals.

JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur general manager, Mahmoud Skaf, said: "There will be a modest increase in occupancy from this market which makes up

about three to five per cent of our clientele."

This was attributed to a rise in business travellers. Cokkinias explained: "This is linked to the Malaysian government's efforts to attract investments into the country. We expect to see more Germans coming to Malaysia in 2012 specifically for investment in and work related to the technology and automation sectors."

"We also remain hopeful that Europe will recover fully as Malaysia has historically been a popular destination for the UK, German, French, Italian and Scandinavian markets in particular."

For the JW Marriott, a major driving factor was MICE. "However, many of our German MICE clients are actually major German companies that are based



Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur

here or in the region, rather than from Germany itself," Skaf said.

Irrespective of the performance of the German-speaking

markets, room rates and occupancy rates are on an upward trend. "We expect an increase in rates of six to eight per cent in

2012 and an increase in occupancy by four to five percentage points," Cokkinias said.

JW Marriott expected a four to nine per cent increase in occupancies and a seven to 10 per cent rise in room rates for 2012.

"We cannot go too high with our room rates because of the strengthening of the ringgit against the US dollar," Skaf said.

For the Swiss-Garden International Hotels, Resorts & Inns group, which has nine hotels and a serviced residence, group general manager for central region, Ryan Komatt, said: "There will be a significant increase in the business and corporate market compared to 2011 especially for the mid- and long-term segment as there is an escalating demand for serviced apartments."

Products

From Legoland to Lost World, or shop and cycle



Legoland Malaysia

Accor makes it three

What Accor will open the Pullman Kuala Lumpur Bangsar – its third Pullman in Malaysia – by June. It will offer 510 guest rooms and suites and two ballrooms and 11 meeting rooms that can accommodate up to 2,000 guests. In the Bangsar district, the hotel is close to the Mid Valley Megamall, and the business, entertainment and shopping hub of Bangsar. Accor will also introduce its three-star Ibis Styles brand to Malaysia. The new hotels in Kuala Lumpur are the Fraser Business Park Kuala Lumpur (500 rooms) and the Ibis Styles Cheras (156 rooms).

Contact
Tel: (603)2240 0888
Email: dmc@pullmankualalumpur.com
Website: www.accorhotels.com/asia

Legoland pricing

What Legoland Malaysia has announced the pricing for tickets and annual passes for its park in Nusajaya, Johor, which will open by end-2012. The gate prices will be RM140 (US\$47) for an adult and RM110 for a child, while an annual pass offering unlimited access for a calendar year will be RM275 for an adult and RM210 for a child. With a development cost of RM720 million (US\$240 million), Legoland Malaysia will offer seven themed areas.

Contact
Tel: (607) 597 8810
Email: Thila.Munusamy@legoland.my
Website: www.LEGOLAND.my

Berjaya Langkawi upgrade

What All 241 rooms at the Berjaya Langkawi Resort will be upgraded as part of the ongoing room renovation by July. Superior and deluxe rooms are being upgraded into rainforest and seaview chalets respectively, while a pair of superior rooms will be merged into a rainforest studio.

Contact
Email: langkawi.rsvn@berjayahotel.com
Website: www.berjayahotel.com

Russian connection

What Transaero Airlines, Russia's second largest carrier, which made its maiden flight to Kuala Lumpur on December 31, provides the only direct air link between Russia and Malaysia. It will operate one flight weekly, every Saturday from Moscow to Kuala Lumpur, using a Boeing 763 aircraft with a 255-seat configuration.

Contact
Website: www.transaero.com

Premium shopping opens

What Johor Premium Outlets (JPO), a premium shopping area, opened in Kulaijaya in Johor in December. Claimed to be the first outlet of its kind in South-east Asia, JPO will offer off-season branded items such as designer fashion, sportswear, children's clothes, bedroom linen, jewellery and shoes at discount of up to 65 per cent.

Contact
Email: info@genting.com
Website: www.genting.com



Lost World of Tambun

New cycling tours

What Eight cycling tour packages have been introduced in Putrajaya by 3T Travel & Tours and Inter-Orient Travel & Tours, making use of the cycle lanes in the federal administrative centre. 3T offers two-night cycling packages for RM450 (US\$150) and RM250 with and without accommodation, respectively. Inter-Orient offers packages from RM80 to RM288 a person.

Contact
3T Travel & Tours
Tel: +603 2021 3143/ +6017 339 3143
Email : reservation@3travel.com.my
Website : www.3ttravel.webs.com

Lost World adds

What The Ipoh-based Lost World of Tambun (LWOT) theme park has added a team-building park as its latest attraction. It will feature a series of high rope elements designed to showcase and use the LWOT's natural limestone landscape. The team-building programmes include a high ropes course, a para jump, a 30m *via feratta* – road with irons – climb and natural abseil (claimed to be the first in the region) and a quadruple zip line.

Contact
Tel: +603 5631 1411
Email: adrianpa@sunway.com.my
Website: www.sunwaylostworldoftambun.com

MASwings connects

What MASwings commenced flights on February 1, between Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak), Brunei and Indonesia (Kalimantan). Frequencies include Kota Kinabalu to Bandar Seri Begawan (14 flights a week); Kuching to Bandar Seri Begawan (three a week); Kuching to Pontianak (seven a week); and Tawau to Tarakan (three a week).

Contact
Tel: +603 7843 3000
Email: info@maswings.com.my
Website: www.maswings.com.my

Destination by the numbers



1 The number of flights a week operated by Transaero Airlines between Moscow and Kuala Lumpur since December 31.

5 The percentage rate at which arrivals from the German-speaking market are expected to rise in 2012 compared to 2011 at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

8 The number of cycling tour packages introduced in the federal administrative centre of Putrajaya by 3T Travel & Tours and Inter-Orient Travel & Tours.

20 The percentage fall in arrivals from the German-speaking market for two leading inbound tour operators – Asian Overland Services and Asia Experience – in 2011 compared to the previous year.

30 The height (in metres) of the *via feratta* (road with irons) climb and natural abseil – claimed to be the first in the region – recently opened at the Ipoh-based Lost World of Tambun theme park.

140 The gate price in Malaysian Ringgit (US\$47) for an adult at the first Asia-based Legoland Malaysia theme park to be opened in Nusajaya, Johor by end-2012. A child's ticket will cost RM110.

510 The inventory of guest rooms and suites at the Pullman Kuala Lumpur Bangsar to be opened by June 2012.

© Alan Taylor



China

The destination moves up to meet Germans' high expectations. By **Manuela Zoninsein**

The general trend last year saw business travel to China holding strong, while leisure travel weakened. Three key factors – global, regional and local issues – uniquely impacted the German market.

On the global level, after-shocks from the financial crisis are now being felt across Europe, leading to a “weaker economy and the euro uncertainty,” explained Marcel Schneider, chief executive officer at TUI China Travel.

TUI, however, had “a very good year from European source

markets,” which was in part due to new clients.

Similarly, Pacific World, according to Violet Wang, senior account manager for the destination management company, said “the European market has been the one to grow”.

Yet Schneider admitted that volume was “still lower than in the pre-crisis years”.

Wang said that regardless of cultural differences between European countries, “all of the countries are very price sensi-

Continued on page 10

Far East Hospitality Group of Hotels gains recognition with travellers

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QUINCY HOTEL in Singapore, has won three awards from TripAdvisor 2012 Travellers' Choice award, namely, “Trendiest Hotel in Asia” “Top 10 Hotels in Singapore” and “Top 20 Luxury Hotels in Singapore”.

The 108-room Quincy Hotel is a boutique hotel, managed by Far East Hospitality Group in Singapore. It is located in the charming enclave of Mount Elizabeth, right in the heart of Singapore's premier shopping district.

Other standalone hotels managed by Far East, include the newly renovated Elizabeth Hotel. The Group have just invested over S\$3.5 million to uplift its executive rooms with modern furnishings including 40-inch LED HD TVs and rain showers, to provide a contemporary feel for guests

Besides managing the individual hotels, Far East also owns two other renowned hotel brands.

Village Hotels & Residences launched in 2009

Its Village Hotels & Residences was launched in 2009 and comprises four hotels, namely, the Albert Court Village Hotel, Changi Village Hotel, Landmark Village Hotel and the newly added East Village Hotel.

Far East Organization's Executive Director Mr Chia Boon Kuah said, “The articulation of our Village brand signals Far East Organization's aspiration and readiness to grow its hospitality presence, locally and overseas.”



On the other hand, the latest hotel brand launched by the Group - the Oasia Brand - revolves around three key values that encapsulate all of Asian Hospitality – thoughtfulness, respect and care – and these have been translated across all facets of the property from its hotel and room design, through to its service and guest experience.

Oasia Brand launched in October 2011

The opening of Oasia Hotel Singapore in Novena last October marked the first hotel launched under that brand. A key feature of Oasia Hotel is its Club lounge on the 22nd floor, *The Living Room*, whereby Oasia Club guests can swim and unwind in its pool

amid panoramic skyline views and lush greenery.

Oasia Hotel is located at the Novena MRT Station which is just two stops away from Orchard Station, the hub of Singapore's luxury shopping district.

“For busy travellers, we wanted to create a feeling of warmth and coziness,” said Mr Raphael Saw, Chief Operating Officer, Hospitality Business Group at Far East Organization. “Staying at Oasia, guests will be truly looked after, and feel rejuvenated and relaxed.”

Singapore's largest private property developer, Far East Organization owns Far East Hospitality Group with eight hotels and 11 residences and offers a wide array of accommodation options located all over the island in prime locations.

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More rooms put brake on prices

Budget and boutique hotel offerings are on the increase as hoteliers perform well in China's second-tier cities

By Manuela Zoninsein

CHINA'S increasingly sophisticated hotel industry is pushing towards second-tier cities for both business and leisure travel with new convention centres and entertainment facilities to match.

According to the third edition of the 2011 China Newsletter from Horwath Hotel, Tourism and Leisure Consulting, year-on-year growth comparing 2010 to 2011 showed hotels in Chengdu, Qingdao, Guangzhou, Chongqing, Shenzhen, Xi'an and Hainan were among the top performers.

There had also been increases in budget and boutique hotel offerings. "Even the local budget hotel chain HanTing is developing its boutique brand 'All Seasons,'" said Violet Wang, senior account manager of destination

management company Pacific World.

This suits the German market, said Marcel Schneider, chief executive officer at TUI China Travel, as their expectations of quality and service delivery are high. "They always expect the best value for money no matter whether travelling in three-, four- or five-star hotels."

But an increase in room numbers acts as a brake on prices.

Many hotels were opened in anticipation of a boom in arrivals for the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, so Shanghai hotel prices have now fallen by 23 per cent, with a Hotels.com report showing an average daily rate of US\$117.

Peninsula Hotel Shanghai manager Katja Henke points to the "after-Expo effect," where "everyone who had a reason to



Shanghai: Prices have fallen

come to Shanghai, came during the Expo".

Partner the post-Expo blues with global financial woes as China's economy rises, and the

industry can expect to see tourism increasingly geared towards domestic audiences, in all segments and especially the luxury level.

"The inbound market is playing a less and less important role for a lot of large travel businesses," said Zhang Mei, founder, WildChina.

From page 9

tive". For TUI, the German-speaking markets (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) showed strong numbers while France and the UK slightly under performed.

At The Peninsula Hotel, Shanghai, France showed lower numbers between 2010 and 2011 while Germany – and, in this case, the UK – experienced increases, explained Katja Henke, hotel manager.

The second factor, said Wang, was regional and relates to the earthquake, tsunami and resultant nuclear crisis in China's neighbour, Japan.

Due to the catastrophes, "some programmes were cancelled but also some programmes were shifted to China because we were the closest destination".

Locally, the 2010 Shanghai World Expo affected arrivals.

The Peninsula experienced an increase in French guests during Expo year but a slight drop in German guests. However, in 2011, the trend was reversed.

Henke said: "Our clientele is mostly leisure rather than business ... and the French market is stronger in leisure," so they came during the Expo while English and German travellers, coming on business, held off during 2010 to avoid the Expo crowds.

Strong bookings for the coming season point to growth, inspiring trade hopes that things will get back on track.

However, the industry is careful to consider the global economic outlook and its impact on international travel. Moreover, China is not in the top three destinations on Germans' wishlists, said Henke.

The German national explained that her compatriots liked to combine many elements on vacations, such as beach, culture and nature outings.

China is not seen as a beach destination so they often choose South-east Asia over China.

German travellers, according to Veronique d'Antras, director of the leisure journeys department at high-end travel company WildChina, expect cleanliness and comfort in accommodation, safety



"We're cautiously optimistic and expect pretty healthy growth, although right now there is a general cautiousness in the European market because the eurozone problems and financial crisis are hitting them pretty hard. For us, because the European market has always been fairly small, we can continue to grow despite the trend."

Zhang Mei
Founder
WildChina

and quality of cars and a desire to stick to a schedule.

As the destination's tourism infrastructure and services have developed quickly, the experience of travel in China is becoming more suitable to German tastes.

Products

Better transport spurs tours outside the usual China spots

High-speed trains

What For European travellers and especially Germans, the high-speed train – in particular the Shanghai-Beijing service – is a popular form of transportation, according to inbound operators. Rail travel is easy and hassle-free because there is no airport security. It competes well with other forms of transport on price and is comfortable. China's rapidly increasing high-speed railway network makes travelling by train much more attractive and on some routes the train has become a real alternative to domestic flights. The quality of the high-speed rail network is impressive.

Go West

What The majority of tourists still visit the most well-known attractions in China – Beijing, Xian, the Yangtze River, Shanghai, Guilin and Hong Kong. Increasingly though, popular destinations include Sichuan, Yunnan and the Silk Road. The biggest shift of all is further west to Tibet, thanks to the completion in 2006 of the Qinghai-Tibet railway.

Second- and third-tier cities

What International hotels are now venturing into second- and even third-tier cities as there they still can make a major impact. In part, this is due to the extensive high-speed rail network. Hangzhou, for example, has benefited from integration into the high-speed railway network, connecting it easily with Shanghai. Other secondary destinations increasing in prominence include Chengdu, Xiamen, Guangzhou, Xi'an and even Tibet. European travel consultants should expect more inquiries to these destinations, thanks

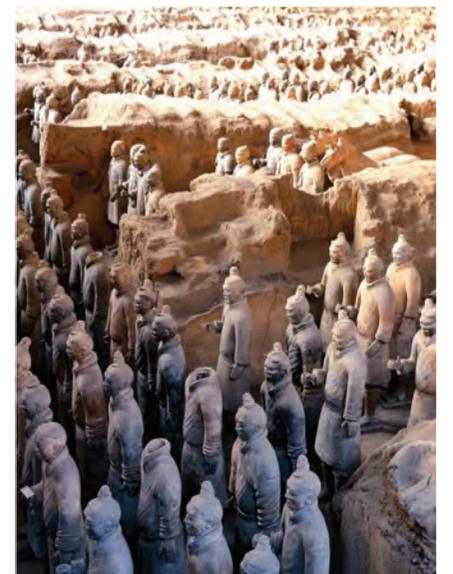
to the improved accessibility and infrastructure.

Kempinski in Gui Yang

What International travellers are becoming more adventurous and exploring new areas. The south-western province of Guizhou is a hot, upcoming destination, especially noted for its ethnic groups. With the opening of the Kempinski – a popular brand for German travellers – in the provincial capital, Guiyang, luxury and international clients will find the destination more comfortable.

West Lake: UNESCO World Heritage award

What The fact that Hangzhou's beautiful West Lake in eastern China became a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site in 2011 will attract more international tourists to a city which is already a top attraction for domestic travellers.



Xi'an, terracotta warriors

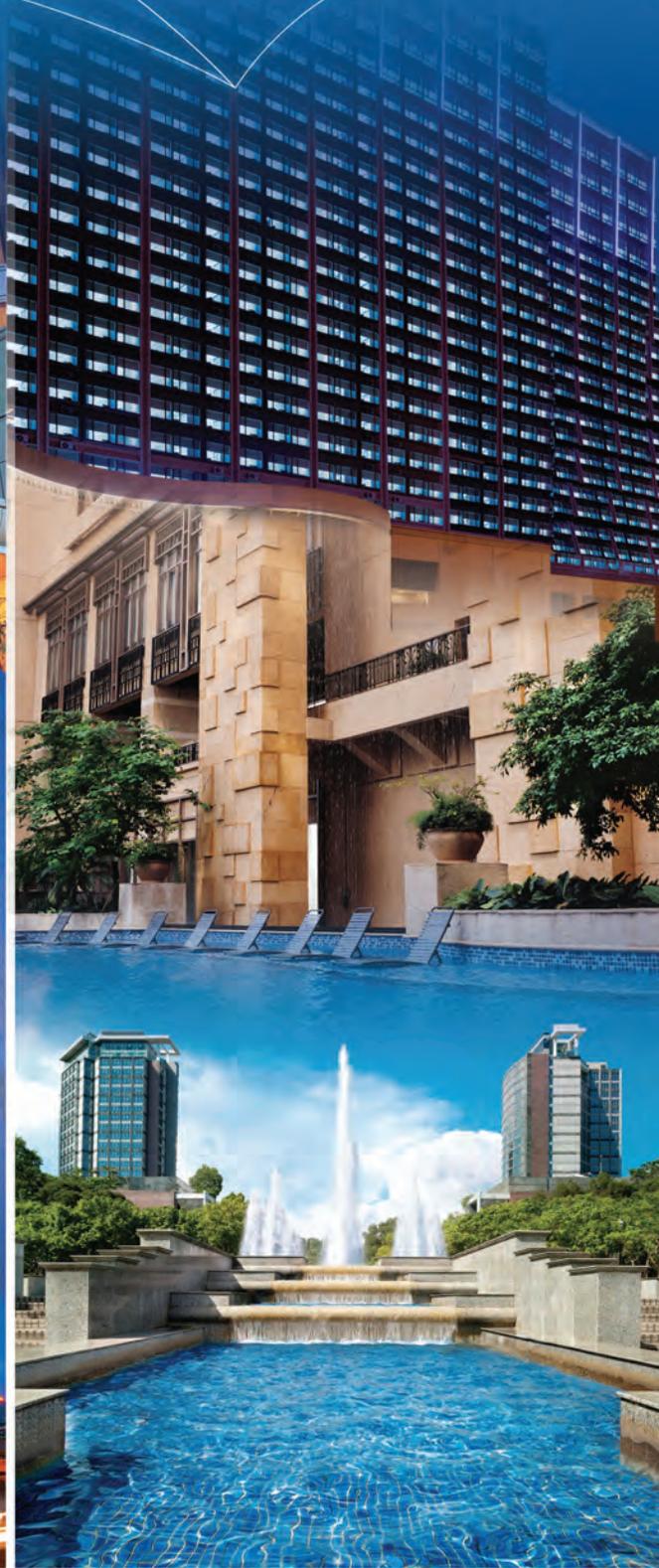
Courtesy of Peninsula Shanghai

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Cambodia

Angkor Wat is still the top draw but Germans are spreading their wings as they find the country has more to offer. **Liam Barnes** reports

The number of German visitors arriving in Cambodia increased 7.6 per cent through September last year, compared to the same period in 2010, according to figures from the Ministry of Tourism.

Improved awareness of Cambodia and increased maturity in its tourism market were cited as the reasons for increase, from 40,969 to 44,073, in German arrivals.

“Cambodia is no longer a destination largely visited by backpackers,” said James Thornton, general manager of Cambodia-based travel company Intrepid Travel. The iconic Angkor Wat temple complex is now recognised worldwide as a must-visit destination, he added.

The company, which only started monitoring sales channels in 2009, recorded a 12 per cent growth in visitors from Ger-

many last year. Thornton said that a growing proportion of visitors were university graduates and professionals.

“Most of our clients are looking for a unique travel experience that leads to a deeper understanding of the culture and people ... in a country that is great value.

“It is also very popular with visitors to South-east Asia who want to see beyond the beaches of Thailand.”

Some Cambodia-based travel professionals believe the performance of the emerging German market is dependent on Europe’s economic climate and the availability of air routes.

“I think 2012 (for the German market) will be very much dependant on the situation in Europe,” said Michele Whealy, country manager of Buffalo Tours.

She said that although Cambodia’s

popularity among German tourists was growing, flight connections between the two countries remained poor.

However, Thornton said that the recent introduction of flights from Siem Reap, Cambodia’s largest tourist destination, and Sihanoukville, which was recently inducted into the World’s Most Beautiful Bay Club, would push German visitors out into the countryside beyond Angkor Wat.

He added: “Cambodia is now firmly in our top 10 destination list and we expect sales from Germany to continue to perform through 2012.”

Though a lesser-known South-east Asian destination compared to Thailand and Vietnam, Thornton said there was big potential for growth within the next few years.

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“The world heritage – listed Angkor Wat is now a must-see site and travellers from all walks of life and from across the world are drawn to it.”

James Thornton
General manager
Intrepid Travel

Destination by the numbers

117.2 There was an exponential increase of 117.2 per cent in Russian arrivals through September 2011. While this only translated into 44,194 tourists entering the kingdom, it accounted for more than 73 per cent of all Eastern European arrivals.

10 While total arrivals from the Americas increased 10 per cent in the first 10 months of 2011, its marketshare remains fairly low at 7.5 per cent. However, tourist arrivals from Argentina and Colombia soared 167.7 and 128.9 per cent respectively.

27.4 The Cambodia-Thailand border dispute appears to have affected Thai arrivals to the kingdom in the first 10 months of the year. Arrival numbers plummeted 27.4 per cent from 111,411 to 80,912.

0.2 Although tourist arrivals from Africa made up only 0.2 per cent of the total market share, arrivals from South Africa rose 20.9 per cent. However, it was the only country on the continent to experience an increase.

93,263 Laos became one of the top 10 source

markets for the first time through September 2011. The 93,263 Laotian arrivals were a 42.8 per cent year-on-year increase, topping French tourist arrivals by more than 10,000.

462,371 Vietnam retained its number one spot in the tourism arrival charts, with 462,371 entering Cambodia in the first 10 months of 2011. It dominated the market with a total share of 22.2 per cent – a 21.7 per cent year-on-year increase.

14,531 Inbound arrivals via air surpassed land and waterway arrivals by 14,531 through September last year. Siem Reap International Airport remained the prime destination for inbound tourists travelling by air, with a total of 581,665 arrivals in the first 10 months.

1,167,104 Siem Reap Province – home to the iconic Angkor Wat temple complex – remained the country’s most popular tourist destination, with 1,167,104 arrivals through September 2011, compared to 917,685 in Phnom Penh and other destinations.

Products

Airport opens up beaches as kingdom adds to its upmarket offerings

Sihanoukville International Airport

What Service at the airport, constructed during the 1960s, restarted on December 19, 2011. Direct flights to and from Siem Reap currently run three times a week through national carrier Cambodia Angkor Air, with additional routes slated for the future. The relaunch of the airport is expected to significantly boost tourism to the beachside resort and it is forecast to eventually become the kingdom's busiest airport, with an annual maximum capacity of 10 million passengers.

Contact
Website: www.cambodia-airports.com
Tel: (855)1233-3524



Quad Adventure Cambodia

Quad Adventure Cambodia

What Explore the Khmer countryside around Siem Reap in a rough and down-right dirty way, traversing the terrain on four wheels with Quad Adventure Cambodia. The company offers a number of excursions ranging from a serene sunset drive to the five-day Angkor Adventure Tour, priced at US\$38 and \$1,055 per person, respectively.

Contact
Website: www.quad-adventure-cambodia.com
Tel: (855)17784-727, (855) 9278-7 216

Hotel 1961

What A unique concept in a city clogged with monotonous accommodation options and carbon-copy bars, Hotel 1961 is a breath of fresh air in Siem Reap. Described as an "address for art", it was opened in early 2010 by photojournalist Loven Ramos and comprises galleries, studios, dining, shopping and an eight-room 'creative hotel'.

Contact
Website: www.the1961.com/index.html
Email: info@the1961.com
Tel: (855) 1537-8088

Song Saa Private Island

What Cambodia's premier five-star beach resort Song Saa opened in February 2011, putting Cambodia firmly on the luxury tourism map. Situated in the unspoilt Koh Rong Archipelago off the coast of Sihanoukville, the resort embodies five-star luxury, from its world-class restaurant to its opulent accommodation in 27 over-water, rainforest and beach villas. Though a newcomer, it has received regional and international acclaim.



Song Saa Private Island

Contact
Website: songsaa.com
Email: info@songsaa.com, sales@songsaa.com, reservations@songsaa.com

Bokor Mountain Park

What After months of access issues due

to the lengthy construction of a new road. Bokor National Park has re-opened. At the peak of the mountain, which offers sweeping views of the surrounding area, is an eerie abandoned French colonial town, complete with a casino and former royal residence. A

number of additional facilities are slated for the future. A short trip from nearby Kampot, it can be visited as a day trip or overnight stay.

Contact
Website: www.bokor-mountain-cambodia.com

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ASIA'S BOUTIQUE AIRLINE

Philippines

Adventurous top-end travellers from Germany are keen to find new sights and they continue to pick the Philippines. **Marianne Carandang** reports

Travel representatives and groundhandlers targeting the German market had a satisfying 2011.

Long-stay packages of two to three weeks to up-and-coming destinations and high-end resorts off the beaten track proved popular.

Although no Philippine carriers had flown to Europe since the EU ban of October 2009, and KLM may halt the last direct flight from the continent (Amsterdam-Manila) by April 2012, travel professionals are optimistic.

They cite that Middle Eastern carriers such as Qatar Airways, Etihad and Emirates, and South-east Asian carriers Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines and Thai Airways, provide alternative routes from Europe.

Serafina Joven, president and GM of Annset Holidays, said: "Year after year, arrivals from the German markets keep on improving, despite the ban on Philippine carriers."

She said Germans went for "nature, culture, soft adventure and leisure".

Annset Holidays recently introduced tours to Bicol in Southern Luzon.

Joven said: "Bicol offers nature and adventure at the base of Mt. Mayon and Donsol, where visitors can swim side-by-side with whalesharks."

The packages also include historical church visits, all-terrain vehicle rides and walks up the lava rocks on Mt. Mayon with a zipline on the way down.



"Our strategy is to continue to promote the Philippines as the perfect long-haul destination for guests who want to experience a unique culture, stunning scenery, fantastic beaches and world-class diving. The Philippines is spread over 7,107 islands so there is always something new to offer."

Alexander Stutely
CEO

Blue Horizons Travel and Tours

Shroff International Travel Care marketing director, Kristine Shroff, whose agency courts French, Russian and Middle Eastern travellers, said German clients were well-informed, mature travellers who are into diving and marine life.

Shroff said: "They go to unique destinations like Tablas, Romblon island and cities in the Visayas region like Dumaguete – a cultural and diving centre."

Their clients avoid large hotels, going for boutique properties and tours that allow them to explore different locations.

Alexander Stutely, CEO, Blue Horizons Travel and Tours, said: "Our typical guests from Germany stay in the Philippines between two and three weeks, visiting both cultural and beach destinations."

His guests prefer private tours and private transfers and stay at four-star and five-star resorts.

Sonia Lazo, managing director of Intas Destination Management, said his FIT clients were attracted by adventure products, such as diving trips and cruise expeditions sailing between Batangas, Mindoro and Palawan and packages to Banaue and Ilocos. The exclusive resorts of Palawan also appeal to the top end of the market.

Travel experts believe that 2012 will see business from German improve.

Lazo said: "The European economy is not very stable right now, so most people will hold back, but the luxury market will not be affected."

Diving packages are the focus of new campaign in Germany

By Marianne Carandang

GERMANY is the Philippines' second largest market from Europe, generating more than 58,000 arrivals in 2010. This increased by approximately four and five per cent in 2011 – a growth rate the DoT expects to maintain in 2012. Its efforts at ITB are not just aimed at capturing German visitors but to reach the world market as well.

"We do a lot of campaigns for diving, which is a big niche for German visitors. The Philippines is one of the top diving destinations for Germans," Verna Buensuceso, DoT director of Team Europe, said.

DoT is promoting Puerto Galera, Dumaguete, Malapascua, Balicasag Island in Bohol and Camiguin Island off Cagayan de Oro in Mindanao for German visitors.

The Philippines attends Dusseldorf's BOOT Boat and Dive Show every January and this year launched its 'Unlimited Dive Philippines' campaign there. Packages are coordinated via DoT's Frankfurt office, which offers various diving packages developed in tie-ups with airlines.

In 2012, DoT will be pushing the country's new tourism campaign – 'It's More Fun in the Philippines'. The campaign, unveiled in January, continues to focus on fam trips for media and tour operators as well as frontline travel consultants, in a bid to increase their effectiveness in selling the Philippines back in Europe.

The DoT has also given special support to travel professionals from DERTOUR, an Asia wholesale specialist.

Packages will highlight the country as a cultural destination with Banaue or Bohol tied into a beach experience, usually Cebu, Boracay, Bohol (also a beach destination) or Palawan.

Sharp Travel is back at ITB to market cruises to the European market while new players such as Uni-Orient Travel are in Berlin to woo new visitors.

The EU ban on Philippine carriers and uncertainty about the European economy are a lingering concern, but Buensuceso said: "The Philippines is perceived as a new destination, so it is unlikely to suffer."

The DoT participated in the World Route Development Forum held in Berlin in October 2011 to meet carriers which would consider flying to the Philippines.

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Hotel building booms across country

Palawan could be the next big thing thanks to higher profile of Puerto Princesa Underground River

By Marianne Carandang

MORE than 10,500 new hotel rooms will have been added to the Philippines' inventory between 2011 and 2014 with nearly 4,360 rooms opening last year.

The DoT estimates that Metro Manila would have added 2,700 by early 2012, while Cebu and Bohol would add 600 and 500 respectively.

In Cebu, Bluewater Sumilon will add 30 rooms, while Costabella and Shangri-La Mactan are undergoing renovations.

On Bohol's Panglao Island, the luxury, 54-room Bluewater Panglao resort opened in July 2011 and the 158-room Bellevue Hotel Bohol opened at the end of the year.

On Panglao, during the next few years, Henann Resorts will

add 350 rooms to its Alona Beach villa property and MICE facilities will be added at Bohol Beach Club and Eskaya Beach Resort & Spa.

Margie Munsayac, president of the Hotel Sales Managers Association and VP for sales at Bluewater Resorts, said that on Boracay construction was under way on White Beach and at the Boracay Newcoast integrated resort project where approximately 2,500 rooms would be added.

The next big wave of expansion is likely to be in Palawan, thanks to publicity generated by the inclusion of the Puerto Princesa Underground River in the provisional list of the New-7 Wonders of the World.

In Manila, openings in Makati will include Raffles Residences,



Ariara Resort in Palawan

Fairmont Hotel, F1 and Holiday Inn, while Ascott, Shangri-La, Grand Hyatt and a Kukun Hotel Inn by the Ayala Group will open in the new business district of Bonifacio Global City.

Mercure and Marco Polo will launch properties in the Ortigas business district, while a Novotel will open in Quezon City.

Carmela Bocanegra, group director of sales and marketing at hotel management company HSAI Raintree, said its Discovery Suites in Ortigas, Manila, expected 2011's occupancy rate to settle at 60-65 per cent. HSAI expects to increase prices for 2012 by less than five per cent.

Cristina Cruz, director of

Marketing at Peninsula Hotel in Makati, reported occupancy rates of 73-74 per cent in 2011, with an average room rate of P6,800 (US\$154).

Cruz said that long-stay business travellers from the US and Australia were a major market for the hotel.

The DoT's estimate of 10,500 new rooms does not include developments in Entertainment City Manila or 30 budget hotels and a luxury Mactan resort planned by Robinson's Land Corp, sister company of low-cost carrier Cebu Pacific Air.

The state's gaming regulator recently ruled that the four firms licensed to run casinos within Entertainment City must provide 800 hotel rooms each before opening the casinos.

Products

Cruise ships come first as Philippines adds draws



The Mind Museum

Legend of the Seas in Boracay

What Royal Caribbean's *Legend of the Seas* will make its first-ever call at the island of Boracay during an eight-day Hong Kong, Singapore cruise in October. Fares range from US\$754-US\$2,408 per person.

Contact
Website: www.royalcaribbean.com

Azamara Quest in Manila

What Azamara Club Cruises' boutique ship *Azamara Quest* will make its first visit to Manila during a 17-day Hong Kong-Singapore voyage starting on March 26. The cruise makes a two-day stop in Manila and visits Borneo, Sulawesi, Komodo, Benoa and Semarang.

Contact
Website: www.azamaracruises.com

New Cebu Pacific routes

What Cebu Pacific Air will launch two new thrice weekly services on March 23. The Hong Kong-Kalibo route will use new Airbus A320s and Manila-Xiamen will use A319s.

Contact
Website: www.cebupacificair.com

Bellarocca expansion

What Santorini-inspired Bellarocca Resort in Marinduque Island recently completed its last 19 *casas* (one-, two- and three-bedroom houses), rounding up its portfolio of 70 luxury suites which include private pool villas, two-bedroom *terrazas* and hotel rooms. A three-bed-

room guesthouse, costing US\$5,000 per night, has also been opened.

Contact
Website: www.bellaroccareorts.com

The Mind Museum

What The P1billion science museum in Bonifacio Global City, the first of its kind in the country, is opening this month, with more than 250 exhibits divided into five main galleries and an outdoor area.

Contact
Tel: (632) 6236301 03
Website: www.themindmuseum.org

Private island playground

What One of northern Palawan's newest island getaways, the 50-hectare Ariara island boasts 600m of unspoiled white-sand beach, 200m of protected reef and beachfront cottages accommodating a maximum of 17 pax. Activities include luxury yacht cruises, waterskiing, wakeboarding, island-hopping and fishing. Ariara is only available to one party at a time.

Contact
Email: bliss@ariaraisland.com
Website: www.ariaraisland.com

PICC undergoes renovation

What The Philippine International Convention Center in Manila is in the process of completing a P35 million (US\$795,000) renovation of its convention halls and meeting rooms.

Contact
Website: www.picc.gov.ph



Bellarocca Resort Marinduque

Cirque du Soleil tour

What Cirque du Soleil returns to Manila from August 9-19 with its longest touring show, *Saltimbanco*, at the soon-to-open SM Mall of Asia Arena in Metro Manila.

Contact
Website: www.cirquedusoleil.com/saltimbanco, www.hoopla.ph & www.smtickets.com
Tel: (632) 470 2222.

UA takes on Manila-Guam

What Following its merger with Continental Airlines, United Airlines has taken over its nine weekly direct Manila-Guam flights and two more Guam services via Palau (Koror). United will also launch a joint venture with ANA in April tapping the Manila-Tokyo (Narita) route.

Contact
Website: www.united.com

Cliff diving on Boracay

What Half-day packages from Boracay to Buruanga Island offer access to popular cliff jumping spot Ariel's Point. Packages include meals, drinks, access to canoeing, kayaking and snorkelling gear and the opportunity to use the five cliff diving platforms spread around the island.

Contact
Tel: (63-36) 288 6770 or (63-36) 288 4853
Website: www.arielspoint.com

New MICE concierge

What Waterfront Cebu City Hotel in downtown Lahug has a new group and convention check-in facility in its second floor lobby. The hotel has a 2,000m² ballroom, two exhibition halls and nine meeting rooms.

Contact
Tel: (6332) 232 6888
Fax: (6332) 232 6880
Email: wcch@waterfronthotels.net
Website: www.waterfronthotels.com.ph/waterfront/waterfront-cebu-city-hotels-casino/

Destination by the numbers

1.16 A total of P1.16 billion (US\$26.36 million) has been released for the revamp of Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 1, which began last January. The work aims to ease chronic runway congestion and refurbish the terminal.

3.52 Approximately 3.52 million visitors arrived in the Philippines in the first 11 months of 2011, an increase of 12.66 per cent over the same period in 2010. East Asia contributed the bulk (47.66 per cent), while North America provided 18.81 per cent.

6 Since the implementation in March 2011 of Executive Order 29 promoting 'pocket' (or regulated) open skies air services agreements for airports outside Metro Manila, the Philippines has signed seven bilateral treaties with Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea and Hong Kong.

12 From January to September 2011, 43,743 Germans visited the Philippines, making it the 12th largest market.

4.2 Secretary Ramon Jimenez's target for foreign arrival numbers has been raised to 4.2 million for 2011 from an initial target of 3.7 million. The DoT hopes new international and domestic tourism campaigns will boost arrivals figure further this year.

5.8 Tourism's direct gross value added contribution to the Philippines' GDP from 2000-2010 averaged 5.8 per cent, reaching P518.5 billion (US\$11.7 billion) in 2010, 13 per cent more than in 2009.

50 Cebu Pacific Air has inked a joint venture with Canada's CAE to open the Philippine Academy for Aviation Training in Clark, Pampanga in late 2012. The school, which costs US\$50 million to launch, will train an average of 2,500 pilots and aviation professionals a year. The pilots will initially receive training for A319/320/321 aircraft.



India

The trade is working harder to lure a soft market back to its shores. **Shekhar Nigoyi** reports

Even though the debilitating eurozone economic crisis has not impacted Germany directly, Indian inbound travel companies handling the market report it is having an impact on travel.

Many feel that caution is the reason behind delayed confirmation of bookings, from four months before to as short as four weeks now.

Ratanpreet Kaur, travel counsellor of Holidays of India, a product of SOTC, said: "Usually at this time we are deluged with requests, but this year it is surprisingly dry from our German clients. We expect it may pick up

next month but one cannot be sure."

Said the head-product development of an inbound company: "In many instances, Germans are postponing their travel plans to a later time and there is a trend to conserve money due to a fear-psychosis caused by the problems in the EU.

"Demand from Germany dropped 20 per cent in 2011 and we expect a further dip in 2012. We are creating new products to give the German clients an incentive to return."

But Rohit Kohli, joint managing director of Creative Travel, blamed the apparent reticence of

the German tourist on difficulties in obtaining visas rather than eurozone economic concerns.

"India has outsourced visa applications and the website is not user-friendly, with only an English version of the application form. Outbound tour operators are not permitted to help their customers fill the forms, which must be done by the travellers themselves. Moreover, there are inordinate delays in the issuance of visas that must be addressed immediately."

Some trade members like Anand Singh, manager, Le Pas-

Continued on page 20

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Room rate slide unlikely

Domestic tourists expected to absorb big spike in roomcount across India

By Shekhar Niyogi

HOTELS, whose occupancies had dipped due to large increases in room inventory in 2010 and a fall in arrivals from prime European markets hit by the economic crisis, have domestic tourism to thank for preventing the ARR to tumble.

A CRISIL report shows that ARR fell 3.3 per cent year-on-year in 2011, while average occupancies levelled out at 67 per cent. There was a 45 per cent rise in domestic tourism numbers between 2005 and 2011, reaching 740 million annually. Last year, domestic tourism grew 11 per cent over 2011.

According to HVS, branded room supply, spearheaded by international hotel chains, is spiralling further, from 71,531 in 2010-11, to 102,438 in 2015-16, with 45 per cent of the proposed rooms already under construction.

Everywhere, new rooms are being built. Bangalore is adding 12,509 rooms by 2015-16 to the 5,947 available in 2010-11; Jaipur is adding 4,867 rooms to its current 2,554 rooms; Delhi NCR is adding 18,608 rooms to its current total of 12,708; and Chandigarh is adding 1,855 rooms to its total of 786 in 2010-11.

The new rooms are split 48:52 between mid-market and budget hotels, and the luxury and upscale segments. An upward-



Leela Palace Udaipur

ly-mobile domestic Indian traveller is catalyst for growth of rooms in the mid-market category.

However, room rates may not fall further as the burgeoning domestic demand is expected to prop up occupancy levels.

Indian Tourism Minister, Subodh Kant Sahai, said: "We are targeting a huge growth in both domestic tourism and in-bound tourist arrivals and to sustain this expected growth our thrust is on creating infrastructure with new hotel developments and various other projects, all to be

carried out in partnership with the private sector.

"We have set up a Hospitality Development and Promotion Board to fast-track the clearance of hotel projects."

In some places, in fact, ARR has risen. Rates rose in Jaipur from US\$95 in 2010 to US\$106 in 2011, an increase of 11.8 per cent, while Goa recorded an increase from US\$118 to US\$130 in the same period chalking up a rise of 10.3 per cent. Agra posted an 11.6 per cent increase in ARR with rates rising from US\$121 to US\$135.

But major cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata and Hyderabad are not likely to see increases in room rates. In Delhi NCR, the ARR remained almost the same as 2010 at US\$182, HVS's report shows.

K. Mohanchandran, general manager of Taj Bengal Hotel, Kolkata, said: "We are looking at maintaining our ARR in 2012 at the 2011 levels, as our occupancy level is healthy and uniform." Demand grew by 17 per cent in 2011 from 2010.

Sanjesh Jethi, sales manager travel trade of The Oberoi Group, said: "Occupancies will not drop as all major hotel groups are reaching out to Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities for new clientele and, fortunately, these markets have disposable income – good enough for conspicuous consumption."

Destination by the numbers

10 The target, in millions, of tourist arrivals in India by 2016.

100 The percentage increase in new branded hotel rooms in Delhi National Capital Region by 2014, increasing from approximately 10,000 to 20,000 rooms, of which about 60 per cent are in the luxury and upscale segment.

1 The number, in million, of medical tourists expected to visit India in 2012.

40 The number, in millions, of people likely to be employed by India's travel and tourism industry by 2019.

95 The number, in thousands, of spectators who watched the first Indian Formula One Grand Prix in October 2011, in the Buddh International Circuit in Noida. The circuit will be upgraded to cater for 120,000 spectators for the 2012 race.

36 The percentage of winter schedule flights withdrawn by Kingfisher Airlines, amid losses due to high state taxes, a pilot exodus and the return of leased aircraft.

42 The percentage of Lemon Tree bookings made online or through online travel portals in 2010-11, a year-on-year growth of almost 100 per cent.

Products

World's largest dining table is among unique experiences on offer

The Tree House Resort

What The resort is a unique eco-friendly haven with five-star comfort, off the highway near Jaipur in Rajasthan. All eight rooms are different and blend with the lush tropical forest setting. Camel rides, campfires, golf, archery and a once-in-a-lifetime experience of an aviary spa are available. Rooms are Rs15,000 (US\$300) per night for two including meals.

Contact
Tel: 91-9001797422/
91-9799490390
Email: reservation@treehousesort.in

Hyderabad International Convention Centre

What 40 minutes from Hyderabad airport and connected to the five-star, 288-room Novotel, this is one of the largest convention facilities in India with a capacity for more than 5,000 delegates. The 6,480m² hall is pillarless and can be sectioned-off into six areas with 32 break-

out rooms. It has won Incredible India's Best Convention Centre award for the last three years.

Contact
Tel: 91-4066163000
Web: www.hicc.com
Email: jkhanna@hicc.com

India Expo Centre & Mart

What A fully-integrated facility in Greater Noida spread over 235,000m² in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) it boasts 35,300m² of exhibition and convention space including eight halls that can be divided into 18 spaces and a convention hall for 1,100 delegates.

Contact
Tel: 91-120232801120

Web: indiaexpomart.com

101 dining room at Taj Falaknuma Palace

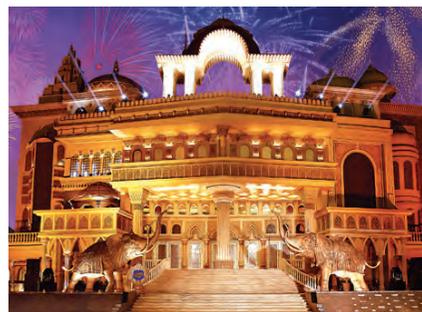
What It is home to the world's longest dining table, 32.9m with 100 identical

chairs and one the Nizam of Hyderabad used when he entertained. The acoustics mean diners can hear conversations at either end of the room. Six-course menus are from Rs8,000 (US\$170) per guest.

Contact
Taj Falaknuma Palace,
Tel: 91-4066298585
Web: www.tajhotels.com

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Kingdom of Dreams

travellers at this three-bedroom retreat in Cheranelloor, 45 minutes from Ernakulam. Only one booking at a time is accepted, so guests have the property, built in 1898 for the Rajah of Kochi, to themselves. The tariff includes accommodation (maximum six), meals, a temple visit and sunset cruises.

Contact
Tel: 91-4842668221
Email: contact@cghearth.com Web: www.cghearth.com

Kingdom of Dreams

What India's first live entertainment and leisure destination, in Gurgaon in Haryana, offers six restaurants, six show kitchens, three street bars, seven retail stores and a Bollywood-style musical. Tickets range from Rs750 (US\$15.32) to Rs6,000.

Contact
Tel: 91-124452-8000
Web: www.kingdomofdreams.in

From page 19

sage to India, which partners TUI in India, are unfazed, however.

"We have had growth in the German market and foresee about eight to 10 per cent increase from that country in 2012," he said.

Piyush Mathur, senior general manager international sales of Cox & Kings, said: "Our (German market) volume did not grow in 2011 but there was no

decrease either. We expect 2012 to be about the same."

Large number of Indian sellers are continuing to showcase their products at the show, hoping their visibility will ensure top-of-mind recall when the buying pattern is more conducive and tourists are less cautious spending money on longhaul travel.

Sanjay Kothari, additional secretary, Ministry of Tourism, is bullish about India's position

in the German market. He said: "We have tourism promotion offices in Germany that have been performing well for many years and we are hopeful that sustained efforts will pay rich dividends."

However, many travel experts are skeptical about the quality of promotion and the real extent of the penetration, pointing out that revenues from the German market had slipped in 2011.

Many are soldiering on. Vijay

Dadhich, managing director of Blue Moon Travels, said: "Our promotion in Berlin is not directed at Germany alone but to the whole global market that buys from there."

Efforts undertaken back home, such as a Clean India campaign launched by the Ministry of Tourism, and a new initiative by the India Tourism Development Corp to get tourism infrastructure development go-

ing, are giving the trade a reason to smile.

Members believe these efforts will make India a more desirable destination to visit, especially for quality-conscious Germans.

As well, the Indian rupee depreciated in the last quarter of 2011 by 17 per cent compared to most major currencies, including the US dollar, euro and British pound, providing more bang for the buck to international visitors.

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its intrinsic Buddhist culture, national and colonial architecture, gastronomy, World Heritage Sites, multi-ethnic people, trekking locations and local handicrafts. Its unparalleled natural landscape has earned Laos the reputation of being the only remaining "original" South-east Asian experience left, and it is just waiting to be discovered.

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Buzz in the Asia booths

Sellers from the East suit up in anticipation of a good business day. **Patrick Tan** pays a visit



Creative Travel India's Sandeep Kapur, Rajeev Kohli, Rohit Kohli and Ashish Sehgal welcome buyers into their brilliantly-coloured booth



Jin Jiang International Hotel Management China's Roger Wang, Cinn Tan, Bernold O Schroeder, Victor Lim and Christine Han

Dusit International's Chanin Donavanik (second from right) leads his team from Thailand



Regal Hotels International's Elgene Lee and PC Tours & Travel's Cary Chiu, both from Hong Kong

Taipei Tourism Office Germany's Johnson Wang, China Airlines Germany's Kelvin Chen, Tourism Bureau Ministry Of Transportation and Communications Taiwan's Eric Lin, China Airlines Netherland's James Chung and Taiwan Visitors Association's Pi-Hua Yeh



Wuzhen Tourism China's Cao Yangdong, Zhu Feng, Zhu Yuan Min and Chen Bin showcase the ancient watertown



Japan National Tourism Organization's Hideaki Nakazawa, Angela Troisi and Brigitte Leitzbach, all from Germany



Shiv Vilas India's Prathvi Raj Sharma and Rahul Kaushal



Sita India's Harpreet Bhatia, Dipak Deva, Keya Sen Mitra, Ernest Dias, Philip Thomas and Vineet Mahendru



Apple Tree Vietnam's Brenda Ho, Mövenpick Hotel Saigon's Michelle Singson, Furama Resort Danang's Hanna Manuel, Vietnamtourism's Vu Thi Lan Phuong and Vinpearl Joint Stock Company Vietnam's Jurairat Povibool



Swissôtel Nankai Osaka's Christian Schaufelbuehl

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An energetic sales parade

Sellers continue to rock the show floor with a flurry of travel products and hot deals, discovers **Patrick Tan**



Pinnacle Grand Jomtien Resort & Spa's Ingo G. Räuber and Thai Garden Resort's René E H Pisters



World Express Tours & Travel's Ho Vandy, Ministry of Tourism's Thang Bunthan, Hanuman Travel's Sotho Kulikar, Ministry of Tourism's Nim Sovann, Sunway Hotel Phnom Penh's Pheakdey Kong and Absolute Tours' Pao Dara Rassmei, all from Cambodia



Hotel Icon Hong Kong's Edmond Kan, JTB (Hong Kong)'s Rachel Chum, The Park Lane Hong Kong's May Au Yeung and Hotel Icon Hong Kong's Janet Wu

JTB Okinawa's Toshihide Ozaki and Okinawa Convention & Visitor Bureau's Akimitsu Miyazato



Hotel Maya Kuala Lumpur's Adrian Tan and Danny Goh



Grand Hotel Saigon's Vu Thi Thanh Hien and Tieu Huynh Thu Phuong and Saigontourist's Nguyen Thi Hong Phuong, Hoang Huu Loc, Nguyen Tien Dat and Nguyen Ngoc Thuy Phuong



Ministry of Hotels and Tourism Myanmar's U Htay Aung (fourth from left) leads the destination's delegation of sellers



Accor's Graham Wilson (back row, second from right) with his team and the cast from The Lion King musical warm up for the hotel group's high-octane client appreciation dinner on Wednesday night



Themed Attractions Malaysia's Raja Zafura Raja Zain and Kevin Cheong show off their new and upcoming draws



Sedona Hotels International's Maria Leow and Vincent Tan



An abbreviated version of The Lion King musical surprised top buyers at Accor's client appreciation dinner

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