



## Unfair Ebola fallout

Geographical misunderstanding is scarier than Ebola, opines trade

By Mimi Hudoyo

DESPITE their locations thousands of kilometres away from the Ebola epicentre, tourism in other parts of Africa are reporting fallouts from the outbreak.

Damian Sadie, general manager, Rovos Rail South Africa, said the train is losing about US\$100,000 a week in the last two months as a result of cancellations, which are mostly coming from the US, China and Japan.

Expressing his bewilderment, he said: "It is very strange because travellers taking our (luxury rail) tours are global, well-informed travellers who have been to so many countries.

"It is also strange that we received cancellations from Texas when there are cases in their backyard in Dallas and Houston."

Likewise, Constance Hotels and Resorts marketing coordinator, Emily Li, shared that the group lost significant business

and postponement requests from China at its Mauritius properties since the Ebola outbreak.

"I think it is the lack of awareness of Mauritius' position in Africa that travellers are afraid to go," said Li, adding that the hotel group is working with tour operators to educate clients on the real situation.

World Travel & Tourism Council president & CEO, David Scowless, said: "The right reaction is the US, the UK and Scandinavian countries sending in medical personnel into the affected countries; the consumer reaction is what we need to (tackle). There is already a shortfall of people going to Africa from the US and Europe.

"They don't understand the geography of the continent – the affected parts of Africa are closer to London than Kenya, for example. They are cancelling holidays very unnecessarily."

Some destinations in Africa, however, claimed they are not feeling the impact of Ebola. Twiga Tour in Kenya managed to contain the damage through preventive actions, said sales and marketing director, Rahim Manji.

"We realise many travellers are lacking in geographical knowledge so as soon as there was the outbreak, (the government and trade associations) in Kenya sent out information on the disease, the affected areas, number of cases and where we are," he said.

For another player, Le Voyageur, its location on Madagascar, an island on its own, has cushioned it from cancellations, according to managing director, Michael Horn.

Meanwhile, Patrick Debus, permanent secretary at World Federation of Consuls, said the association has shifted one of its annual conferences, originally planned for Nigeria next year, to South Africa. – *Additional reporting by Paige Lee Pei Qi*



Manji: educating consumers is key

## Diethelm's new CEO set for change

By Raini Hamdi

MAARTEN Groeneveld fills the shoes of Richard Brouwer as CEO of Diethelm Travel Group at a time when disruptions in the travel distribution landscape keep continuing (see page 2) and there is no guarantee for survival whether you're a big-name OTA or a pedigree traditional player.

Groeneveld is guiding Diethelm through its latest investment worth US\$2 million on an IT system that will "change the way we operate, purchase, transact bookings", which he said is the backbone of Diethelm's survival in the future. "We are not going to go away. We have been here for 58 years, we have plans going forward," he said.

**BACKGROUND** Groeneveld joined the group in 2000 in its Myanmar operations and has been COO since 2012. He is widely held as the techno-geek of the company and has been working with Brouwer on the new system, which will be implemented in all 12 Diethelm companies across Asia, with Thailand going live in April. His promotion to CEO, effective December 1, came as a surprise to many, although Groeneveld said internally "it has been in the making for some time".

**FORCES OF CHANGE** "There are two major factors. One, salaries in Asia will go up in 2015 and beyond. As a DMC, that's always one of the biggest costs,



### MAN TO WATCH

so we do have to become more efficient and only computers can help us. With the rising cost of human resource, we also have to train and develop people better, so they become more efficient," he said. "Secondly, there is a rising middle class in Asia and with this system, we will have the capability to distribute to that market in a way we previously did not have."

**WHAT HE'S DOING** His focus will be on putting to work UK technology specialist Open Destinations' flagship software, Travel Studio, in all Diethelm offices and milking the ROI. "I don't foresee any huge expansion in the immediate term as we focus to enhance our distribution and take on different markets than we had before."

Asked about Diethelm's profit level, Groeneveld said: "In Thailand today, it's hard to run fantastic figures, but our goal is not for this year or next, but for the future. Richard and I have been working hard on this; it's a shame he is not going to be part of it going forward, but we have started the process and I'm ready."

### NUMBERS THAT MATTER

**39** The percentage of Asian Millennials (referring to the generation born between 1981 and 1996) who are likely to stay with their company for the next three years, according a study commissioned by the Singapore Tourism Board covering

over 5,000 Millennial employees and over 1,500 managers across Asia's travel industry.

**49** The percentage of Asian Millennials who chose career progression as the top factor in their decision to work in the travel industry, over strong company reputation (26 per cent) and the opportunity

to meet and interact with new people (25 per cent).

**75** The percentage of Indian Millennials who are satisfied with their work experience in the travel industry, the highest level recorded in the region. Japan ranked the lowest in job satisfaction at 44 per cent, while Singapore recorded 66 per cent.



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## News/Snapshots

# Blurred lines

Meta-search sites muscle in on OTAs and traditional players

By Gracia Chiang

META-search sites are muscling in on OTAs and other traditional players, and pundits expect the disruption in travel distribution to continue with the end winners and losers being anybody's guess.

With facilitated or assisted bookings gaining ground in Asia – where users don't have to leave meta-search sites to complete bookings – other intermediaries can effectively be bypassed.

Ross Veitch, co-founder and CEO of Singapore-based Wego, a meta-search, said: "There's probably a few more layers in travel distribution than there needs to be. It'll be good for suppliers and customers if we could strip it down."

Wego is working with some of its bigger partners to allow consumers to book their inventory without having to leave the Wego app. Veitch said the emergence of "deep linking standards" over the last year would help Wego further drive conver-

sion rates for its suppliers.

"(With deep linking) when we send somebody from Wego, we drop them on a booking page with their flights and the right fare already selected; they just have to pull out their credit card and fill the form," explained Veitch.

Facilitated bookings have also been around in China, with Qunar being a strong proponent of such a model (see yesterday's *TTG-ITB Asia Daily*).

Unfazed by these moves, Agoda vice president marketing, Timothy Hughes, said the OTA would continue to work with meta-search sites, but felt there were two challenges to be tackled. "They are allowing the distribution of (wholesale) rates that hoteliers don't want distributed and as a result sometimes consumers get a bad experience during check-in.

"They also need to figure out what role they are going to play in being a marketing support

to companies like Agoda. We'll continue to support and work with those that (help) us get customers from markets we're interested in."

Yet the lines are being blurred, with meta-search sites themselves admitting they are no longer just about price comparisons.

Frank Skivington, chief commercial officer, Skyscanner, said: "It's very clear that meta has moved way beyond a price point, which is probably what it was two, three years ago. It's now about customer experience and information we can impart on behalf of our partners beyond simply price."

PhoCusWright senior vice president, research, Lorraine Sileo, summed it up: "Everything is getting switched around in the blender. OTAs and metas are looking more like each other and it's hard to distinguish... It's an open playing field, and it's anybody's game right now."

## Mismatch in BTmice rise and scant infrastructure

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

AS Asia-Pacific continues to be a major beacon of growth in global business travel, improvements in infrastructure are vital to keep up with the speed of growth.

According to the Global Business Travel Association's (GBTA) Business Travel Index outlook report unveiled during the ITB Asia opening press conference yesterday, global business travel spend is expected to reach a record US\$1.18 trillion by 2014, a seven per cent growth from last year, with nearly 40 per cent coming from Asia-Pacific.

Infrastructure across Asia, however, is not keeping up with the pace of tourism growth, said Welf Ebeling, GBTA vice president, operations, Asia.

China, which is set to overtake the US as the world's top business travel market by 2016, is a prime example where infrastructure is still lagging, he said,

"The new 100 airports that

are being built (in China) are badly needed in a country that is expected to take delivery of one aircraft per day for the next 19 years," noted Ebeling in his ITB keynote address yesterday.

Likewise for India, Ebeling remarked that the mid-range hotel accommodation is not growing fast enough to match growth.

"For example, there are only about 250,000 registered hotel rooms available in India, which has a population of nearly a billion people," he said.

While these pressing issues are already prevalent in China and India, Ebeling cautioned emerging countries like Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to take heed too.

He said: "The GBTA is expecting that Asia-Pacific will continue to gain another five per cent in the global market share by 2018, and these countries are also showing high growth in terms of business travel spend."



Ebeling: Asia must address mismatch

# Setting the show wheels in motion

TTG's Ken Tay joins the bustle on the floor as ITB Asia 2014 commences



Image Travel Philippines' Emy Malate, Paradise Garden Philippines' Hannah Yulo, Philippine Tourism Promotion Board's (TPB) Tess Mauricio, Philippine Airlines' Idasolit and Monette Trespasses, Paradise Garden Boracay Resort's Sheila Bautista, Angs Tours Philippines' Tony Ang, TPB's Domingo Enerio III and Ramon Jimenez, Crimson Hotels & Resorts Philippines' Jo Ann Castillo, Huma Island Resort & Spa Philippines' Teody Espallardo, Crimson Hotels & Resorts Philippines' Sarah Joy Mascarinas, Uni-Orient Travel Philippines' Wilson Techico, Masman Drysdale Travel Philippines' Eleanor Ng, Pan Pacific Travel Corporation Philippines' Charmaine Dee and Department of Tourism Manila's Lily Libosada



Best Western International's Glenn de Souza (centre), Paul Suvodip and Jane Kamolnithi welcome you to their booth



Left: Messe Berlin's Christian Göke and Singapore's second minister for trade and industry, S Iswaran, cut the ribbon to open ITB Asia 2014; right: Lufthansa German Airlines Singapore's Christian Altmann showing the minister his improved seats



Outrigger Enterprises Group Hawaii's Sean Dee and Outrigger Resorts Thailand's Mark Simmons



Illusions Online Arabia UAE's Julia Makarova, Gregory Duffell, Faisal Memon, Duncan Andrew Alexander and Jessica Wong, and I-World Travel Exchange UAE's Mohsen Kherani





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## Snapshots

# Striding towards success

With the show in full swing, sellers are working hard to entice buyers with their best deals. TTG's Ken Tay nabs the shots



Furama Singapore's William Ng (centre) and Furama Hotels International Management Singapore's Shirlena Tan (fifth from right)



Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing's (DTCM) Shahab Abdulla Shayan, Dubai Corporation for Tourism & Commerce Marketing's Issam Kazim and Jessie Ling, and DTCM Hong Kong's Gloria Lai



Marina Mandarin Singapore's Hawk Tan, Mandarin Orchard Singapore's Adeline Loh, Meritus Hotels & Resorts UK's Guy Fotherby and Flight Centre Travel Group Australia's Andrew Gallard



Akquasun Holidays India's B A Rahim and HS Travel International Hong Kong's Hazen Tang



Carlton City Hotel Singapore's Jacqueline Ho, Kenneth Li and Pam Chae

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## Theme parks

# Endless fun in Asia

Attraction operators are clearly not worried about theme park fatigue in Asia, with more set to make their debut in the coming year. Paige Lee Pei Qi, S Puvaneswary, Caroline Boey, Marianne Carandang, Prudence Lui and Xinyi Liang-Pholsena find out

### River Safari, Singapore



Officially opened in 2014

#### Target markets

China, Malaysia, India, Indonesia and the Philippines

#### Unique selling points

River Safari is Asia's first and only river-themed wildlife park. With 6,000 animals representing 200 species, it is home to unique river giants and megafishes such as the giant river otter, giant freshwater stingray and the critically endangered Mekong giant catfish, all curated in thematic exhibits representing each river zone.

Key attractions include the Giant Panda Forest, home to Kai Kai and Jia Jia, and the Amazon Flooded Forest which features the world's largest freshwater aquarium and where manatees and arapaimas can be seen swimming among giant trees.

The park also offers two boat rides: the Amazon River Quest and River Safari Cruise, both of which offer an immersive wildlife experience into the world of freshwater habitats.

#### Getting there

Public trains and buses are readily available for visitors. In addition, bus shuttle services by Singapore Attractions Express and Safari Gate transport visitors to and from the wildlife parks and selected loca-

tions around Singapore. Tour companies also provide transfer services to the wildlife parks.

#### Operational hours

09.00-18.00 daily

#### Ticket prices

Adults: S\$25 (US\$20)

Children (three to 12 years): S\$16

Boat ride: Top-up fee of S\$5 (adults) and S\$3 (children)

#### How should the trade sell your theme park?

"Tour companies may choose to bundle admission to two wildlife parks together with meals. For example, a trip may start with a visit to Singapore Zoo in the morning followed by River Safari in the afternoon. This package includes Chinese buffet lunch at the River Safari Tea House.

There are also packages where visitors make a trip to River Safari in the afternoon followed by a choice of Asian or Indian buffet dinner at Night Safari's Ulu Ulu Safari Restaurant, before embarking on their tour of Night Safari.

In addition to the above packages, an additional snack set can be included in the River Safari itinerary. This set comes with the park's signature panda *pau* (bun) and a soft drink in a souvenir cup."

#### Isabel Cheng

Chief marketing officer, Wildlife Reserves Singapore



"River Safari opens another platform for us to create another experience for our guests. I suggest it teams up with reputable research institutions and even NGOs, as well as bring in specialist talent to upgrade the attraction beyond its touch-and-go programme. It can provide relevant activities and tour programmes targeting guests who want greater insights."

#### Jaelyn Yeoh

Director, Siam Express, Singapore



"This new attraction has yet to create a huge enough impact to make every traveller want to list it as a must-do activity in Singapore, so I think more can be done to promote it. Perhaps it is still overshadowed by the award-winning Singapore Zoo and Night Safari.

However, the Amazon boat ride is a fantastic experience because it allows visitors to get really close to the animals, yet not within reach to ensure safety – and this is an attractive point."

#### Dominic Ong

Managing director, Star Holiday Mart, Singapore

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## Theme parks

### Skytrex@Perdana Quay, Langkawi



Opened in August 2014

#### Target markets

Those who enjoy extreme sports and outdoor activities, nature lovers and adrenaline junkies from within the country and overseas

#### Unique selling points

The park's three challenges comprise the Little Legend Adventure, Island Extreme and Eagle Thrill.

Little Legend Adventure circuit has more than 20 fun adventure challenges for all ages. Eagle Thrill, for adults only, has more than 25 adventure challenges with various levels of difficulty. Island Extreme is also for adults only and offers more than 30 adrenaline-pumping extreme challenges.

#### Getting there

The park is located in the Lifestyle Precinct of the integrated development of Perdana Quay, which is around 20 minutes' drive from Kuah town as well as from Langkawi International Airport.

#### Operational hours

09.00-17.00 daily

#### Ticket prices

Little Legend: RM35 (US\$11)

Eagle Thrill: RM45  
Island Extreme: RM55  
Group bookings of minimum 10 people: 10 per cent discount; incentive for travel agencies: more favourable rates through a contractual arrangement with Skytrex to bring tourists to the park

Note: Minimum age for guests is eight years old. Height requirements are 110cm for children and 140cm for adults.

#### How should the trade sell your theme park?

"Tour operators can combine a visit to the park with other activities such as a mangrove tour or visit to Langkawi Oriental Village where one can take a ride on the SkyCab."

#### Azlan Idrus

Director  
Skytrex Langkawi



"Skytrex@Perdana Quay Langkawi attracts adventurous international visitors looking for challenges. The park also gives an additional reason for business event organisers to choose Langkawi, as it can be used for teambuilding activities.

Langkawi has always been known as a family destination. Thus, I hope the park will have activities that allow everyone to participate in together as a family."

#### Arokia Das

Senior manager, Luxury Tours Malaysia

Skytrex@Perdana Quay, Langkawi



### Movie Animation Park Studios, Ipoh



Opening in late 2015

#### Target markets

Families with children and young adults. Some 1.4 million visitors are expected in the first year, with 80 per cent from Malaysia and 20 per cent from overseas.

#### Unique selling points

The park will be Asia's first animation theme park, comprising 40 attractions and rides including the world's first DreamWorks-dedicated zone featuring The Croods, Mr Peabody & Sherman, Casper and Megamind. It will also feature Asia's first car stunt show and a one-of-a-kind live TV broadcast.

It will also serve as a springboard for Malaysia's growing creative industry, including projects with local animation studios and a performance stage concept dedicated to young adults.

#### Getting there

The park is about 2.5-hours' drive from the heart of Kuala Lumpur and 15 to 20 minutes from Ipoh city, Perak. It will be within walking distance of the new Amanjaya Bus Terminal served by inter-city bus companies. By air, Firefly connects Singapore to Ipoh with two daily flights.

#### Operational hours

To be confirmed

#### Ticket prices

To be confirmed

#### How should the trade sell your theme park?

"We aim to put Perak on the list of Malaysia's top five destinations for international tourists when the park opens.

The park can be combined with Ipoh Heritage Trail, Royal Belum Rainforest and Taiping Zoo. There are a number of new hotels in Ipoh, including Ibis Styles Ipoh, Casuarina @ Meru and Best Western Premier The Haven Ipoh, making it easy to stay overnight and create packages."

#### Ramelle Ramli

Director  
Animation Theme Park



"It will be a stopover destination for those travelling from south to north or vice versa, or from the east coast of peninsular Malaysia to the south or vice versa.

Being Asia's first animation theme park will make the park a must-see attraction for Perak. Currently, there is no single attraction in the state that is a real crowd-puller.

We do not see much demand for Perak now; I hope this will change when the park is open. It will create a lot of spillover business for the local tourism industry, benefiting the hotels, restaurants and transportation-related businesses.

In time, I hope there will be adjoining hotels to the theme park, making it easier to package it with overnight stays.

Perak should ride on the park's presence to showcase other products in the state to draw longer-staying travellers."

#### Syed Mohd Razif Al Yahya

Group managing director and group CEO  
Sutra Group of Companies, Malaysia

### Shanghai Disney Resort



Opening in late 2015

#### Target markets

The population of 330 million who live within a three-hour drive or train ride from Shanghai make up the attraction's core market.

#### Unique selling points

The mega resort will comprise a variety of products under one roof – a theme park, two themed hotels, a large retail, dining and entertainment venue, a theatre and outdoor recreation areas.

It will be a world-class family vacation destination that combines classic Disney characters and storytelling with the uniqueness and beauty of China. F&B and merchandising will incorporate many Chinese elements.

Unique features include the largest and most immersive castle at any Disney park around the world, the iconic central attraction Enchanted Storybook Castle, the first pirates-themed land in a Disney park and the first Disney Broadway-style theatre, which will stage the global premiere of *The Lion King* in Mandarin.

#### Getting there

A high-speed rail line will connect Shanghai Disney Resort to the city, and Disney Express rail services will connect the attraction to other Chinese cities.

#### Operational hours

To be confirmed

#### Ticket prices

To be confirmed



"Shanghai is known as a business destination, so the resort will add a fresh family travel dimension.

Widely travelled Singaporeans have visited Disney theme parks in the US, Europe and Asia, so the resort may have limited appeal for them. However, it might appeal to the Malaysian and Indonesian markets; we need more information to repackage tours to Shanghai when the resort opens."

#### Nancy Tan Li Keng

Managing director  
Ik Chin Travel, Singapore



"The resort can help to attract younger tourists and encourage families to travel to Shanghai. However, I doubt it will have a big impact on international visitors.

Still, we will promote the resort to family travellers. Of course, special rates and promotions will help us sell it."

#### Voo Wei Keong

Director  
WTS Travel, Singapore

Shanghai Disney Resort





## Kidzania Manila, Bonifacio Global City, Metro Manila



Opening in late 2015

### Target markets

Families with kids, educators, non-profit organisations and government agencies

### Unique selling points

KidZania believes in the power of play in child development. It is an interactive kids' play city that offers nearly 100 role-playing activities in more than 60 establishments, featuring real brands, with various levels of difficulty to meet the abilities and interests of every child. It combines fun and learning for children aged three to 14 years.

There is the credibility of the brand to boot as well – it has over 500 partners around the world with hundreds of major international and regional brands that authenticate the content at the park, including American Airlines, Avis, Coca-Cola, Domino's, Dunkin Donuts, Duracell, Fuji Film, Gillette, Honda, HP, Johnson & Johnson, Mattel, McDonald's, Mitsubishi, Nestle, Nike, HSBC, Unilever, Seiko, Sony and Wal-Mart.

### Getting there

By public transport; there's also a shuttle bus going around Bonifacio Global City. The park is about 20 to 30 minutes by car from Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, but a bit longer if coming from Terminals 1 and 2.

### Operational hours

Kidzania operates by five-hour shifts  
Mondays-Thursdays: One shift  
Fridays-Sundays: Two shifts

### Ticket prices

To be confirmed



"It will do well if it is sold to schools. For foreigners, it can be attached to day tours of the city, offered to families."

### Thaemar Achacoso

Operations manager,  
Travelhub Inc, Philippines



Kidzania Japan



Kidzania Mexico

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## Theme parks

### DreamPlay by DreamWorks, Entertainment City, Manila



Opening in late 2014

#### Target markets

Besides the large domestic market, DreamPlay by DreamWorks anticipates key markets to be leisure-seeking visitors and families from overseas source markets such as South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, China and Thailand, among others.

#### Unique selling points

DreamPlay by DreamWorks will be the



first of its kind in the world. Inspired by the mantra of learning through play, it represents a revolutionary approach to family entertainment.

The park also represents an exciting blend of integrated live and digital play spaces, featuring popular characters and creative storytelling combined with innovative educational play appealing to chil-

dren and adults alike.

Interactive environments, featuring the very latest digital technologies, will enable kids to engage in a wide range of thrilling activities, interacting with beloved characters from DreamWorks Animation's world-famous franchises including *Kung Fu Panda*, *Shrek*, *Madagascar* and *How to Train Your Dragon*.

Each experience is designed exclusively for City of Dreams Manila.

#### Getting there

By taxi, it is 15-20 minutes away from Ninoy Aquino International Airport, or 10-15 minutes from SM Mall of Asia.

#### Operational hours

To be confirmed

#### Ticket prices

To be confirmed



"It's time we came up with something relevant, and I am for it. Kids these days know all the fads and can be hard to please.

If Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia have theme parks, then this is (the Philippines') way of stepping it up."

#### Dino Manila

Head of sales and marketing, Rajah Travel Corp, Philippines



Vana Nava Hua Hin Water Jungle

### Vana Nava Hua Hin Water Jungle



Soft opening in October 2014

#### Target markets

About 70 per cent Thai and 30 per cent foreigners from Germany, China, Hong Kong, the UK, Australia and Scandinavia

#### Unique selling points

The park is Asia's first water jungle concept combining a lush tropical environment with modern design, world-class attractions, interactive facilities and latest technology to create 'an oasis of fun' for all.

It features over 19 attractions, such as Thailand's first and only Aqua Course, a multi-level challenge and interactive adventure; one of Thailand's longest lazy rivers; Asia's tallest man-made waterfall; and Thailand's first Abyss, one of the world's most popular and award-winning slides.

#### Getting there

From Bangkok, the park is 2.5-hour drive away or 40 minutes by private jet to Hua Hin Airport. It is just five minutes from Hua Hin's city centre.

#### Operational hours (tentative)

Waterpark (Wet) Zone: 10.00-18.00 from Sundays to Thursdays and 10.00-21.00 on Fridays and Saturdays  
Adventure (Dry) Zone: 10.00-21.00 from Sundays to Thursdays and 10.00-23.00 on Fridays and Saturdays

#### Ticket prices

To be confirmed

#### How should the trade sell your theme park?

"The park can be bundled with accommodation and transfers or as an optional tour offer. Guests can spend an entire day in the park for its other facilities besides the 19 attractions, such as the double flow rider, restaurants and cafes, lounges, private sala, weekend market and concerts."

#### Usa Boonchalakulkosol

Director of sales and marketing



"This may be a nice addition for Hua Hin, Cha Am and Pranburi residents and tourists. The area already has other smaller water theme parks that are very popular with mainly the Thais. I'm sure this new park will be 'invaded' by weekend guests from Bangkok.

Will this lead overseas guests to choose Hua Hin instead of Pattaya or Phuket? I don't think so; after all it's not Disney World right?"

#### Hans van den Born

Managing director, Diethelm Travel (Thailand)



"I don't think this park will be a game changer, especially for the international market. It will not be the deciding factor when foreign travellers decide where to spend their beach break. But it will be very interesting for the domestic market, and will have more influence on people's decision for short breaks from Bangkok."

#### Michael Lynden-Bell

General manager, Thailand, Exotissimo Travel

### Chimelong Ocean Kingdom, Hengqin, Zhuhai



Opened in March 2014

#### Target markets

Mainly China, Hong Kong and Macau. The attraction is developing the Taiwanese and South-east Asian markets. Target segments include families with children for school holidays; young adults in non-school holiday seasons; and MICE groups.

#### Unique selling points

The Whale Shark Aquarium claims to be the world's largest acrylic panel, which in turn sets a record for the world's largest aquarium window. It also features the largest underwater viewing dome where visitors can enjoy the experience with a spectacular underwater view.

#### Getting there

Located on Hengqin Island, the park is near Macau and only a 30-minute ride from Taipa/Hengqin Port to Hengqin Chimelong. At Taipa Ferry Terminal, board the Taipa Chimelong shuttle bus (departs hourly from 10.25 to 17.25) to Macau Lotus Port and through to Zhuhai Hengqin Port, disembarking at both ports for immigration formalities. After completing the immigration procedure, board the Taipa Chimelong shuttle bus to Chimelong.

#### Operational hours

10.00-21.00

#### Ticket prices

Adults: RMB350 (US\$57)

Children (height 1m-1.5m): RMB245  
Seniors (65 years old or above): RMB245  
Holders of registration card for people with disabilities: RMB245

#### How should the trade sell your theme park?

"They may promote the FIT package for one night's accommodation at Chimelong Hengqin Bay Hotel inclusive of return ferry tickets, shuttle bus transfer, admission to Chimelong Ocean Kingdom and Chimelong Hengqin International Circus City. The group tour package may include transportation, Chimelong Ocean Kingdom, Chimelong Hengqin International Circus City and Zhuhai cuisine."

#### Spokesperson,

Chimelong Ocean Kingdom, Hengqin, Zhuhai



"The new park has generated more tourist traffic to Zhuhai, which had been lacking new tourism products like theme parks. It also draws many domestic travellers who extend their visit to Hengqin Island after touring around Guangdong province. I observe that Chinese travellers now tend to stay longer than before.

This new attraction also draws traffic from Macau and Hong Kong. Business is good with high demand for weekend packages. However, the park needs to improve accessibility given its remote location on Hengqin Island. It's an issue for FITs, and I hope to see more shuttle bus or public transportation connecting to the park. The shuttle service from Taipa Ferry Terminal is not frequent."

#### Wing Wong

Managing director  
W Travel, Hong Kong





## Destination Singapore

# Innovation takes centre stage

The Lion City is coming up with unique experiences to make fans out of visitors, discovers **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

After years of furious tourism infrastructure developments, Singapore is now fine-tuning its “software” to stand out from regional competitors.

Yap Chin Siang, assistant chief executive, policy and planning group of the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), told the *Daily*. “While Singapore’s tourism sector has been experiencing strong growth in the past decade (from 2002 to 2012), the growth was propelled by the introduction of new attractions and marquee events.

“The backdrop to this has changed today, with intensifying regional competition. Infrastructure developments can be easily replicated, but what makes our attractions stand out among the competition and appeal to increasingly discerning travellers will be the quality of experiences we offer.”

As a result, STB is developing “innovative tourism experiences” with industry partners that can appeal to the target audience, Yap revealed.

An example of such efforts is STB’s Attractions Experience Design Series, launched last year in collaboration with the Workforce Development Agency of

Singapore (WDA) and the Association of Singapore Attractions (ASA) to enhance the attraction industry’s capabilities in designing and delivering emotive visitor experiences.

Dynasty Travel’s managing director, Clifford Neo, who defined software as experiences that invigorate all five senses, said: “We need to create different themes for different market segments. For instance, we could draw honeymooners with Sentosa’s villas and resorts, families with theme parks, and retirees with food and heritage tours.”

Although Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) is recognised as one of Singapore’s key tourist attractions today, the integrated resort is not resting on its laurels.

Goh Chye Boon, executive vice president of Resort Operations, RWS, said the team is also seeking to “turn the focus from hardware to heartware”.

Goh explained: “While RWS has been a trailblazer in its integrated resort development, we acknowledge that there is intense competition as more cities in the region realise the growth potential of the leisure and service sector, and are developing similar products.”



Wildlife Reserves Singapore

In May, RWS launched a regional campaign, *Moments*, which is helmed by two promotional videos evocating the theme of family and friendship.

Also looking to charm visitors with

unique software is the River Safari wildlife park. Visitors are invited to take a behind-the-scenes peek through two new programmes – *Fishy Business* and *Be a Panda Researcher* – and have hands-on experiences with its animal residents.

Through *Be a Panda Researcher*, visitors can learn more about the park’s giant pandas Kai Kai and Jia Jia, dissect panda poo, examine paw prints and other panda markings to gain insights into how researchers track pandas in the wild, and appreciate the hard work that goes into meeting the pandas’ special dietary needs.

Through *Fishy Business*, visitors can venture deep into the underbelly of the Amazon Flooded Forest exhibit and discover what the aquarists do to keep the animal residents in the pink of health.

STB’s Yap concluded: “Enhancing our destination’s attractiveness through the development of compelling tourism content is one of our identified pathways to quality tourism. While hardware offerings such as the Gardens by the Bay, River Safari and Sports Hub have come on-stream in the last few years, it is imperative that we continue to inject the right complementary tourism experiences.”

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# Destination Singapore

## WHAT'S NEW

### 1 Hotel Jen Orchardgateway Singapore

The 502-key hotel is Shangri-La International Hotel Management's first property under the new brand, Hotel Jen. Located along the Orchard Road shopping belt and close to the CBD, the hotel appeals to both leisure and business travellers.

Facilities include Makan@Jen, an all-day restaurant, OnTheGo deli counter, Baywatch@Jen bar, and a rooftop pool. Guests also enjoy free Wi-Fi access, mobile charging stations throughout the hotel, laundry wash and fold service at one price for unlimited items in the laundry bag, iMac stations and a PressReader app with free access to 2,500 online publications.

Email [hjog@hoteljen.com](mailto:hjog@hoteljen.com) for details.

### 2 Saha Signature Indian Restaurant

This new dining establishment in tranquil Duxton Hill presents an eclectic menu created by chef Abhijit Saha, who is regarded the Gordon Ramsay of India.

Chef Saha specialises in traditional Indian dishes with a Western twist and his signature draws include Kakori lamb roulade, *kasoor methi* seared foie gras and *gulab jamun* cheesecake.

The restaurant can be booked entirely for private functions with up to 42 guests, and a minimum spend of S\$4,000++ (US\$3,200++) applies.

Email [info@saha.sg](mailto:info@saha.sg) for reservations.

### 3 Human Body Experience

Hosted at the Science Centre Singapore, the Human Body Experience exhibition

offers visitors a chance to enter the human body and explore the fascinating workings of nature's most stunning creation.

Visitors are invited to step into the mouth of a six-metre tall human face, slither down the throat and take an audio-walking journey through the vocal chords, respiratory system, circulatory system, brain and ultimately, the digestive system.

The exhibition is based on the expertise of Australia's Newman Entertainment International and Science Centre Singapore, and will run for two years.

Tickets are priced at S\$20 for adults and S\$15 for children.

Visit [www.science.edu.sg](http://www.science.edu.sg) for details.

### 4 Lewin Terrace

The elegant Lewin Terrace, which specialises in Japanese-French cuisine, has opened in the tranquil Fort Canning Park. Housed in a black-and-white colonial bungalow, the fine-dining restaurant features chef de cuisine Ryoichi Kano at its helm. It can seat up to 82 guests.

Email [info@lewinterrace.com.sg](mailto:info@lewinterrace.com.sg) for reservations.

### 5 Wings of Time

Sentosa Island's new multimedia night show *Wings of Time* promises to wow audience with a range of effects from robotic water fountains to pyrotechnics. It tells the tale of two teenagers, Rachel and Felix, who help a mystical pre-historic bird, Shahbaz, find its way home through time and space.

Shows run daily at 19.40 and 20.40 along Siloso Beach. Premium seats are priced at S\$23 while standard seats cost S\$18.

Visit [www.sentosa.com.sg](http://www.sentosa.com.sg) for details.

## HOW TO DO SINGAPORE



Travel back in time at the Jurassic Park Rapids Adventure

**Day 1** Arrive in Singapore and proceed to your hotel for a comfortable lunch. Enjoy some free time before heading to the Night Safari where the animals come out to roam after dark. Get ready to be acquainted with more than 2,500 nocturnal animals as they frolic, graze and hunt. An exciting tram ride will take you through seven geographical regions and more. The 20-minute *Creatures of the Night Show* is not to be missed.

**Day 2** Dive into Marine Life Park at Resorts World Sentosa today, recognised as the world's largest oceanarium. The eight-hectare park is home to two main attractions – S.E.A. Aquarium and Adventure Cove Waterpark – which will require a full day to explore.

For a truly immersive experience, dine at Ocean Restaurant by Cat Cora, Singapore's first aquarium dining experience that allows

one to enjoy a meal while savouring a magnificent view of the Open Ocean habitat.

After satisfying your tummy, meet and greet the resident dolphins in Dolphin Island. Close interaction can be expected and you can even choose to swim with the dolphins.

**Day 3** Round up your time in Singapore with a day of fun at Universal Studios Singapore. This movie-inspired theme park features multiple rides and attractions such as Jurassic Park Rapids Adventure, Madagascar: A Crate Adventure, TRANSFORMERS The Ride: The Ultimate 3D Battle, Revenge of the Mummy and Shrek 4-D Adventure.

You can also catch street entertainment throughout the day or watch a performance of death-defying stunts, explosions and exhilarating actions at Waterworld.

*Itinerary by Chariot Travels*



Clockwise from top: Wings of Time, Hotel Jen Orchardgateway Singapore rooftop pool, Saha Signature Indian Restaurant



## VIEWPOINT

What are the challenges in selling Singapore as a destination?



**Dominic Ong, managing director, Star Holiday Mart**

"Our service standards are very poor. Take for instance the frontline staff – whether or not they smile when greeting a customer can make or break a tourist's experience. Sadly, we are still lacking these warm and genuine touches from our service industry."



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# On track for success

A strong destination marketing campaign and a robust calendar of festivals and business events have driven up arrivals to Dubai, reports [Shekhar Niyogi](#)

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Dubai welcomed 5,828,449 tourists in 1H2014 – the highest number of visitors it ever achieved in the first half of the year. The emirate saw 5,583,379 visitors in 1H2013. Saudi Arabia continues to be Dubai's leading source market while footfalls from India and China – taking second and sixth spots – are registering steady growth. China in particular rose 26 per cent as a result of both strong outbound demand and focused campaigns by Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM).

Dubai's rosy arrival performance can also be attributed to the destination's busy calendar of events. In 1H2014 it hosted several top events including the Dubai Shopping Festival, Emirates Airline Festival of Literature, the Dubai World Cup as well as a 16,500-pax incentive hosted by Nu Skin China. Subsequent months saw Dubai hosting Dubai Summer Surprises, Modhesh World, GITEX Shopper, DP World Tour Championship and Dubai International Film Festival – large-scale events that will contribute well to the destination's full-year footfalls.

Length of stay rose across the board, standing at an average of 3.9 days.

On the accommodation front in 1H2014, Dubai's average room rate (ARR) stood at 637 dirham (US\$173) while hotel revenue reached 12.74 billion dirham, up 10.9 per cent from the same period last year.

DTCM's director general, Helal Saeed Almarri, is pleased with the performance indicators. He said: "The figures show steady growth. We're on target for our medium-term plans. More importantly, this growth is sustainable and we are moving in the right direction to achieve our Tourism Vision for 2020 targets."

Supporting the arrival growth momentum is Dubai's steady increase in hotel room inventory. Since the end of June 2013, Dubai has added opened more than 7,188 new hotel rooms, bringing the total count to 88,680 in 1H2014.

But the room boom has made some tourism players jittery. Rutz Patil, assistant sales manager of leisure, Sofitel The Palm, Dubai, noted that the rising room supply has "put pressure on ARR".

On the other hand, Sunny Augustine, executive director of White Sands Tours & Travel Dubai, is unperturbed. "Tourism growth will continue even if yield drops marginally. All stakeholders can grow revenue as total business will outpace supply. I see no cause for worry," he said.

To maintain strong interest in the emirate, DTCM will continue to position Dubai as a family destination. Helal Saeed Almarri said: "As such, we are constantly diversifying our offering and increasing our hotel portfolio to attract and cater to a broader market of visitors."

Meanwhile, recent regulatory changes to the UAE's visa system will have a transformative effect on Dubai's cruise and medical tourism sectors. From August 1, travellers from India, Russia and Commonwealth of Independent States, South Africa, and Brazil are allowed to obtain multiple-entry cruise or medical tourism visas. The 200 dirham cruise visas permit cruise passengers to sail out of Dubai's Port Rashid and return on the same visa. Re-entry was not permissible previously.

Medical tourism visas cost 550 dirhams for entry and 1,400 dirhams for a multiple-entry permit, with costs applicable to the patient's companions. Visa renewal is priced at 500 dirhams for the patient and 600 dirhams for companions.



## HOW TO DO DUBAI

**Day 1** Arrival at JW Marriott Marquis Hotel Dubai. Highlight of the day is a desert safari with barbecue dinner, falconry show, belly dancing and local music performances.



**Day 2** Start the day with breakfast at the hotel, or if you fancy a champagne breakfast at AtMosphere can be arranged. Visit the Burj Khalifa (pictured left), the tallest man-made structure in the world today, before diving into Dubai Mall for some retail therapy. A half-day city tour will ensue, followed by dinner on a dhow cruise.

**Day 3** Head out of Dubai for a city tour of Abu Dhabi. Spend the day at Yas Island, home to top quality attractions such as Ferrari World theme park and Yas Marina Circuit.

**Day 4** After breakfast at the hotel, head up into the skies with a 25-minute sea plane ride. Later, choose to spend the day at leisure or have a golf game at the Emirates Golf Club. A visit to the Gold Souk can also be arranged.

**Day 5** The day begins with a new hotel experience. Check into Atlantis The Palm before embarking on a hot air balloon flight. Also, visit Aquaventure water park and The Lost Chambers aquarium.

**Day 6** Highlight of today includes dune bashing, a visit to a Bedouin camp and rides on camels. End the day with dinner at the desert camp.

**Day 7** Check out and transfer to airport for flights.

*Itinerary by Royal Gulf Tourism LLC, Dubai*

## WHAT'S NEW

### 1 Al Hamra Golf Club, Ras Al Khaimah

This par-72, 18-hole championship golf course challenges players with long water hazards along the narrow fairways, yet at the same time charms with a well-equipped clubhouse that comprises a sports bar and restaurant.

Green fee for visitors, inclusive of a golf cart and a pyramid of range balls, costs 295 dirham on weekends and 275 dirham on weekdays. Tee-offs must be booked in advance. Night play is possible.

Visit [www.alhamragolf.com](http://www.alhamragolf.com) for more information.

### 2 Amwaj Rotana – Jumeirah Beach Residence

This five-star property in Dubai's Marina area features 301 seaview rooms and suites, an array of dining destinations and various recreational facilities such as a temperature controlled swimming pool and a wellness centre with Jacuzzi, steam and massage rooms. Meeting facilities are also available, with the largest being the Sadaf Ballroom which can seat 320 people in a theatre setting.

Its stellar location puts guests within easy reach of JBR's shopping and entertainment strip.

Email [amwaj.hotel@rotana.com](mailto:amwaj.hotel@rotana.com) for details.

### 3 Banyan Tree Al Wadi

The Banyan Tree Spa at the luxurious Banyan Tree Al Wadi is offering The Rainforest Experience, a 60-minute signature indulgence that combines the best of European spa and hydrothermal therapy. It is executed in a tropical rainforest setting and through a trail of 16 state-of-the-art hydrothermal therapies and facilities, each

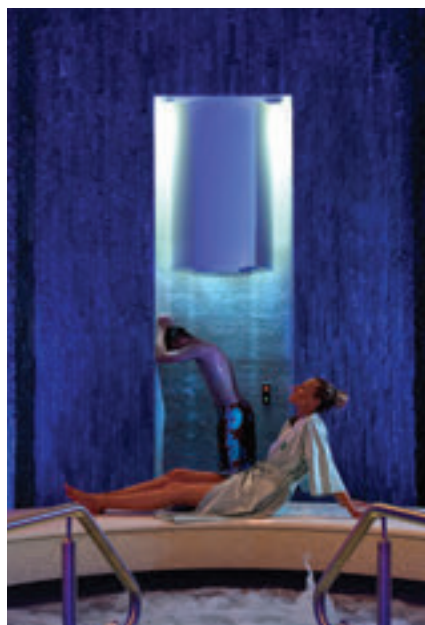
designed to soothe and revitalise different parts of the body.

Email [alwadi@banyantree.com](mailto:alwadi@banyantree.com) for reservations.

### 4 Bassata Desert Village

Hidden within a beautiful desert at the northern tip of the UAE and an hour's drive from Dubai, the Bassata Desert Village offers visitors a variety of traditional Arabian activities including a belly dance show, Egyptian Tanoura, henna tattoos, camel rides and dune bashing. An Arabic barbecue style dinner provides the perfect ending to an unforgettable day.

Email [hisham.hania@travcotravel.com](mailto:hisham.hania@travcotravel.com) or visit, [www.travcotravel.ae](http://www.travcotravel.ae) for more details.



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But such is Best Western's confidence in the Middle East market, the company has firm plans to launch more than 10 new hotels across the region over the next three years.

These new openings will include the company's first hotels in Iraq, and not fewer than seven new hotels in Saudi Arabia, including a stunning upscale hotel BEST WESTERN PLUS Al-Ahsa Grand Suites & Studios.

*With these new openings, Best Western is bringing more comfortable and convenient hotel accommodations to this vibrant region.*



BEST WESTERN PLUS Al Massa Awan, SAUDI ARABIA



BEST WESTERN PLUS Sand Rose Suite Hotel, SAUDI ARABIA



BEST WESTERN PLUS Al Massa Awan, SAUDI ARABIA



BEST WESTERN PLUS The Olive, BAHRAIN

## UPCOMING PROPERTIES

COUNTRY/PROPERTY	OPENING
<b>BAHRAIN</b>	
BEST WESTERN Hawar Island Resort, Hawar Island	Q4 - 2014
<b>IRAQ</b>	
BEST WESTERN PREMIER Erbil, Erbil	Q4 - 2015
BEST WESTERN PREMIER Erbil Airport, Erbil	Q4 - 2015
<b>KUWAIT</b>	
BEST WESTERN Kuwait, Kuwait City	Q4 - 2014
<b>QATAR</b>	
BEST WESTERN Bin Mahmoud Hotel, Doha	Q1 - 2015
<b>SAUDI ARABIA</b>	
BEST WESTERN Jazan, Jizan	Q3 - 2014
BEST WESTERN Hotel Jeddah, Jeddah	Q4 - 2014
BEST WESTERN PLUS Al-Ahsa Grand Suites & Studios, Al-Ahsa	Q1 - 2015
BEST WESTERN Ring Road, Riyadh	Q1 - 2015
BEST WESTERN Al Khudair, Riyadh	Q2 - 2015
BEST WESTERN Dammam Hotel, Dammam	Q2 - 2015
BEST WESTERN PREMIER Al Russ, Al Qassim	Q4 - 2015
BEST WESTERN PREMIER Makkah, Makkah	2017



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## Destination Malaysia

# Good progress

A vibrant Visit Malaysia Year 2014 campaign has yielded a healthy tourism performance, with the ASEAN region continuing to lead as a major source market, reports **S Puvaneswary**



SHINE/7856/123RF.COM

Arrivals traffic from China took a drastic tumble in the wake of the mysterious disappearance of Malaysia Airlines' flight MH370 on March 8, which was on its way to Beijing with 153 Chinese nationals on board. Some 30,000 tourists from China cancelled or suspended their holidays up to early 2015 after the incident, and tourism arrival statistics for April 2014 revealed a 19.5 per cent year-on-year drop in Chinese visitors to 132,158 tourists. In May, there was a further drop of 31.6 per cent compared with the year before.

Visit Malaysia Year advertising and electronic marketing efforts in China, directed at the travelling public in China, was temporarily muted in March, April and most of May out of respect for the families of the Chinese nationals on board.

Tourism Malaysia's deputy director-general (promotion), Azizan Noordin, said: "At the time we continued to support agents with product updates and helped them with the challenges they faced."

Azizan is hopeful for a full recovery in 2015.

Meanwhile, Tourism Malaysia is stepping up efforts to woo more ASEAN tourists as well as South Asia, West Asia, Australia, Japan, South Korea and Europe markets to offset the shortfall in Chinese tourists.

"Part of the recovery plans, rolled out starting end-May, also involves intensifying promotions in China's second- and third-tier cities, where the population is more open to holidaying in Malaysia," Azizan revealed.

On the MICE front, the country welcomed 1.4 million business events arrivals last year, which translates to 5.2 per cent of total tourist arrivals to Malaysia. This year, business event arrivals are targeted at 5.3 per cent of total arrivals.

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre started 2014 with a bang, hosting numerous high-profile events including the Million Dollar Round Table Experience 2014; GAMA International LAMP Asia 2014; Offshore Technology Conference 2014; 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Obesity; XXV International Federation of Surveyors Congress 2014; 20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Federation of Cardiology Congress; 16<sup>th</sup> Asian Congress of Architects 2014; and Asia Water Expo 2014. These eight events alone attracted close to 30,000 delegates in total.

To grow the business event segment further, Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) organised Malaysia Business Events Week in August in Kuala Lumpur to create a platform for local business events specialists to meet and discuss issues that impact the industry's growth and sustainability.

Zulkefli Sharif, CEO of MyCEB, hopes the "inaugural initiative will contribute towards the country's goal of becoming among the top five Asia-Pacific (meetings) destinations ranked by ICCA by 2020, and to attract 2.9 million business events visitors."

**T**ourism Malaysia's aggressive promotional efforts in line with the celebration of Visit Malaysia Year 2014 had resulted in a 10.1 per cent increase in arrivals for the first five months of 2014, with 11,532,859 million tourists compared with 10.47 million for the same period in 2013.

According to statistics from the Immigration Department of Malaysia, for the first five months of the year, Singapore remains Malaysia's largest source market by a large margin with 5.8 million arrivals.

In contrast, Malaysia's second-largest source market, Indonesia, sent 1.11 million arrivals. China takes third (754,696), followed by Thailand (574,255), Brunei (488,119), India (328,498) and Australia (156,662).

Unsurprisingly, the ASEAN region continues to be the largest contributor of tourist arrivals with 73.2 per cent share (8.4 million) of Malaysia's total arrivals. Among ASEAN countries, Vietnam registered the highest growth of 25.6%, followed by Thailand (+15.1%), the Philippines (+13.9%), Singapore (+11.3%) and Cambodia (+10.7%).

The surge in Vietnam arrivals was due to the local holiday season in February as well as attractive promotions and discounts offered by Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia and Vietnam Airlines, said Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, director-general of Tourism Malaysia.

Among the medium-haul source markets that registered double-digit growth were South Korea (40 per cent), Saudi Arabia (19.1 per cent), Australia (19.1 per cent), New Zealand (15.2 per cent) and India (12.3 per cent).

With the ongoing Visit Malaysia Year campaign, Tourism Malaysia is targeting 28 million arrivals and RM76 billion (US\$24 billion) in tourist receipts for 2014.

### VIEWPOINT

What is your company doing to see a return of Chinese business?

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

"We met with agents from Beijing and Shanghai at the end of October to rebuild their confidence (in Malaysia) and (show our) sincerity. While the MH370 disappearance was unfortunate, it was at the same time nobody's fault. We plan to have a dedicated brochure on Malaysia for the Chinese market to encourage more FIT travel. The brochure will promote places with a lot of potential but are relatively unknown to (the Chinese), such as The Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat, Redang Island and Gayana Eco Resort, Sabah."



### HOW TO DO MALAYSIA



Stadthuys, Malacca

centre, starting from Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock, which was home to Malacca's richest Chinese merchants in the past, and ending at the famous Jonker Street (now known as Jalan Hang Jebat) where interesting curio and antique shops can be found.

**Day 1** Start your tour of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur. First stop, Aquaria KLCC, a state-of-the-art oceanarium showcasing over 5,000 exhibits. Later, dig into lunch at the food court just outside of the attraction. Spend the rest of the afternoon shopping to your heart's content at Suria KLCC mall.

Get in touch with nature come evening, with visits to KL Bird Park, the world's largest free-flight walk-in aviary, and the Orchid Garden Kuala Lumpur, home to more than 800 species of orchids.

Then, enjoy a late dinner at Saravanaa Bhavan, an Indian vegetarian restaurant located opposite of KL Sentral.

**Day 2** After breakfast, depart by car for the charming historical city of Malacca. The journey takes about two hours. Upon arrival, take a walk through the heritage

For lunch, choose to dig into Malacca's famous chicken rice balls at Famosa Chicken Rice, or indulge in a richly flavoured Straits Chinese (also known as Peranakan) meal at the quaint Kocik Kitchen.

Later, take a trishaw ride along Dutch Square, starting from the Stadthuys, built by Dutch occupants in 1650, and concluding at Proclamation of Independence Memorial. Then, take the Melaka River Cruise which departs from Muara Jetty.

Before evening falls, drive back to Kuala Lumpur and have dinner at Saloma Bistro & Theatre Restaurant where traditional dances are performed every night.

**Day 3** Spend a full day at Sunway Lagoon theme park and in the evening, take a short walk to Sunway Pyramid Shopping Mall for some last minute shopping.

### PRODUCTS

#### 1 Miri Country Music Fest

First held in February this year, the event is hailed as the only country music festival in South-east Asia. Created by Sarawak-based Planet Conventions and Events, Miri Country Music Fest aims to promote Miri as a tourism destination and help the local communities promote their events. The second edition on February 7, 2015 will feature eight local and international country bands.

#### 2 Grand Lexis Port Dickson

Formerly known as The Legend International Water Homes, this five-star property has been awarded for having the most number of swimming pools in a single resort by the Malaysian Book of Records. All 317 villas come with a private pool and boast both Balinese-inspired decor and scenic views of the open waters. Solid glass panels under the feet of guests allow clear views of the sea underneath.

Besides tantalising guests' appetite with four restaurants that serve a wide range of local and international cuisine, Grand Lexis Port Dickson also offers various recreational facilities such as an archery range, a bicycle rental service and an in-

doors games room. Meeting rooms are available too.

For more information, visit [www.port-dicksonwaterhomes.com](http://www.port-dicksonwaterhomes.com).

#### 3 Vivanta by Taj - Rebek Island, Langkawi

The former Rebek Island Resort was relaunched on May 28 as Vivanta by Taj - Rebek Island, Langkawi following a revamp and rebranding exercise. The property welcomed an additional 12 rooms, bringing its total room count to 94.

The five-star private island resort has a function hall that can accommodate up to 100 people in theatre setting. There are also three F&B outlets.

More details at [www.vivantabytaj.com/rebek-island-langkawi/overview.html](http://www.vivantabytaj.com/rebek-island-langkawi/overview.html).








# Boracay

## Asia's 24/7 island



 Experience blue water, white sand, and rainbow sunsets in the world's party paradise.

 **Getting There:**  
Accessible via air from international gateways Manila, Cebu, Davao, Clark, Singapore and Hong Kong

 **More Things to Do:**

- Shop for island souvenirs at the Talipapa and D'Mall.
- Go cliff diving and barbecuing at Ariel's Point.
- Get an authentic hilot or Filipino massage on the shore.
- Catch the sunset on a paraw or local sailboat.
- Enjoy a game of beach volleyball on the powdery white sand.





## Destination Philippines

# A celebration of variety

The Philippines powers up its marketing campaign by promoting specific destinations, writes **Rosa Ocampo**

**T**he Philippines has experienced a string of natural catastrophes and testy diplomatic relations in recent years, but the country has also shown immense resilience to bounce back from the misfortunes that have wrecked havoc on its tourism industry.

Tourists are returning to Bohol, a year after the earthquake clobbered its heritage and natural attractions. Parts of Palawan, Boracay and Cebu damaged in varying degrees by super typhoon Haiyan last November have since recovered.

The inbound market is poised for some growth, with international arrivals rising 2.4 per cent year-on-year to 2,733,367 in January to July 2014. Among its traditional source markets, China has recorded a double-digit performance while Japan is showing stable single-digit growth.

A closer look at the inbound numbers, however, also reveals pressing concerns about major source markets in Asia. South Korea – the Philippines' top source market with a 25.3 per cent market share – has slowed for the first time in years. South Korean arrivals dropped 6.4 per cent year-on-year to 662,228 in the first seven months of this year.

The 8.5 per cent increase in arrivals from the fourth biggest market, China, is expected to be wiped out in September when the mainland advised its citizens not to travel to the Philippines due to safety and security concerns.

The lifting of travel bans by Taiwan and Hong Kong in the last 14 months did not help to improve visitor arrivals. In Janu-

ary to July 2014, Taiwanese arrivals dipped 13.4 per cent to 82,787 while Hong Kong footfalls fell 12.4 per cent to 67,034.

The Russian market slid 6.9 per cent to 18,992 arrivals during the same period, owing to the Ukraine crisis, the bankruptcy of several big tour operators and Western sanctions against Russia. The slowdown is expected for the rest of the year, said Ala Enache, Russian market sales executive, Blue Horizons Travel and Tours.

In response to the challenge of growing these declining Asian markets while tapping others, particularly the mid- and longhaul markets, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) has tweaked the *It's More Fun in the Philippines* campaign earlier this year to give a stronger focus on specific destinations instead of the entire country.

The new approach seeks to step up the "power branding" and overcome the lack of awareness of these tourist destinations, explained Domingo Ramon Enerio III, COO of TPB. He added that although only Tacloban and few other provinces felt Typhoon Haiyan's fury, tourists thought the whole Philippines was devastated.

The campaign will also ramp up its focus on Europe, a small but steadily growing market after Philippine Airlines began direct services from Manila to London last year, Enerio informed. Other markets targeted are the Muslim, Middle Eastern, Indian and other new Asian markets, as well as Russia and Eastern Europe.

New destinations being promoted include Aurora in Quezon, Cagayan and

### VIEWPOINT What should the Philippines do to develop its potential in high-end tourism?

**Guy Louis Roger, president, Asiana Pearl Vision**

"The Philippines should be promoted not only for mass tourism but also for the high-end clientele, especially in Europe. Amid the international competition, the Philippine hospitality industry and all tourism stakeholders must improve their quality of service and offer real value for money.

The Philippines should look at Thailand and Bali, which are performing very well in many aspects of tourism.

Hotel developers should consider building holiday villas. With good management and service quality, they can bring more high-end clientele. The Philippines is 20 years late; Bali and Thailand have invested in villas many years ago."



the Ilocos region in the north, which pack heritage and adventure attractions apart from sun, sea and sand, informed John Paul Cabalza, president, Philippine Travel Agencies Association.

Thanks to a robust economy and investment surge, Manila's room supply is expected to increase by 30 per cent over the next three years. City of Dreams Manila, the second integrated resort at the Manila Bay Entertainment City, will open this November with 981 keys.

According to STR Global, the Philippines is one of Asia's strongest performers which, for the period January to August 2014, posted a 3.6 per cent increase in hotel occupancy to 69.4 per cent from a year ago; a 4.1 per cent in ADR to 5,651.5 pesos (US\$127.60) and a 7.9 per cent rise in RevPAR to 3,809.05 pesos.

On the other hand, the country still faces longstanding issues in its tourist infrastructure. Accessibility has improved after the addition of air service agreements and new routes launched by LCCs. However, the recent transfer of five foreign carriers from Terminal 1 to Terminal 3 at Manila's congested Ninoy Aquino International Airport is just a mere palliative; a new, modern and bigger airport is still needed.

On a brighter note, airports in secondary gateways such as Bohol, Boracay, Palawan and Cagayan de Oro are currently being built or upgraded.

Urging more relaxed visa policies, Angel Ramos Bognot, president and managing director, Afro Asian Travel and Tours, said: "Japan has eased visa policies for many Asian travellers. Thailand has waived visa fees for Chinese and Taiwanese tourists... We should ease visa restrictions to lure more tourists into the country."

### HOW TO DO THE VISAYAS

For adventure-seekers with limited time, a three-day dive safari can be customised to feature two of the country's best dive havens plus a day of adventure away from the sea.

Since the sites are in Visayas, the most convenient way of getting around is to hop on modern outrigger boats locally known as *bancas*. The *banca* can also serve as a dive platform.

**Day1** Dive into the Apo Island Marine Reserve in Dauin, Negros Oriental. Surrounded by hard and soft corals, this protected marine reserve is a breeding ground for 500 fish species. Turtles, giant clams and sea snakes also abound.

With year-round visibility, divers are rewarded with sightings of large schools of jacks, as well as barracudas, surgeon fish, and white and black tip sharks.

**Day2** Today, you will explore the waters of Malapascua Island, Cebu. The island is world-renowned for the rare thresher sharks and also hammerhead sharks and manta rays. Three shipwrecks in the vicinity offer more adventure.

This underwater paradise is great for macro diving, with its diversity of marine life including rare blue ring octopus, seahorses, cuttlefish, mandarin fish, etc.

**Day3** Taking a break from diving, today will be spent canyoning in Badian, Cebu. Canyoning involves traversing canyons through various ways like hiking, climbing, swimming, jumping and abseiling.

The Badian area is one of the most picturesque and secluded in the province. This activity lasts three to four hours and includes portions of the Matutinao River, lush jungles, wet canyons, slippery trails, rocks and boulders, and the waterfalls of Kawasan.

*Itinerary by Regent Travel Corp., Manila*



Air access to Bohol will improve soon with a new airport; visitors can explore the island in a jeepney

### WHAT'S NEW

#### 1 Bohol GeoScience tour

The 7.2-magnitude Bohol earthquake has resulted in new geologic transformations in the province – some lands disappeared while new ones rose from the sea, and portions of Chocolate Hills were sliced and scraped off. Ideal for geologists, students and the curious, this tour takes a peek at the landscape changes in Bohol. More information available at [www.tourism.bohol.gov.ph](http://www.tourism.bohol.gov.ph).

#### 2 Videoke Jeepney Party

What better way to tour Manila than

on the city's most famous transport icon, the jeepney? Furthermore, Jeepney Tours has customised the colourful jeepneys into air-conditioned, wireless videoke machine on wheels, featuring comfortable seats and higher ceiling so passengers can stand up while belting out their favourite tunes. There's also a built-in cooler with beer, soda and water on board. Visit [www.JeepneyTours.com](http://www.JeepneyTours.com).

#### 3 Pagudpud

Pagudpud, a picturesque resort town with pristine white sands and crystal blue waters in Ilocos Norte, boasts one of the country's best spots for surfing, kitesurfing and other marine sports.

Round the holiday with visits to plethora of attractions in Ilocos Norte and Sur. Visit [www.itsmorefuninthephilippines.com/ilocos-norte](http://www.itsmorefuninthephilippines.com/ilocos-norte).

#### 4 Bambike Ecotours

Traverse Manila's Walled City, Intramuros, on a bambike, a bicycle made of bamboo and abaca fiber. Lightweight yet safe and sturdy, bambikes are handcrafted in adherence to fair trade and sustainable building principles by members of the Gawad Kalinga, a community in a rural town in Tarlac.

Contact Bambike Ecotours at (63-2) 525-8289 or email [ecotours@bambike.com](mailto:ecotours@bambike.com) for more details.



## Destination Hong Kong

# Striving for good market mix

Hong Kong is grappling with ways to attract visitor dollars without crowding out the territory. Prudence Lui reports

**H**ong Kong's inbound market painted a rosy picture in the 1H2014, posting a 12.5 per cent year-on-year increase to 28.5 million arrivals.

The mainland Chinese and shorthaul markets achieved satisfactory growth of 16 per cent (21.8 million arrivals) and 3.5 per cent (4.1 million arrivals) respectively, while longhaul markets kept up a steady performance (2.1 million arrivals; +0.1 per cent).

Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) executive director, Anthony Lau, said: "Our goal is to attract overnight visitors, particularly those who are likely to spend more during their stay. Therefore, our key target visitor segments are the higher-spending, mid-career and achiever segments, while we also tap the potential of the sizable youth and family segments, especially those in the shorthaul markets."

To meet rising demand for authentic experiences, HKTB has launched the *My Time For* branding campaign earlier this year to showcase the vast array of experiences in Hong Kong. The NTO will continue to highlight core mega events such as Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival, Hong Kong WinterFest and New Year Countdown celebrations.

However, apart from ongoing challeng-

es like manpower shortage and escalating rentals, the deluge of Chinese visitors – more than 70 per cent of total arrivals to Hong Kong – has sparked widespread concern over the city's capacity to sustain future growth.

HKTB is striving to maintain a balanced mix of visitors to Hong Kong, Lau commented. "We are allocating the majority of our marketing budget to 19 international markets, especially shorthaul markets that promise greater growth potential," he said.

Via Vai Travel director, Sef Lam, contended: "From an economic point of view, it is always a danger to depend on a single market. We do have a big proportion of tourists coming from across the border, but there is enough space for everyone."

"I feel that we get too emotional and political about the issue," Lam added, citing examples of how European countries are now eager to court the Chinese market by easing visa policies and hiring more Mandarin-speaking service staff.

Lam also noted such attractions as the Bruce Lee and Studio Ghibli exhibitions at Hong Kong Heritage Museum could potentially draw Chinese tourists, especially families, away from the crowded city centre. "There is also more awareness (among Chinese visitors) of Geopark, hiking trails,



With increasing number of visitor arrivals, locals worry about rising prices and overcrowding

boat rides, etc, not just shopping for milk powder!" he said.

Despite a drop in government spending from China, the Chinese corporate and leisure markets continue to perform for Grand Hyatt Hong Kong, according to the hotel's director of sales and marketing, Cecilia Lo.

She added: "While MICE lead time remains short, we notice that longhaul association and convention enquiries for

2015/2016, especially from the US, are more active this year."

With more infrastructure by 2017 – Wanchai Bypass, Sha Tin to Central Link, West Kowloon Cultural Centre and the likely launch of the third airport runway – Lo is sanguine that Hong Kong will attract more international events and visitors.

In 1Q2014, overnight MICE arrivals to Hong Kong grew 4.2 per cent year-on-year to exceed 318,000.

## ■ HOW TO DO HONG KONG

**Day 1** Experience the magic of Victoria Harbour in the morning through a harbour cruise onboard a Chinese-style boat. Watch the day unfold as you sweep past some of Hong Kong's famous landmarks including Two IFC and the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. As the boat sails east to Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter, you will catch a glimpse of local fishermen mooring their fishing boats.

Take a dim sum lunch break at Luk Yu in Central before venturing into Wan Chai to explore the local buzz. Visit the Blue House, a 1920s-style building named for its stark blue exteriors. The well-preserved building houses the city's first livelihood museum which aims to promote and preserve the culture and spirit of the Wan Chai neighborhood. Heritage walking tours, available upon request, are led by longtime Wan Chai residents and leads to the Wanchai fish and vegetables market.

**Day 2** Today's programme focuses on Kowloon, with the tour starting at Mei Ho House Museum in Shek Kip Mei where you will learn about the beginnings

of Hong Kong's successful public housing system. Then, visit a repurposed factory and observe how creative handicrafts are made by the elderly. Round up the morning with a visit to Jao Tsung-I Academy for an immersion in Chinese culture and visit a repurposed tong lau, a traditional residential and commercial complex.

Break for lunch at a restaurant in a beautiful bonsai garden within Chi Lin Nunnery.

In the afternoon, explore the local markets along Tung Choi Street North, Mong Kok.

**Day 3** Step back in time as you head into the New Territories today. First stop, Tai Fu Tai, the opulent residence built by a scholar who was bestowed the title of Tai Fu by a Qing dynasty emperor. Lavish plaster moldings and auspicious Chinese wood carvings adorn its regal interior, while exquisite décor can be perused inside the Tang Chung Ling Ancestral Hall.

The nearby walled village of Lo Wai offers fascinating peeks into what village life was like in the New Territories, while roots of ancient beliefs can be discovered inside the Man Mo Temple, dedicated to the God of Literature (Man) and the God of War (Mo).

Spend the afternoon at Lam Tsuen Wishing Trees, where local villagers burn joss sticks and incense papers in hopes of their wishes coming true.

Itinerary by Lotus Tours



Mei Ho House Museum

## ■ VIEWPOINT

What do you think of limiting the number of Chinese visitors under the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS)?



Wing Wong, managing director, W Travel Service

"I agree to limiting the number of visits by IVS holders, especially those who enjoy multi-entry access per year. These are mostly same-day visitors shopping for daily necessities without contributing to hotel or tour business. Tourist traffic should also be diverted from key downtown shopping districts like Mongkok to New Territories like Tuen Mun and Sheung Shui. More shopping facilities can be opened there."

## ■ WHAT'S NEW

### ① Revitalization Experience

The six-hour Revitalization Experience tour by Lotus Tours immerses visitors in the colourful history of Hong Kong.

Visitors can learn about the city's oldest public housing complex through the Heritage of Mei Ho House museum, create their own handicrafts at a repurposed factory building and enjoy lunch at Gingko House which supports the elderly through its re-employment scheme. The tour also includes a visit to Jao Tsung-I Academy, a gallery devoted to Chinese culture, and Lui Seng Chun, a historic shophouse now home to a Chinese medicine school.

### ② Aberdeen Street Social

Located at the revitalised PMQ heritage site in Central, Aberdeen Street Social is the brainchild of Michelin-star chef Jason Atherton and entrepreneur Yenn Wong. It serves Atherton's modern British cuisine, creative cocktails and desserts in a convivial atmosphere.

The upper floor houses a contemporary restaurant with a private room and balcony overlooking the garden below.

The ground floor features a more casual restaurant and bar with outdoor dining on its front terrace, plus Sweet Social, a retail shop for pastries, gelati, homemade chocolates and beverages.

### ③ Shark Mystique, Ocean Park

Opened June 2014, the Shark Mystique at Ocean Park is one of Asia's largest shark exhibits with over a hundred sharks and rays, viewable through a 360-degree glass panorama spanning three levels. Extensive educational displays, interactive games and educators are stationed at various narration points to help guests understand the characteristics and living habits of different shark species and convey the message of marine conservation.

### ④ Hong Kong 3D Museum

The Hong Kong 3D Museum opened its doors in July to boast a total exhibition area of over 930m<sup>2</sup>. Situated at Hilton Tower in Tsim Sha Tsui, it displays 70 paintings across five different zones – Modern Hong Kong, Hong Kong Memories, Chinese Culture, Love Journey and Imaginary Wonderland. In the designated 3D experience zone, visitors can enjoy a starry sky, mirror maze, infinity tunnel, virtual projection and trick art games.



## Destination USA

# The Big Apple offers Asians a bite

As Asian footfalls rise, New York City steps up efforts to capture more Asian business events. By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

Thanks to the pervasive influence of Hollywood movies and American pop culture, many Asians already look to New York City (NYC) as an aspirational destination and industry players are hence eager to leverage The Big Apple's brand recognition for outbound travellers from Asia.

New York Marriott Marquis, director of sales & marketing, Leon Goldberg, said: "Everybody wants to come to NYC. The Asian market knows about New York, they know the Marriott name and specifically the New York Marriott Marquis, because of all the movies that are shot here in the city and Times Square."

Makiko Matsuda Healy, vice president, tourism development for NYC & Company – NYC's official marketing and tourism organisation – contends that the city's energy, diversity and attractions are among its best assets in courting Asian visitors.

She said: "From language capability, variety of authentic cuisine options and dietary requirements such as halal and vegetarian needs, many cultural-specific talent and items can be sourced locally because of our community's diversity."

Asian interest is reflected in the arrival figures. According to NYC & Company, the city welcomed 11.4 million international visitors in 2013, of which China and Japan were ranked fifth and 10<sup>th</sup> among the top source markets with 646,000 and 337,000 arrivals respectively.

"Although we do not have a specific figure, both China and Japan are key generators of incentive travel segment as well. We have been seeing more movement from India and South-east Asia such as Indonesia, too," said Healy.

"We have been active in the MICE space across Asia, especially China, Japan, India, Australia and South Korea, through our international offices outreach, trade shows (such as CITM and AIME), sales missions, seminars and fam trips, etc. We also started our outreach in South-east Asia last year through our first presence at ITB Asia."

The increasing availability of longhaul flights linking Asia and America, plus the Asian familiarity with established hospitality brands, have led New York hoteliers to be especially positive in their outlook of the Asian inbound market.

Said Trump SoHo's director of sales and marketing, Mary Mayes: "As Trump SoHo is a young hotel, we are currently focusing on growing the Asian MICE market. Industry intelligence all points to the importance of courting this demographic."

Elaborating on Trump SoHo's multi-pronged promotion strategy in Asia, Mayes said: "On the marketing front, we have invested in a Chinese language website, as well as dedicated efforts to target the online and offline media channels that they are most influenced by. From a sales standpoint, the Trump Organization has

a new development office in Shanghai to grow the brand's footprint in the region.

"On the property level, we have a multi-lingual staff to assist travellers, a dedicated arrival procedure for Chinese guests that keeps cultural customs top-of-mind, and several traditional Asian dishes on our in-room dining menu."

Significant growth has been recorded from China, South Korea and Japan in the past five years for New York Marriott Marquis, according to Goldberg. While Japan remains a "steady feeder market", South Korea and China "have been evolving for

the past two years in all segments", he observed.

In preparation for Amway China's 1,500-pax visit in April this year, New York Marriott Marquis gave its staff a culture crash course on welcoming Chinese visitors. The hotel also replaced all hot water carafes from the coffee makers in guest-rooms, as Chinese in general prefer warm water over ice-cold faucet water, and engaged cultural expert Terri Morrison, author of *Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands*, to educate staff on all the "do's" and "don'ts" of interacting with Chinese guests.



New York City's livewire vibes are familiar and attractive to Asian travellers

## WHAT'S NEW

### 1 Universal Studios Florida

On July 8, *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter – Diagon Alley* debuted at Universal Studios Florida, adding to sister park the Hogsmeade at Islands of Adventure which opened in 2010.

The new attraction includes shops with windows full of magical supplies, food and beverages, a fire-breathing dragon, and Harry Potter and the Escape from Gringotts – the centrepiece roller-coaster ride that goes through the Gringotts vaults.

The Hogwarts Express transports guests between the two Harry Potter parks.

More details can be found at [www.universolorlando.com/wizardingworld](http://www.universolorlando.com/wizardingworld).

### 2 Tilt

Launched in spring 2014, Tilt is a glass-and-steel-enclosed moveable platform that extends 30 degrees outward to generate downward-facing views of The Magnificent Mile and Chicago's famed skyline – from 94 stories at 360 Chicago (formerly the John Hancock Observatory).

Accommodating eight guests at any one time, the Tilt experience can also be combined with private cocktail receptions or seated dinners at the observatory deck.

Visit [www.360chicago.com](http://www.360chicago.com) or email [groupsales@360chicago.com](mailto:groupsales@360chicago.com) for more information and reservations.

### 3 Walt Disney World Resort, Orlando

This resort has from March 31 introduced the MagicBand, an innovative wristband

that functions as an all-in-one device – a room key, theme park ticket and optional payment system – to enable visitors easier access to the touch points throughout the destination. The MagicBand also provides FastPass+ access so park attendees can make reservations for shows, attractions and parade viewings in advance.

More information can be found at [disneyworld.disney.go.com](http://disneyworld.disney.go.com).

### 4 9/11 Memorial Museum

Opened in New York since May, the 9/11 Memorial Museum is an educational and historical institution that documents the events of September 11, 2001, examining their impacts and significance. The institution also commemorates the nearly 3,000 people killed on 9/11 and in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing with artefacts associated with the events to present stories of loss and recovery. Admission is priced at US\$24. For group tickets, email [groups@911memorial.org](mailto:groups@911memorial.org).



The Wizarding World of Harry Potter – Diagon Alley

## VIEWPOINT

What are the challenges in attracting more visitors from Asia?



Leon Goldberg, director of sales & marketing, New York Marriott Marquis

"It is the visa challenge. Japan and South Korea are waiver countries; in China visas are easier now, but still tough. We look forward to the easing of visas so that we will be able to welcome more Chinese visitors to the greatest city in the world!"

## HOW TO DO NEW YORK CITY

**Day 1** Experience the famous New York skyline from the observatories at the Empire State Building and Rockefeller Center's Top of the Rock. Then head over to Times Square, where the excitement of the city holds – bright lights, big screens and bustling crowds.

While in the area, dine at one of the popular eateries on Restaurant Row (46<sup>th</sup> Street, between Eighth and Ninth Avenues) and shop in the huge flagship stores like Toys R Us that are attractions on their own.

End your day with a bang at Broadway. Whether you are into dramas, comedies or musicals, you will find them in the city's theatre district. Choose from long-running shows like *Chicago* and *Mamma Mia!*, or newer hit musicals such as *Once*, *Kinky Boots* and *The Book of Mormon*.

**Day 2** The city is known for its cultural offerings, famous skyscrapers and Central Park, but many forget that it is home to North America's

largest urban zoo – the Bronx Zoo. The zoo houses 6,000 animals representing in excess of 600 species. Visitors can marvel at the tremendous diversity of life on Earth and learn about all kinds of creatures: Madagascar hissing cockroaches and king cobras, snow leopards and sea lion pups.

Catch a traditional baseball game at the end of the day in The Bronx or Queens to pay homage to New York City's unparalleled baseball history.

**Day 3** Ride the free Staten Island Ferry from Lower Manhattan to the northern tip of Staten Island and enjoy magnificent vistas of Lower Manhattan and New York Harbor. For more than a hundred years, the Statue of Liberty, with her raised torch lighting the way to a better life, has symbolised the promise and opportunities of the US. Looking up at the statue during a ferry ride in New York Harbor still provides an emotional jolt.

Itinerary by NYC & Company







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## Marketplace

### Third Bali property joins Furama's portfolio



Furama Hotels International Management is expanding its hotel portfolio in Bali with the addition of FuramaXclusive Ocean Beach, Seminyak, following a property rebranding exercise that will conclude by December 1.

Formerly known as O-CE-N Bali, the hotel features 115 suites with direct beachfront access, living rooms, well-appointed bathrooms, full kitchenettes, and a choice of courtyard, pool or ocean views.

Facilities on-site include a swimming pool, whirlpool tubs, a full-service day spa and a range of dining outlets.

With the completion of the rebranding and FuramaXclusive Ocean Beach's integration into FHI's portfolio, the Singapore-based hotel and resort management company will launch a twin resort concept for its three properties in Bali. Guests will have the option of first enjoying FuramaXclusive Ocean Beach for a thriving beachfront and nightlife scene, and then retreating to either Furama Villas and Spa or FuramaXclusive Villas and Spa, both in Ubud, to experience the enclave's unique village culture and local arts scene.

The twin resort package comes with the convenience of transfer to and from the airport and between the resorts.

**Booth: F21**

### Travelport takes Travelport Smartpoint's capability up a notch



Travelport is showcasing its latest version of Travelport Smartpoint, which will be made available soon, at ITB Asia 2014.

Travelport Smartpoint enables travel agents to take advantage of new content and technologies and helps them achieve immediate productivity gains, reduce costs and improve customer service.

The latest version comes with a range of new features that make shopping and booking the full range of airline products and services even easier. With more airline content than ever before as well as safe and

secure payment options to choose from, it's set to transform the way travel experts drive sales.

- Visually rich content and detailed product descriptions help travel experts sell the complete airline experience and provide the levels of service their customers expect
- Scheduled carriers, LCCs and ancillaries can be shopped and booked side by side – saving time and money
- Travel experts can book by price or preference and up-sell easily, using our most advanced seat maps

Through Travelport Smartpoint, travel experts get real-time access to 400 airlines, including leading LCCs, 610,000 unique hotel properties, 35,000 car rental locations as well as unique access to the full range of airline products and services.

This smart desktop appeals to all user types, as minimal training is required. Meet the Travelport team during the Travelport clinic on October 30, from 16.00 to 17.00, at Hall D, **booth V40**.

### Illusions makes foray into Asia

Travel technology provider Illusions is making its move on Asia this month with the establishment of its first regional office in the "travel hub" of Bangkok.

Vice president Asia of Illusions and former PATA CEO, Greg Duffell, has relocated to the Thai capital with the aim to get major DMCs on board with the company's marketplace solution IWTX, which he calls the "Amazon of the travel trade", as well as

deepen Asian products within its wide scope of inventory.

Presently, the company specialises in providing, on a global basis, unique products and customised automation solutions and services to the travel and leisure industry. Its global clientele includes DER Touristik, Travco Group, 1001 Events, Astro Travel, Petra Travel and New World Travel.

He told the *Daily*: "Let's face it, Thailand

### Thumbs up for Grand Park Orchard's handy mobile service

Grand Park Orchard Singapore is providing guests with unlimited local and international calls through the introduction of a 'handy' smartphone service, launched on March 3 this year.

The free smartphone service, which comes as an in-room amenity, offers guests unlimited international and local calls, unlimited 3G data and Wi-Fi tethering capabilities, as well as a comprehensive city guide.

Darren Ware, general manager of Grand Park Orchard, said: "For today's traveller, staying connected is important and if you will, at the top of anyone's travel checklist."

Created by Tink Labs Singapore, the handy mobile solution is pre-loaded with travel apps including news services, a currency converter, MRT maps as well as a digital location-based city guide.

Ware said: "This is best suited for those who, when travelling, would like to keep to

their daily routine, whether it is keeping in touch, staying on top of the news or sharing their travel experiences and photos through social media."

According to Ware, the hotel has invested close to S\$300,000 (US\$235,000) on the project. "It is more than just a numbers (cost) game – when the intangible benefits add up, (handy is) aligned with our service philosophy of providing loving hospitality at our hotel."

The guest's browsing history, personal information and any additional applications are completely deleted from the device when the handy is reset to factory settings upon check-out.

Ware added that Park Hotel Group is targeting the roll-out of this handy solution to its other two Singapore properties – Grand Park City Hall and Park Hotel Clarke Quay – within the year.

**Booth: F/F16**

### Best Western's Asia expansion rages on

Best Western International (BWI) has this month opened the new Best Western Patong Beach in Phuket, near the famous white sands of Patong Beach and a multitude of bars, restaurants and entertainment venues.

The hotel's 224 contemporary rooms and suites come equipped with 32-inch LCD TVs, comfortable beds, minibars and tea and coffee making facilities. Wi-Fi is complimentary throughout the property.

There are two F&B outlets, an outdoor infinity-edged swimming pool, a fully equipped fitness centre, and a business centre.

The property is BWI's 13th hotel in Thailand and its third in Phuket, joining the Best Western Premier Bangtao Beach Resort & Spa and Best Western Phuket Ocean Resort Phuket.

Over in Sri Lanka, the group teamed up with Elyon Hotels to open the 60-room Best Western Elyon Colombo this summer. The city hotel offers an all-day dining restaurant, specialty restaurant, bar, room service, fitness centre, meeting space and free Wi-Fi.

The opening kickstarted BWI's expansion plans in Sri Lanka under the partnership with Elyon, which will see the latter identifying op-

portunities for new hotels likely to come up in destinations such as Colombo, Kandy, Mirissa and Tangalle.

BWI has also set a target of more than four hotels and 400 rooms within the next three years and 700 rooms in five years in Sri Lanka.

These two openings join the 189-key midscale Best Western Green Hill Hotel which opened at the end of December 2013 in the heart of Yangon.

Offering views of Shwedagon Pagoda, the hotel caters to business event planners with three meeting rooms collectively providing over 200m<sup>2</sup> of function space and free in-room Wi-Fi, as well as a restaurant serving Asian and international cuisine.

Glenn de Souza, BWI's vice president of international operations for Asia and the Middle East, said: "BWI sees huge potential in Myanmar, and we intend to be here for the long term, helping to grow the country's tourism industry."

These three new hotels are showcased at ITB Asia 2014.

**Booth: E/J41**



Best Western Elyon Colombo rooftop bar

is the hub of travel in Asia, and a lot of major DMCs – Diethelm, Khiri, Destination Asia, Exotissimo – are based there, and we're pitching to get this crowd."

"Five years ago, Asia was struggling but now it's the leading travel market in the world... Trade comes so naturally to Asians, look at the wet markets!"

Illusions has had four salespeople based in Thailand since three years ago.

Another aim of the shift is to get more content aggregated on Illusions' IWTX

solution to in turn fulfill its aim of offering all travel-related products under the sun, eventually including peer-to-peer vacation rentals as well.

Duffell pointed out there is "not so much" inventory on products from Cambodia and Vietnam.

Asked what was next for Illusions, he said: "We'll go to B2C eventually, but there's enough trade on the B2B platform to be happy."

**Booth: S35**



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## News

# New airlinks stoke road less travelled

Mature Singapore outbound market goes for exotic holidays, from Uzbekistan to China's Lanzhou province

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

THE introduction of direct air services linking Singapore to Mongolia, Uzbekistan and Lanzhou in China's north-western Gansu province this year is whetting Singaporeans' appetite for exotic holidays in these far-flung destinations.

Angela Wong, director of global accounts Singapore, Helms Briscoe, a meetings procurement and site selection agency, said: "We definitely see growing interest in these places, especially for incentives, because we have already exhausted the usual places like Bali and Phuket."

"We want to promote these culturally rich destinations because chances are high that they (Singapore travellers) have never been there before."

Anita Tan, COO of the Na-

tional Association of Travel Agents Singapore, said: "Broadly speaking, there is growing popularity for such lesser-travelled destinations particularly among mature travellers aged 30 and above, who have more disposable income and have already seen most of what the world has to offer in terms of mass-market destinations."

Tan said that the average length of stay in these destinations varies between eight and 12 days. "For such places like Mongolia, Uzbekistan and Lanzhou, the (pull) factors are the cultural and historical aspects of the destination, which can be in the form of cuisine, heritage sites and architecture," she said.

Similarly, Jeremiah Wong, senior executive of marketing and communications at Chan Broth-



There is growing popularity for such lesser-travelled destinations...

Anita Tan  
COO, National Association of Travel Agents Singapore

ers Travel, highlighted how the company's new eight-day Uzbekistan tour package launched this

year has been sending groups out every week during the seasonal peak period.

"This country's exotic culture and architectural masterpieces is like a dream holiday for history buffs, photography lovers and culture vultures," he said.

The company's Silk Road tour, which can be connected via Lanzhou now, also garnered a record 100 travellers from Singapore earlier last month, added Wong.

Dynasty Travel director of marketing communications, Alicia Seah, said: "However, these new links are primarily not just to attract tourists from Singapore but also around South-east Asia which entails a much a bigger population, and Singapore will be the connecting hub."

Seah elaborated: "As Mongolia, Lanzhou and Tashkent are

rich in Muslim culture, they will be attractive especially to the religious (travel) audience in South-east Asia as well."

Robin Yap, managing director of The Travel Corporation Singapore, feels these exotic spots are "fairly new" hence he has yet to add them to his product offerings. "Training for consultants is also necessary to give accurate information about these destinations, but experienced consultants should not take too long to become an expert," said Yap.

Chan Brothers' Wong suggested: "As new destinations are still considered niche and lesser known, we should have more marketing campaigns led by the relevant airlines, NTOs and travel (consultants) to promote these destinations and ideally sustain the demand after the big bang."



## A DORSETT DO

Dorsett Hospitality International threw a party for the trade Tuesday evening. From left, senior vice president of sales & marketing Philip Schaez and director of marketing & communications, Kattie Hoo; Dorsett Singapore's marketing communications manager Lindy Lin and general manager Philip Wong.

## Forward bookings raise hope for Sabah

By S Puvaneswary

SABAH inbound operators, which have suffered softer demand this year due to numerous kidnapping cases, are breathing a sigh of relief as they start to see forward bookings climbing.

Borneo Eco Tours, assistant general manager, Susan Soong, saw an improvement in forward bookings for March to May 2015 from the European markets, mainly from Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, to the wildlife attractions in Sukau and Sandakan.

Said Soong: "It shows that confidence is returning. This year, most bookings from the European market were last minute, with a two-week lead time."

"I think 2015 will be better and with the government's year-long tourism campaign promoting Malaysia Year of Festivals, it will create more awareness of the destination."

Another tour operator from Sabah, Borneo Trails Tours & Travel sales manager, Yunus Sampeh, said European demand started to pick up again in July 2014 for Sandakan and Sukau, compared with a quiet first half of the year during which many European consultants stopped selling eastern Sabah.

Yunus said: "These areas (Sandakan and Sukau) are very far from Lahad Datu, Semporna and Pom Pom Island where the kidnapping cases took place."

The spate of abduction incidents involving tourists on the east coast of Sabah earlier this year nevertheless wreak havoc on

tourism to the eastern Malaysian state, which took a plunge amid safety concerns at the destination.

In order to pave for the recovery of traffic from the international market, several buyers told *TTG-ITB Asia Daily* that stronger efforts are needed on the Malaysian government's part to disseminate information on improved security measures on the east coast of Sabah to a global audience.

Chinese buyers in particular advocate this action, saying their clients put safety first.

Joseph Sze, director of Shanghai Business Holiday International Travel Service, said: "Sabah is not as hot as it used to be due to numerous kidnapping cases."

"To see a return in confidence, the Malaysian authorities have to emphasise the improved security on the east coast of Sabah."

"We get enquiries from clients whether it is safe to go to Sabah, but this is something we cannot promise," he added.

Another Chinese buyer, Laura Hu, MICE manager of Chongqing-based Private Tour Club, said: "Safety is always the first consideration that travellers make in choosing the destination."

"The kidnapping cases in Sabah had affected demand for the whole destination as travellers are unsure if the country is safe. The media has to play a role in disseminating information on efforts taken to improve security in the east coast of Sabah."

## New Philippines campaign music to young ones and 'young once'

By Hannah Koh

THE Philippine Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) officially launched *Visit the Philippines Year 2015* in Singapore at Conrad Centennial Singapore on Tuesday evening, marking the first unveiling of the campaign outside the Philippines.

Key to the campaign is the first-ever MTV Music Evolution event, brainchild of Viacom International Media Networks Asia's MTV and the Philippine TPB.

Scheduled to take place in Manila in 2Q15, the concert will explore the evolution of a music genre by bringing together iconic regional or local artistes in that field. Hip hop will be the first genre of study.

The Philippines' tourism secretary Ramon R Jimenez said: "Through our partnership with MTV, young people from around

the world will now have the opportunity to share in this passion and experience why and how the music culture is even more fun in the Philippines."

Said Paras Sharma, vice president-MTV, Comedy Central & Digital Media (Asia), Viacom International Media Networks Asia: "MTV Music Evolution in Manila reinforces the Philippines' image as a choice destination for youth travellers by using music as a key platform, something which we've done with Malta, Scotland, Malaysia and Northern Ireland."

He added that the MTV Music Evolution's audience is expected to be in the "tens of thousands". Details on the venue and artist line-up will be announced later.

Asked if this event indicates the NTO's emphasis on the youth market, Domingo Ramon

C Enerio III, COO of the Philippine TPB, replied: "We would like a lot more youth travellers coming in – not just the young ones but also the 'young once'."

Besides partnering major tour operators specialising in youth travel and offering incentives for tour operators and travel agencies to experience MTV Music Evolution in Manila, the TPB is already working on a "big partnership with STA Travel" for a separate project, Enerio shared.

"There are so many music and art festivals lined up that we can now use to sharpen the focus on the youth market," he added, citing the country's biggest outdoor electronic dance music party, Life Dance Philippines, which happens annually every January in Cebu, as an example.

The Philippines is aiming for 8.6 million arrivals in 2015 and, besides the youth market, will also focus on South Korea and the US.



Jimenez: experience our music culture



Hu: disseminate information on improved security



## News/Snapshots

# South America keeps going

Numbers from Asia rising despite access issues, so tourist boards forge on with efforts

**By Hannah Koh**

SOUTH American destinations are seeing efforts to tap Asians pay off, even though accessibility remains an issue.

Peru Export and Tourism Promotion Board (PromPeru), for instance, has seen numbers from Asia growing significantly, albeit from a small base, and is adding China as a target market in 2015. Its work on Asia started with Japan in 2012, followed by South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong.

From January to August 2014, the tourism board saw a year-on-year growth of 41 per cent for Hong Kong, 10 per cent each for Singapore and South Korea, seven per cent for Taiwan and 31 per cent for China.

According to Rosana Guinea, PromPeru's incoming tour-

ism co-ordinator (regional manager)-Asia and Pacific, a fam trip for trade partners in South Korea this year resulted in 10 new travel agencies offering Peru-only itineraries.

Over in Argentina, the National Institute of Tourism Promotion (INPROTUR) is after South-east Asia, India, the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

The NTO is training Argentina's travel trade to chase the Asian market, while marketing efforts this year included campaigns, roadshows, participation at tradeshow in the region, and fam trips for trade and media. "Next year we plan to expand and target other South-east Asian countries such as Indonesia," said Pablo Cagnoni, INPROTUR's Asia-Oceania and Africa tourism co-ordinator.

With Aerolineas Argentinas being a SkyTeam member since 2012, "many people can get to our country with different flight options", he said.

Access remains a thorn in attracting longhaul Asian travellers. Guinea admitted: "(There is) limited access to Peru, with airlines such as American Airlines and Delta Air Lines routed through the US currently." While connections from Asia to the US are plentiful, links from the US to Peru are limited despite growing demand from Asia, she noted.

Aside from access, long travel time, high prices, safety and visas are issues raised by some buyers, including Stefania Set, founder of Singapore-based Yoga Travelers Asia.

Antonette Rose D Aquino of Blue Horizons Travel and Tours

Philippines has seen inquiries for Peru and Mexico, with Brazil drawing the most interest, but grapples with visa issues. "Travelling to South America is a problem because Filipinos have to pass through the US and getting a US visa is a difficult (for us), although we don't need visas for South America," she explained, adding that Filipinos' penchant for short holidays is also an issue.

A2A Safaris, which launched bespoke South American itineraries on October 28, said Latin America could do with products that cater better to Asians. Said managing director Kim Nixon: "Lots of lodges in Latin America focus on the (main source markets like) UK, the US and Europe but what resonates with those markets does not resonate with Asians."

### NUMBERS THAT MATTER

**8,000** The number of ITB Asia 2014 attendees, from 90 countries, compared with approximately 9,000 delegates last year.

**750** The number of exhibitors present at ITB Asia this year, down from 825 last year.

**76** The number of countries and regions represented by the exhibitors, up from 73 last year.

**300** The percentage that Garuda Indonesia has widened its booth space by from last year, the biggest expansion among the exhibitors. In second place is the Philippines Tourism Board at 200 per cent increase.

**14** The percentage increase in the number of buyers this year, registering the strongest buyer participation to date at ITB Asia.

## GET KICKING WITH THIS



### UNIQUE PRODUCT

Put action into wellness tours with Wing Chun lessons by Yoga Travelers Asia

**By Hannah Koh**

TRAVEL consultants with clients looking for a different spin on wellness can take a leaf out of Bruce Lee's book by studying the martial art he mastered.

When a corporate client said it was tired of yoga and demanded a new experience, Singapore-based Yoga Travelers Asia got into action and put together a

3D2N itinerary incorporating Wing Chun lessons, said founder Stefania Set.

The choice of instructor was a bone of contention at first. "The client wanted to minimise costs so flying in a Wing Chun master from Singapore (to Zhuhai, the meeting destination) was a no-go. But the group had a few Westerners (language issue) and we couldn't hire someone from Zhuhai either," Set explained.

"In the end, we got a Wing Chun master from Hong Kong who has trained actors for action movies to take the ferry over and he came with two assistants. All of them spoke English, and one even has a UK degree."

Wing Chun lessons took place two mornings during the 3D2N trip, but this, like other options, can be tailored to suit group needs.



# Thumbs up to a good beginning

Buyers and exhibitors alike are all brimming with excitement and ready to kick into action as ITB Asia kicks off. TTG's Ken Tay checks out the buzz



Pacto Indonesia's Ade Rachmadi



Tauzia Hotel Management Indonesia's Yusuf Ijsseldijk and Dafam Hotels Indonesia's Yuni Manicha



The Royal Paradise Hotel & Spa Thailand's Roserin Sritabutr and Nantaporn Amornpyroj



Above: Helms Briscoe China's Li Zeng, Jessise Pan and Haya Sun



Left: Tourism Fiji's Kathy Koyamaibole, South Pacific Tourism Organisation's Esther Morrel, Samoa Tourism Authority's Tracy Wong Ling-Warren and South Pacific Tourism Organisation's Filipe Kord

Right: ULT Germany's Ruth Meerkamp and Lydia Heinisch





Snapshots

# Where leaders are made

TTG captures CEOs unwinding during TravelRave Leaders Gala in newly-renovated Victoria Theatre & Concert Hall on Tuesday



Singapore Tourism Board's Chew Choon Seng (left) and Lionel Yeo (right) with World Travel & Tourism Council's David Scowsill

Far East Hospitality's Raphael Saw, Abacus International's Robert Bailey, TTG Asia's Raini Hamdi, Singapore Tourism Board's Lionel Yeo and Jones Lang LaSalle's Tasos Kouslogiou



Lavish Dine Catering Singapore's Jerry Sim and Parkroyal on Pickering Singapore's Gino Tan



Singapore Tourism Board's (STB) Jasmine Lew, Panorama Group Indonesia's Budi Tirtawisata, Shandong Provincial Tourism Administration's Wang Rong-guo, STB's Leong Yue Kheong Lawrence and STB China's Kwan Su Min



Singapore Tourism Board's (STB) Tan Yen Nee, Singapore River's Michelle Koh, STB's Chew Chin Heng Edward and Orchard Road Business Association's Adine Loh



Suntec Singapore's Arun Madhok, Conrad Centennial Singapore's Mark Meaney and Suntec Singapore's CH Kong



Garuda Indonesia's Heriyanto, Sentot Mujiono and Emirsyah Satar, Tuniu.com Tour China's Donald Yu and Barry Lin



CNBC Singapore's Peter Junro, Starhub Singapore's Chang Tou Yuen and CNBC Asia Pacific Singapore's Michael Kearns



Hong Thai Travel Services Singapore's Alex Chan and TTG Asia's Gracia Chiang



TTG Asia's Mimi Hudoyo and Tazua Hotel Management's Marc Steinmeyer



Kingsmen Creatives Singapore's Andrew Cheng and Global Premium Hotels Singapore's Eddie Lim Chee Chong



Live for Knowledge Singapore's Alyssa Seah and Globe International Events Consultancy Singapore's Theresa Gan



A proud moment for Stephen Ho, president, Starwood Asia-Pacifi, winner of the 2014 CNBC Travel Business Leader of the Year, presented at the gala



# AWARD-WINNING ASIAN HOSPITALITY

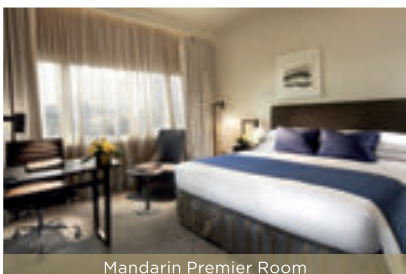
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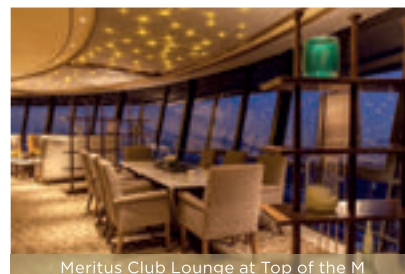
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# TTG Show Daily



Issue

# 2



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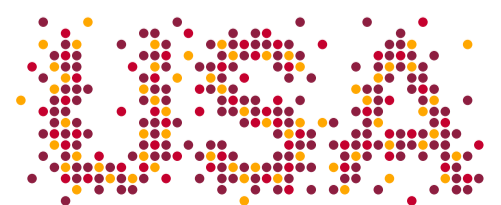


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# CITY OF LIGHTS

**Y**ou'll discover "fabulous" is the perfect description for Las Vegas once you dive into the hyperbole and glamour of the world's entertainment capital.

While Las Vegas will likely never lose its reputation as casino city, it has become a fully developed lifestyle destination in its own right. Travelers across the world certainly seem to agree - Las Vegas received a whopping 39.7 million visitors in 2013.

Las Vegas offers an unrivalled variety of entertainment. You'll sing along to the greatest 80's hits with the Rock of Ages cast at the Venetian, and be swept away by Cirque du Soleil productions.

Satisfy your inner shopaholic with designer boutiques and outlet stores, and go for a rejuvenating spa treatment. Venture into 'Vintage Vegas' (Downtown Las Vegas) to the Fremont East District for nightlife with a unique vibe that you can't find on the Strip.

Let yourself loose, and indulge - after all, what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.

## CULINARY LAS VEGAS

**D**ecadence comes in all shapes and sizes in Las Vegas cuisine. It's not just the exquisite cuisine and celebrity chefs, but the extravagant dining experience you invariably get.

Start with a French brunch at Thomas Keller's **Bouchon** in The Venetian, which models the original bouchons of Lyon, complete with bistro-style fare perfected over years of travel. The Jazz Brunch at **The Country Club** at Wynn Las Vegas is another option, serving buffet-style brunch

fresh with jazz music.

Luxury lifestyle magazine Robb Report crowned Las Vegas "the best place on Earth to eat steak". There's no better place to start than with the 240-day dry-aged Riserva rib-eye steak by Mario Batali's **CarneVino** in Palazzo. You'll also have to sample melt-in-your-mouth American Wagyu at AAA Four Diamond Award-winning **CUT by Wolfgang Puck**, also in Palazzo.

It may be hell in TV personality Gordon Ramsay's kitchens, but his resulting food sure is heavenly. Visit **Gordon Ramsay Steak** at Paris Las Vegas and learn more about his exclusive beef aging program.

Challenge yourself with bold, spicy Southwestern flavors in Chef Bobby Flay's **Mesa Grill** at Caesar's Palace, and try dishes like Shrimp and Roasted Corn Tamale. Then, watch your dinner created right before your eyes with **L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon's** unique counter service at MGM Grand, and relax in the friendly, interactive atmosphere with tapas, entrees, and international wines.

If its extravagance you're looking for, visit Julian Serrano's **Picasso**, in Bellagio, to dine on seasonal French-Mediterranean cuisine amongst a collection of original Picasso oils and ceramics.

A different sort of artistry prevails in **Katsuya by Starck** in SLS Las Vegas, where design impresario Philippe Starck and master sushi chef Katsuya Uechi create a captivating dining experience. Its specialty cocktails, unique maki rolls, and sushi and sashimi platters have won over a following of

Luxury lifestyle magazine Robb Report crowned Las Vegas "the best place on Earth to eat steak". There's no better place to start than with 240-day dry-aged Riserva rib-eye steak.

Hollywood A-listers and food critics.

For more excellent Japanese cuisine, Hard Rock Hotel's **NOBU** offers the freshest sushi you can find. Its fish is flown in daily from the Tokyo Fish Market. Try its innovative creations too!

Not on top of the world yet? Make a trip 800 feet above Las Vegas to the Stratosphere Tower's **Top of the World Restaurant**. Savor the Colorado Rack of Lamb and Chateaubriand 3-course dinner while soaking in unparalleled views Las Vegas from the 360 degree revolving tower.

There's always room for dessert - especially when it's crafted by patisserie chef Jean Philippe. A fountain of cascading liquid chocolate, and an incredible selection of sweet and savory items will wow you at the **Jean Philippe Patisserie** in Bellagio.

Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority  
Ruth Kim • rkim@lvcva.com  
www.lvcva.com

Booth Number **T05**



# LAS VEGAS ADVENTURES

Located within the Mojave Desert, Las Vegas' urban skyline forms a fascinating contrast with the natural magnificence of its stunning desert environment. In just under an hour from the Strip, visitors can find themselves in equally dramatic surroundings- though this time, in nature.

If it's drama you want, you'll definitely get it at the **Grand Canyon**. The iconic national park's majestic red rock walls stand over a mile over the canyon floor, and cover a vast area of 277 miles by 13 miles. The vibrant colors and raw beauty of this geographical wonder will take any traveler's breath away. The Grand Canyon can be accessed via its main entrance on South Rim, North Rim, and through the Hualapai Indian Reservation on its western edge. Travelers can reach it by land transport, or get an amazing view via airplane or helicopter.

For those looking for somewhere nearer, the **Red Rock Canyon** is only thirty minutes west from the Strip, making it a perfect half-day getaway.

Take in its colorful hard rock and fiery sandstone formations with the 13-mile scenic loop drive, which covers plenty of trailheads and viewing spots. The adventurous will also be delighted with the 30 miles of hiking trails, and the cycling, rock-climbing, and horse-back riding activities available.

Take a break from summer heat and red rock with the cool mountain breezes of **Mount Charleston**. Dazzling waterfalls, panoramic views, teeming wildlife and wildflower-blanketed meadows are guaranteed to enchant its visitors. The peak offers opportunities for hiking, camping and picnicking throughout the year, and skiing and sledding in the winter.

Experience the outdoors from the water by embarking on a **Colorado River** tour. Day trips from Las Vegas are a perfect way to admire the rugged beauty and desert wildlife of this otherwise inaccessible gorge. Look out for bighorn sheep, hidden waterfalls and hot springs!

Finally, **Hoover Dam and Lake Mead** are essential Las Vegas day-trips. An engineering and architectural marvel, Hoover Dam generates enough power for public and private utilities in Nevada, Arizona and California. A massive curvilinear arch crosses the mouth of the Colorado, channeling the mighty river through generators into Lake Mesa, USA's largest reservoir. Though man-made, this mind-blowing wonder is no less spectacular.

## Featured Tours

### Maverick Helicopter

**• Wind Dancer Air and Landing Tour**  
An exhilarating helicopter tour over Lake Las Vegas, Lake Mead, Hoover Dam and Fortification Hill. The tour features a landing in Hualapai Indian Territory, and a concluding flight over Downtown Las Vegas and the Las Vegas Strip.

**• Las Vegas Strip Helicopter Tours**  
Intimate views of the Strip on board a state-of-the-art helicopter. Passengers will be treated to the aerial view of Red Rock Canyon, Mt. Charleston, and the Springs Mountains. Passengers have a choice of flight by day or night.

**• Grand Canyon and Rafting Helicopter Tour**  
This helicopter tour flies travelers over the best sights of the Grand Canyon, before landing at Boulder City Airport. The rafting crew takes over, guiding passengers through a full motorized and narrated river rafting voyage 12 miles down the Colorado.

### Papillon

**• Grand Canyon Connoisseur with Harley**  
A scenic flight from Las Vegas to the Grand Canyon National Park, is followed by a 2.5-hour guided South Rim tour - on Harley Davidson Motorcycles. An experience of freedom, adventure, and companionship.

**• Indian Country Adventure**  
Travelers are flown by airplane to the West Rim of the Grand Canyon, then given ample time to explore the rim. The Skywalk, as well as the Native American cultural village, are two popular attractions.

**• Grand Celebration and Eldorado Canyon**  
A helicopter flies guests over the West Rim with educational narration to Eldorado Canyon for a fully guided tour. This adventure-filled tour gives guests an opportunity to explore the surrounding desert via horse-back, ATV, Baja Jeep, kayak, or paddleboard.



## Must See: Cirque du Soleil

The sheer aestheticism of the Cirque du Soleil's spell-binding productions is recognized globally as the stuff of dreams. The Quebec-based company has been dazzling audiences since 1984.

### Productions

Whether it involves jaw-dropping illusions, fantasy, or burlesque, its productions showcase exquisite choreography, music, and showmanship.

- **Michael Jackson ONE** | Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino
- **Zarkana** | ARIA Resort & Casino Las Vegas
- **The Beatles LOVE** | The Mirage
- **CRISS ANGEL Believe** | Luxor Hotel Casino
- **KÀ** | MGM Grand
- **Zumanity** | New York-New York Hotel and Casino

- **O** | Bellagio
- **Mystère** | Treasure Island

### Art Galleries

Richard Macdonald's art immortalizes the grace and strength of Cirque du Soleil dancers and acrobats, capturing the company's artistry.

- **Bellagio Gallery** | "O" Theatre lobby, Bellagio
- **City Centre Gallery** | Crystals in City Centre

### Hospitality

Prolong the wonder of your Cirque du Soleil experience in the company's take on after-hours entertainment.

- **LIGHT** | Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino
- **The Beatles REVOLUTION Lounge** | The Mirage
- **GOLD Boutique Nightclub and Lounge** | ARIA Resort & Casino

**Cirque du Soleil**  
Dionne Yuen • dionne.yuen@cirquedusoleil.com  
www.cirquedusoleil.com  
Booth Number **T05**

Hoover Dam

## Aspen Snowmass

Just a direct flight away from Las Vegas lies the winter wonderland, Aspen Snowmass. Boasting the "Power of Four", this skier's heaven comprises four peaks: Snowmass, Aspen Mountain, Aspen Highlands, and Buttermilk.

Aspen Snowmass occupies 5,300 acres of land in total. Its four peaks lie in the White River Forest National Park, right in the middle of the Rocky Mountains. Summer activities such as hiking, biking, and mountainboarding are also available.

**Key Offerings:**

- A mix of beginner, intermediate and expert runs - including black diamond runs on Aspen Mountain.
- A 5.3-mile long run on Snowmass - its longest of the four peaks.
- A total of 319 miles of ski trails
- Ski and snowboard schools on every peak, all run by professionals
- Guided tours on Aspen Highlands
- Amazing views of Maroon Bells

**Aspen Snowmass**  
Sonia Bekhaazi • sbekhaazi@aspensnowmass.com  
www.aspensnowmass.com  
Booth Number **MC-1**



# ONLY IN SAN FRANCISCO

## CULINARY SAN FRANCISCO

**C**reativity and cultural diversity combine to keep San Francisco among the best restaurant cities globally; in fact, *Saveur's* readers just named it Best Culinary Destination.

San Francisco's culinary excellence is also aided by its access to the freshest of ingredients from the Pacific and California's fertile agricultural lands. Go back to the basics at the **Ferry Building's Marketplace and Farmers Market** to taste locally grown produce and fruit, and gourmet products like artisan cheese, pastries, and honey.

Try fresh seafood, fresh Dungeness crab, and clam chowder, served in a sourdough bread bowl, at the **Fisherman's Wharf**. Historical family-owned restaurants like **Alioto's**, which created the Italian-American fish stew, cioppino, are definitely worth a visit.

Charles Phan's **Slanted Door**, which showcases Vietnamese cuisine made with organic Californian ingredients, was named the nation's outstanding restaurant by the James Beard Foundation this year. That's like getting the Oscar's Best Picture Award!

Meanwhile, visit neighboring **Napa Valley** for its two Michelin 3-Star restaurants: **The Restaurant at Meadowood**, which specializes in sustainable local cuisine, and **The French Laundry**, for French cuisine. While you're at Napa Valley, sample its world-famous wines as you enjoy the region's tranquil beauty.

End your meals with artisan chocolate by chocolatier **Domingo Ghirardelli**. Feeling adventurous? Go for experimental flavors like wasabi, goat cheese, and even bacon.

## SAN FRANCISCO ADVENTURES

San Francisco is the perfect access point to an incredibly varied selection of outdoor activities. From hot-air ballooning at **Napa Valley** to hang-gliding through **Monterey County**, outdoor enthusiasts can plunge into all sorts of experiences while basing themselves in San Francisco.

Only four hours east of San

**M**ulticulturalism. The Beat Generation. Hippies. Gay rights. Start-ups. The vibrant city of San Francisco has been in the midst of it all.

This fascinating city is so multi-faceted that despite its relatively small land area, you'll need plenty of time to explore its colorful neighborhoods, rich arts and culture scene, and beautiful surroundings.

Learn about the roots of the waterfront community at the Fisherman's Wharf. After indulging in some fresh seafood, ride the cable car, America's only moving national historic landmark. Explore San Francisco's eclectic architecture and neighborhoods by foot or by bicycle.

Whether you want to shop, surf, visit a museum, or party, you'd be spoiled for choice for exciting activities and attractions.

San Francisco, **Yosemite National Park** is an obvious choice. Admire its towering granite cliffs and waterfalls, and hike through groves of Giant Sequoia trees and peaceful alpine meadows.

The **Shasta Cascade region**, fondly nicknamed the "American Alps", is named for the gorgeous snow-capped Mount Shasta. Bikers and hikers will fall in love with the 200 miles of trails in the region that take them through its seven national forests, the Lava Beds National Monument, and numerous lakes, rivers and waterfalls.

Cruise down **California Highway 1's** series of beach towns to get your dose of sand and sea. **Half Moon Bay** is a surfer's paradise, while the dazzling **Asilomar State Beach** boasts pristine white sands, tide pools, and a dune preserve.

If you're looking for marine wildlife, join a tour to the **Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary** to catch sight of majestic blue whales and creatures like the elephant seals and stellar sea lions.

**San Francisco Travel Association**  
Antonette Eckert • aeckert@sanfrancisco.travel  
www.sanfrancisco.travel

Booth  
Number **S08**



**Yosemite,  
coastal  
towns,  
and  
cruises!**



### Red and White Fleet Tours

In operation since 1982, the Red and White Fleet brings San Francisco's history to life. Multi-topical audio narratives in 16 languages are offered on every single one of its tours, in or out of the city. The historic company recently added the massive Zalophus into its fleet of four boats. It accommodates up to 650 passengers, and will be used for sightseeing and private charter.

#### Key Offerings:

- **Golden Gate Bay Cruise**  
Breathtaking views of the San Francisco Waterfront, Golden Gate

Bridge, and Alcatraz Island from the water

- **Hop-On Hop-Off Grand City Tour**  
Bus tour across the city where travelers can hop off and explore further at their own leisure
- **Yosemite in a Day**  
A daytrip to the Crown Jewel of the National Park system with beautiful waterfalls, cliffs, and alpine lakes
- **Monterey & Carmel**  
A day trip down California's scenic coast to two charming towns, Monterey and Carmel

**Red and White Fleet**  
Louise Winsnes • louise@redandwhite.com  
www.redandwhite.com

Booth  
Number **MC-2**



What better way to experience a place than with natives whose ancestors walked the same land centuries ago?

Tucked between Lake Mead and the South West boundaries of the Grand Canyon, you'll find Grand Canyon West, the Native American Hualapai Nation. Named "People of The Tall Pines", the Hualapai are native to the region.

Grand Canyon West is perfectly positioned. It's closer to Las Vegas than the North and South Rim, yet offers visitors a great base for immersive experiences both within the Grand Canyon and in surrounding areas like Lake Mead and the Colorado River. That's because the Hualapai American Indian Reservation sprawls across almost 1,000,000 acres, including 108 miles of the Colorado River and Grand Canyon.

A perfect complement to natural wonders is the traditional flavor visitors will experience. From stories of ancient Native Americans and the Wild West to profound customs and traditions, local tribe members will bring the Grand Canyon to life for you, contextualizing its natural beauty with the wealth of history it holds.

# LAND OF THE HUALAPAI

An experience you shouldn't miss is a meal right at the rim of the canyon, which many tours offer. The Hualapai Indians offer a **barbecue lunch**, with local staples like turkey chili, beans, corn on the cob, and corn bread, finished by an apple cobbler.

## GRAND CANYON WEST ADVENTURES

Grand Canyon West has unending experiences for those who love the outdoors. A hop-on hop-off shuttle bus even provides convenient access between the entrance, Eagle Point, and Guano Point.

First make a stop at **Eagle Point**, named for an Eagle-shaped rock formation sacred to the Hualapai. Eagle Point's most popular attraction is by far the engineering marvel, **the Skywalk**: a huge cantilever bridge extending out over the canyon. With its glass floor, the Skywalk offers an unobstructed birds' eye view of the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River from all angles.

You can visit an authentic **Native American village** at Eagle Point, where visitors can experience a walking tour to learn about different tribes and their traditional dwellings. Besides rituals, ceremonial dances, and other traditional performances by local Native Americans, you'll also find hand-made crafts and jewelry sold in the village.

Take the manageable "**Highpoint Hike**" at **Guano Point** to enjoy breathtaking views of the canyon. The point is named for the accumulation of guano in the nearby bat caves, which was mined for use as fertilizers in the



Native American culture, rafting, and tacos!

### Some Facts

- The Hualapai nation was in a state of poverty before it turned to tourism.
- Tourism revenue is now used for schools, roads, and social services.
- The Skywalk extends from the cliff by 21 m, and is 4,000 feet above the Colorado.
- If you go to Arizona Room on the South Rim, do try grilled rattlesnake with your steak.
- The Hualapai American Indian Reservation was created in 1883.

## CULINARY GRAND CANYON WEST

You'll experience the Southwest and Native American culture in the cuisine Grand Canyon West and its surroundings have to offer.

Find your way to **Hualapai Lodge** on Route 66, USA's "Mother Road" stretching from East to West, and you'll discover Diamond Creek. The restaurant has a casual, inviting atmosphere, and more importantly - authentic Native American cuisine like the Hualapai Taco and Hualapai stew, paired with fry bread. The pork green chili is a must-try!

Or eat like a cowboy by staying the night in the **Hualapai Ranch**. You'll enjoy western cuisine in a 1930's ranch-style dining hall, while enjoying entertainment by local artists. The rustic dining experience is completed by an evening by a crackling campfire, listening to cowboy stories as you toast s'mores in the open fire.

1930s. Learn about the history of the Bat Cave Mines as you view the ruins of its pulley system and a historic tramway hanging 8,800 feet across the canyon.

If you're bored with travelling by bus or by foot, go white-water rafting with the **Hualapai River Runners**, and discover another perspective of the Grand Canyon. The tour will take you over the white water rapids of the Colorado River, then on a hike up the Travertine Falls. A smooth water ride will precede the final exhilarating helicopter ride to the top of Grand Canyon West.

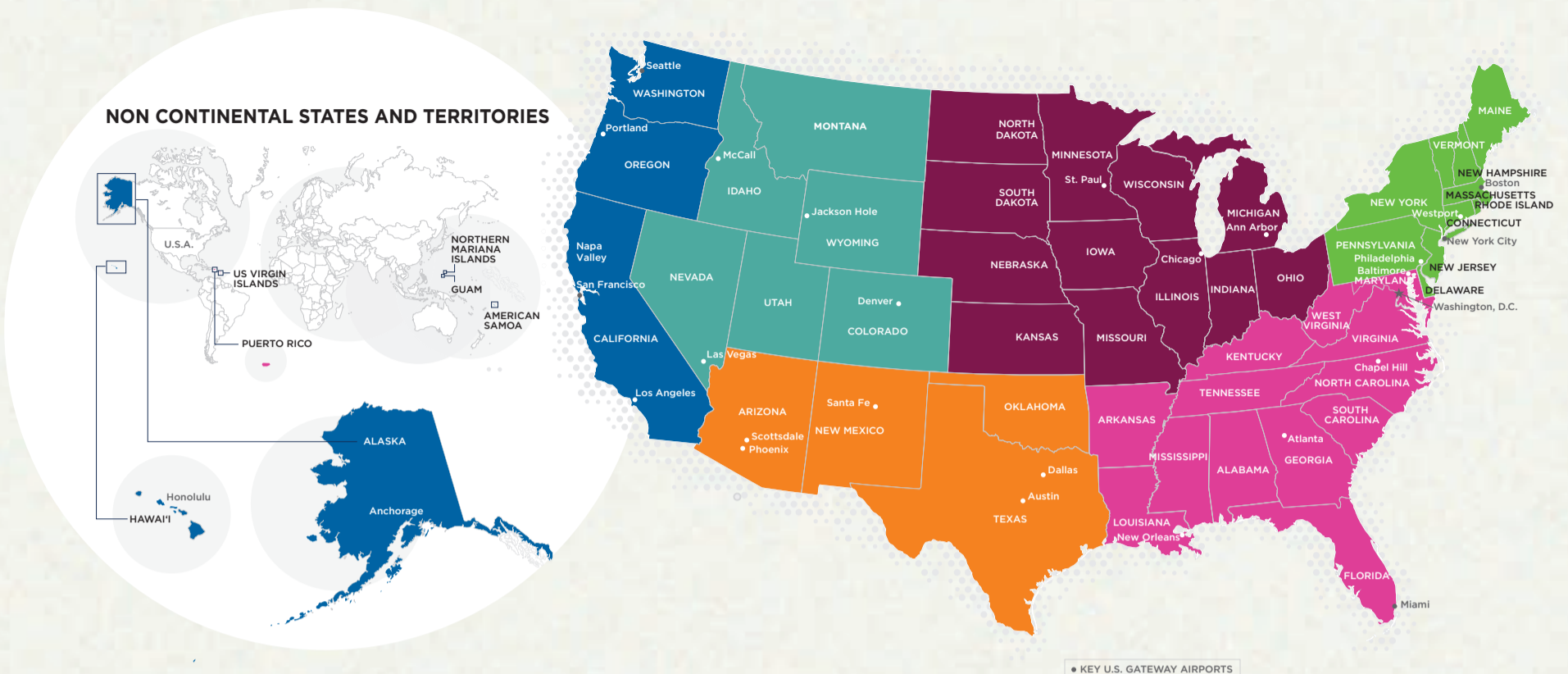
Alternatively, channel cowboy style by riding out into the desert on **horseback from Hualapai Ranch**. The guided tour will bring you right to the edge of the West Rim, where you'll enjoy amazing views of the red rocks of the Grand Canyon, and the Colorado River rushing below.

Grand Canyon Resort Corporation  
Robert Mendez • robert@mendezmediamarketing.com  
www.hualapaitourism.com

Booth Number **T29**



# WELCOME TO THE USA



## ENTRY INFORMATION

Are you a Visa Waiver Program traveler? If you're planning a trip to the United States, make sure you get your travel authorization first. The ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization) application process is fast, easy, costs only \$14 and is valid for up to two years or until your passport expires. Apply for your ESTA and learn more on the only official website: [esta.cbp.dhs.gov](http://esta.cbp.dhs.gov).

Before entering the country, make sure you know what items you must declare. Educate yourself on U.S. travel regulations for a quicker, simpler entry process, whether you're coming home or taking a holiday with family and friends.

### What are the rules regarding large amounts of money?

Anyone travelling with \$10,000 or more in cash — whether it's in U.S. Dollars, another currency or any other monetary instrument — you must declare it

### What may I bring in duty-free?

- No more than 200 cigarettes and 100 cigars per individual 18 and older
- Up to one liter of alcoholic beverages per individual 21 and older
- Gifts and purchases valued at a maximum of \$100 total



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