

Nice one, Kuoni: trade

GTA acquisition seen as a feather in Kuoni's cap as it moves to grow B:B e-business

By Raini Hamdi

KUONI Travel Holding has made the market sit up with its announcement last Monday that it was buying Gullivers Travel Associates (GTA) for US\$705 million (*TTG Asia e-Daily, March 7, 2011*), with industry players interviewed at ITB – Kuoni competitors included – admiring it as a smart move by a company generally seen as conservative.

Hotelplan Suisse CEO, Thomas Stirnimann, said: "It's not a done deal yet, they have to raise the capital and it looks a bit expensive to me, but from a strategic point of view, it's a smart move and will give Kuoni a more balanced portfolio, with less dependency on the traditional tour operating business, which is

under pressure these days. With all due respect, it is a good move."

With the deal being subject to Travelport lenders' consent and Kuoni shareholders approval at the AGM April 20, Rolf Schafroth, the man who will take over the responsibility of GTA once the deal goes through (Ken Esterow is understood to be going back to Travelport), in an interview with *TTG Asia ITB Daily* declined to discuss future expectations and earnings.

However, Schafroth stressed that this was not a story about a competitor buying another to consolidate the business and cut jobs, but about bringing two successful businesses, GTA and Kuoni Destination Management

(KDM), which are still growing, to new heights.

GTA, which has been in the market for sale, "has found a good home in Kuoni because it

"We buy and integrate, but we don't Kuoni-nise companies."

is a business we know and have been doing ourselves, and we believe in the growth of this business and intend to further develop it", said the CEO Destination Management and EVP Procurement & Production.

"It's not just a change of own-

ership. We buy and integrate, but we don't Kuoni-nise companies – look at the companies we bought like Asian Trails or Desert Adventures. They have their culture and values and we want to preserve them."

He said GTA added content and skilled people. The immediate synergies would be buying power and creating a stronger value proposition to suppliers with a bigger client base and distribution.

He said the GTA brand and the Kuoni brand would remain but it was too premature to say how other brands of GTA and Kuoni, such as Kuoni Connect, would fall in line following the integration.

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Sound bites

"Kuoni is able to surprise us every once in a while!"

Holger Baldus, managing director, Marco Polo Reisen

"Tour operator consolidation today is in the non-traditional spaces."

Arjun Sharma, managing director, Le Passage to India

Don't spoil India year, Marco Polo warns

By Raini Hamdi

MARCO POLO Reisen, which described last year as the "India year" for it, has warned the destination not to spoil the gains with a proposed bed and F&B tax which suppliers are starting to negotiate to pass on to tour operators.

"India is keeping its high volume, having recovered so well from the impact of the Mumbai attacks two years ago. But higher taxes, coming when the season has started and the brochures produced, won't help. These higher taxes are also in addition to increases in room rates and currency exchange rates," said managing director Holger Baldus.

India "for the first time in decades" became one of Marco Polo's top three destinations last year, along with China and Indochina. "This is true of both us and (sister) Studiosus," he said.

Thailand used to be stronger than India but is still "non-existent" due to Bangkok's political protests.

The Studiosus Group roped in a nine per cent growth in passenger numbers last year, but Baldus expects this year to yield a smaller growth as a result of the Middle East restiveness, which is affecting bookings to destinations such as Egypt, Jordan and Israel. He expects Asia to gain some business from the Middle East political tensions. – See story on page 2



Kuoni surprises with its GTA deal – left, Rolf Schafroth, who will take over GTA once the deal goes through, with KDM's Olivier Moeschler

Philippines gets more pages

By Ollie Quiniquini

MORE European tour operators are putting the Philippines in their brochures this season.

Kuoni UK is featuring the Philippines for the first time in its brochure out this November. Alexander Stutely, CEO of Blue Horizons Travel & Tours that won the account, said the UK operator will focus mainly on midscale to high-end beach resorts in Palawan, Boracay and Bohol, as well as northern Philippine roundtrips.

Stutely said: "With Kuoni UK selling the Philippines, more big UK players might feature the country. Right now, UK business comes mainly from smaller boutique-style operators."

Blue Horizons is also the groundhandler for Transorient Touristik's first ever programme on the Philippines. The Ham-

burg-based operator devoted 12 to 15 pages on the Philippines in its brochure that came out last November. Boracay resorts are the star attractions, though some properties in Bohol, Cebu and Palawan also made the cut.

Stutely expects Transorient's production to reach half of Meier's Weltreisen's – Blue Horizon's and the Philippines' biggest producer for Germany – in the next two to three years.

Meanwhile, Marsman Drysdale Travel has convinced Paradise Reisen to run group series to the Philippines for the first time. Paradise was to start its programme last year but cancelled due to the European Union ban on Philippine carriers. Director of tourism services Pedro Young is expecting Paradise's first group for the Manila-Banaue-Bohol programme this October.

Hotelplan mulls GTA impact

By Raini Hamdi

THE SHIFT of business into dynamic sales and sourcing will not stop and will change the way traditional tour operators source and distribute in the future, according to Hotelplan CEO, Thomas Stirnimann.

Interviewed yesterday on the impact of Kuoni's GTA acquisition on Hotelplan, Stirnimann foresees that traditional tour operators in the future will not work with as many suppliers and retail agents as they do today. Rather, it will be about building up tighter relationships and true partnerships to win loyalty.

"Twenty years ago, you'd work with everybody, now you downsize the sheer volume of agents you work with, but you try and establish true relationships with

the remaining ones by, for example, educating, training and outsourcing services to these agents. The same would apply to the relationship with suppliers."

Stirnimann: true relationship

He said there was space for relatively smaller companies such as Hotelplan, which can build on strengths such as nimbleness and leanness – "the fast boat among the big oil tankers that are building up these days".

However he also does not rule out going into B:B e-business by buying "probably some other candidates".

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Lina Tan Editorial Assistant

CONTRIBUTORS

Murray Bailey, Rahul Khanna, Amy Fabris-Shi, Prudence Lui, Ngoc Phong, Bernie Rosenbloom, Anand and Madhura Katti

SALES & MARKETING

Michael Chow Publisher
Katherine Ng, Marisa Chen Senior Business Managers
Fiona Heng Marketing Services Executive

PUBLISHING SERVICES

Tony Yeo Division Manager
Agnes Loy Senior Production Executive
Nancy Lee Production Co-ordinator
Betty Loo Advertisement Administration Executive
Carol Wong Circulation Executive

TTG ASIA MEDIA

Darren Ng Managing Director

'Vulture' tourism

Asia could still fill gaps as Egypt mounts a comeback

By Raini Hamdi

EGYPT is expected to bounce back quickly with the UK market, even causing a small percentage of clients to switch from Asia, but there still is opportunity for Asia to position itself as an alternative destination to the restive Middle East in the coming months, say tour operators.

"Sri Lanka is taking some good share from Egypt, still coming in that bit less expensive than Thailand," observed Tamara Diethelm, Kuoni UK vice president market management & pricing, who said this could be the perfect opportunity for hoteliers in Asia with empty beds to field strong tacticals, with key partners who could promote them as good alternatives to Egypt.

"We have seen the UK traveller getting more and more resilient to destination challenges around the world. However, if alternatives are available within budget, many will choose what they perceive a 'safer' option and any real bounce back for Egypt is unlikely to occur in full force for some months."

"The UK market is literally crying out for all-inclusive when they travel these days."

Tamara Diethelm

Vice president market management & pricing, Kuoni UK on how Asian destinations can learn from Egypt, where all-inclusive is the most popular meal plan for beach holidays

Operators said they were already seeing strong offers from hotels in Egypt and charter companies being forced to cut prices to fill their planes, which are perking the interest of bargain hunters to book. This, coupled with rising flight costs as a result of increased APD and fuel costs, will be a challenge for Asia to match in due course.

Said Diethelm: "Asia does have a genuinely unique offering, but I think it is essential to bear in mind that clients are not as loyal to destinations anymore, so it re-

ally must consider its competition on a global scale if it wants to position itself correctly for the UK market. Good tour operator partners can guide their friends in Asia on flight costs, taxes, hotel offerings in other parts of the world to help them make these comparisons."

Chic Locations UK director David Kevan said the UK market had become "a nation of opportunist vultures" descending on troubled spots to pick on a carcass of bargains.

"Those looking for a cheap two-week beach holiday are more likely to find it in Egypt than Thailand, but for us it is a totally different client. However, where I do see an impact for us is availability issues on direct flights to the Far East. Many budget-conscious travellers to the Far East choose a carrier like Qatar Airways or Gulf Air because they're cheaper than direct flights. These clients are now scared of even a transit in the region, so that is causing sudden availability issues on direct flights. If this continues, it will have an impact on sales."

Asia market pulse

Kuoni UK

- Anticipating growth for Thailand, given the impact of the political unrest last year
- Bali performing well, growing
- Vietnam tagged Huge Growth Target, demand 80 per cent up in the first few months of 2011 over the same period last year
- Real concern over Hong Kong and Singapore. Stopover business affected by sad events in Australia/New Zealand. Cities getting expensive for stopovers; Dubai/Abu Dhabi get cheaper

Tamara Diethelm

Vice president market management & pricing, Kuoni UK

Chic Locations UK

- Thailand will be 2011's top South-east Asian destination, both in its own right and as a twin centre Indochina gateway
- Malaysia moving up into Bali's spot at second place, as the air lift is good and product range becomes more innovative
- The Maldives dropping back in popularity, perceived as unaffordable

David Kevan

Director
Chic Locations UK

Egypt set to expand charter subsidies

By Gracia Chiang

EGYPT'S tourism authority is now considering subsidising charter flights to a larger number of destinations within the country as part of a concerted push to win back tourists – one that also has private operators embarking on their own promotional offers.

Egyptian Tourist Authority (ETA) chairman Amr Elezabi said discussions were underway for a "double-touch initiative", which would see charter incentives extended to include a second airport.

Under the current scheme, Egypt subsidises anywhere between 65 to 85 per cent of empty seats globally, but only for one stop per flight.

Elezabi added that ETA was also now "ready to discuss with serious tour operators in Asia" the possibility of subsidising charters due to the growing importance of the region. There are currently no charters from Asia to Egypt.

In order to speed overall recovery, Egyptian Tourism Federation director general Ayman Altaranissi said there were also plans to reintroduce charter subsidies for the Red Sea destinations of Sharm el-Sheikh and Hurghada, where demand in recent years had been strong enough to not need such incentives anymore.

"All these strategies will require a new budget for charter flights, which is now over 100 million Egyptian pounds (US\$16.9 million) a year. We are now calculating how much this will add up to and this will probably be finalised very soon after ITB," said Altaranissi.

At press time, Elezabi said the ETA was

still "building on the actual strategy", and the overall budget had not been finalised yet. *TTG Asia ITB Berlin Daily*, however, understands that on the cards are increasing cooperation with agents by dishing out brochure subsidies among others, stepping up marketing efforts using online and social media platforms, and attending all international travel fairs this year.

These would hopefully offer some respite to hotels and tour operators who have noted that demand had dropped by as much as half for this winter season and the upcoming summer season.

Sunrise Resorts & Cruises regional director of sales and marketing Ramy Darwish said prices had dropped by 25 to 35 per cent, and there were even talks that tour operators from the UK and Russia – top markets for Egypt – were planning to slash capacity for charters by half for summer. "We're trying to persuade them to just reduce it by 10 to 20 per cent."

Domina Coral Bay Sharm el-Sheikh regional director of revenue and reservation Abdel Atty Ragab said instead of dropping rates, the hotel was trying to dangle deals such as "pay six, get seven nights".

African Express Travel president Nasr El Din Fadl said: "We cannot destroy the market price, but we're offering promotions such as free dinners on night cruises." He added he was planning to make personal visits to France and Russia to convince partners that Egypt was safe.

Egypt's new tourism minister Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour makes his first international appearance at the country's press conference today.



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Raring for business

All smiles as Asian players anticipate the return of European yields through deals. By **Patrick Tan**



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www.cimcf.org
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www.itcmchina.com
13 to 15 April | ShanghaiMart Expo

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ICCA Association Database Workshop
13 April

During this 3-hour workshop, ICCA members will learn a variety of database skills including the use of the ICCA Association Database, how to locate business leads and the use of other ICCA business tools. The training will be conducted in Mandarin and is suitable for all level of database users.

Future Leaders Forum
14 April | ShanghaiMart Expo

Aimed to nurture the future leaders of the MICE industry, this full-day programme is catered to students pursuing degrees in meetings and events management, tourism or related business or administration studies. It offers the best and brightest students a chance to experience real-life industry challenges and an insightful glimpse into a dynamic MICE career. This event is jointly organised by IMEX, MPI and IT&CM China.

TTG China Travel Awards
www.ttgchina.com/ttg-awards/en
14 April | Shanghai World Financial Centre

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City tweaks marketing strategy to unencumber German inflows, reports **Prudence Lui**

A bigger slice of the pie

Cautious optimism over this year's German prospects



Germany may have been Hong Kong's third largest source market last year, but the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) is not leaving anything to chance, what with the persistent risks associated with the continent's economy.

The NTO is adopting a conservative marketing approach for Europe this year, despite encouraging signs of recovery. It will continue to cultivate arrival growth from Germany through a variety of marketing channels, including co-op

partnerships and new media platforms such as online and digital campaigns.

The city received 230,000 visitors from Germany last year, an increase of 9.3 per cent over 2009, according to the HKTB.

Airlines cruising at a steady altitude

A Civil Aviation Department spokesman said no major changes or additions to scheduled services between Hong Kong and Europe are expected this year.

According to national carrier Cathay Pacific Airways, the German market exceeded expectations last year. The carrier forecasts growth this year, albeit at a

slower pace. While demand will be highest from the corporate segment, leisure travel will remain extremely price-driven.

Lufthansa will continue its daily Hong Kong-Frankfurt and five weekly Hong Kong-Munich winter schedule, with the resumption of daily flights to both cities in the summer.



Greener itineraries now available

Programmes are going green to pique the interest of nature-loving German tourists.

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) is capitalising on new Geopark products to attract more visitors from Germany.

C&A Tours, for one, has rolled out more green itineraries, such as a day tour to the Geopark at Ma Shi Chau of Taiipo, led by a

German-speaking guide, and the newly-launched Sun Yat Sen Heritage Trail, a walking tour in Hong Kong Island's central and western districts.

The trade is optimistic of a German resurgence, given the improved global economy as well as a hiatus in China's mega events that caused room rates and airfares to soar last year.

Room rates to jump by double-digits

Buoyed by ever-rising demand, Hong Kong room rates are poised for a substantial jump this year.

Seeing no dip in demand in the near future, Metropark Hotel Wanchai general manager Evan Chiu said: "We are projecting an eight to 10 per cent increase in rates this year."

Kowloon Hotel believes its 12 to 15 per cent rate increment will not impact negatively on the German market. Director of sales and marketing Musetta Wong said: "Fiscal stimulus is driving demand for travel. Hong Kong is very often used as a base for

business with mainland China, Taiwan, Macau, Singapore and other countries in the region."



"We expect an arrivals increase of 10 per cent in 2011, especially since Hong Kong is often used as a base for doing business with other countries."

Musetta Wong, director of sales and marketing, Kowloon Hotel

Brand platform to help reach specific market segments

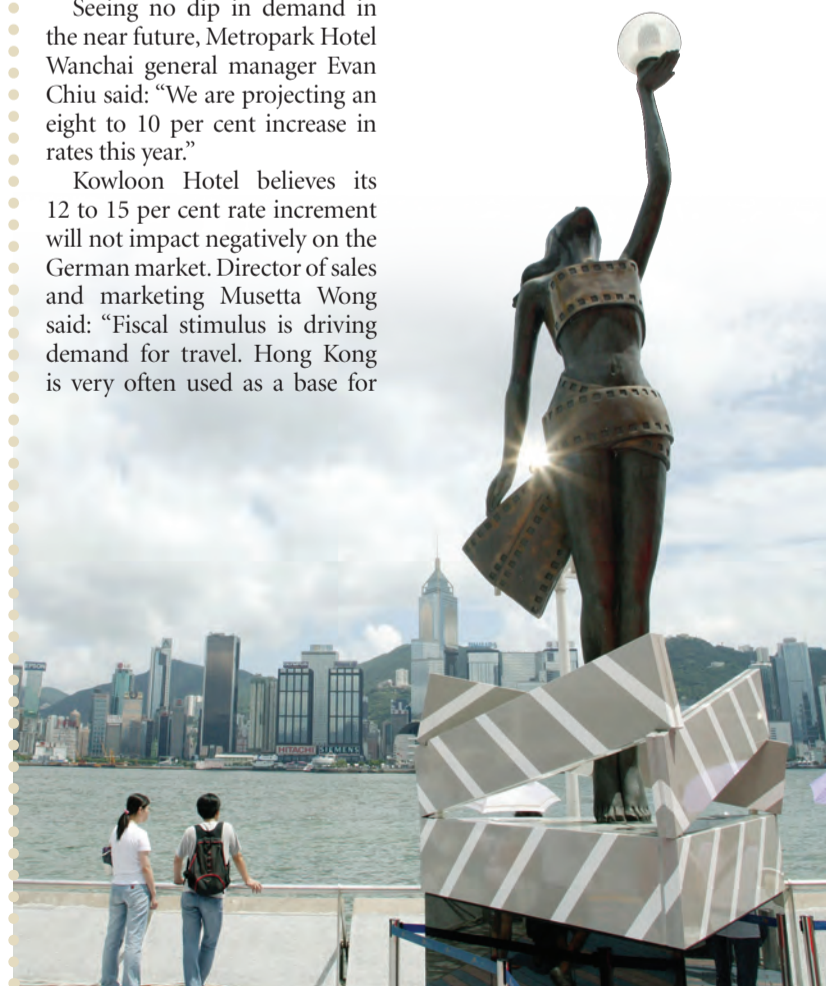
The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) will leverage on the Hong Kong – Asia's World City brand platform to promote its image as a "must-see" and "must-visit" destination.

Living Culture: Authentic Hong Kong will remain as the NTO's long-term marketing theme in Germany, with a focus on unique products such as its Culture Kaleidoscope.

With the help of its Frankfurt office, the board will employ tactical marketing and publicity programmes to highlight selected anchor events and festivals, such as the Chinese New Year, the Cheung Chau Bun Festival, Buddha's Birthday, Tin Hau Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival and Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival.

The NTO will likewise target the growing high-potential, af-

fluent "Young" (young men, ladies, couples) and "Achiever" (aged 46 to 60, married, with or without children) segments. It will also continue to work with industry partners to promote multi-destination combo packages to countries popular with Germans, like Thailand, Australia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Bali, Australia and New Zealand.



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More than China's sidekick

Increasingly turning into an afterthought, HK jockeys for star status

By Prudence Lui

Hong Kong's German hopes rest largely on China, as the city – long a mono-destination for German leisure traffic – is increasingly becoming an extension from China.

ATI Travel, for whom German leisure traffic accounts for 80 per cent of business, attests to this growing trend.

Managing director Richard Woss said: "The shift has become more obvious, owing to China's improved accessibility and tourism promotions. This also happened to Macau, as Germans are curious about visiting the Las Vegas of Asia. But Hong Kong has not been sidelined, as the city is still a hip destination and people come to enjoy the East-meets-West ambience."

The upside, according to Woss, is the slight increase in the length of stay of Germans, from two to three nights.

"Hong Kong needs to create special-interest products and package these with its other attractions. For instance, it would be great to highlight the fact that Hong Kong is a city that never sleeps, which also boasts of 15,000 restaurants," said Woss.

C&A Tours director Jo Chan agreed, saying that while there remained considerable mono-destination traffic, the company's German market had evolved into a multi-destination one, given the direct flights to China.

Chan said: "Many Germans are repeat travellers, and our new attractions like Disneyland are not their cup of tea. So it's typical for them to pick Hong Kong as their last stop in China before heading home, thanks to our excellent flight connections."

To woo more Germans, Chan is planning to offer more unique ecotourism products. "Germans love nature. We could push our Geopark eco-tour as a niche product. Still, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) should strengthen cooperation with different operators for product development," said Chan.

In terms of business traffic, InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong general manager Peter Pollmeier said companies were looking at Hong Kong for regional meetings, as several held their meetings at Shanghai's EXPO City last year.

"Hong Kong is still the main point of entry in southern Chi-

na, and this will not change for a number of years. The only challenge we may face is the additional five-star hotels that will open across the border. We need to make sure that we provide unparalleled service as well as competitive prices compared to our counterparts in China. In the end, travellers look for value for money," he added.

Pollmeier said that rates in Hong Kong went up by an average of 10 per cent last year, and further increases were expected this year. He does not foresee price becoming an issue for Germans though.

"The German economy is very export-focused, so there will be demand to travel to this part of the world," he explained.

To boost traffic from Germany, the HKTB plans to take advantage of the draw of multi-destination travel.

The board's Frankfurt office will continue to nurture strategic alliances with the China National Tourism Administration, the Macau Government Tourist Office and provincial tourism boards in the mainland to develop multi-destination itineraries, with Hong Kong as anchor.

Total overnight arrivals (January – November 2010)

| | Arrivals | % change over Jan-Nov 2009 |
|---------------|------------|----------------------------|
| All Markets | 32,486,877 | 22.5 |
| * EAME Region | 2,008,506 | 11.0 |
| Germany | 213,581 | 9.8 |

*Europe, Africa, Middle East

Total overnight arrivals (2008 – 2010)

| | 2010 (Jan-Nov) (% change) | 2009 (% change) | 2008 (% change) |
|-------------|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| All Markets | 36,030,000 (21.8) | 29,590,654 (0.3) | 29,506,616 (4.7) |
| EAME Region | 2,174,000 (10.4) | 1,968,781 (-6.0) | 2,094,039 (-4.4) |
| Germany | 230,000 (9.3) | 210,828 (-6.2) | 224,665 (-4.3) |

Source: Hong Kong Tourism Board

Viewpoint

What is the German market looking for?



"I do not have a new product for the German market this year. Germans still want to

experience local cultures and flavours in their programmes as well as quality service and hotels."

Cary Chiu
General manager
PC Tours and Travel



"The German market is improving but tourists are trading down on accommodation due to high rates. We have more requests for budget hotels this year. The high room rates really scared the market."

Alan Wu
Managing director
Tourasia



"Most German leisure traffic to Hong Kong is an extension from China. We are hopeful that the German leisure market to China will recover. Corporate travel already showed good prospects in the last peak season, and this is likely to continue."

Ken Chang, vice president, Associated Tours

Products Scale new heights with towering additions to the city's portfolio



Sky100

What Hong Kong's latest attraction regales visitors with a stunning, 360-degree panoramic view from the 100th floor of the International Commerce Centre, Hong Kong's tallest building. Equipped with interactive multimedia exhibits on local history and culture, sky100 is also one of the city's first tourist spots that offer interactive and tailor-made sightseeing itineraries.

Why Hong Kong is the third most popular destination in Asia for German travellers. sky100 allows Germans to take in the skyline of one of the world's busiest cities while enjoying an infotainment experience made possible by high-tech multimedia exhibits.

Contact
info@sky100.com.hk

Aqua City

What Ocean Park's new world-class marine-themed area opened in January. Attractions include Grand Aquarium, one of the world's top 10; Symbio!, a night-time extravaganza of water, fire and lights on the world's first 360-degree water screen; and Neptune Restaurant, a unique dining experience in an aquarium that allows diners to feast on their meal while viewing creatures of the sea.

Why Ocean Park is one of the most iconic attractions of Hong Kong. Aqua City is an impor-

tant milestone in the park's history since opening 33 years ago. Families are well served by Ocean Park's latest facility that focuses on entertainment, education and conservation.

Contact
Tel: (852) 3923-2886
bonnie.lm.leung@oceanpark.com.hk

DHL Hong Kong Balloon

What Located on West Kowloon Reclamation, the DHL Hong Kong Balloon operates daily, with flights lasting 15 minutes. It can be rented for private parties, incentives and corporate events, with a 400m² on-site marquee,



perfect for functions. The hot-air balloon accommodates up to 30 passengers, who get to spy Victoria Harbour, Hong Kong Island and Kowloon and The Peak from the air. Rates are HK\$150 (US\$19.24) for day flights and HK\$250 for spectacular night flights.

Why The DHL Hong Kong Balloon offers both tourists and residents a totally new perspective: from 100m above the ground – yet another way to enjoy the spectacular views that the city has to offer.

Contact
DHLBalloon@dmc.com.hk



Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong

What Set to open this month, the 312-room property marks the return of the Ritz-Carlton flag after its downtown property was demolished in 2008. Facilities include a 930m² ballroom, four meeting rooms totalling 265m², and six dining venues. The Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong occupies the 102nd to the 118th floors of the International Commerce Centre. Also setting it apart from other hotels is its accessibility. It is conveniently located above Kowloon MTR Station, which is 20 minutes from the Hong Kong International Airport and 30 minutes from Shenzhen, China.

Why The hotel will strike a commanding presence in the city's already impressive skyline. At 490m high, it gives Hong Kong yet another first – the world's tallest hotel, offering splendid views of Victoria Harbour, Hong Kong Island and the New Territories.

Contact
Tel: (852) 2263-2263



Meeting targets by adding more 'heart'

Tourism Malaysia is targeting 130,000 German visitors this year, an increase of 1,000 arrivals over 2009.

In the first nine months of 2010, German numbers grew by 4.4 per cent year-on-year, to 100,657 visitors. Overall international arrivals reached 18.2 million, a 4.9 per cent increase over 2009.

Noting a trend among German travellers for more meaningful holidays and volunteer tourism, tour operators are introducing itineraries with charitable elements.

"Germans do not mind working on projects to improve the lives of local communities or on animal rehabilitation programmes," said Noor Mohammad, assistant business development director of Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel.

Partnerships frame NTO's German efforts

Tourism Malaysia is banking on foreign airlines to help grow Germany, its second largest European market, as national carrier Malaysia Airlines' five-weekly return flights between Kuala Lumpur and Frankfurt prove insufficient.

The NTO's director of international marketing (Americas, Europe & Oceania) Normasila Musa said Tourism Malaysia would cooperate with airlines such as Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines, Emirates, Qatar Airways, Etihad and Kuwait Airways on joint marketing efforts and familiarisation trips for travel agents and the media.

The Malaysian NTO will also develop dual destination marketing campaigns with Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai to capitalise on the air connections.

Meanwhile, to increase German consumer awareness of Malaysia, the NTO's office in Frankfurt will participate in more consumer events and online, print, radio and television promotions to reach high-yield segments, such as honeymoon, wellness and spa, luxury, MICE, diving, UNESCO World Heritage sites, health and medical tourism.

The NTO will also continue to invite German travel agents and media to major tourism events, such as the F1 Grand Prix in April, Colours of Malaysia in May and the Malaysia Mega Sale Carnival in July.

It will likewise keep on educating German agents about the destination through its e-learning programme Malaysia Academy, introduced in March 2007. As of last December, 2,800 travel agents from Germany and Austria had registered for the programme, which sees around 500 graduates a year.

Country goes all out to attract Germans, reports **S Puvaneswary**

Taking steps in the right direction





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BEST WESTERN La Vinci Hotel, Dhaka

Cambodia

BEST WESTERN Suites And Sweet Resort Angkor, Siem Reap
(Opening March, 2011)

China

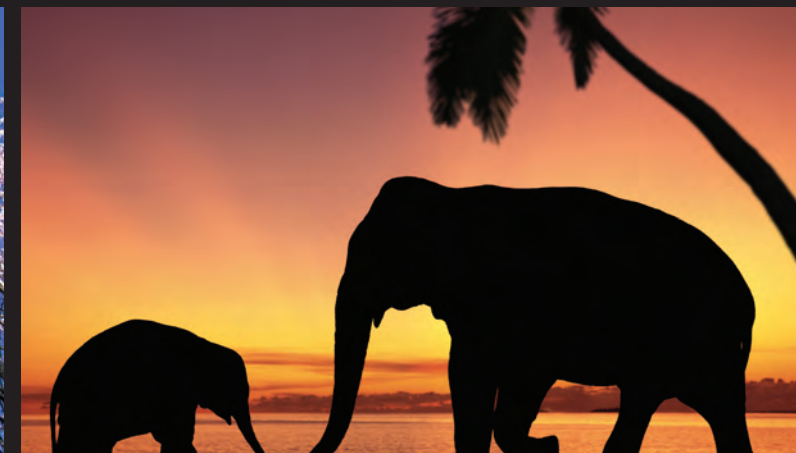
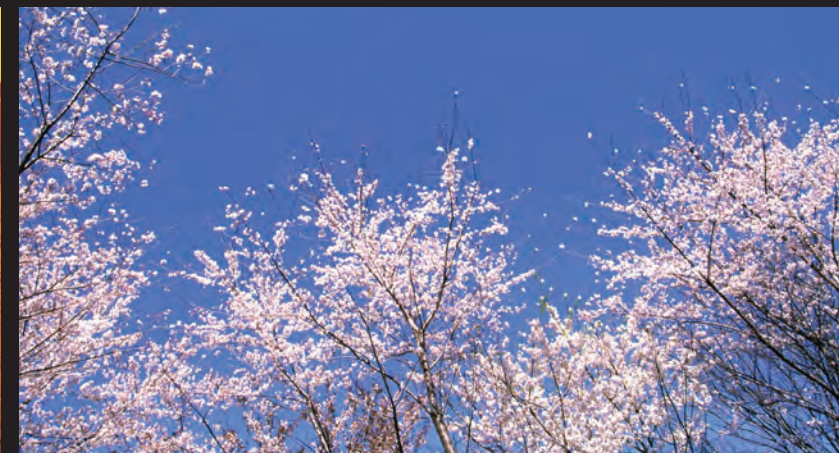
BEST WESTERN PREMIER Fortune Hotel Fuzhou, Fuzhou
BEST WESTERN PREMIER Richful Green Hotel, Hangzhou
BEST WESTERN PREMIER Red Forest Hotel, Nanning
BEST WESTERN PREMIER Qingdao Kilin Crown Hotel, Qingdao
BEST WESTERN PREMIER Junyu Grand Hotel, Qinhuangdao
BEST WESTERN PREMIER Wuhan Mayflowers Hotel, Wuhan
BEST WESTERN PREMIER Ocean Hotel, Yiwu
BEST WESTERN OI Stadium Hotel Beijing, Beijing
BEST WESTERN Grandsky Hotel Beijing, Beijing
BEST WESTERN Fuzhou Fortune Hotel, Fuzhou
BEST WESTERN Hangzhou Meiyuan Hotel, Hangzhou
BEST WESTERN Harbin Fortune Hotel, Harbin
BEST WESTERN World Trade Hotel Jinhua, Jinhua
BEST WESTERN Fortune Hotel Longyan, Longyan
BEST WESTERN Hotel Taipa, Macau
BEST WESTERN Hotel Sun Sun, Macau
BEST WESTERN Kylie Hotel Ningbo, Ningbo
BEST WESTERN Jianghua Hotel Ningbo, Ningbo
BEST WESTERN Putian Hengfeng Hotel, Putian
BEST WESTERN New Century Hotel Shanghai, Shanghai
BEST WESTERN Shanghai Ruite Hotel, Shanghai
BEST WESTERN Pudong Sunshine Hotel, Shanghai
BEST WESTERN Shenzhen Felicity Hotel, Shenzhen
BEST WESTERN Byronn Hotel, Tianjin
BEST WESTERN Tianjin Juchuan Hotel, Tianjin
BEST WESTERN Richview Hotel, Tianjin
BEST WESTERN C-Bank Hotel Wuhan, Wuhan
BEST WESTERN Tian An Wuhan City Centre, Wuhan
BEST WESTERN Dongjin Taoyuan International Hotel, Xian
BEST WESTERN Xuzhou Friendship Hotel, Xuzhou
BEST WESTERN Maple Hotel Yueyang, Yueyang
BEST WESTERN Zhenjiang International Hotel, Zhenjiang

India

BEST WESTERN PREMIER La Marvella, Bengaluru
BEST WESTERN PREMIER Vedic Village Spa Resort, Kolkata
BEST WESTERN Rock Regency, Ahmedabad
BEST WESTERN Goradia's, Ahmednagar
BEST WESTERN Merrion, Amritsar
BEST WESTERN Royal Park, Baddi
BEST WESTERN De Aqua, Delhi
BEST WESTERN Peace Valley, Goa
BEST WESTERN Devasthali, Goa
BEST WESTERN Resort Country Club, Gurgaon
BEST WESTERN Skycity Hotel, Gurgaon
BEST WESTERN Amrutha Castle, Hyderabad
BEST WESTERN Jubilee Ridge, Hyderabad
BEST WESTERN Radha Ashok, Mathura
BEST WESTERN The Pride Hotel, Pune
BEST WESTERN Discover Motel, Raigad
BEST WESTERN Blue Ocean Resort and Spa, Ratnagiri
BEST WESTERN Yuvraj, Surat
BEST WESTERN Maryland, Zirakpur

Indonesia

BEST WESTERN PREMIER Solo, Solo
BEST WESTERN Resort Kuta, Bali



Japan

- BEST WESTERN PREMIER Hotel Nagasaki, Nagasaki
- BEST WESTERN Fukuoka Nakasu Inn, Fukuoka
- BEST WESTERN Hotel Newcity Hirosaki, Hirosaki
- BEST WESTERN Kansai Hotel, Kansai (Opening March, 2011)
- BEST WESTERN Naha Inn, Naha
- BEST WESTERN Hotel Fino Oita, Oita
- BEST WESTERN Joytel Osaka, Osaka
- BEST WESTERN Hotel Fino Osaka Shinsaibashi, Osaka
- BEST WESTERN Hotel Fino Sapporo, Sapporo
- BEST WESTERN Hotel Sapporo Nakajima Koen, Sapporo
- BEST WESTERN Hotel Sendai, Sendai
- BEST WESTERN Hotel Takayama, Takayama
- BEST WESTERN Shinjuku Astina Hotel Tokyo
- BEST WESTERN Wakayama, Wakayama

Israel

- BEST WESTERN Regency Suites, Tel Aviv

Laos

- BEST WESTERN Vientiane Hotel, Vientiane

Malaysia

- BEST WESTERN Kinabalu Daya Hotel, Kota Kinabalu

Mauritius

- BEST WESTERN Laguna Beach Hotel, Mauritius

Pakistan

- BEST WESTERN Islamabad Hotel, Islamabad

Philippines

- BEST WESTERN Boracay Tropics Resort, Boracay
- BEST WESTERN La Corona Manila, Manila

Qatar

- BEST WESTERN Doha Seef Hotel, Doha

Singapore

- BEST WESTERN Jayleen 1918, Singapore

South Korea

- BEST WESTERN PREMIER Incheon Airport, Incheon
- BEST WESTERN PREMIER Songdo Park Hotel, Incheon
- BEST WESTERN PREMIER Gangnam, Seoul
- BEST WESTERN PREMIER Hotel Kukdo, Seoul
- BEST WESTERN PREMIER Seoul Garden Hotel, Seoul
- BEST WESTERN PREMIER Guro Hotel, Seoul
- BEST WESTERN Gumi Hotel, Gumi-Si
- BEST WESTERN New Seoul Hotel, Seoul
- BEST WESTERN Niagara Hotel, Seoul

Thailand

- BEST WESTERN PREMIER Amaranth Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok
- BEST WESTERN PREMIER Signature Hotel Pattaya, Pattaya
- BEST WESTERN PREMIER Bangtao Beach Resort & Spa, Phuket
- BEST WESTERN Mayfair Suites, Bangkok
- BEST WESTERN Samui Bayview Resort, Koh Samui
- BEST WESTERN Ao Nang Bay Resort & Spa, Krabi
- BEST WESTERN Ban Ao Nang Resort, Krabi
- BEST WESTERN Pattaya, Pattaya
- BEST WESTERN Phuket Ocean Resort, Phuket
- BEST WESTERN Allamanda Laguna Phuket, Phuket

Vietnam

- BEST WESTERN Dalat, Dalat (Opening March, 2011)
- BEST WESTERN Pearl River Hotel, Haiphong



BEST WESTERN PREMIER Guro Seoul, Korea



BEST WESTERN Suites And Sweet Resort Angkor, Siem Reap



BEST WESTERN Laguna Beach Hotel, Mauritius



PREMIER PLUS

Seats in demand



The 2,950 weekly air seats on the Germany-Malaysia sector do not sufficiently meet demand during peak periods.

Noor Mohammad, Asian Overland Services' assistant business development director, said it was difficult to get one of Malaysia Airlines' 1,390 weekly seats on its Frankfurt-Kuala Lumpur flight during the June to August travel season.

Lufthansa's Frankfurt-Kuala Lumpur service via Bangkok is the only other service on the Germany-Malaysia sector. Middle East carriers have thus become popular among Germans for their schedules and competitive fares, said Noor.

Demand is likewise fuelled by Malaysia turning into a hub for Germans exploring South-east Asia on budget carriers, said World Express Tours Malaysia executive director Cherry Lee. Firefly's new East Malaysia services have also made Sabah and Sarawak more accessible to the German market.

"We expect a 10 per cent growth from the German market in 2011. I don't think the air passenger departure tax will have a negative impact on travel. Germans are still travelling, but they are cautious with their spending."

Ngiam Foon, CEO, Asia Experience Tours



Community-based tourism takes hold

Tour operators are tailoring their programmes for Germany to the market's growing trend towards responsible tourism.

Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel is working with the local community in Kiau Village in the foothills of Mount Kinabalu to develop programmes including trekking to waterfalls and Sambatang Cave, flora tours, and village cycling and camping. The tour provides an option to stay with the local Dusun tribe and help the latter with their community activities.

World Express Tours Malaysia will complement nature and cultural tours to Sarawak's southern and northern regions with new programmes to central Sarawak's Sibiu and Mukah areas. This, said executive director Cherry Lee, would increase German length

of stay to seven nights, from five.

The new tours will feature soft adventure, heritage and culture, jungle trekking and longhouse accommodation.

World Express Tours has also come up with new itineraries for Sabah's nature attractions in Sukau, Kinabatangan and Lahad Datu.

Seeing potential demand for cultural exchanges, DiscoveryMICE has developed online strategies to target German youths through rural tourism. Products include homestays and rail tourism packages, said president and CEO, Lee Choon Loong.

Asia Experience Tours is promoting ecotourism in Langkawi, incorporating Geopark elements into its tours, said CEO Ngiam Foon.

Tacticals offset slight rate increases

Contract rates are going up this year, but conversion rates will ensure they do not hurt the European pocket too much.

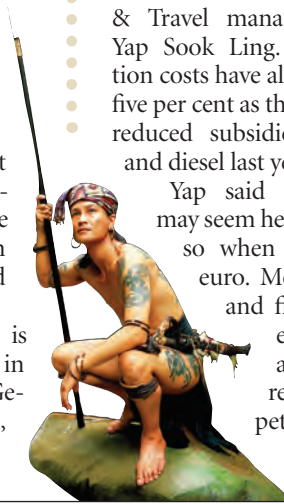
"Contract rates for hotels will increase by five to 10 per cent in all hotel categories," said Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel managing director Yap Sook Ling. "Transportation costs have also gone up by five per cent as the government reduced subsidies for petrol and diesel last year."

Yap said the increases may seem hefty but are not so when converted to euro. Moreover, four- and five-star properties in Sabah and Langkawi remain as competitive as Bali and Phuket.

Contract rates at Awana Port to Malai Langkawi have gone up by 15 per cent for all international markets, said Faizal Iskandar Ghazali, Genting International Services' director of sales. The resort has introduced a room, breakfast, lunch or dinner and all-you-can-drink package that starts from 140 euros (US\$192) per night.

Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort & Spa Kota Kinabalu will relaunch its renovated poolside area with a "pay five, get six nights" promotion offered to German agents, said director of sales and marketing Suzaini Ghani.

Ping Anchorage Travel & Tours is offering room-and-tour packages to the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia at 10 per cent off normal rates.



Diving into new opportunities

Competitive packages flood German market to attract divers

By S Puvaneswary

To revive the German dive tourism market that has taken a beating since the global financial crisis, Malaysian operators are combining diving with attractive ground packages to entice visitors to extend their stays.

Mayflower Acme Tours senior manager Patricia Abdullah said the company has come up with a seven-night/eight-day package in Sabah, combining diving at UNESCO World Heritage site Sipadan Island with ground packages on Sandakan and Langkayan islands.

Abdullah said she hoped the attraction of observing endangered wildlife, such as pygmy elephants, proboscis monkeys and orangutans in their natural habitat would attract German divers to Borneo Island.

"We hope to attract divers who are also nature lovers. This would make their trip very meaningful," said Abdullah.

With divers from Germany typically spending 1.5 times more than the average leisure traveller, Miri-based Tropical Dives managing director James Wan said he



planned to introduce seven-day/six-night sea-and-land packages priced at US\$100 per day, and promote these through his partners in Germany.

Wan hopes these packages will increase the length of stay of German divers – typically four days/three nights. The ground packages will include optional tours to a number of national parks in Miri, such as World Heritage site Mulu National Park, Niah Cave, Loagan Bunut National Park and Lambir National Park.

Ping Anchorage Travel & Tours CEO, Alex Lee, said his company would target consum-

ers directly, as his German-based partners had underperformed in promoting diving in the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, resulting in a 30 per cent drop in arrivals of this variety in 2009 and 2010.

Ping Anchorage's dive packages to Redang and Perhentian islands start from RM750 (US\$244) for a two-night stay in a beach resort, including five dives. There is an option for tours to Malacca, Penang and Cameron Highlands, and opportunity to sample the lifestyle and culture of Malay villagers in Terengganu and Kelantan through a homestay experience.

Viewpoint

Will diving programmes sell in Germany?



"We help local tour operators sell their programmes to our in-house guests."

We also work with operators specialising in diving on tailor-made itineraries, such as island and scuba diving excursions."

Suzaini Ghani

Director of sales and marketing
Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort & Spa



"Langkawi has an edge over Sipadan as it has a greater variety of sea and land activities. We are trying to attract more German divers to Payar Island, especially during the year-end period when the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia is off limits due to heavy rains."

Anthony Wong

Managing director
Frangipani Langkawi Resort & Spa

German tourist arrivals to Malaysia

| | | |
|------|-------------------|---------|
| 2007 | | 78,598 |
| 2008 | | 111,525 |
| 2009 | | 128,288 |
| 2010 | Target | 129,000 |
| | January to August | 88,961 |
| 2011 | Target | 130,000 |

Key indicators of German visitors to Malaysia

| | Length of stay | Average daily expenditure |
|------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 2009 | 10.5 nights | RM274.90 |
| 2008 | 10.3 nights | RM282.10 |
| 2007 | 9.8 nights | RM278.00 |

Source: Tourism Malaysia



"We are optimistic that business will be slightly better this year, despite the introduction of the air passenger departure tax. Hotel rates and goods are still cheaper in Malaysia, compared to Germany. In Malaysia, it is summer all year round, and the country still has an exotic pull for the German market."

Yap Sook Ling, managing director, Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel

Products **Community- and nature-based products to feed the German soul**

D'Coconut Hill Resort Langkawi

What Currently the only resort on the peak of Mount Raya, some 915m above sea level, D'Coconut Hill Resort Langkawi has 15 guestrooms. These include suites and family chalets, an infinity pool, two fine-dining restaurants, a boardroom and an in-house spa facility.

Why Nestled on hill slopes, the resort provides breathtaking views of Langkawi and the bays and smaller islands around. The infinity pool appears to drop off into the Andaman Sea, providing a gorgeous backdrop for a relaxing swim. Jungle trekking

and bird watching activities can be arranged on request. Small meeting and incentive groups can book the entire resort for an exclusive retreat.

Contact
Tel: (60-3)4252-6686
sales@dcoconuthillresort.com
www.dcoconuthillresort.com

Rainforest Kayaking

What The hour-long kayaking experience winds through the rainforest on the Sungai Sarawak Kiri, a gentle 26km tributary of the Sarawak River. The midway stop at Kampong Danau gives guests a tour of the village and a crash course on native plants and herbs.

Why Families and nature-lovers will enjoy the activity, which is safe for children from age 12, as the river is placid. Guests will also be able to fully enjoy the pristine natural environment devoid of much human activity.

Contact
marco@masamaborneo.com
www.masamaborneo.com

Malaysia Rail Explorer

What MalaysiaRailExplorer.com is a portal that provides information and booking facilities for homestay packages by rail in



Tourism Ministry of Malaysia

Homestay programmes by Malaysia Rail Explorer

Malaysia. The website, initiated by the Tourism Ministry and selected tour operators, introduces the Malaysian concept of homestay, where guests get to experience rural village life with host families and participate in cultural and festive activities.

Why The programme, usually hosted by a Muslim family, is targeted at youth and student groups seeking cultural exchange experiences or volunteer tourism vacations. German tourists get to appreciate scenic sightseeing by rail and a variety of physical activities like hiking and trekking, as homestay sites are usually near natural, coastal or rainforest areas.

Contact
yvonnelim@malaysiarailexplorer.com

Kiau Village – Minitiduk Gorge, ancient gateway to Mount Kinabalu

What Kiau Taburi is a small village at the foot of UNESCO World Heritage site Mount Kinabalu. Highlights include jungle, river and flora trekking, nature walks, village cycling, bird watching and local activities such as gong craft, hill paddy farming and preparing of local dishes. Stays with the local Dusun tribe can be arranged.

Why A visit to this traditional village offers a myriad of nature-based activities suitable for all ages. In the spirit of responsible tourism, guests get to help sustain the livelihood of the local community.

Contact
aosbki@asianoverland.com.my
www.asianoverland.com.my

Marang River Safari

What The four-hour day cruise along the Marang River in Kuala Terengganu is organised by Ping Anchorage Travel & Tours.

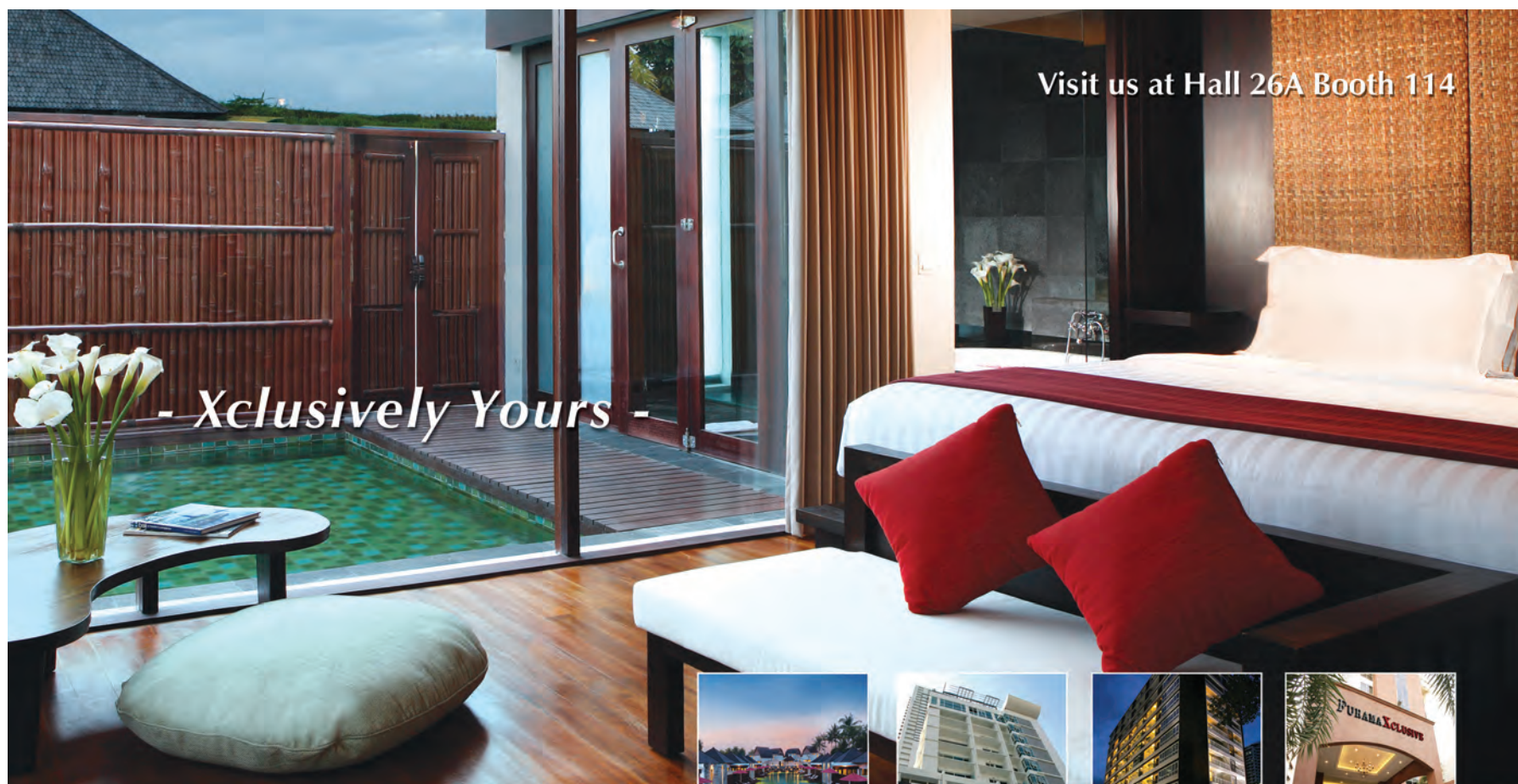
There is a stop in Kampung Jenang, a traditional Malay village, where visitors will be able to sample local fruits, watch monkeys plucking coconuts, and observe villagers making coconut candy and weaving nipah palm leaves into attap roofs.

Why Guests will see mangrove forests along both sides of the river, a natural habitat teeming with wildlife such as monitor lizards, eagles and kingfishers. They will also get to experience the rustic lifestyle of villagers on the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

Contact
info@pinganchorage.com.my
www.pinganchorage.com.my



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Heightened demand lays bare access and infrastructure constraints. By **Ngoc Phuong**

Preparing for success

German market rebounds following a sluggish 2010



Vietnam enjoyed a record-setting 2010, with five million foreign arrivals and US\$4.8 billion in tourism revenue.

The Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) is targeting 5.3 million foreign visitors and US\$5.6 billion in revenue this year. Of the total, some 800,000 visitors are expected to come from Europe.

Vietnam-based tour operators reported a decline in

bookings from Germany last year due to the European economic climate. In the absence of official figures from the VNAT, Luxury Travel Vietnam estimated that the country received some 100,000 German visitors in 2010.

According to Diethelm Travel Vietnam, the German market started to rebound last November, with a 14 per cent increase in arrivals over the same period in 2009. Di-

ethelm expects the trend to continue through to March.

Exotissimo Germany general manager Pantanida Jantsakool said the uptrend in last-minute bookings from German-speaking markets in 2010 was also expected to continue this year, while another growing trend was the inclusion of beach add-ons for extended stays, as opposed to extensions to Thailand following a Vietnam roundtrip.

Trade calls for more NTO consultation and promotions

The Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) has been criticised for not working closely with the country's trade.

Many stakeholders said the VNAT had not contacted them on this year's international tourism marketing initiatives.

A tour operator, who declined to be named, lamented that the

VNAT lacked the experience and funding to promote Vietnam to the German market.

"There is no VNAT office in Germany, nor are there any plans to open one in the foreseeable future," said the tour operator.

Meanwhile, VNAT said it had been organising cultural and tourism promotion activities in

Germany over the past few years, and was planning to do so again for 2011.

The NTO, however, was unable to provide further details, other than that its future marketing efforts would focus on the beaches and islands of the central coast between Danang and Binh Thuan.

Shortage of air seats in high season

Finding suitable connections from Germany during the high season has proven to be quite a challenge for Vietnam-based tour operators.

Luxury Travel CEO, Pham Na, said this problem has resulted in a number of tour cancellations.

Only Vietnam Airlines (VNA) operates a nonstop service from Germany, with a daily flight from Frankfurt to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC).

Lufthansa's thrice-weekly Frankfurt-HCMC service via Bangkok is considered a key air link between the two countries. Together with Star Alliance partners Thai Airways International and

United Airlines, Lufthansa offers twice-daily services from Vietnam to Europe and beyond.

There were rumours last year that the German national carrier was planning to launch direct services from Berlin to Hanoi and HCMC, but no official announcement has been made on the matter yet.

Meanwhile, Asian Trails Vietnam managing director Bui Viet Thuy Tien said that LOT Polish Airlines' new thrice-weekly Warsaw-Hanoi services would make Vietnam more accessible to tourists from eastern Germany.



Currency moderates rate increases

Rates have increased by five to 15 per cent this year.

The increases are, however, not expected to affect demand from high-yield markets such as Germany, said Exotissimo Ger-

many general manager Pantanida Jantsakool.

She said the strength of the euro against the local currency meant that the comparative increase was very small.

"We have more tour requests from German agents this year than ever before. We will attempt to attract affluent German-speaking travellers with niche tourism products."

Pham Ha, CEO, Luxury Travel Vietnam



New twists to encourage repeat visits

Tour operators are spicing up their itineraries with new activities and extensions to lesser-known beach retreats in order to encourage repeat visits.

Special-interest tours incorporating private jet or helicopter transfers, archaeological thrusts, pilgrimages, medical tourism, art, golf and spas feature prominently in 2011 programmes.

Buffalo Tours is partnering with two Swiss agents on cycling tours, photography tours led by professionals and adventure programmes. Also on its 2011 menu are active-relaxation trips that

combine adventure activities and beach holidays.

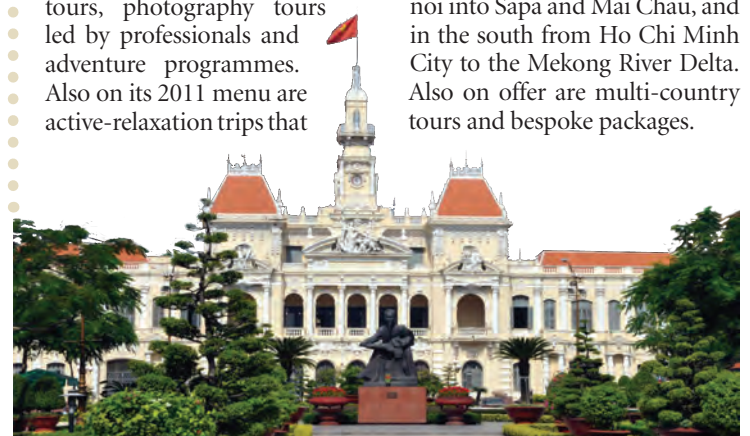
Diethelm Travel Vietnam and Luxury Travel Vietnam are padding their beach-extension options, like Muine, Nha Trang and Danang, with emerging sites such as Quy Nhon, Tuy Hoa and Con Dao.

Tour operators are also offering exploratory programmes with active components and homestays in the north from Hanoi into Sapa and Mai Chau, and in the south from Ho Chi Minh City to the Mekong River Delta. Also on offer are multi-country tours and bespoke packages.



"German spend has decreased for longhaul travel, compared to intra-Europe trips. The Golden Generation, aged 55 years and above, continue to travel, choosing holidays that focus on culture, nature and relaxation."

Petra Schweiggl, German sales manager, Buffalo Tours



Products

Idyllic holiday options offer a taste of nature, history and luxury



Forest Floor Lodge

What The newly-opened Forest Floor Lodge in Cat Tien National Park, just 160km north of Ho Chi Minh City, offers a distinctly upscale Tarzan-and-Jane experience. It has luxurious safari tents and traditional wooden houses built from reclaimed timbers and tiles, with views over the jungle or Dong Nai River.

Why The lodge exemplifies the recent eco-chic sustainable tourism trend, giving visitors the chance to hike many routes through the park. Cat Tien is known for its small and rarely-seen population of Javan rhinoceros, recorded by automatic cameras in the northern areas of the park, and the less camera-shy Asian elephants, honey-loving sun bears, and many types of primates and deer. Guests can also visit the on-site

WAR bear and wild cat rescue centre and conservation project Gibbon Island, operated by the East-Asian Species Trust (EAST) and home to some of Vietnam's most endangered primates.

Contact
enq@forestfloorlodge.com

Colonial Roots of Tonkin

What The six-day "explore" tour in northern Vietnam covers the most significant and beautiful vestiges of Vietnam's colonial roots. The itinerary includes Hanoi, a homestay in the countryside and a private junk experience in Halong Bay, one of Vietnam's UNESCO-listed sites featured in the 1992 movie *Indochine*, set in 1930s French Indochina.

Why This tour explores one highly influential aspect of Vietnam's culture: the French colonial period, which shaped the nation's cities and sensibility. The scope of the tour, in terms of both history and architecture, will satisfy German travellers' penchant for learning about a destination, as well as their sense of adventure.

Contact
vietnam@asiantrails.com.vn

The Jahan

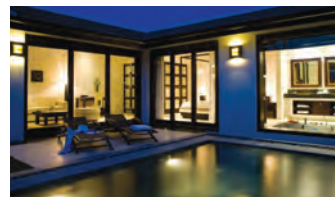
What Luxury boutique tour company Trails of Indochina has launched a new cruise on a brand new, 26-berth sister boat to the company's existing Jayavarman vessel. The seven-day/seven-night cruise from Ho Chi Minh City to Phnom Penh explores the intricate backwaters of the Mekong Delta and the way of life of the people who live on the river, from sampan floating fruit markets to floating house fish farms.

Why Trails of Indochina specialises in unique, personally-tailored tours and one-of-a-kind experiences not offered by any other operator. This itinerary will give German travellers the opportunity to explore Vietnam's "rice bowl", one of the richest and most vibrant areas of the country, at a leisurely, relaxing pace.

Contact
info@trailsofindochina

Fusion Maia Danang

What Located on the white sands of Danang's famous China Beach, Fusion Maia is Asia's first resort with an all-inclusive spa. Comprised of suites and stand-alone villas, the resort's



Fusion Maia Danang

contemporary open-plan design celebrates light and space.

Why German travellers enjoy relaxing holidays with a strong emphasis on spa therapies, and here, all spa treatments are included in the room rate. The resort's location in Danang also provides convenient access to all of the central coast's UNESCO-listed sites – the ancient merchant town Hoi An, former feudal capital Hue and the Cham ruins at My Son.

Contact
info-DN@fusion-resorts.com

Six Senses Con Dao

What The resort is definitely one of Vietnam's most luxurious and environmentally-friendly accommodation options. Its 50 villas, built by local workers from indigenous, sustainably-grown wood, are laid out as a traditional Vietnamese fishing village, fitting seamlessly into the

beachfront terrain, which happens to be one of the country's most important sea turtle nesting grounds.

Why Con Dao, the former notorious Poulo Condore prison island historically used by both the French and Vietnamese and dubbed "hell on earth" by prisoners of war incarcerated there, is now a peaceful beach retreat. Roughly 80 per cent of the land area in the island chain is protected as a National Park. Visitors can hike, cycle, scuba dive or simply chill out on the soft swathes of unspoiled sand. Con Dao is easily accessible from Ho Chi Minh City by a direct 45-minute flight.

Contact
reservations-condao@sixsenses.com



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|----------------|--------|-----------|---------|
| Bangkok-Mumbai | PG 733 | 22:20 | 01:05 |
| Mumbai-Bangkok | PG 734 | 01:55 | 07:50 |

Flight Schedule (27 March 2011 onwards)

| ROUTE | FLIGHT | DEPARTURE | ARRIVAL |
|----------------|--------|-----------|---------|
| Bangkok-Mumbai | PG 733 | 21:40 | 00:25 |
| Mumbai-Bangkok | PG 734 | 01:05 | 06:50 |

Flight Schedule (27 March 2011 onwards)

| ROUTE | FLIGHT | DEPARTURE | ARRIVAL |
|---------------|--------|-----------|---------|
| Bangkok-Dhaka | PG 745 | 00:30 | 02:00 |
| Dhaka-Bangkok | PG 746 | 03:15 | 06:45 |

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Destination scores infrastructure, access and product gains, reports **Sirima Eamtako**

Positive key indicators

Germany expected to continue to produce the numbers for Cambodia



Cambodia expects 2.75 million arrivals this year. The top 10 markets are to remain the same as in 2010, when the country recorded 2.5 million arrivals and US\$1.78 billion in tourism revenue, a 16.04 per cent and 14.41 per cent in-

crease over 2009, respectively.

The top 10 markets in 2010 were Vietnam, South Korea, China, Japan, the US, France, the UK, Thailand, Australia and Taiwan.

Germany was Cambodia's third largest European market

last year, after France and the UK. German visitor numbers to the country grew 4.92 per cent to 62,864, with around 60,000 Germans visiting for leisure and some 1,300 on business trips.

Other German-speaking

markets, Austria and Switzerland, shrank 1.54 per cent to 8,457 and 15,645 arrivals, respectively. Some 8,290 Austrians and 14,888 Swiss came as tourists, while 177 Austrians and 527 Swiss visited Cambodia on business.

Initiatives aplenty

Cambodia will stick to its Kingdom of Wonder campaign for the third consecutive year, along with the tagline it launched last year – clean city, clean resort and good service.

The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) launched its new website www.tourismcambodia.org in January at the ASEAN Tourism Forum. It will also introduce more promotions for southern coastal and north-eastern areas to encourage repeat visits from tourists who had already been to Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

Last year, the MoT nominated Cambodia's 450km southern coastal stretch for listing with the Club of the Most Beautiful Bays of the World, in an attempt to attract more sun-sand-and-sea lovers, especially from European markets such as Germany.

Tourism minister Dr Thong Khon said he hoped the country's nomination would be approved within the year.



pprincess.com

“Europe, including Germany, is under pressure but is still one of our key longhaul sources, accounting for 75 per cent of business at present.”

Peter Foster, sales and marketing area director, Raffles Hotel Le Royal and Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor



Air France's resumption a huge fillip for Cambodia

Service gives Europeans direct access to the kingdom

By Brian Higgs

Air France will resume flights from Paris to Phnom Penh on March 27 after a 35-year hiatus, marking the first longhaul service connecting Europe and Cambodia. The carrier previously served its former colony from the early 50s until the Khmer Rouge seized control in 1975.

Voyageurs Associes managing director Jacky Pilo said: “The fact that you have the French national carrier serving this route is very important. We will be able to gather travellers from around France and increase our business out of Paris with these flights.”

“The French market loves Cambodia, it is almost like a second home,” said Asia Voyages deputy director of production Virginie Gerbault. “While it is still too early to give exact figures, there will definitely be an increase in business.”

Gerbault added that Asia Voyages had already been approached by Air France and was developing packages and special

promotions for the next winter season, targeting FITs and groups, in particular.

An Airbus A340-300 will be used on the thrice-weekly flights between Paris and Phnom Penh, with a Bangkok stopover. During the summer of 2011, Air France will switch to a Boeing B777-200ER.

Tith Chantha, director general of the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) Cambodia, said: “This will be a way for more European travellers to come to Cambodia, and the local people will be able to reap the benefits of the increase in tourism activity. Cambodians will also be able to easily travel to Europe.”

Gerbault added: “Previously, Siem Reap was usually an extension to travel in Vietnam, but now we will have new opportunities to bring people straight to Cambodia, not only to Siem Reap, but also to Phnom Penh.”

Asked whether this would affect business to Vietnam, both Asia Voyages and Voyageurs Associes said that would not be the case.

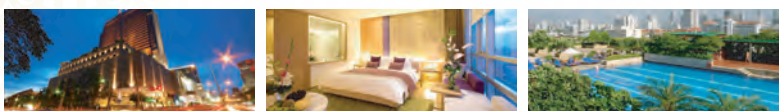


Kuenzle: milestone

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“We are seeing growing numbers of German, French, Scandinavian and Russian tourists, especially those who have already been to Phuket and Bali, and are looking for new beach resort destinations.”

Michael Lim, general manager, Sokha Beach Resort Sihanoukville

Airfares push up package prices

Local agents and operators fear that Cambodia Angkor Air's high fares for its Phnom Penh-Siem Reap service would make their packages less competitive this year. The national carrier has been charging US\$170 for return tickets on the route, comparable to a Phnom Penh-Bangkok roundtrip fare.

Hotel rates, at least, are expected to remain steady this year. Cambodia Tours managing director Om Pharin said oversupply in Siem Reap would continue to cap rates in the city. “Three- to four-star hotels in Siem Reap are charging less than their counterparts in Phnom Penh,” he said.

But Borei Angkor Resort and Spa in Siem Reap increased its ARR last year by 20 per cent to US\$75, after a US\$2 million renovation that allowed it to qualify for five-star status, explained managing director Finan Khim. “We now average US\$100; US\$120 for online bookings,” he said.

Raffles Hotel Le Royal and Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor area director Peter Foster cited “encouraging bookings” till March as catalyst for slight rate adjustments at both hotels.

Access upgrades a boon to tourism

Additional air links to Cambodia, whether by codeshare or airline reentry, present fresh opportunities to develop new markets.

Air France's resumption of services is being hailed as a breakthrough (see page 16). Air Berlin, through a codeshare agreement with Bangkok Airways, activated an online booking facility last November for its passengers in Germany and Scandinavia.

Annelie Moog, group CEO of ICS Travel Group, said Myanmar Airways International's new Siem Reap-Yangon service would also allow tour operators to better sell destinations in South-east Asia, especially to longhaul travellers on multi-country itineraries.

Olivier Marchesin, Exotissimo Travel Cambodia general manager, saw the need though to improve domestic air access.

Programmes go off the beaten track

Tour operators are veering away from the tried-and-tested to highlight new regions to the German market.

Exotissimo Travel Cambodia plans to showcase the southern coastal areas. General manager Olivier Marchesin said: “If the coastal areas are developed quickly, with the proper air access, it would be easier to attract more tourists.”

Exotissimo is also developing more fixed camping grounds this

year, having launched mobile safari tented stays in 2010. It has 40 tents, with two fixed grounds – one near Siem Reap, another in Rea – with six tents each. The remaining tents can be set up anywhere in the country.

Buffalo Tours Cambodia has created a range of responsible tourism products, said country manager Panya Thin. It launched Buffalo Tours tuk-tuk in Siem Reap last October and is developing a programme along the Mekong Discovery Trails in the north-east this year.

Sokha Beach Resort Sihanouk Ville has been promoting the city as a springboard for island-hopping tours in the southern coastal areas, said general manager Michael Lim.



“It will be a win-win situation for all, with more visitors coming into the region, explained Pilo.

Asian Trails group managing director Laurent Kuenzle agreed. “This resumption of flights by a European carrier from Europe to Cambodia will be an important milestone,” he said.

“It will benefit tourists and business travellers alike, with convenient connections through Air France's Paris Charles de Gaulle hub,” Kuenzle added.

MoT and the travel trade plan to do either roadshows to France or organise fam trips to Cambodia. These are planned to take place after ITB Berlin, said Cambodia Government-Private Sector Forum co-chair – tourism working group Ho Vandy.

Ho, who is also managing director of World Express Tours & Travel, said the flights would help sell Cambodia as a mono destination to France and neighbouring European countries, and promote longer stays, beyond the average three nights.

Apsara Tours product assistant manager Hang Lina is developing new tour itineraries for the French market to supplement the present classic tours. – **Additional reporting by S Puvaneswary**

Visitor arrivals from Europe, 2010-2009

| Market | 2010 | 2009 | % change |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Europe | 489,400 | 464,742 | 5.31 |
| France | 113,285 | 105,437 | 7.44 |
| UK | 103,067 | 106,837 | -3.53 |
| Germany | 62,864 | 59,916 | 4.92 |

Purpose of visit of European arrivals, 2010-2009

| | Tourists | Business | Others |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Europe | 463,096 | 16,816 | 9,488 |
| France | 104,270 | 5,859 | 3,156 |
| UK | 97,298 | 4,201 | 1,568 |
| Germany | 60,303 | 1,349 | 1,212 |

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Cambodia

Viewpoint

How will the new air services help tourism?



“The new air links will open new visitor markets and perhaps lead to more airlines setting up direct connections. We hear that Philippine Airlines, Lufthansa and Emirates are interested to fly to Cambodia.”

Ho Vandy
Steering committee chairman
Cambodia Association of Travel Agents



“Air France's Paris-Phnom Penh flight will surely bring more visitors from Europe to Cambodia. It will also pose competition on the Bangkok-Phnom Penh route and hopefully bring airfares down.”

Tui Rutten
Managing director
First Travel Cambodia

Products Room and tour boom

Adventure tours

What Exotissimo Travel Cambodia has added seven new and improved programmes to its existing range of adventure tours. The new offerings include the four-day Siem Reap Cycling Tour, Angkor Hike and Bike, Trek Angkor, Cambodia Grand Adventure Tour and Ream's Jungle-to-Beach Experience.



Why The new programmes are ideal for visitors who have travelled from afar to experience the real Cambodia. The adventure tours combine cultural immersion, historical perspectives, impressive landscapes and adrenaline-driven activities. The programme in Ream would be particularly interesting for nature-lovers and adventure-seekers, as it includes tented accommodation on the beach.

Contact
david_king@exotissimo.com

Best Western Suites And Sweet Resort Angkor, Siem Reap

What Best Western International has signed its first hotel in Cambodia – the all-suite Suites And Sweet Resort Angkor in Siem Reap. The rebranding is slated to be completed this quarter. The resort has 18 suites housed in nine villas, each with their own private pool and terrace. Facilities include a restaurant, a bar and a traditional massage service.

Why The resort is less than a 10-minute drive from Siem Reap town and the main entrance to the Angkor temples complex.

Contact
www.bwrewardsasia.com

Water Chalet cluster at Sokha Beach Resort, Sihanouk Ville

What The 284-room Sokha Beach Resort Sihanouk Ville will open its 69-key Water Chalet cluster this year. Fifty-three of these will operate as Mahori Chalets, going for US\$400 per night. The remaining 16 will form the all-inclusive Moha Mahori Chalet by Sokha Hotels and Resorts, charging US\$1,000 per chalet for accommodation, all meals and daily spa treatment. The Water Chalets will have a dedicated team of employees and an exclusive F&B outlet and recreation centre. Sokha Beach Resort Sihanouk Ville also opened its 112-room Lakeside Wing late last year.

Why High-end honeymooners and couples from Europe would delight in the privacy of

the water chalets that occupy a secluded quarter of the main resort's 25-hectare beachfront grounds. Mainstream European tourists also get a wider range of accommodation options – the main resort, the Lakeside Wing or the Moha Mahori.

Contact
salespp@sokhahotels.com

Song Saa Private Island

What Song Saa Private Island, located 30 minutes by boat from Sihanoukville, will open late this year as Cambodia's first luxury island resort development. It will have 25 rainforest, beach and water villas spanning the two islands of Koh Ouen and Koh Bong. The islands, whose names mean “sweethearts” in Khmer, are connected by a footbridge over a marine reserve for the island's reefs and marine life, including dugongs, seahorses and tropical fishes.

Why Responsible, nature-loving, high-end travellers will be drawn to the unspoiled white sandy beaches of the two islands. As Song Saa chairman Rory Hunter put it: “Think Thailand 40 years ago, before Koh Samui or Phuket became the international hubs they are today. (Cambodia's southern coastal areas) have pristine rainforests and secluded white-sand beaches, but without the crowds or overdevelopment.”

Contact
rory@songsaa.com



Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra

What Opened in December last year, the US\$50 million development is Phnom Penh's first new five-star debut since the 1990s. The hotel's 201 rooms cut across seven categories – 121 Superior rooms, 45 Luxury rooms, 23 Junior Suites, 11 Prestige Suites and one Opera Suite. About 150 rooms boast views of both the Bassac and Mekong Rivers.

Why Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra general manager Didier Lamoot said: “This hotel should move Phnom Penh from ‘maybe-visit’ to ‘must-visit’ for upscale travellers who have wondered whether it was possible to be catered to appropriately beyond Siem Reap.” The hotel is walking distance from the Royal Palace, the National Museum and attractive waterfront promenade Sisowath Quay.

Contact
www.sofitel.com

Meeting market needs

Patrick Tan captures the action on the floor as Asia meets Europe for the latest round of negotiations

Park Hotel Group's Francis Tan, Cindy Goo, Mohd K Rafin, Pauline Cheung and Peggy Lo



Garuda Indonesia's Don JP Bustan (first from left), Ted Sulisto (fourth from left), Iswandi Said (sixth from right), Tonny Ali (second from right)



Vacation Singapore DMC's Helen Goh, Amara Singapore's Winnie Chew and Nirwana Gardens' Hazel Leow



Grand Hyatt Macau's Andy So



Accor's Peter Hook, Adi Satria, Michael Parsons, Markus Keller, Charlotte Gutte, John Farrell, Graham Wilson, Sofitel Greater China's Michel Molliet, Accor's Edyta Peszko and Wim Truyens



Singapore Airlines' Peter Tomasch and Tradewinds Tours and Travel Singapore's Victor Seah with the SIA girls



Anta Express Tour and Travel Service Indonesia's In-grid Astari, Nikko Bali Resort and Spa's Jean-Charles Le Coz and Iva Farida, Aspen Holidays Malaysia's Edwin Teng and Chatrium Hotel Yangon Myanmar's May Myat Mon Win



Bayview International Hotels and Resorts, Singapore's Lim Liang Joo and Datuk Winston Tan with Rendezvous Hotel Singapore's Kellvin Ong



Harbour Grand Hong Kong's Elaine Chow, Harbour Plaza North Point Hong Kong's Amanda Chan, The Kowloon Hotel Hong Kong's Musetta Wong, Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees Hong Kong's Alec Chan, Harbour Plaza Metropolis Hong Kong's Lucetta Chan, Euro Marketing Connections Germany's Dilara Gozen and Harbour Grand Kowloon Hong Kong's Doris Li



Furama International's Ivan Chan, Vione Tan, Tatcha Riddhimat, Jason Peck, Daphne Sim and FuramaXclusive Villas and Spa Ramia Adnyana



The team from Jakarta: Hari Wibowo, Arie Budhiman, H Nasrullah and Sri Juniarti





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