

ITB  
Asia

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Issue

# 1

### Trend watch

**1** Who's doing waka waka Indian and Chinese luxury travellers are heading for Africa. Nairobi-based Holiday Bazaar, which specialises in wildlife tours and safaris in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, has seen a surge in FIT traffic from Asia-Pacific over the last few years, especially from India and China.

Thus, the sole purpose of Holiday Bazaar's marketing director, Nishma Shah, here is to target India and China outbound players. She said the two countries had transformed into the company's top two Asia-Pacific source markets, compared to eight years ago, when there was practically "zero traffic" from these areas.

"Indians are travelling like god knows what. Their middle class, in particular, has a lot of spare cash," she said. "They also used to be last minute, but now they plan in advance."

According to Shah, Holiday Bazaar's FIT traffic from India has "increased by maybe 60 per cent or more" over the last four years. Its customer base from China, on the other hand, has seen a 20 per cent boost over the past two years.

"We cater to a lot of mid- to high-end FITs from India and China," she said. "They tend to stay in four- to five-star accommodation and their budget is about US\$4,000-US\$5,000 per pax. Indians stay an average of two weeks, while Chinese stay about 12 days." Shah said the burgeoning outbound numbers from Asia-Pacific were in stark contrast to the shrinking travel demand from Europe. — **Brian Higgs**

## Thailand takes a hit

Flood crisis sweeps away thousands of roomnights, says trade

By **Brian Higgs**

THAILAND is taking a hit from the ongoing flood crisis in the country, with buyers and sellers at ITB Asia saying that media coverage exaggerating the extent of the disaster has impacted both leisure and MICE traffic.

Despite the Tourism Authority of Thailand saying attractions in key destinations such as Bangkok, Pattaya, Hua Hin, Chiangmai, Phuket and Koh Samui continue to operate as per normal, the country's tourism industry is feeling the effects of the crisis.

Eric Hallin, general manager, Rembrandt Hotel & Towers Bangkok, said his hotel had already suffered "a few hundred roomnights worth of cancellations" by the time he left Thailand to attend ITB Asia. "It will probably be more like in the thousands (of roomnights) over

the coming weeks," he said. "Europe, Asia, business, leisure, you name, it is all being cancelled."

Hallin added that not only were cancellations pouring in, the booking pace had slowed considerably. "Many people are writing in to ask about the situation before they even consider coming to Thailand," he said.

John D Owens, senior vice president, global sales, Pegasus Solutions, also reported a drop in bookings for Thailand properties, which include those under Utell Hotels & Resorts.

"People are still shopping around for Thailand, but the number of confirmed bookings has definitely dropped," he said.

Owens attributed the sudden drop to the lack of updated media coverage on the floods. "We heard some news about the flood when it first happened, but

have received no updates since then," he explained. "Because of a lack of media coverage and updates, most people don't know if the situation has recovered, or what's being done to fix it."

Ewan Gray, director Asia Pacific, Skyscanner, reported a 19 per cent dip in the number of searches via its websites for international flights into Thailand over the last five days, over the same period in September.

Patrick Lee, regional director, Best Travel Deals Singapore, had to relocate four incentive and meeting groups, scheduled for Bangkok over the next three months, to Jakarta, Bandung and Bali in Indonesia.

"The news is not helping, and clients would rather be safe than sorry. At least business is still there and you don't lose the groups entirely," he said.

### Viewpoint

Has Thailand's flood crisis impacted business?



"Yes, we had mass cancellations, including a 250-pax incentive to Phuket and

Chiangmai, a 150-175-pax exhibition to Phuket and a 75-pax managerial meeting in Bangkok."

**Hugo Gonzalez**

President, Goico Travel Houston, US



"Over 50 per cent of my customers scheduled to travel to Thailand during the

Muslim holiday in the first week of November have cancelled."

**Paul Clabburn**

Group general manager  
Bahrain International Travel Group

### Sound bites

"People are happier before their holidays than on them."

**Rod Cuthbert**, founder and chairman emeritus, Viator, explaining that studies have shown that it is the expectations of a vacation that have a stronger emotional resonance than the whole trip itself. What this means for the trade is that customer experiences at the pre-trip or initial stage, such as a general manager coming to greet you at the lobby when you check-in, should be considered more carefully



*This time for Africa:* African Sun Zimbabwe's Brian Maponde and Lindi Mthethwa, Zimbabwe Tourism Authority's Margaret Kasambira and Tourism Services Zimbabwe's Edmore Kasira get ready to promote

## Yatra.com leaps into group-buy space

By **Gracia Chiang**

THE GROWING traction of group-buying sites continues to be watched with close interest by the trade, and even online travel agents are feeling the heat.

Citing intense competition from deal sites as a threat to its business, Yatra.com co-founder and CEO, Dhruv Shringi, said the Indian OTA launched its own equivalent microsite, Steal-a-deal, two months ago.

"We don't want the customer to have the perception that he can get a better deal elsewhere.

"We're also in discussion with suppliers to make sure they don't undercut us (when they

"We're in discussion with suppliers to make sure they don't undercut us (when they sell to deal sites)."

**Dhruv Shringi**

Co-founder and CEO  
Yatra.com

sell to deal sites)," he said.

Shringi said Indian online players like Snapdeal.com were active in the short-break holiday

market. Steal-a-deal publishes 20 to 30 deals a day, also providing an opportunity to manage distressed hotel inventory.

Not wanting to reveal specifics, Shringi would only let on that figures had "tripled month on month".

He added that the OTA was also trying to grow its offline distribution network over the next 12 months. It currently has between 8,500 and 9,000 travel agent partners, and is working towards an initial target of 20,000.

Interestingly, pilots had been conducted with middle-class housewives, an untapped seg-

ment because of the social structure, he said.

"These are currently not travel agents, and we are trying to get them to be our affiliates."

When asked if Yatra had plans to expand overseas, Shringi said the focus was still to serve the Indian mass market, riding on growth in tier-two and tier-three cities.

"Where there are physical barriers, people will take to online faster," he said.

Shringi added that the grim economic outlook had not put a dampener on outbound bookings, though Indian inbound was starting to see a slowdown.

"Social guys like to do the talking, we mostly like to do the acting."



**Ali Yilmaz**, head of travel, Google South-east Asia, on the ongoing debate between whether marketing dollars are best invested in search engines or social media channels. He pointed out that Google offered companies a tool to track the real-time customer buying process rather than just analysing brand conversations



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# Currency pull for Asia

A more expensive Europe sends buyers scurrying to region

By Mimi Hudoyo

THE Euro's depreciation is prompting longhaul buyers such as Agora Occasions US and Van der Vegte Travel Consultancy Netherlands to look at Asia as a possible venue for their conferences and incentives.

Both are at ITB Asia for the first time to test the waters and find possible destinations and venues for clients.

Agora Occasions' programme manager-government and association contracts, Tisa Nava, said: "My clients usually organise conferences in Europe, but with today's currency (depreciation), we are looking at possible destinations in the Far East."

Nava demonstrated that with a US\$100,000 budget, conference delegates could get five-star facilities and services such as hotels, tours and restaurants in Asia, which they are not able to enjoy anymore in Europe at current currency rates.

Nava however sees the challenge of getting clients to Asia due to long flight durations. "You need to have at least two or three stops, and that is tiring and they need to go to a meeting the next morning with jetlag," she said.

Nevertheless, this is not a dead end, according to Nava. She praises Asian destinations such as Thailand for being proactive in easing the shortcomings.

"Thailand, for example, assists with measures such as speeding up immigration and customs services. Once the delegates get to the hotel, keys are ready, a massage is even offered. This really helps.

"Americans love to be pampered," she said.

Van der Vegte Travel Consultancy, meanwhile, is handling pharmaceutical conferences and incentives, and is seeing growing interest in Asia among clients.

Managing director Tony van der Vegte said: "They are planning for 2013 programmes and I'm here to find out possible venues and programmes to present to them."

## Title tattle

### So engaging

**Who says nothing can replace the paper itinerary or glossy brochure that puts any agent's clients in the mood to travel rightaway?**

Agents just need to talk to John Sutherland, CEO, Dreamscape

Journeys Singapore, who has just shared with us he is launching not just a virtual itinerary, but an interactive one.

Agents can create a detailed interactive route planner, with photos, videos and satellite images pinpointing all the stops of the trip. All local relevant information can be uploaded in an Insider Guide section. If an

itinerary has to be updated during travel, it will immediately appear on the client's link. All their favourite photos can also be uploaded to their Facebook page from the site.

With so many other bells-and-whistles, we just marvel at how we were able to do with just a piece of paper detailing our itinerary not too long ago.

## Express action to online tweets

By Gracia Chiang

CIRCOS Brand Karma announced yesterday a free social media analytics tool for hotels, allowing managers to both receive and immediately respond to issues about them aired on three online channels: Facebook, Twitter and TripAdvisor.

The tool, Brand Karma Express, picks up mentions on brands or properties and presents them as emails in an inbox. Daily or weekly email notifications are also available.

An in-built feature allows posts to be assigned and sent to relevant employees for follow-up, allowing hotels to integrate social media feedback into their daily operations, explained CEO and co-founder Morris Sim.

Those who want to better diagnose their brand reputation and compare it against their competitors have the option to upgrade to the Brand Karma Standard Edition.

Sim said the company was also working with the Media Development Authority in Singapore to develop a similar analysis tool for local SMEs, which travel agents and other service providers could benefit from.

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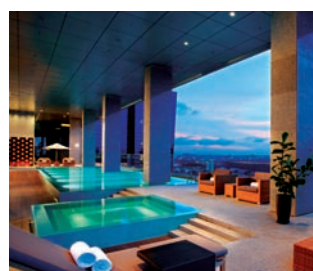
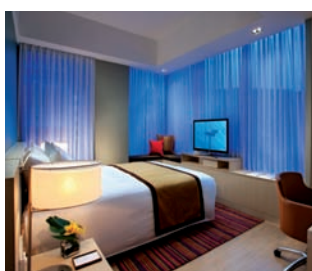
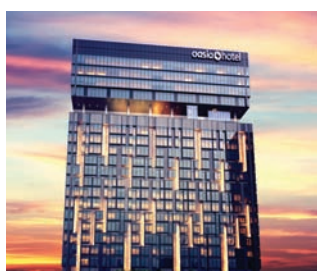
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## Easy payment for travel agencies

By Linda Haden

eNett International, a joint venture between Travelport and PSP International, will launch its vNett virtual card solution in Asia and the Middle East, after successful roll-outs in Europe and Australia.

The solution is backed by financial institutions such as Citibank, JP Morgan and Mastercard. The UAE is on the cards in November, followed by Singapore, Hong Kong and India in the first quarter of 2012. eNett is also looking at Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Targeted principally at OTAs, traditional travel agents and TMCs, vNett allows these buyers to pay suppliers using a 16-digit single-use MasterCard virtual account number for a specific transaction. Agencies who sign up for vNett will also have access to feeNett, which enables clients to process service fees without the need for a point-of-sale terminal. Agencies can also use eNett's capability to mitigate the cost of cross-currency exchanges through its desktop fx tool.

"It's a market that has not been reached by other providers before," said Anthony Hynes, MD and CEO of eNett.

## Park's home run

Portfolio to double as local chain eyes IPO

By Raini Hamdi

SINGAPORE-based Park Hotel Group (PHG) is poised to reap the rewards of its five-year brand-building programme, with a planned doubling of portfolio in the next five years and an eventual IPO.

Senior vice president Mohd K Rafin would not comment on the IPO, only saying the group aimed to add eight to 10 hotels in the next five years. Park's director Allen Law was recently quoted as eyeing a dual listing in Singapore via a REIT (real estate investment trust) and a Hong Kong listing.

Park has been spending S\$1.2 million (US\$946,000) to S\$1.5 million each year from 2007 to 2010, and S\$2 million this year – its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary – to build brand awareness among consumer and trade. Separately, it also made strategic acquisitions, including the flagship Grand Park Orchard, and upgraded older properties. The group started with the lone Park Hotel Hong Kong in Tsimshatsui and now operates eight hotels, including three in Singapore, one each in Kunming, Xian and Wuxi, China; and one in Otaru, Japan.



Rafin: aggressive path continues

In the past five years, the group also worked to foster a strong corporate culture among staff, culminating in the ongoing branding themed *50 years of loving hospitality*. "What it means is, in everything we do – how we treat our customers and staff – we do it with love and passion," said Rafin. "Corporate culture, leadership and right talent are key to consistency."

Meanwhile, Rafin said the group was strengthening its sales and marketing by opening three new offices in the Middle East (Dubai or Jeddah), India (New Delhi or Mumbai) and Australia (Sydney). It has seven regional sales offices now and the three planned openings reflect the markets which are fast growing for its hotels. Currently, its main markets groupwise are Europe, Australia, Japan, South-east Asia, Hong Kong/China and India, according to Rafin.

## Westin makes a fit comeback

By Raini Hamdi

THE Westin Singapore Marina Bay is banking on its location and the brand's lifestyle proposition to compete in a market which has changed since it left a decade ago.

Westin was in Singapore until 2002, in the form of The Westin Stamford and The Westin Plaza at the Raffles City complex, now Swissotel the Stamford and Fairmont Singapore respectively.

Asked to compare the new Westin, which will open in the last quarter of 2013, with the old, Vincent Ong, director brand management Asia-Pacific of Sheraton & Westin, said The Westin Stamford did not have programmes such as Superfoods menu, WestinWorkout gym, The Heavenly Spa by Westin and nature-inspired design aesthetics, all now part of the brand's

'wellness' DNA. Westin, he said, was all about catering to the "I" in individuals, so that every guest would leave feeling better than when he arrived. Starwood Hotels & Resorts had been sharpening the brand's positioning since 2005, along with creating distinct personalities for its other brands such as Sheraton, Ong said, during a media launch of the Westin Singapore comeback on Monday.

The hotel will occupy the 32<sup>nd</sup> to 46<sup>th</sup> floors of Asia Square Tower 2, featuring 305 rooms and the highest hotel lobby in the city. It will also have four F&B outlets and a 480m<sup>2</sup> Banquet Hall.

The hotel is owned by an MGA managed fund. MGA managing director James David said Westin fitted Asia Square's 'Work, Play, Live, Grow' proposition well.

### Numbers that matter

**3** Airline prices in Asia-Pacific are expected to rise 3.1 per cent to 3.8 per cent next year, as legacy and LCCs compete for travellers, holding down air fares in the region, according to Carlson Wagonlit Travel's Global Travel Forecast 2012.

**2** Average daily hotel rates in Asia-Pacific will range from a 1.9 per cent fall to a 2.1 per cent increase in the first half of the year, then are expected to remain flat in the second half. Car rental rates are also expected to remain relatively flat, according to the just-released report.

# Early birds out to catch the juiciest worm

The first sellers arrive and show Patrick Tan they are all ready to sell, sell, sell



eMarketingEye Sri Lanka's Kusalika Basnayake, Niranka Perera and Dasun Premasinghe



Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau's Miyoko Imanaka and Tetsuya Nakamura

Bali Village's Rahma H and Merry D

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# How to enjoy Singapore

Editors from TTG Asia trade insider information, from cool restaurants to overlooked haunts



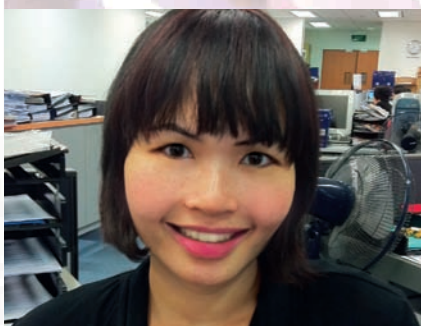
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Raini Hamdi  
Group Editor

## NEW DINING PLACE Joël Robuchon Restaurant at Hotel Michael

If you've just sealed a deal or are craving for something A-List in Singapore, head straight to Joël Robuchon Restaurant at Hotel Michael, Level 1, Resort World Sentosa, which opened on April 28.

I recently dined there, and find the word 'dine' too plain to describe the experience. I must have died and gone to heaven the moment they rolled out a trolley with 30 types of freshly-baked breads to choose from – wished I could have them all on my little side plate – and landed back on earth, grinning from having devoured a fit-for-the-gods seven-course menu designed by the world's most celebrated chef.

Service deserves all the stars there are. One would have thought it would be stiff, but restaurant manager Guillaume Anglade, sommelier Jonathan Tingaud and the service staff give it real heart.

The seven-course menu cost S\$290 (US\$226). But the value of an unforgettable evening? Priceless.

**CONTACT** Tel: (65) 6577-7888

[www.rwsentosa.com/ShoppingDining/Dining/JoelRobuchon](http://www.rwsentosa.com/ShoppingDining/Dining/JoelRobuchon)



## MUST DO Singapore River jog

If you're someone who packs the jogging shoes no matter where you travel, then a run around the bay and the Singapore River is a must do for you.

I'd recommend starting at the Esplanade, passing Fullerton Bay Hotel, then Marina Bay Sands, completing the circle at the Durian. This will give you wonderful views of the three towers and the ArtScience Museum designed by Moshe Safdie. Once back at the Durian, jog towards the river, pass the UOB Plaza and marvel at Dali's *Homage To Newton* and Botero's *Bird*. Across the river stands the Asian Civilisation Museum and next to it, Raffles Landing Site.

You can jog pass Boat Quay all the way down to Clarke Quay and further. Discover the many riverside dining places that have sprouted in the area – that'll give you plenty of ideas for eating out later.

## MUST SEE Club Street

Club Street, an enclave of pre-war houses that have been restored and found new uses as boutique hotels, restaurants, bars, shops and galleries. Each of the establishments has its own peculiarities and charm, and the area teems with life and laughter. Club Street is located in Chinatown, linking Cross Street with Ann Siang Hill.



Joël Robuchon Restaurant (left); the lightness of cheesecake with vanilla from Tahiti with coloured fruit in season



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Gracia Chiang  
Editor, *TTG Asia*

**NEW DINING PLACE** Sky on 57 at Marina Bay Sands

Less than a year old, homegrown celebrated chef Justin Quek is taking Asian cuisine to new heights – quite literally, given Sky on 57’s dizzying location on the top floor of Marina Bay Sands.

Known for his French-inspired creative combinations, Quek’s signature foie gras *xiao long bao* (Chinese dumpling) was one of the more memorable bites I sank my teeth into this year.

For mains, the same East-meets-West creations dominate the menu: think penne with Nordic king crabmeat and Singapore chilli crab sauce, and sautéed Maine lobster in Asian pepper sauce. To end your meal, ask for the baked apple tart. Sounds deceptively boring, but it’s not.

**CONTACT** Tel: (65) 6688-8857  
www.marinabaysands.com

**MUST DO** Southern Ridges Walk

Connecting the lush hills of Mount Faber, Telok Blangah and Kent Ridge parks via a 9km trail, the Southern Ridges Walk is one not to be missed for nature enthusiasts.

A good starting point is the Marang Trail at Harbourfront MRT station. From



Courtesy of Chris Wee

**Southern Ridges Walk**

there, you will slowly ascend into verdant rainforest inhabited by a rich variety of flora and fauna, with occasional glimpses of the harbour.

The path later meanders through the highest pedestrian bridge in Singapore until you reach an open area known as HortPark. One of my favourite stops along the entire route, I love the flowers in a riot of colours and themed gardens. This is only one of the last stops before your end point, but as they say, it’s never the destination but the journey, that counts.

**MUST SEE** Tiong Bahru

With buildings belonging to the pre-World War II period, the Tiong Bahru neighbourhood offers an authentic taste of old Singapore.

From low-rise Art Deco apartments to shophouses selling vintage bric-a-brac, a retro vibe hangs in the air. Its charm has even attracted boutique properties like the Link Hotel and Nostalgia Hotel.

On a weekend, you’re likely to see elderly women with basketfuls of market produce or families making a beeline for the famous food centre. One of Singaporeans’ most-loved breakfast fare, *chwee kueh* (steamed rice cakes topped with preserved radish) can be had here.

I also recently discovered Yong Siak Street, where you’ll find artisan coffee at hole-in-the-wall 40 Hands, quirky independent bookstore BooksActually, and Nana & Bird, with a curated collection of apparel and accessories.



Karen Yue  
Editor, *TTGmice*

**NEW DINING PLACE** The Jackson Place

The Jackson Place is veteran restaurateur Beppe de Vitto’s first British project, which follows his successful Il Lido and Forlino Italian restaurants.

Located in Duxton Hill, the new go-to place for chic and unique dining experiences, The Jackson Place serves authentic British nosh such as bubbles and squeak, black pudding and braised pork cheeks, as well as imported English beers.

Its crab cakes with quail eggs and anchovy cream, spiced lamb chops and sticky toffee pudding took me to gastronomy heaven.

Décor is admirable too, with the interior styled after a good old-fashioned English home – think beautiful tiles and wood-panelled floors, curvy wooden tables and chairs, white cupboards and shelves, and flickering candlelight at every table.

**CONTACT** reservations@thejacksonplan.com

**MUST DO** The Tipple Exchange

The Original Singapore Walks’ The Tipple Exchange is a clever blend of history walks and quality beers that takes participants through Boat Quay, where merchants once gathered and traded in the early 19th century.

Engaging and humorous story-telling is employed, and participants get to hear about stories not available in the usual history literature.

The Tipple Exchange is not a new tour, but it impressed me immensely when I first experienced it in 2008 – it satiated my thirst for knowledge and alcohol at the same time. Email fun@singaporewalks.com for more information.

**MUST SEE** ArtScience Museum

Marina Bay Sands’ ArtScience Museum is Singapore’s latest museum offering.

Its unusual architecture – shaped like an open palm – offers many photo opportunities, especially on a clear day when the building sits in harmony with the blue sky, while its interior feeds the senses with a variety of special edition exhibitions.

By the time you read this, *Dali: Mind of a Genius – The Exhibition*, will be in the final weeks of its run. At the same time, *Titanic – The Artifact Exhibition*, will be opening on October 29, showcasing 275 authentic pieces in nine galleries.

Marina Bay Sands’ ArtScience Museum



Brian Higgs  
Assistant Editor,  
*TTG Asia Online*

**NEW DINING PLACE** Café les Moutons Noir

If you’re looking for authentic French food that won’t burn a hole in your pocket, then look no further than Café les Moutons Noir (The Black Sheep Café) in Little India.

Run by an Indian chef trained in classical French cuisine, this restaurant has gained something of a cult following among Singapore foodies. In fact, word on Chef’s Ratha’s fine culinary skills has spread to the extent that he sometimes ends up closing his humble eatery for private dinner functions, catering to an esteemed guest list that includes government ministers and the past and present presidents of Singapore.

If you do manage to secure a reservation – call early to avoid disappointment – make sure you try the excellent renditions of pan-seared foie gras, mouthwatering duck confit, and oh-so-crispy pork cheeks. For dessert, the daily soufflé and flourless chocolate tart should satisfy your sweet tooth.

**CONTACT** Tel: (65) 9272-1842  
www.theblacksheepcafe.net

**MUST DO** Little India

To experience a slice of India without actually having to be there, make sure you head down to Little India on a Sunday, when almost the entire population of South Asian workers residing in Singapore can be found at the main commercial thoroughfare, Serangoon Road, and various sidestreets.

Visit the Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple to observe Hindu devotees, or make a beeline for Mustafa Centre, a 24-hour shopping monstrosity that sells everything from electronics to toilet plungers.

**MUST SEE** 1-Altitude Gallery & Bar

Hands down the best spot in Singapore to view the sunset, 1-Altitude Gallery & Bar is the world’s highest rooftop watering hole.

Perched on the summit of One Raffles Place building, 282m above ground level, the venue is perfect for pre-dinner cocktails while taking in the magnificent views of Marina Bay and the surrounding Singapore city skyline. The cacophany of colours and shadows that form when the sun begins its daily disappearing act will take your breath away. Log on to www.1-altitude.com for more information.



Linda Haden  
Assistant Editor

**NEW DINING PLACE** Anar At Resorts World Sentosa

If you and your beloved desire a glitzy night out, then Anar at Resorts World Sentosa is definitely the place for you.

Anar, which means pomegranate in Arabic, is part of an established chain of restaurants from the UAE, the group’s only incarnation outside the Middle East.

Situated at the scenic Waterfront, the standalone restaurant sets out to seduce patrons with dazzling chandeliers and décor befitting a sultan’s palace.

Guests are treated to authentic Persian and Lebanese delights, including *Cous Cous Royale* and *Riz Be Lahem ala Djaij*, a hearty, meaty dish with its roots in the Ottoman Empire. Desserts are sublime – I sampled *Um Ali* – a candied confection of melt-in-the-mouth filo pastry, milk, raisins, pistachios and almonds scented with cinnamon that proved to be the perfect comfort food for a frazzled soul.



Singapore Tourism Board

**Katong**

**MUST DO** Singapore Botanic Gardens

A green oasis nestled in between the well-heeled districts of Bukit Timah and Tanglin, the 150-year old Singapore Botanic Gardens is a welcome respite from the crowds of neighbouring Orchard Road.

Stroll along its smooth paths, admiring the flora and fauna spread across its landscaped lawns and gardens. Stop for a romantic picnic by Symphony Lake or for a cosy meal for two at *Au Jardin Les Amis*, an exquisite French restaurant, tucked on a hill away from prying eyes in an elegant 1920s colonial bungalow.

A pitstop at the National Orchid Garden, with its rarified display of over 600 species, is not to be missed. To avoid the blistering sun, take a late-night jaunt, as the park is open till midnight everyday.

**MUST SEE** Katong

Once sitting by the seaside, Katong, in the eastern periphery of Singapore, offers a rare glimpse into the country’s rich and fast-disappearing heritage.

Eateries serving a multitude of cuisines throng this residential enclave, which was once home to swathes of Straits Chinese and Eurasian families.

Joo Chiat Road, the main thoroughfare in Katong, is a gem, with its crumbling shophouses standing as a testament to the unique architectural blend of Chinese, Malay and English colonial styles.

Time has stood still at Chin Mee Chin, a Katong institution since 1925. Its aging owners still whip up Singaporean *kopi* (coffee) and *teh* (tea) the traditional way. Half-boiled eggs and charcoal-fire toasted bread slathered with creamy homemade coconut jam and generous butter are served on antique porcelain crockery. The custard cream puffs sell out quickly and have been a childhood favourite of mine.





Amee Enriquez  
Senior Sub-editor

#### NEW DINING PLACE Antoinette at Mandarin Gallery

Regal setting. Decent food. Good service. Antoinette at the Mandarin Gallery along Orchard Road is a cosy French patisserie, with comfy chairs that make you feel like you are hanging out at a rich aunt's living room.

The food menu includes sandwiches, pasta and all-day breakfast. There is also a fine selection of teas to choose from. What they are known for, however, are the pastries and desserts, with the macarons reputedly being the best in the city.

I would recommend the hot chocolate – reminiscent of my grandmother's – and anything breakfast, like the French toast with maple syrup and fluffy pancakes.

Be prepared to queue, though, even during weekdays, as they don't accept reservations.

**CONTACT** <http://sugardaddy.com.sg/>

#### MUST DO Marina Bay Sands

Two free things that people of all ages can do at the Marina Bay Sands at night are watch the *Wonder Full* light and water show, dubbed as South-east Asia's biggest water event, and take a breezy walk along the brightly-lit Helix Bridge.

*Wonder Full* is a 13-minute nightly show that features state-of-the-art laser lights and the water at Marina Bay, set to an original score recorded by a 140-piece orchestra. On the other hand, aside from being good exercise, walking along the Helix Bridge could also be an educational trip. The meaning of CGAT, anyone?



Haw Par Villa

#### MUST SEE Haw Par Villa

Strangely fascinating is an adjective that best sums up the 150 dioramas and 1,000 statues at Haw Par Villa, a Chinese mythological theme park at Pasir Panjang.

While the park has been around since 1937, it has not been as popular on tourist itineraries, but it should be interesting to those looking for something different. Conceptualised by the men behind Tiger Balm liniment, it takes the visitor through 10 courts of hell that includes depictions of humans getting disemboweled, grinning devils and lots of blood and gore.

As if that were not enough, there are other weird statues to contend with – cavorting mermaids, mythological depictions and a menagerie of animals. Access should be easier with the opening of the long-anticipated MRT Circle Line.

"Strangely fascinating is an adjective that best sums up the 150 dioramas and 1,000 statues at Haw Par Villa, a Chinese mythological theme park along Pasir Panjang."

Amee Enriquez  
Senior Sub-Editor



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# Thailand projects growth

Destination targets a nine per cent increase in revenue for 2012, reports **Sirima Eamtako**



Thailand has proven its resilience. It recorded a 12.6 per cent increase to 15.9 million visitors last year, despite challenges in the domestic and international scene. Based on visitor rebound, and with possible crises factored in, the country is expecting 18-18.3 million visitors for this year and 19.5 million in 2012.

Thailand hopes to generate US\$24.9 billion in revenue from foreign visitors next year. This is an increase of nine per cent over this year's estimated US\$23.4 billion in receipts from international travellers.

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) governor, Suraphon Svetasreni, said that the projection already factored in possible crises that may happen.

The figures are also based on last year's 15.9 million tourists, up 12.6 per cent over 2009, even as Thailand faced nearly three months of political turmoil then. Visitor numbers rebounded from July last year, according to the Thai travel trade.

In the first half of this year, the country recorded 9,685,847 foreign visitors, a year-on-year increase of 28.1 per cent.

Suraphon said that despite visitor rebound and signs of continued growth, the country's tourism industry would still be facing a period of unpredictable problems – be they natural disasters locally and globally, and political situations within the country and in source markets.

"Responding to constant and incessant change has become our biggest challenge," he added.

For next year, TAT will continue to market the country using the *Amazing Thailand Always Amazes You* branding.

Inbound tour operators believe that Thailand stands the chance of sustaining growth in arrivals, given the country's wealth of culture and nature offerings, but there remains areas of concern.

What Thailand needs to sustain growth in arrivals is political stability, said Khiri Group CEO, Willem Neimeijer.

Asian Trails, CEO, Luzi Matzig agreed, saying that marketing-wise, it would be important to have peace in the country.

He added that the country's infrastructure was also in dire need of improvement.

In addition, inbound tour operators point to human resources as a vital area for Thailand to achieve tourism growth. Diethelm Travel Group CEO, John Watson, said that although the bar was already set pretty high, it could still be taken up a notch.



"Human resources are the key. Air links, marketing and product development all count for nothing if the customer experience is not good and that, mostly, is down to the attitude of the people they meet – on arrival, transportation, hotels, restaurants, attractions and so on."

**John Watson**, CEO, Diethelm Travel Group

## Hotel Update | Reservations on room rates

Hotels in Thailand are keeping a cautiously optimistic approach on rate movement in view of burgeoning supply, despite the rebound in visitor figures and signs of continued growth in arrivals.

Thai Hotels Association (THA) president Prakrit Chinamourphong said there was room to increase rates, provided that the current growth in arrivals continued and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) pressed on with its marketing strategies in drawing new and repeat visitors.

He added that if the domestic political situation remained calm and if TAT continued to focus on attracting high-spend market segments, hotels should be able to increase room rates by five to 10 per cent.

Centara Hotels and Resorts is looking at increasing room rates by shifting its focus towards the MICE and corporate markets, said its sales and marketing senior vice-president, Chris Bailey.

He said that strong forward bookings for the chain's properties



**Furama Silom, Bangkok**

in Bangkok, Phuket, Hua Hin and Pattaya from all markets would allow a five to 10 per cent rate increment.

Accor operations director for Thailand, Paul Stevens, said that the chain's rate strategy would vary by location, but increases for hotels in Bangkok were likely if supply became more stable.

Oversupply in key Thai cities remained an obstacle in bringing up rates, as the current growth in arrivals was mainly from short-stay regional markets, Stevens explained.

Against the odds of rising supply and sluggish room rates,

new openings are in the pipeline throughout Thailand, which according to the THA, has more than 500,000 rooms now.

In Bangkok, some 103,000 rooms based on THA's count have ballooned by 2,143 rooms in the first half of this year, and will further grow by 2,297 keys in the second half and 4,709 rooms in 2012.

Phuket, Koh Samui, Pattaya, Hua Hin and Krabi also saw new openings in the first six months, and look set to see more competition flooding its shores.

## Destination by the numbers

**19.5** At least 19.5 million international travellers are expected to visit Thailand in 2012, an increase of about nine per cent from the Tourism Authority of Thailand's (TAT) estimate of 18-18.3 million tourists for this year

**24.9** Projected revenue to be generated from the targeted 19.5 million foreign visitors in 2012 is US\$24.9 billion, up from about US\$23.40 billion in estimated income from foreign tourists in 2011.

**12.6** Thailand had a 12.6 percentage growth to 15.9 million visitor arrivals in 2010. East Asia contributed the most number at 51.25 per cent or 8.2 million visitors, followed by Europe at 27.9 per cent or 4.4 million tourists.

**9.7** The number of foreign visitors who have visited Thailand in the first half of 2011 is 9.7 million, representing an increase of 28.1 per cent over the same period in 2010. East Asian visitors jumped the highest at 35 per cent to five million tourists.

**50.8** Russian tourists to Thailand in the first six months of 2011 had a growth of 50.8 per cent to 460,555, one of the fastest-growing international markets for Thailand.

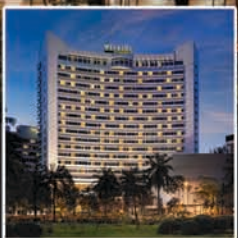
**60** Suvarnabhumi Airport will be able to accommodate 60 million passengers per year from the current 45 million after its expansion plan is completed in 2015. Its operator, Airports of Thailand, is also expanding Phuket Airport to increase its handling capacity from 6.5 million to 12.5 million passengers by 2013.

Sources: Tourism Authority of Thailand, Thai Airways International



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# Malaysia keeps it green

Ecotourism a strategy to increase arrivals from longhaul markets, reports **N. Nithiyananthan**



In Malaysia, arrivals were up 4.2 per cent to 24.6 million in 2010 over 2009, and 1.2 per cent to 1.9 million in January 2011 over January 2010. While on track with the numbers, the NTO is placing greater emphasis on the introduction of products that would boost the country's share of high-yield visitors.

Ecotourism has been identified as one of Malaysia's specific strategies to widen its arrivals base from non-regional markets and increase yield.

Deputy tourism minister Dr James Dawot Mamit said that the growing global trend of ecotourism could help the country generate surplus revenue.

Markets identified for the promotion of ecotourism tours were Europe, the US and Australia, from which 50 per cent of the ecotourism target market was to be generated. States rich in biodiversity, such as Johor, Perak, Selangor, Kedah (Langkawi Island in particular), Sabah and Sarawak, have been identified as ecotourism destinations.

Asian Overland Services (AOS) Travel & Tours managing director, Yap Sook Ling, said her company's own focus supported this strategy.

"The trend of travellers today is very different. They want to see, feel the place and do something useful with the community," she said. "These (eco-tourism) products appeal to those in Europe and those from mature markets such as Hong Kong and Japan."

Tourism Malaysia has set a long-term goal of attracting 36 million visitors by 2020. With the increase in arrivals by 4.2 per cent to 24.6 million in 2010 over 2009, and a further increase in arrivals by 1.2 per cent to 1.92 million in January 2011 compared to the same month last year, the country is on track with its upward trend in arrivals at a comfortable rate.

Neighbouring countries continue to dominate arrival numbers, with Singapore (13 million), Indonesia (2.5 million), Thailand (1.5 million) and Brunei (1.1 million) accounting for more than 73 per cent of arrivals for 2010. China (1.1 million), India (690,000) and Australia (590,000) are also big source markets for the destination.

The arrivals trend for January 2011 followed an almost identical pattern as that of last year's.

Red Apple Travel & Tours managing director, Arokia Das Anthony, who is a specialist in the Indian market, said that business was up 20-25 per cent so far this year. "The numbers are only going up," he said. "We are barely scratching the surface. The market is very promising."



"Business has become more challenging. Distribution channels are changing. Agents need to adapt to stay relevant and see what value we can bring into the chain."

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

## Hotel Update | Modest increase in occupancy

Hotels in Malaysia are experiencing a growth in occupancy this year. They are maintaining a positive outlook for 2012, with a focus on the regional market.

Berjaya Hotels & Resorts Group head of sales and marketing Mondhi Mecja said: "Rates increased by eight per cent, while occupancy rose by two per cent."

However, the increase in occupancy across the group's six city and resort properties was lower than expected. "There was a fall in the European and Middle Eastern markets. The demand to travel long distances for vacations, especially from Europe, has softened," Mecja said.

With the completion of upgrades to its Langkawi property this year, the group's rates are expected to increase by six to eight per cent next year.

Overall, the group expects occupancy to rise by about two per cent in 2012.

"Our focus will be on the regional market," Mecja said.

Seri Pacific Hotel Kuala Lumpur

is also experiencing a good year compared to 2010. Director of sales and marketing Zakaria Musa said: "Rates have increased by 15-20 per cent, while occupancy has risen by 12-13 per cent."

Both rate increases are expected to be maintained into 2012.

Zakaria attributes the hotel's success to its ability to change strategy. He said: "When we noted the problems in Europe, we regionalised and localised our markets."

ASEAN offers great potential for Seri Pacific. "It is stable and safe," Zakaria said.

Markets that have turned out to be winners are Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Laos.

At Micasa Hotel Apartments, occupancy more than doubled in 2011 compared to the same period last year. In July, occupancy closed at 70 per cent.

However, director of sales and marketing Pamela Chong said: "Rates had to be revised to boost occupancy."

Chong could not offer a clear outlook for 2012. "The opening of new hotels could soften the market," she said.



Seri Pacific Hotel Kuala Lumpur

## Destination by the numbers

**53** About 53 per cent of tourist arrivals to Malaysia in 2010 were from one country – Singapore. Its 13 million visitors recorded an increase of 2.4 per cent over 12.7 million arrivals in 2009.

**17** India recorded a 17 per cent increase in the rate of its tourist arrivals to Malaysia in 2010 compared to 2009, the highest rate spike among all tourist source markets.

**6** Six travel agencies are offering helicopter tours around Kuala Lumpur, Langkawi and Sabah under the 1Malaysia Helicopter Tour Packages brand. Prices start at 835 ringgit (US\$278) per person.

**28** The 'floating' Bridge Bar at the G-Tower Hotel is located on level 28. Suspended between two buildings, the bar offers impressive views of Kuala Lumpur.

**4.2** With tourist arrivals in 2010 increasing by 4.2 per cent to 24.6 million compared to 2009, Malaysia is on track to meet its target of 36 million arrivals by 2020.

**40** More than 40 interactive rides and attractions will be offered at Legoland Malaysia, Legoland's first theme park in Asia, when it opens in Johor late this year.

**207** With more than 207 golf facilities, Tourism Malaysia is actively working with the Malaysian Golf Tourism Association (MGTA) to make these tourism products.





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# Indonesia's sunny outlook

Trade remains upbeat about future business despite stronger rupiah, reports **Mimi Hudoyo**



Indonesia is facing tough competition from Thailand for the longhaul market due to the weak economy in Europe and a stronger rupiah. With a robust regional and Australian market, however, the trade is optimistic business will still expand next year, especially in Bali.

Despite the flat European market, tour operators in Indonesia said that business was growing this year because of the country's improved economy and the stronger rupiah.

Pacto business development director, Umberto Cadamuro, said: "The first half of the year was outstanding for us, especially in Bali. For the rest of Indonesia we saw a stable demand for overland tours for Jakarta, while a strong growth had been registered for other areas, especially Kalimantan and Nusa Tenggara."

Asian Trails Indonesia managing director André Seiler said: "Trips to Java have increased for us and we see an even higher increase for trips to Toraja Land in Sulawesi and also Lombok. Sumatra is doing better as well, but (the growth) is still slow."

Both operators are projecting business to grow by 20 per cent this year. Similarly, Panorama Destination Jogjakarta director Triagung Pramono Adi said that the city had completely recovered from the impact of the Mount Merapi eruption, and business was actually better than last year.

The first six months saw arrivals to Indonesia up by 6.4 per cent to 3,597,632. The ministry targets arrivals this year to reach 7.3 million to 7.7 million.

Ministry of Culture and Tourism director of international promotions Noviendi Makalam said: "We are optimistic that we will be able to achieve the target, as the second half of the year is usually bigger than the first half."

"However, we are not being complacent. We still have many activities to ramp up arrivals."

The government has yet to announce its target arrivals and revenue for 2012. The trade sees the opportunity to regain the more traditional European market, with the start of Garuda's Makassar-Singapore services.

Incito Tours managing director Ng Sebastian said: "Travellers who need to connect in Jakarta or Bali to get to Makassar, can now fly directly here from Singapore. This lessens the concern of some travellers about having to take an airline that is still under the EU ban to connect to the second- or third-tier destinations."

Bali Hotels Association chairman, Jean-Charles Le Coz, said: "Indonesia as a whole looks set to grow as well as others in the region."



"Changing contracts from the US dollar to rupiah would be extremely beneficial to the travel industry, considering how much our currency is appreciating."

**Umberto Cadamuro**, business development director, Pacto

## Hotel Update | Robust bookings predicted

The hotel industry in Indonesia is expecting another healthy showing in 2012, as demand from international and domestic markets continue to improve.

Horwath HTL Jakarta director and Indonesia Hotel and Restaurant Association (IHRA) board member, Rio Kondo, said: "Both 2010 and 2011 are great years for Jakarta and Bali, but especially Bali. The main supporting factor is the strong increase in visitor arrivals."

While Jakarta occupancy remains flat at 70 per cent in the first five months of 2011 compared to the same period in 2010, the average rate slightly increased from US\$70 to US\$75, based on Horwath data.

In Bali, occupancy was 70 per cent in the first five months, while rates increased from US\$115 in 2010 to US\$130.

For the rest of Indonesia, healthy occupancies in most parts of the country have been mostly credited to the domestic market.

Swiss-Belhotel International

reported average occupancies ranging from 65 per cent to 75 per cent, with rates from 600,000-800,000 rupiah (US\$71-US\$94).

According to Aston International vice president sales and marketing Norbert Vas, most of their hotels were enjoying 80-95 per cent occupancy in the first half of 2011, with Bali consistently fully booked.

Many hotel additions, from Swiss-Belhotel, Aston, Accor and PHM Hospitality, are in the pipeline. But even with this, hoteliers are still

projecting that rates will increase by five to 10 per cent across Indonesia, while Bali can go up to 20 per cent in 2012.

Swiss-Belhotel regional director operations and project, Bill Vincent, said: "There is strong demand for (good) accommodation facilities, for business and leisure is increasing in most parts of the country."

Aston's Vas said: "The Indonesian economy is again growing by 6.5 per cent this year and will continue to grow. This fuels demand, which in turn increases yield. In addition, the Indonesian government is successfully moving forward with much needed structural changes."

Bali Hotels Association chairman Jean-Charles Le Coz said: "Room rates will (and should) always increase in a healthy economy – all costs go up, inflation in Indonesia and around the world is positive."

"The growth will depend on the markets and the strategy of each hotel...between 10-20 per cent seems reasonable."



**Harris Hotel**

### Destination by the numbers

**10.5** Tourist arrivals to Bali in the first six months of 2011 rose by 10.6 per cent to 1,303,609. Data from the Central Board of Statistics-Bali shows that Australia, China, Malaysia and Singapore booked the highest growth rates.

**50** In a bid to develop its budget carrier Citilink, Garuda Indonesia placed an order of 50 Airbus 320s. The airline will receive delivery starting in 2014.

**1,000** According to the Jogjakarta Tourism Office, the city is expecting an additional 1,000 rooms between now and 2013 to help ease the destination's room crunch.

**25,000** Indonesia and Australia have signed an agreement to increase air seat allotment between the two countries to 25,000 seats per week. This represents 70 per cent increase in capacity compared to the previous 14,800 seats.

**60** Intiwhiz International, a member of local property developer Intiland, is targeting 20 Hotel Whiz in two years and 60 other budget properties in five years.

**20** Trans Corp, a group of companies in the media, lifestyle retail and entertainment sectors, is planning to have 20 indoor theme parks around Indonesia by 2020.

**2.2** State-owned railway KAI is planning to develop railway tracks between the Jakarta city centre and Soekarno-Hatta International Airport by 2014. The project will cost an estimated 2.2 trillion rupiah (US\$235 million).



Indonesia

New shows and attractions to draw in the crowds

Devdan show in Bali

The newly-renovated 700 seat Bali Nusa Dua Theatre is now home to the permanent musical extravaganza *Devdan*, *Treasure of the Archipelago*, which soft-opened in June.

*Devdan* is a traditional contemporary dance musical and acrobatic show that unfolds over 80 minutes and features 60 performers and 50 stage crew.

The Bali Nusa Dua Theatre re-opened after it was converted from an open-air amphitheatre into a theatrical complex, with modern stage, sound and lighting system. At press time, the shows are staged four times a week, and may increase up to six times later in the year.

Ticket prices range from US\$45 to US\$120.

Contact  
www.devdanshow.com

Trans Studio Bandung

Trans Studio Bandung has opened in Bandung, West Java, following the success of Trans Studio Makassar, which opened in the capital of South Sulawesi in 2009.

Among the attractions are

the Yamaha Race Coaster, which is one of the three top extreme roller coasters in the world, the Giant Swing, Trans Car racing cars and performances from 4D Marvel superheroes.

Trans Studio Bandung also offers an inside look at TV and media production, as it is owned by a major TV studio.

The theme park targets families from the domestic Jakarta and West Java areas, as well as the Malaysian market.

Contact  
www.transstudiobandung.com



Devdan show in Bali

Java Active Tour

While it may seem similar to traditional Java overland tours, the Java Active Tour by Aneka Kartika Tours is more environmentally friendly. The nine-day tour includes trekking, walking, cycling and train rides, different from the usual sit-in coach arrangement.

The tour starts from Jogjakarta, across to Bali, passing through quiet villages near Borobudur, then on to the acclaimed Kaliandra Eco Resort, Kalibaru and Mount Ijen.



Mount Merapi on Java Island

Contact  
www.aneka-tours.co.id

Fantastic multimedia show at Ancol

*Fantastique Multi-media Show* and Underwater Theatre are new attractions at Ancol Dreamland, an integrated tourism resort and amusement park along Jakarta's waterfront.

The *Fantastique Multi-media Show* uses a water fountain with 3D mapping and claims to use

more advanced technology compared to other water fountains in South-east Asia.

The Underwater Theatre in Ocean Dream Samudra features performances with sea creatures.

Contact  
www.ancol.com







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Amara Sanctuary Resort Sentosa



# Pack these in the itinerary

## Thailand



Royal Barge

### The 17<sup>th</sup> Royal Barge Procession for the king

To commemorate His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Seventh Cycle Birthday Anniversary – the seventh or 12-year circle of life in Asian tradition – Thailand will hold the Royal Barge Procession on December 5. This will also mark the royal *kathin* ceremony at the end of Buddhist Lent on October 22.

The Royal Barge Procession will be the 17<sup>th</sup> of its kind in the reign of the current king. The last event was held in November 2007. This year's event will involve 52 traditional royal barges and 2,500 oarsmen.

**Contact**  
Email: prdiv3@tat.or.th  
www.tatnews.org

### The Royal Flora Ratchaphruek 2011

Thailand's garden show will be held in the northern capital of Chiang Mai from November 9 to February 15, 2012.

The horticultural exposition will feature a lush and refreshing display of colourful plants, flowers and greenery from Thailand and 30 other countries spread out over an 80-hectare area.



#### Contact

Tel: (66-2) 579-7531  
Email: royalfloa@royalfloa2011.com  
www.royalfloa2011.com

### Chiang Mai's new convention centre

The city's long-delayed convention and exhibition centre will finally open its doors in July next year, according to Thailand's Ministry of Tourism and Sports (MoTS).

The state-funded MICE facility will comprise a 10,000m<sup>2</sup> exhibition space and a 3,000-seat convention hall on a 52.16-hectare plot in Chiang Mai, and will likely be managed by a private professional venue management company.

**Contact**  
Tel: (66-2) 283-1555  
www.mots.go.th

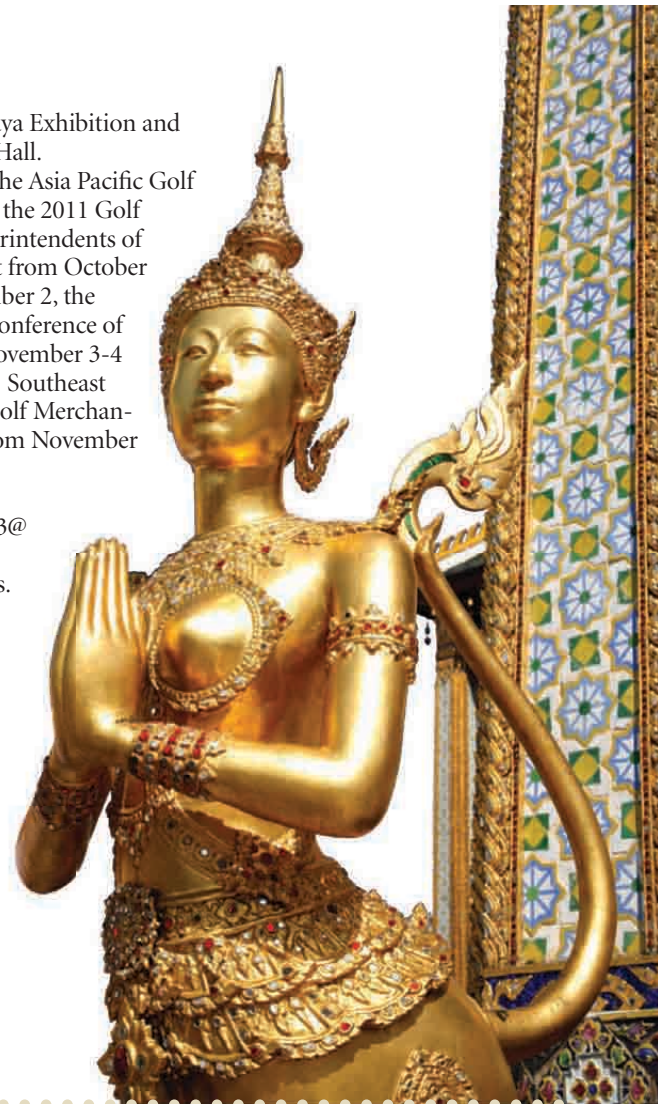
### Gearing to become Asia's next golf hub

As part of its plans to become the region's golf hub, Thailand will play host to four golf events from October 31 to November

6 at the Pattaya Exhibition and Conference Hall.

They are the Asia Pacific Golf Summit and the 2011 Golf Course Superintendents of Asia Summit from October 31 to November 2, the 2011 PGA Conference of Asia from November 3-4 and the 2011 Southeast Asia/India Golf Merchandise Expo from November 4-6.

**Contact**  
Email: prdiv3@tat.or.th  
www.tatnews.org



## Malaysia

### Swiss-Garden Residences in KL

The Swiss Garden International Hotels, Resorts & Inns brand has opened the Swiss Garden Residences Kuala Lumpur.

The property offers 478 units of apartments, ranging from 51m<sup>2</sup> to 69.7m<sup>2</sup>, as well as a penthouse with an area of 251m<sup>2</sup>. It also offers 1,000m<sup>2</sup> of convention space, incorporating a ballroom and seven meeting rooms. It was built at a cost of RM330 million (US\$111 million).

**Contact**  
www.swissgarden.com

### Bargain shopping

Claiming to be the first outlet of its kind in South-east Asia,



Swiss Garden Residences Kuala Lumpur

Johor Premium Outlets (JPO), a premium shopping facility, will open its doors in Kulaijaya, Johor on November 11. JPO will provide a wide selection of off-season branded items. Shoppers will be offered discounts of between 25 and 65 per cent year-round. The RM149 million complex has an area of 31,000 m<sup>2</sup> and is located on a 17.8 hectare site.

**Contact**  
www.genting.com

### Langkawi resort freshens up

More than 100 rooms have been completed as part of the ongoing room renovation programme at the Berjaya Langkawi Resort. The remaining 241 rooms are set to be finished by July next year.

The rooms are the first of a three-stage upgrade costing RM40 million. The second stage will involve the junior chalets on water, including extensions of the units, while stage three will focus on the main buildings, reception area and restaurants. The property will remain open during the entire refurbishment process.

**Contact**  
langkawi.rsvn@berjahotel.com  
www.berjahotel.com

### MASwings goes international

MASwings, the subsidiary of Malaysia Airlines (MAS) serving domestic routes within Sabah and Sarawak, went international on October 1, with a flight from Kota Kinabalu to Bandar Seri Begawan in Brunei.

Also on schedule are flights from Kuching to Pontianak in Kalimantan and from Kuching to Bandar Seri Begawan. Depending on how the services are received, the airline would consider starting flights within Borneo and to the Philippines. MASwings currently has a fleet of 10 ATR72-500s.

**Contact**  
www.maswings.com.my

### New cable car

With the aim of doubling the number of tourists to the coastal town of Port Dickson (PD), from 1.5 million annually to three million, the country's first mainland-to-island cable car facility will be built from the new PD Waterfront to Arang Island.



The cable car will span 50m.

While the island is currently uninhabited, its first phase of completed development includes shophouses, a seafood restaurant for 2,000 people and a hypermarket. Phase two and three of the project would see the construction of a convention centre, hotel, theme park, recreational park and apartments. Also in the plans are a multi-purpose jetty to facilitate the entry of more foreign tourists and a 2 km-long boardwalk along the beach.

**Contact**  
www.ns.gov.my/mb

### Water sports at Putrajaya and Kuching

Waterskiing and waterboarding are now offered at the Putrajaya Lake and the Kuching Waterfront by Waterski & Waterboard World Cup. Rates in Putrajaya are RM320 per hour on weekends and public holidays and RM260 per hour on the weekdays.

In Kuching, price ranges from RM300 per hour on weekends and public holidays and RM250 per hour on the weekdays. Coaching is available at an additional charge of RM120 per hour.

**Contact**  
www.waterski.com.my





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A low-angle, night-time photograph of the Marina Bay Sands hotel in Singapore. The building's iconic three towers are illuminated with warm yellow lights, and the SkyPark at the top is also brightly lit. The sky is dark, making the building stand out.

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**Date:** 20 October 2011 (Thursday)

**Time:** 9:30pm to 1am

**Venue:** **Avalon** (Crystal Pavilion South L1)  
Marina Bay Sands, 10 Bayfront Avenue, Singapore 018956

Register your attendance at ITB Asia, Hall 602 Booth H16, 10am to 3pm  
by 20 October 2011.

PROUDLY PRESENTED BY

  
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# It's a small world after all

From Nepal to Tanzania, the world is on show at ITB Asia. By Patrick Tan



Amadeus Asia's Kartikeya Tripathi and Trust International Singapore's Younes Hammoui



Cosma Tour Spain's José María Sánchez Morente (left)



Tanzania National Parks' Pascal Shelutete and Victor Ketansi



Travelport Hong Kong's Michael Yates and Philip Jacobs & Associates Singapore's Scott Blume



Shangri-La Hotel & Resort Nepal's Raju Bikram Shah and his wife



JTB (Hong Kong)'s Maria Yiu and Rachel Chum



Meet Taiwan's Grace Chiu and Tess Yang



IHR Asia Pacific's Bruce Hancock and Assumption University Thailand's Scott Michael Smith

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# Descending on Suntec city

Suntec Singapore gets crowded with travel people as ITB Asia registration and WIT open. By Patrick Tan



Bridge Mobile Singapore's Jane Man, Claudio Checchia, Veronica Yeo, Achuth Pai, June Ong and Kee Ghim Hui



Accor Thailand's Emile Couton and Accor Singapore's Markus Keller



Worldhotels Germany's Paulo Salvador and Roland Jegge, and Solare Hotels & Resorts Japan's Jack Tan



Lac Hong Voyages Vietnam's Robert Tan, Messe Berlin Singapore's Nino Gruettke and Ap Best Travel Deals Singapore's Patrick Lee



HotelTravel.com Thailand's Olivier Dombey, Berjaya Hotels & Resorts Malaysia's Chris Cheong and Trippiece Japan's Ryutaro Yokoyama



Rembrandt Hotel & Towers Bangkok's Krosakorn Rokrunroj and Eric Hallin



Singapore Tourism Board's Nix Tang Wanxin and Yvonne Yeo Yian May



STIReservations.com US's Mr & Mrs Peter Brunner



Urdam Tours & Travels Pakistan's Asghar Shaheen and Media Team & Travel Germany's Claudia Mitteneder



Travelstart Africa's Stephan Ekbergh



Seri Pacific Hotel Kuala Lumpur's Eva Cheong and Edwin Teng



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## Travelport voted No.1 in Asia Pacific yet again

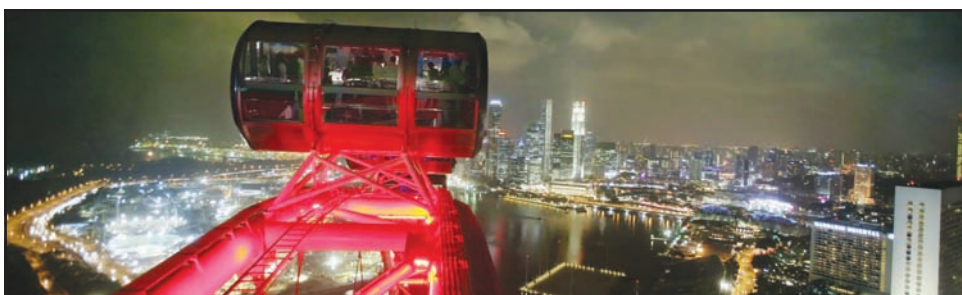


We'd like to thank the travel industry for voting Travelport as the Best GDS in Asia Pacific for the third year in a row in the 2011 TTG Travel Awards. We are delighted that our industry peers continue to recognise Travelport's commitment to delivering great service and game-changing solutions such as Travelport Universal Desktop and Travelport Rooms and More.

Discover how you can benefit from our award winning solutions at the Travelport booth (G24) at ITB Asia 2011.



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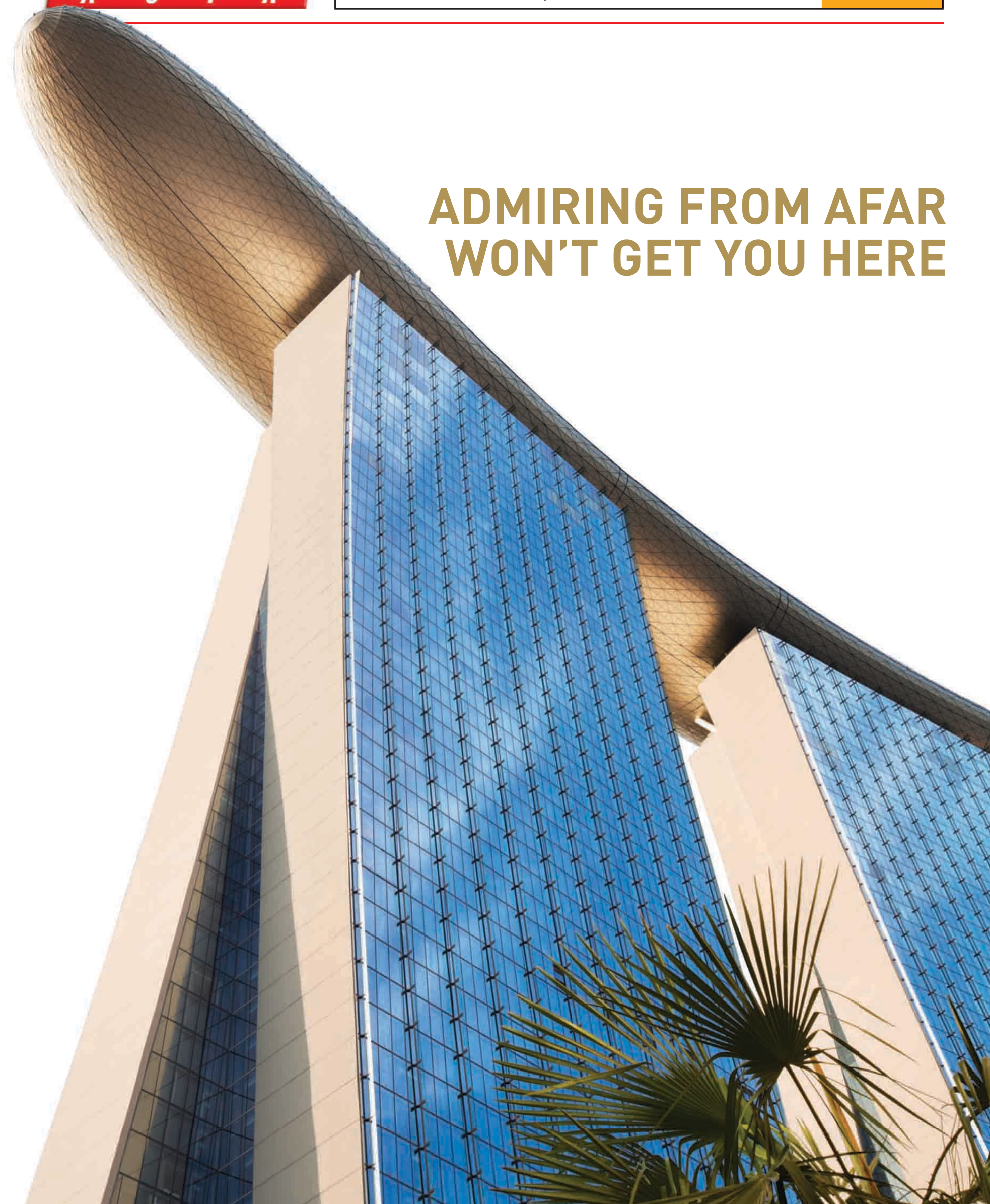
**Official ITB Asia Daily**

October 19, 2011

Issue

**1**

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## HOTEL

### How many hotels can claim to be the icon of their city?

With 2,561 luxurious rooms and suites spread over 55 floors, most overlooking the city or the South China Sea, Marina Bay Sands is largest and most spectacular hotel in Singapore.



## MICE

### Never business as usual, but business done right

With 1.3 million square feet of configurable space spread over five levels, the Sands Expo and Convention Center is Singapore’s largest and most versatile. It is home to Southeast Asia’s largest ballroom, and can comfortably accommodate 45,000 delegates, 2,000 exhibition booths, and 250 meetings.



## THE SHOPPES AT MARINA BAY SANDS

### A glamorous gathering

Flagship designer boutiques, new concept stores and the world’s first Louis Vuitton Island Maison, complimented by a variety of bars and cafés in more than 800,000 square feet of shopping haven. The Event Plaza on the waterfront comes alive every evening with Wonder Full, the largest Light and Water Spectacular in Southeast Asia.



## TITANIC: THE ARTIFACT EXHIBITION

### Set foot into the legendary RMS Titanic

No other maritime disaster has captured the imagination of the public like that of the Titanic, with more than 25 million tickets sold to date, is one of the most successful exhibitions in the world. Marvel at 275 actual artifacts, 14 of which have never been seen before, recovered from the wreck 3,800 meters below the Atlantic Ocean.



## BANYAN TREE SPA & FITNESS CLUB

### Be embraced by the Tree of Life

Rejuvenate yourself at the 1,213 square meter urban spa located 55 floors above, which offers a suite of distinctive treatments in 15 uniquely designed rooms with panoramic views.



## CRYSTAL PAVILIONS

### Be transported to other worlds

Two underwater tunnels via The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands® take visitors to the two Crystal Pavilions that appear to float on the Bay. Louis Vuitton Island Maison, the first of its kind in the world, occupies the northern pavilion, while Hollywood super club and lounge Avalon and Pangaea in the south is where the party of a new era begins.







## ASIA'S DINING DESTINATION

### Let your palate take flight

7 celebrity chef restaurants, a bevy of fine dining options, specialty cafés, waterfront and alfresco settings, as well as popular street eats from around the region make for infinite epicurean experiences at Asia's Dining Destination.



ASIA'S DINING  
DESTINATION  
MARINA BAY SANDS

## SANDS SKYPARK

### The Crown Jewel of Marina Bay Sands

Stretching further than the Eiffel Tower laid down, longer than four and a half A380 jumbo jets, Sands SkyPark® boasts an impressive 12,400 square meters of lush tropical garden and features the world's largest and highest outdoor infinity pool. The Observation Deck rests on a gravity-defying cantilever, one of the largest of its kind in the world.



## ARTSCIENCE MUSEUM

### Moshe Safdie's lotus-inspired architecture is an exhibit in itself

Coined "the welcoming hand of Singapore" to visitors from all over the world, the iconic ArtScience Museum has over 50,000 square feet of galleries that host marquee exhibitions by leading collections and museums around the world.



## THEATERS

### WICKED The Broadway Musical

Seen by 30 million people and winner of 35 major awards, WICKED has broken every box office record around the world, making it one of the most successful shows in theater history. For a strictly limited season from 7 December 2011, be transported into the magical atmosphere of the Land of Oz.



## WATER TAXIS

### All roads lead to Marina Bay Sands, but why settle for the conventional one?

Take the scenic route via Water Taxis, operating every 15 minutes, daily from 9am till the last service at 10pm, with ticket prices starting at \$4.

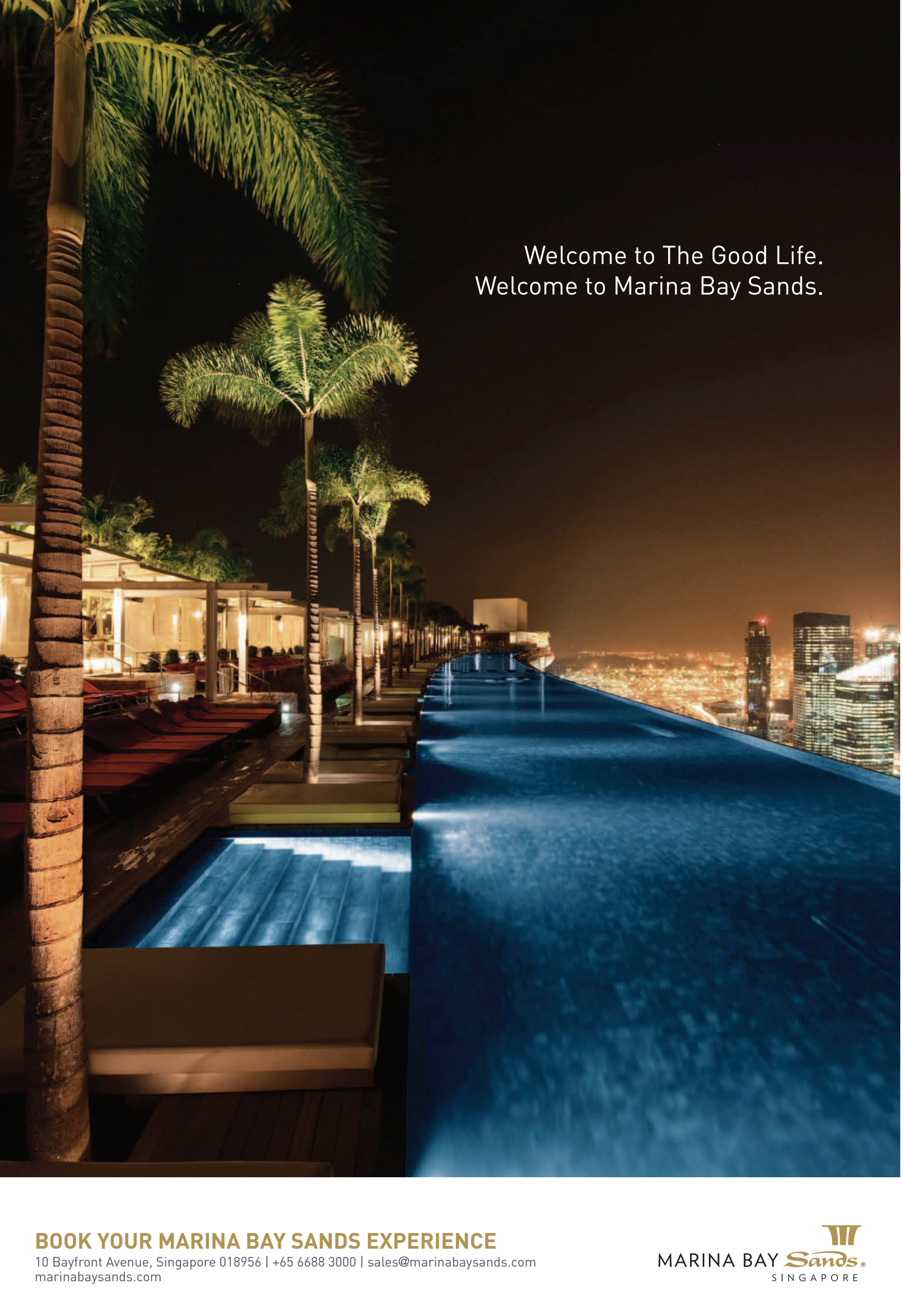


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