



Breaking the mould

Industry starts to smash legacy ways to attract, retain Millennials

By Raini Hamdi

LEGACY human resource practices of hotel and tourism companies are starting to unwind, as findings show most Millennials in the industry are unlikely to stay with their company for the next three years.

A Singapore Tourism Board (STB)-commissioned research on *The Asian Millennial workforce and the travel industry* released Wednesday shows only 39 per cent of Millennials are likely to stay with their company for the next three years. Not even half (45 per cent) believe they are paid a competitive wage. Only 54 per cent are satisfied with career progression prospects.

Asked if the industry must be disruptive about their HR practices to attract and retain talent, Neeta Lachmandas, STB's assistant chief executive, interviewed by the *TTG-ITB Asia Daily* at TravelRave Leaders Gala Tuesday evening, said: "I definitely believe our industry needs to look at everything from a clean sheet perspective. We have a complex industry that is very structured and it's hard to move away from the structure."

"I don't think we have a choice but to be disruptive. It won't happen overnight but at least the conversations have started on the ATLS (Asia Travel Leaders Summit) platform and we're learning."

Interviews with industry CEOs show old ways are starting to disappear, fortunately.

Previously it would take on average 17 years to rise to the position of a hotel general manager, but this is being rapidly flattened.

Starwood Asia-Pacific president Stephen Ho said: "We had a Millennial saying (at a session during ATLS this year) that she wants to be a GM in five years. I say that's not impossible."

Saying Starwood has been early in the game to eschew traditional ways, Ho said: "We are competing with various industries for talent. Starwood is seeing people move to, say, an OTA or a digital company whereas previously they stay within hospitality."

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) senior vice development-AMEA, Clarence Tan, said IHG has started a programme to groom young Asians to become GMs of Holiday Inn Express within maximum three years, and five years for its full service brand Holiday Inn.

Asian owners too have had a change of heart. Whereas previously they bank on an international chain to bring in an experienced Western GM to run their hotel, owners today are no longer

averse to hiring local GMs without 20 years' experience and in fact want to see chains promote local talent, said Tan. "We're proud to say all our GMs of Holiday Inn Express in Thailand and Indonesia are locals," he added.

Likewise, Starwood today has GMs who are in their early 30s, particularly in China and India, where it is growing fast. Ho's next aim is to increase the number of female leaders, thereby expanding the pool of talent. Globally, 18 per cent of Starwood leaders are female. "We can raise the bar to 30 per cent. Females tend to have more responsibility to look after the kids and family; we are prepared to give them a sabbatical if they need it, we have different programmes," said Ho.

Meanwhile, as Singapore grapples with labour shortage, former Suntec International CEO Pieter Idenburg is back with his own consulting firm BAUW and is planning a creative disruption in hiring short-term labour for the F&B business or any firm that needs staff on an ad-hoc basis.

"It's basically a short-term employment matching service – the Tinder, Uber or may be even Airbnb for the occasional worker. Singapore is the first test site and we intend to roll this out to other countries within the next 24-36 months," he said.



Ho: what's next are female leaders



Tan: general manager express



TTG Asia's Gracia Chiang (left) and her speakers, Clifford Neo, Angel Gallego, Maarten Groeneveld, John Chan, Bong SC and TTG's Darren Ng and Raini Hamdi

Dynasty is TTG's Innovator

By Gracia Chiang

DYNASTY Travel Singapore yesterday scooped up *TTG Asia's* inaugural Innovator Award for its efforts in driving staff mobility and efficiency with a new iPad mini booking system, which runs on proprietary software and integrates both front and back end, and with CRM.

Two years ago, the outbound agency started equipping its travel consultants with iPads for sales pitches. And from March, they could start using iPad minis to execute bookings with the Tourix system, which updates prices and itineraries in real time. This would also allow a concierge service to be launched in the future, servicing clients at their choice of location.

At *TTG Asia's* Technology Conference at ITB Asia yesterday, Dynasty Travel managing director Clifford Neo showed how the company uses the system to monitor sales trends based on dates, regions and packages. Bookings can also be tracked, including information such as where customers have

been before, amounts spent and frequency of travel.

The three-hour event yesterday was kicked off by Amadeus Asia-Pacific's president Angel Gallego who touched on the importance of personalisation and prediction, urging agencies to "promote content within context".

Microsoft Dynamics Asia's CRM solutions lead-services, John Chan, meanwhile, highlighted case studies of how travel and hospitality players have used mobile to create engaging guest experiences while gaining operational efficiencies.

Marketing expert Bong SC, partner at creative agency MinghamGaxiola, also shared 10 tips on how to navigate the ever-expanding digital landscape using rich and social media.

Rounding off was Diethelm Travel Group incoming CEO Maarten Groeneveld, who touched on how technology could be harnessed to boost staff productivity, but also what talents CEOs should look at bringing into the organisation.



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News

Next for USA: ASEAN

New agency training programme awaits agencies in South-east Asia

By Gracia Chiang

BRAND USA will intensify its focus on South-east Asian markets next year, with a new travel agency training platform being the linchpin of its efforts.

Already in other markets like the UK and India, the USA Discovery Program will be rolled out in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand in 2015.

"One of the biggest challenges within the region is currently the lack of education and awareness," Brand USA vice president, global market development, Jay Gray told *TTG-ITB Asia Daily*.

To address this, the interactive online course has six specialist experience modules – Big City Buzz, Great Outdoors, Culture & Heritage, Winter Sports, Coastal Escapes and Fly-Drive – plus the Regional Expert Badge, which users must attain initially after passing five tests. Further modules such as Food and Drink and Family will be added in the coming months.

"We'll use this as a way to identify travel agencies that will participate in our mega-fam," said Gray, who shared that Brand USA has not conducted any fams in South-east Asia yet. In contrast, North Asia has some 10-12 fams a year.

Added Gray: "After doing

some focus groups with consumers in various markets, we also discovered that there is a broad interest in outdoor activities."

As a result, the marketing body will spotlight the country's

Guess what's the acceptance rate for all Chinese visitors that apply for a visa? It's over 90 per cent.

Jay Gray

Brand USA vice president, global market development

national parks in 2015, which is also the centennial anniversary of the National Park Service. A high-definition feature film will be released in IMAX and giant-screen theatres in the middle of next year, teasing South-east Asian audiences with the US' more than 400 natural assets.

Brand USA would work with the trade on "sweepstakes, special promotions and coming up with great packages", Gray elaborated.

While the ease of getting visas is often cited as a problem among Asian travel consultants, Gray, on the other hand, said that it's often "perception versus reality".

"Guess what's the acceptance rate for all Chinese visitors that apply for a visa? It's over 90 per cent. That's a statistic that we would like to go out and talk about," he quipped.

Within Asia, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Brunei can avail of the US visa waiver programme.

Also highlighting a disparity between perception and reality, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority spokesperson, Jesse Davis, said: "The majority of people we speak to have a dated perception of Las Vegas...10 years ago, our non-gaming revenue exceeded gaming revenue, it's about 60-40 now. There's been an evolution of the destination," he said, adding that there are now 66 celebrity chef restaurants, while a dedicated airline development team is actively building more capacity into Las Vegas.

Also on the area of access, San Francisco Travel Association EVP, tourism, Tom Kiely, shared that flights from China into the city have grown, offering more transit options for South-east Asian passengers. In June, United Airlines launched a service to Chengdu, while in December, China Southern Airlines will start a service from Guangzhou via Wuhan.

Yemen wants Asian tourists and is out to clear image

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

FIRST-TIME ITB Asia exhibitor Yemen wants to court Asian markets such as Singapore, Malaysia and Japan but is realistic about countering negative perceptions.

Essam Ali Alsunaini, deputy minister of administration and financial affairs, Ministry of Tourism in Yemen, said: "There is no doubt that terrorism has affected tourism very badly in Yemen, and that is why we need to take steps to stop this problem."

Green light was given in February for Yemen to promote tourism through participation in international travel trade shows, enabling its tourism board to correct misconceptions and reach out to the global audience.

Alsunaini said: "The media has painted the whole country to be very dangerous but that is not true. Our lives in Yemen are still going on as per normal and it is perfectly safe to visit us."

According to Ahmed Y. Al-Washali, marketing officer of the Ministry of Tourism Yemen, not many tourists currently visit the country – about 1,000 each month – the majority of whom are from the neighbouring Arab countries.

Some Asian buyers are re-

sponsive. Jonathan Tran Vinh Loc, executive director, Lac Hong Voyages in Vietnam, who intends to visit Yemen next year, said: "We are looking for new destinations to sell and the Vietnamese are always interested in the destinations that have a lot of history."

The company has received a few requests for Yemen, he said. "The young people especially are more adventurous and unless entry is forbidden, they will still be keen to explore Yemen."

Similarly, Koyosuke Hashimoto, director of

Japan-based Tour Desk, will be visiting Yemen for the first time next year. He said: "There are actually large parts of the country that are still very safe, like the island of Socotra." He wants to promote the island as "no one has gone there before".

But director of Glimpses Tour India, Ajay Singh Sain, is cautious. He said: "Safety is still our number one priority and if there is the slightest concern regarding security, we would rather not take the risk."

Since February, Yemen has also participated in trade fairs in Italy in February, Berlin in March, Dubai in May, Japan in August and France in September.



Hashimoto: keen on Socotra

Medical tourism association seeks Asian agencies

By S Puvaneswary

THE Medical Tourism Association (MTA), a membership-based international non-profit trade association for the medical tourism and global healthcare industry, wants to increase its membership of medical tourism facilitators and had a session yesterday for Asian travel agencies.

Charlie Rodriguez, MTA's marketing and engagement leader, said the US-based association helps members to raise their online visibility and provides them access to a global network of partners worldwide. Other benefits include providing members with sample contracts for their clients and hospitals and providing training and certification.

The MTA certification programme, which is valid for two years, is aimed at helping medical tourism facilitators to understand medical tourism patient facilitation and best practices.

Rodriguez also invited travel agencies to attend MTA's World Medical Tourism & Global Healthcare Congress in Orlando, US, which will be held next year from September 27-30. Some 3,000 delegates are expected.



AND NOW PARK HAS RESORTS IN THE PORTFOLIO

By Mimi Hudoyo

PARK Hotel Groups (PHG) is strengthening its presence in South-east Asia with two new management contracts in Thailand and Indonesia, both of which signify its entry into the resorts sector.

Both to be branded Park Hotel, the Park Hotel Nusa Dua Bali is scheduled to start operation in 1Q2015, while Park Hotel Khao Lak Beach Resort Phang Nga in 1H2015. The latter is a beachfront property with 125 rooms, while the former is on a hilltop with views of Tanjung Benoa and will have no more than 200 rooms.

Both are existing properties which will undergo a 'facelift' and 'touch ups' to fit the Park Hotel brand, said Allen Law, CEO of Park Hotel Group.

"(Both properties) are important milestones for our group," he said. "Phang Nga is a rapidly developing tourist destination while Bali remains one of South-east Asia's leading tourist destinations."

He said Indonesia and Thailand are "influential and growing markets" and are therefore of strategic importance.

Further expansion plans in South-east Asia include more properties in Indonesia (Jakarta, Surabaya and Medan), Thailand (including Bangkok) and Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur and Malacca).

Above, celebrating the two new management contracts is Law (centre), chief corporate officer Mohd Rafin (in blue) and the rest of PHG's team at ITB Asia.

Aspen: 20% commissions

By Gracia Chiang

ASPEN Skiing Company is prepared to give Asian travel agencies a 20 per cent commission, in a bid to get them to think Aspen, not just Switzerland, for skiing.

"People have this romantic notion of Europe, and they think of Switzerland for skiing...I think it's just branding," said sales and marketing manager, Sonia Bekhaazi, who highlighted among Aspen's USPs its powder-like snow, more than 300 days of sunshine and blue skies, and history, having been part of the silver mining boom.

While Aspen attracts millions of visitors a year, less than five per cent of them are Asian.

The company has started engaging travel agencies and tour operators in Chinese cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, while also offering fam tours. Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore are also markets it wants to target.

"We normally give tour operators 20 per cent commission and travel agencies 10 per cent, but since Asia is a new market, we're willing to pay 20 per cent to travel agencies here too. We want to be more aggressive," she said.



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News

Deeper meetings

STB to arm stakeholders with know-how to make events experiential

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

SINGAPORE is kicking off a series of seminars and interactive masterclasses for MICE industry stakeholders from early next year aimed at arming them with the expertise and know-how to make events more experiential for meeting delegates.

This first initiative under Singapore Tourism Board's (STB) *MICE 2020 Roadmap* comes at a time when the NTO and industry players recognise the need to add value to the MICE visitor experience in Singapore in order to counter popular perceptions the destination is becoming a more expensive place to meet.

The Experience and Development Series, which will run for a year, will be spearheaded by management advisor Joseph Pine, an expert in helping businesses conceive and design new ways of adding value to their economic offerings.

STB assistant chief executive, Neeta Lachmandas, is optimistic that the new series of classes will help transform the city into an "enriching learning destination" for MICE delegates.

"Through this series, participants will learn how to bring Singapore to the delegates during their event and let them interact



Business visitors are generally well-travelled, so there is a need for Singapore to identify the value-added experiences.

Herve Joseph-Antoine
Global managing director,
Pacific World

more with the country," she said.

Serving local authentic cuisine and utilising technology can offer creative elements that planners can tap on to execute memorable events in Singapore, she elaborated.

Herve Joseph-Antoine, global managing director of Pacific World, said: "Singapore is small geographically which can be uncovered within days; this can be

a challenge to attract repeat visitors. Business visitors are generally well-travelled so there is a need for Singapore to identify the value-added experiences and improve on its leisure offerings.

"We can push for more activities under the green approach and showcase more of Singapore's innovation capabilities," he suggested.

Tour East group vice president of sales and marketing, Judy Lum, said: "We (Singapore) are too serious about having fun – for example, you can only board or alight from trishaws at designated points and only travel on designated roads.

"(Singapore is) not blessed with natural wonders and we (have to) compensate with creativity, hence this is our strength and we should not be stifled by regulations," she added.

Besides enhancing the MICE experience, the other two goals the STB is targeting under the *MICE 2020 Roadmap* are developing Singapore into "a hi-tech destination so that visitors can travel conveniently" (under a Connected City plan) and "emerge as Asia's MICE resource capital in skilled talent and knowledge" (under a MICEHQ.sg plan), said Lachmandas.

New arm puts fresh spin on Dubai marketing

By S Puvaneswary

DUBAI is stepping up its visibility on the international stage with the launch of a new destination marketing entity, Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DCTCM).

Unlike its affiliate Dubai Tourism (also known as Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing), which oversees the planning, development, supervision and regulation of the tourism sector, DCTCM, set up in February, is responsible for the branding, promotion and marketing of the destination, as well as creating partnerships between the private and public sector.

"Working in partnership with the private sector, our role is to continue to grow signature annual events such as Dubai Shopping Festival and Dubai Summer Surprises, new events such as Dubai Motor Festival and Dubai Food Festival, as well as celebrations such as Eid Al-Fitr, Eid Al-Adha and Ramadan festivities," said Issam Abdul Rahim Kazim, CEO of DCTCM.

Priority will be focused on making Dubai the top family destination in the world, accord-

ing to Issam, in addition to supporting Dubai's tourism vision of attracting 20 million visitors by 2020 and tripling the economic contribution of tourism, from approximately 75 billion dirhams (US\$20.4 billion) in 2012 to 215-230 billion dirhams in 2020.

To achieve these goals, Dubai's branding and messaging must be communicated in its entirety, which will help overcome the lack of understanding of the city as a vibrant destination, Issam pointed out. Visitors tend to view the city as a destination where a couple of days of touring would be sufficient, but if they knew more about its offerings, even 10 days would not be enough, he opined.

"People have heard of the landmarks – Burj Al Arab, Burj Khalifa and the Palm Islands in Dubai – but these are not all the offerings that Dubai has to offer," he said. "Our challenge is about getting the messages out fast enough to people."

The DCTCM is hence intensifying efforts on digital marketing initiatives including social media and developing mobile apps for Android and iOS.



Issam: making Dubai top family destination

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'No illusion, just pick the right technology'

By Hannah Koh

TECHNOLOGY solutions provider Illusions Online, which has forayed into Asia with the opening of a regional office, is bent on giving "cold, hard technology" and distribute products alongside its DMC and tour operator partners.

Faisal Memon, founder and CEO of Illusions Online, said: "There are a lot of complications in the travel industry for no reason, and that's because there's no unified technology.

"Brick-and-mortar travel companies complain that their business is going to players like Agoda and Booking.com. Then why not invest in the right technology and the right partner?"

Illusions' cloud-based online

system automates the work processes of travel consultants, tour operators and DMCs, but key to the firm's ambition is what Memon calls the "beautiful princess" iWTX, a cross-selling platform.

Users of the Illusions system can distribute inventory on a global scale for free, giving DMCs more international visibility.

"iWTX, which became commercially available in 2012, has been a door opener (for us). If we just sold our technology, we'd just be salespeople. But now we've positioned ourselves as partners in distribution," said Memon.

As a result, Illusions identifies destinations and partners to work with based on what it wants to add to the iWTX. In the coming year, Illusions is looking to

grow into five new destinations including Brazil and South Africa, and build bases out of Europe.

On Illusions' expansion into Asia, Memon said the company will continue to expand its regional team substantially and has a number of Asian acquisitions in the pipeline, mainly technology companies in the travel space.

He added that Illusions is in discussions with the China market, and is also aiming at DMCs with networks across Asia.

The solutions provider is also planning to build a team in the Philippines to handle data by end-2014 or 1Q2015. "It's one thing to bring a customer on board the Illusions system, but it's a headache from the start-up

to when it goes live," Memon remarked. "We want to take away the pain of loading contracts into the system, etc, and leave travel companies to negotiate the best prices for their products and do their selling."

However, he admits that getting into Asia "hasn't been easy". Memon said: "I don't believe in going cheap because we don't want to be a mass supplier at the moment... We're not going to go crazy with discounting and drop service levels as a result."

Nevertheless he sees great prospects. "In 2013 there was US\$500 million worth in transactions in the cloud. By the end of 2014, that will reach US\$1 billion," he pointed out.

WORLDHOTELS' NEW CEO HAS A REASON TO SMILE

JAKARTA-based Tauzia Hotel Management has appointed Worldhotels to represent its Préférence Hotels, during a signing ceremony overseen by Worldhotels CEO Kristin Inness (left) and Tauzia Hotel Management president director Marc Steinmeyer on Wednesday.

Steinmeyer said Worldhotels was chosen for "its sophisticated distribution tools and worldwide network with a strong base in Europe and the US".

Three Préférence Hotels are currently under construction: the 75-room Rumah Luwih, Gyanar, Bali by Préférence

(opening 1Q2015), the 120-room Tijilli Seminyak, Bali by Préférence (opening 2Q2015) and Mintiji, Lombok by Préférence (opening 2016).

Préférence Hotels' main markets will be Asia, Australia and Europe, according to Steinmeyer. — S Puvaneswary



Serviced residences

More units for new clients

The rise of markets such as family and Muslim travel, and a healthy pipeline of serviced apartments, are among factors that make the product more relevant to outbound agencies across Asia, say tour operators

On this panel

ANTHONY CHAN

Group managing director
Chan Brothers Travel, Singapore

ROYANTO HANDAYA

President director
Panorama Tours, Indonesia

JAMIE LAM

Deputy general manager
Wincastle Travel, Hong Kong

SYED MOHD RAZIF AL YAHYA

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

WILLIAM ANG

CEO
Uni-Orient Travel, Philippines

WANIDA HONGSUNIRANDON

Travel manager
Holiday Tours & Travel, Thailand

Is the product more relevant to you?

CHAN Serviced apartments are gaining more relevance for leisure travellers, especially families travelling together. Not only do they provide a place for families to gather under one roof and enjoy the comforts of a personalised space complete with all the essentials of a home, they are also value for money as accommodation cost could be shared among family members while dining costs could be contained with the option of self-catering in the kitchenette. Some serviced apartments also have varied room layouts to suit the practical needs of families.

LAM It depends, because there aren't many destinations where we can include serviced residences in the FIT package. For instance, in Singapore, a minimum stay of seven days is required, whereas there is no such regulation in Thailand. The mix of room types also plays a pivotal role. For example, we usually opt for a two- to three-bedroom apartment. But given the rising number of new players, this means more choices for our clients.

WANIDA Serviced residences are more relevant for us in Australia and New Zealand because these two countries have a lot of apartment offers, plus they are good

for families and groups of friends.

Australia is quite competitive – the three- to 3.5-star apartments there are of good standards, plus there are many apartments in destinations such as the Gold Coast. In New Zealand, self-contained serviced apartments like the Golden Chain Motels are especially popular among those on self-drive holidays.

Travellers like serviced residences only if they are affordable. But serviced residences in Asia are usually in the higher-end segment, hence are typically deemed as more expensive and applicable for business travellers than leisure travellers.

ROYANTO Yes, it is a relevant product for us, but only if the operators provide hotel standards. There is increasing demand from both the leisure and business segment, but it is still in the embryonic stage for the Indonesian market. But the uptrend will continue as leisure travellers want spacious, homely and comfortable accommodation, while business travellers seek space, privacy and modern facilities, complemented by refined hotel services.

Is the line between serviced apartments and hotels blurring? Are apart-

ments better perceived than before?

LAM I don't see the line blurring (in the Hong Kong market). The perception is mostly the same, i.e. serviced residences' standards cannot match hotels' standards. More families are now booking them due to a spacious room with kitchenette.

ANG I disagree. Serviced apartments used to be perceived as cheaper and more suitable for long-term stays than hotels. But some of the new serviced apartments are now comparable to traditional hotels, with better amenities and bigger areas. They also have fewer units, thereby offering a serene environment. All this is making the product attractive to families and friends traveling together.

WANIDA It is still a price factor as Thais, like most Asian travellers, are generally price-conscious, and will consider serviced residences only if prices are competitive. With the growth of LCCs and online bookings, there are plenty of accommodation deals online now and travellers, especially among the younger generation who care more about prices, are now open to different types of accommodation.

SYED RAZIF It depends largely on pricing and the difference between hotel rates and serviced apartment rates. Usually individual travellers and couples prefer to stay in hotels as this works out to be cheaper.

But the take-up rate for serviced apartments also depends largely on the objectives of those travelling. For example, families with children or extended families travelling together may prefer to stay at serviced apartments if their main objective is to be together as a single unit. Or they may have certain food restrictions, such as halal food requirements and choose service apartments because of the kitchenettes.

The Muslim market is thus a new clientele for serviced apartments, especially in destinations where it is difficult and/or expensive to get halal food, such as in Eastern Europe. Some Muslim single travellers do not mind paying more for a serviced

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Serviced residences

Serviced apartments are gaining more relevance for leisure travellers, especially families travelling together... accommodation costs could be shared among family members while dining costs could be contained.



Anthony Chan
Group managing director
Chan Brothers Travel, Singapore

Many serviced apartments have booking facilities via websites or dedicated portals rather than a wider distribution system.



Royanto Handaya
President director
Panorama Tours, Indonesia

I don't see the line blurring (between serviced apartments and hotels). The perception is mostly the same (in the Hong Kong market), ie, serviced residences' standards cannot match hotels' standards.



Jamie Lam
Deputy general manager
Wincastle Travel, Hong Kong

The Muslim market is a new clientele for serviced apartments (because of the kitchennettes), especially in destinations where it is difficult and/or expensive to get halal food, such as in Eastern Europe.



Syed Mohd Razif Al Yahya
Group managing director/group CEO
Sutra Group of Companies, Malaysia

apartment because of the cooking facilities available.

Five years ago the supply of service apartments was a lot less and consequently demand was low. There was not much awareness about them and the perception was they were only for long-stay travellers, such as those on business. Now, it is possible to book serviced apartments for short stays of one or two nights. This makes it an option for leisure travellers wishing to stay in an environment similar to their homes and for everyone to be together.

CHAN I agree. Traditionally, serviced apartments are commonly perceived as most suitable for business travellers on overseas work assignments who need longer-term accommodation. That said, as serviced apartments continually look to improve their products and services to attract a bigger market, such as offering

more competitive short-term and daily rates, enhancing room service menus, having a 24-hour reception, concierge, security services, gyms and even entertainment facilities such as bars, we see a potentially larger market opening up, from corporate clients looking for an optimal and value-for-money accommodation for their employees; to leisure travellers looking for a 'home away from home' where they could enjoy the amenities of a bigger and more personalised space, to larger families looking to stay together under one roof.

What are the pros and cons of booking serviced apartments versus hotels from a tour operator's standpoint?

WANIDA Serviced apartments add more choices to the array of accommodation we can offer clients. But due to a smaller room inventory, they tend to have stricter

cancellation policies than hotels and also require a minimum stay. This is generally the case for apartments in Europe.

SYED RAZIF Serviced residences are mainly located in cities. Choices are limited in small towns. As the daily rates of serviced apartments are more expensive than their weekly and monthly rates, service apartments are not popular for short-stay visitors. Usually hotels have more rooms than serviced residences.

ANG Many of the lesser-known apartments can only be booked through OTAs.

ROYANTO Many serviced apartments have booking facilities via websites or dedicated portals rather than have a wider distribution system. Hotels use a global distribution system like Pegasus, Abacus, Galileo, Amadeus, Worldspan, etc. They

also offer loyalty programmes and marketing partnerships.

What should serviced apartments do to increase bookings from you?

WANIDA Serviced residences must work with inbound tour operators to promote their apartments to Thai outbound travel consultants, who prefer booking from systems such as Gullivers and Gateway (a hotel consolidator). Also, serviced apartments must make themselves more visible on Gullivers and Gateway, and make it easier for travel consultants to include them as a choice for clients. For example, we use Calypso to get wholesale rates, which are secured and placed into the system by Qantas Holidays.

CHAN To attract more leisure travellers looking for shorter-term accommodation, more serviced apartments should

What's coming up

THE ASCOTT GROUP has crossed its milestone of having 35,000 apartment units globally and is stepping up growth in China. It has secured contracts to manage four more properties with over 900 apartment units in Taiyuan, Beijing, Shanghai and Dalian. This beefs Ascott's portfolio in China to more than 11,600 apartment units in 64 properties across 21 cities.

Frasers Hospitality, which currently offers 16,000 apartment units in more than 13 gateway cities worldwide, is pump-

ing up supply with four more serviced residences scheduled to open next year in Kuala Lumpur, Bangalore, Barcelona and Brisbane.

Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts raised the curtains on Cassia in June, which it billed as a new brand of extended stay accommodation. Properties are already in development in five destinations, namely Phuket, Bintan, Beruwala (Sri Lanka), Gold Coast (Australia) and Lijiang. Another seven are slated to come up in Brisbane, New York, Japan, the Seychelles, Chiang

Mai, Bangkok and Lang Co (Vietnam).

Oakwood Worldwide and **Mapletree Group Singapore** announced a new joint venture in May that will roll out more than 100 Oakwood properties globally within the next five years. Under the terms of the agreement, Mapletree will acquire and develop serviced apartments under the Oakwood brand in markets outside of North America. Oakwood Worldwide will contribute to the same portfolio for properties located within North America.



I think they are becoming more hotel-like, but offering amenities that are lacking in hotels. Serviced apartments are moving in the right direction.

better. Secondly, they need to promote themselves more in order to create awareness among customers that they are a viable alternative to hotels.

Are serviced residence developers building the right type of products?

SYED RAZIF Yes, they are building apartments with a family concept and modern facilities you'd find in homes such as TV, Wi-Fi, sofa bed, washing machine, etc. It is

also important they are located near public transport and food marts.

WANIDA The apartments are good for FITs or small groups but they are still not quite suitable for bigger or collective groups due to their fewer facilities and services, for example, the lack of porters to assist with luggage or round-the-clock reception to receive guests at the front desk. Serviced residences should therefore

consider recruiting more service staff.

ANG I think they are becoming more hotel-like, but offering amenities that are lacking in hotels.

ROYANTO Many Indonesians travel with families and sometimes extended families. An apartment near a popular theme park or a hospital/medical centre can offer an alternative option.



William Ang
CEO
Uni-Orient Travel, Philippines

recalibrate their pricing policy and make short-term rates as competitive as their longer-term rates.

SYED RAZIF They should offer promotional rates and attractive commissions to tour operators. If they offer net rates to tour operators, these rates should be lower than what the travelling public gets.

LAM They should offer more two or three-bedroom units in their inventory as that's what our clients look for. The interior design and décor of some of the older properties look unattractive and ordinary.

ROYANTO They need to do some homework. Firstly, most serviced apartments are not very aware of the leisure or business segments that tour operators can generate for them. We can work together

Lanson Place, which prides its serviced suites on a younger and sleeker look, has targeted to grow them in secondary locations in prime cities, as well as in secondary cities. Scheduled for a soft opening at the end of the year is the Aroma Garden Serviced Suites by Lanson Place in Shanghai, which will offer 79 units.

Swiss-Garden International will add two serviced residences in Malacca and Kuantan to its collection by the end of this year. Its portfolio is set to grow further with the opening of D'Majestic Kuala Lumpur and Swiss-Garden Johor Bahru in 2015, while the Pavilion-Garden Suites in Kota Bahru and Swiss-Garden Hotel & Residences Cameron Highlands are slated to welcome guests by 2016.



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Air ancillaries take off

With more legacy airlines unbundling their products and LCCs distributing through B2B, booking of ancillaries through the GDS has become more seamless. [Kathy Neo](#), [Paige Lee Pei Qi](#) and [Hannah Koh](#) find out



Ho Hoong Mau

Vice president, airline distribution

How different are ancillaries booked on LCCs vs full-service carriers (FSCs)?

Today, most FSCs are just selling baggage and pre-reserved seats, while LCCs offer the full suite like meals, comfort kits, in-flight entertainment and early boarding. The main difference is fulfilment. For FSCs, the issuance of EMD-A is needed by the agencies for fulfilment. EMD-A is clearly not needed for the LCCs.

Why have airlines been slow in making ancillaries available to agencies?

For FSCs, unbundling to itemise ancillaries and charge for them separately is retrospective, and so, much more costly and involved. In many respects, their response has therefore been pretty fast.

The defence from some quarters is that Asians like all-in packages and that ancillary strategy and full-service brand strategy don't mix: in a recent poll we conducted with Asia-Pacific carriers, almost eight in 10 still experience resistance from travellers in paying for services that used to be included in the fare. Asian carriers are also hesitant as they don't see a net revenue gain on ancillaries yet, once the operational adjustments have been costed in.

But ancillaries are now gaining momentum, given the strong competition from LCCs with their more flexible fare structures; ancillary-friendly industry standards being developed by ATPCO and IATA; GDSs' ability to support the ancillary-friendly industry standards via evolving technology as well as sale of ancillaries via XML connectivity; and ease of fulfilment of ancillary sales via EMDs.

Around half the LCCs based in Asia-Pacific are now integrated with Abacus to access the B2B channel for ancillaries.

Why have agencies been slow in booking ancillaries through the GDS?

They have not been slow. They are re-

sponding to customer demand for ancillaries and are providing them as a value-add to their offering, within the ancillary provision of the GDS. They are selling these ancillaries without any incentive or commission from the carriers.

Where we need to move faster, however, is in integrating the ancillaries into the more complex workflows, as with the managed travellers gaining pre-ticket approval and then adding ancillaries post-ticketing. We are working on it.

The alternative for some full-service airlines – the introduction of premium economy class, has gained immediate traction. Currently, up to seven per cent of Abacus bookings are premium economy.

How are you encouraging bookings?

With Abacus Air Extras, ancillary options are visible to agencies during the shopping and pricing workflow. Agencies are able to offer the specific product attributes customers want using Abacus point-of-sale technology, without having to check other sources like the airline's website. The graphical interface allows easy sale of excess baggage, pre-reserved seats, lounge access, Wi-Fi and more. These ancillaries can then be fulfilled easily with the Abacus EMD-A document.

Many carriers have chosen to bundle ancillaries into fare families, presenting them to Abacus agencies as branded fares. It's a tactical marketing tool for the carriers to compete more effectively. Travellers are given more packages to choose from, priced accordingly. Our research shows that the majority of carriers are choosing to package ancillaries rather than present them in an à la carte menu, so branded fares have their place.

How many airlines do you have selling ancillaries?

So far, we are working with nine carriers on Abacus Air Extras, with many more offering fare families.

What is the most-booked ancillary by agencies?

Pre-reserved seats.

What is the most profitable ancillary for agencies?

Agencies are not making any profit from ancillary products at present. There's no commission given by the carriers for ancillary sales. In one respect, they are profiting from the confusion among consumers over what is included or excluded online. Travellers are more inclined to use a travel consultant when it begins to look complicated and they want advice.

How can agencies make money from ancillaries?

Either add a mark-up or service fee.



Leon Herce

Vice president, distribution commercial, Asia-Pacific

How different are ancillaries booked on LCCs vs full-service carriers (FSCs)?

LCCs have been 'creative practitioners' of the ancillary revenue art, while FSCs are still catching up.

LCCs typically rely upon a mix of à la carte fees to generate good levels of ancillary revenue. FSCs' ancillary activity, on the other hand, may consist of fees associated with excess or heavy baggage, and limited partner activity for frequent flier programmes.

However, we have also noticed that FSCs are also moving towards adopting à la carte fees. All Nippon Airways, for example, is testing the sale of upgrading meals to economy class passengers on longhaul routes.

Why have airlines been slow in making ancillaries available to agencies?

Airlines are facing some of the most challenging times in the history of aviation. With increasing fuel prices, cut-throat competition and rising traveller expectations, airlines are looking to opportunities like ancillary services to drive new revenue.

Travellers' appetite for ancillary services is growing as well. The IATA's 2013 *Global Passenger Survey* found that nearly half (48 per cent) of passengers bought ancillary products in the last 12 months, compared to 34 per cent in 2012. In the beginning, ancillaries were primarily offered via

an airline.com website, but today, airline sales strategies have evolved to include B2B channels like the GDS. Technology advancement has been crucial to enable the successful sale of ancillary services via a B2B channel.

Why have agencies been slow in booking ancillaries through the GDS?

Ease of booking, system reliability, cost efficiency and content aggregation are top concerns for travel agencies. Historically, booking ancillary services could mean learning new commands, more time investment without necessarily any financial gains.

However, as travellers today expect a more personalised service, travel agencies must be able to advise quickly and efficiently while being able to book a completely customisable ticket. This often means being able to offer clear value-added services from the airline, such as extra leg room, advanced seat selection or a comfort kit, and depending on the travel agency's preference, being able to charge for this value-added service via service fees.

How are you encouraging bookings?

Amadeus believes that the ability to advise and book a completely personalised fare allows travel consultants to deliver far greater value to their customers. Our role is to make this process as seamless as possible.

The Amadeus Selling Platform is a fully integrated solution that completely incorporates ancillary services into the booking flow, ensuring that the booking and pricing of ancillary services is as simple as booking airfares.

Additionally, we are also integrating ancillary services into Amadeus Web Services and our online corporate travel booking tool, AeTM, to enable ancillary sales via the online travel agency channel. We have also invested heavily to evolve our solutions to ensure they are built in the same way that travel agencies think.

How many airlines do you have selling ancillaries?

To date, 56 airlines are using Amadeus to power their ancillary service sales, includ-

ing Tigerair, Qantas and AirAsia, with 25 already selling ancillaries across 108 markets.

What is the most-booked ancillary by agencies?

Advanced seat selection. This is largely because airlines have not only started to unbundle seat reservations from their lowest booking fare, but also because travellers have come to appreciate seat reservation as an ancillary option.

How can agencies make money from ancillaries?

Travel agencies will be able to provide an enhanced level of customer service through the personalised ancillary offering – differentiating them in a highly competitive travel landscape while also providing them with an opportunity to enhance their service fee strategy.



Damian Hickey

Vice president, global sales & distribution, Asia-Pacific

How different are ancillaries booked on LCCs vs full-service carriers (FSCs)?

Traditionally, LCCs have opted for a more unbundled product offering and hence, ancillaries are booked more often and played a bigger part in an LCC revenue stream.

However, we are now seeing hybrid and FSCs unbundling their ancillary products. An example are those airlines that distribute fares on industry standard (like ATPCO) while distributing ancillaries via a more flexible direct API connect.

Why have airlines been slow in making their ancillaries available to agencies?

Airlines have been slow due to the lack of flexibility in distributing ancillaries. Previously, airlines were limited to distributing ancillaries through industry standard such as ATPCO.

According to a study by SITA, 87 per cent of airline ancillary revenues come from direct channels although indirect channels account for nearly half of the ticket sales. This presents great opportunity for the airline to capture additional ancillary revenue by making their offering more available through the B2B channel.

This is changing with the Travelport Merchandising Platform, which enables airlines to distribute and differentiate all of their content and products via the agency channel, connecting to Travelport exactly how they choose to – whether it be industry standard, direct API connect, or a hybrid of both.

Why have agencies been slow in booking ancillaries through the GDS?

Traditionally, agencies have to go outside of their normal booking flow to the air-

line's website to book ancillaries for their customers. Not only is this extra process time-consuming, it also makes the accounting, payment and fulfilment process more complicated.

However, this does not mean that agencies don't want to sell ancillaries. In a series of interviews conducted by Travelport in November 2012 with 33 global corporations – 88 per cent of agencies want to offer baggage allowance, 87 per cent want to offer seat upgrades.

This has again changed with Travelport Merchandising Platform, which enables agencies to fully understand and compare products and offers from those airlines within the agencies' existing desktop environment.

How are you encouraging bookings?

Travelport Merchandising Platform has three core components, which are accessible from our Smartpoint desktop:

- Travelport Aggregated Shopping – aggregates LCC content alongside those of traditional carriers, all on the same screen
- Travelport Ancillary Services – allows agencies to sell airline ancillaries or 'optional extras', such as lounge passes, seats and bags, within their existing workflow rather than via an airline website.
- Travelport Rich Content – enables airlines to fully differentiate themselves with graphical content and product descriptions to help agencies become

more informed about their offering to increase upsell and cross-sell opportunities. This component is currently in alpha testing.

How many airlines do you have selling ancillaries?

FSCs like Air Canada, KLM, Qantas, Air France, Alitalia, Air New Zealand, Aegean and Air Berlin, as well as LCCs like EasyJet, Jet2.com, Transavia.com, Tigerair and AirAsia.

What is the most-booked ancillary by agencies?

Checked baggage and seats with extra leg room.

What is the most profitable ancillary for agencies?

The key is not to focus on ancillary profit, but the overall service they can offer to customers, who expect a one-stop-shop from the agencies.

To be profitable, agencies need to satisfy the increasing demands of today's consumers within the same workflow; upsell through easy access to detailed product and fare information; and improve customer loyalty.

How can agencies make money from ancillaries?

By providing a high-value service. The opportunity always exists for mark-ups for value-added services. Some airlines do pay commission on ancillaries.

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Luxury hotels

Rise of new brands

Chinese luxury travellers continue to consume the imagination of hotel groups, reports [Raini Hamdi](#)

Hong Kong-based Marco Polo Hotels and Langham Hospitality Group are launching new brands that have the Chinese luxury customer in mind, joining earlier entrants InterContinental Hotels Group and General Hotel Management (GHM) which have fielded Hualuxe Hotels & Resorts and Ahn Luh Resorts and Residences respectively.

Niccolo, Marco Polo Hotels' first new brand since the group's inception in 1986, will be a collection of "contemporary urban chic hotels" closely aligned to "a lifestyle fashion experience". Marco Polo Hotels' president, Eric Waldburger, explained this synergises with parent Wharf Holdings' multiple International Financial Square (IFS) developments – high-end retail, residential and office precincts which it is building in China.

The first Niccolo hotel will open in early 2015 within the newly opened IFS Chengdu, China's next mega city in the Sichuan province. "We will be building the brand in China with our IFS developments and partnering with high-end fashion, before shifting our focus to other regions to accommodate the ever-increasing Chinese outbound market," said Waldburger.

The new brand aims to live up to the pioneering spirit of Niccolo Polo, father of the group's namesake, Marco Polo, by offering new ideas such as "a new breed of concierge service", retail partnerships exclusively available to hotel guests and a Niccolo Lecture Series. The first Niccolo in Chengdu, with 228 rooms and suites, aims to benchmark the brand's "passion for high-end fashion, eclectic cuisine and genuine hospitality". Another three Niccolo hotels are to open in Chongqing, Changsha and Suzhou by the end of 2017.

Asked what the difference is

between Niccolo and Marco Polo, Waldburger said: "The brands are more complementary than distinct. As a brand extension Niccolo builds on the Marco Polo legacy but is redefining the guest experience to focus on unique signature discoveries of style, cuisine and culture. Technology, design and service will set new benchmarks that appeal to captains of industry, entrepreneurial leaders and icons of style."

Langham will launch a China hotel brand in September, pitched at the five-star level but just below the Langham brand, said CEO Robert Warman.

"We could become the reliable place for the new Chinese travellers," he said, adding that the brand would also be expanded to Asia and worldwide, although there are enough opportunities in China for Langham to tap without going beyond the country.

Warman said the Chinese travellers' tastes and wants are not that different from international guests, however, what Langham's China brand hopes to fulfil is to "provide well" for Chinese guests in areas such as food, language, etc.

More details of the brand will be unveiled soon.

Meanwhile, GHM's first Ahn Luh has opened in Shaoxing, Zhejiang, while its second is opening in early 2015 in Zhujiajiao, Shanghai. Another two are under development in Dujiangyan, Sichuan and Xunliao Bay, Guangdong. GHM is in advanced talks with developers in China in Beijing, Dalian, Fuzhou, Liyang (Jiangsu province), Sanya, Xi'an and Yichun (Heilongjiang province) and internationally in Taipei and Bali, according to Ahn Luh's CEO and GHM's vice president-development & pre-opening services, Akira Moreno.

He pointed out that

while China has benefited from the expertise in key hospitality competencies that global hospitality brands have brought, this expertise still generally caters to international travellers. On the other hand, local Chinese hotel brands have continued to grow a fair share of the domestic market but none have truly established themselves as peers with their Western counterparts.

"Naturally, with more international leisure and business travellers wanting to experience more of the local culture, we anticipate growth in the demand for a brand that will effectively weave and encapsulate the best of both worlds. This is where we see Ahn Luh filling the gap as it balances the two scenarios mentioned above," said Moreno in an article in the latest issue of sister publication, *TTG Asia Luxury*.

While China has benefited from the expertise global hospitality brands have brought, this expertise still generally caters to international travellers...

Akira Moreno,
CEO, Ahn Luh Resorts & Residences, and vice president development & pre-opening services, General Hotel Management

Redefining luxury with Chinese upmarket guests in mind are, from left, Marco Polo Hotels' Eric Waldburger, Langham Hospitality Group's Robert Warman and General Hotel Management's Akira Moreno



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Destination Macau

Pushing nights

With arrivals up, Macau is now keen to make further progress by encouraging longer stays, writes **Prudence Lui**

Macau's tourism fortune continues to shine after a record-breaking year in 2013. In the first five months of 2014, the destination welcomed 12.9 million tourists, a year-on-year growth of almost nine per cent.

While acknowledging the growth, the Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO) has expressed a desire to encourage longer stays among visitors.

MGTO director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said: "We are trying out new ways to enhance the Macau experience and make it a more interesting and enjoyable place to visit."

One of the things the bureau did to enhance the Macau experience was to launch

a 3D mapping show at the Fisherman's Wharf in April, which showcased Macau and its historical landmarks in a new light. New walking tours were also presented to the public for feedback.

De Senna Fernandes explained that the direction was in line with the destination's promotional slogan, *Experience Macau*.

"(We want our visitors) to experience the city's culture and heritage, events and festivals, alongside its gastronomy, entertainment and shopping, (which will) make their visit a more rewarding one," she added.

Over the next few years, Macau will continue to expand as a tourism destination. Several major infrastructure projects are in progress, including the Light Rail System which will improve accessibility into and within Macau. Many heritage architecture and areas are being restored, while more regular activities and tools are being planned for travellers. Signature events in the destination are, too, being enhanced.

De Senna Fernandes said: "MGTO is striving to enrich the tourism product portfolio of Macau to cater for the interests of different tourist markets. Business tourism, for example, has boomed along

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Fisherman's Wharf offers new experiences



with the favourable conditions and Macau today has become an ideal destination for business tourism.

"With various tourism incentive schemes, MGTO hopes to encourage more visitors, organisations and enterprises to choose Macau as a destination for weddings, student tours and business tourism, which will facilitate the diversification of Macau's tourism development."

However, Macau's rapid expansion is a double-edged sword.

While Hotel Royal Macau reported healthy occupancy and rates in 1H2014, it is plagued by human resource woes.

Deputy general manager, Kevin Chan, told the *Daily*: "We have difficulty replacing our front line and back-of-house staff (and) our supply of tour bus drivers and general drivers is in great shortage. The casinos are hiring many of these position and are obviously offering a higher salary, but even they are facing shortages."

Chan believes that the manpower shortage will burden "the entire Macau infrastructure" in two to three years' time, when all current casino and hotel projects are completed. "Border immigration, public transportation system and space will all be challenged," he predicted.

Gray Line Tours, managing director, Andy Wu, added that bottlenecks in transportation services are exacerbated by "the government's slow approval process for new coach licenses" which "affects operators who want to replace their fleet".

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WHAT'S NEW

1 Fisherman's Wharf

Redevelopment of Fisherman's Wharf is under way, and is slated for completion in 3Q2016. The project will welcome three hotels – Harbourview Hotel (3Q2014), Legend Palace Hotel (2Q2015) and Legendale Hotel (2016). The four-star Harbourview Hotel is modelled after 18th century architecture in Prague and will offer 445 rooms, F&B outlets, a health club and retail spaces.

Existing facilities and buildings at Fisherman's Wharf will also be refurbished, and visitors can expect to see new fine dining and family restaurants.

2 TurboJET

TurboJET has made improvements to passenger experience, offering free Wi-Fi connection onboard its full fleet and shortening its sea-to-air Minimum Connection Time by 10 minutes.

Passengers with checked baggage using the Upstream Check-in Service in Macau will encounter a transfer time of only 80 minutes. Passengers without checked baggage will require 65 minutes.

Furthermore, four new Airport Route

counters have been deployed on level two of the departure hall at Macau Maritime Ferry Terminal. These will shorten passengers' waiting time, facilitate check-in for ferry and flight, and improve baggage processing efficiency.

3 Macau Open Top Bus

The Macau Open Top Bus, operated by Goldspark Macau Tours, will have two new buses coming into operations soon. This will enhance the tour bus service's schedule and bus routes to include new tourism hot spots. There are also plans to launch a Taipa route soon.

Currently, Macau Open Top Bus takes passengers on a 75-minute tour of the Macau Peninsula, covering 10 attractions such as the Macau Science Center, Kun Lam Statue and The Red Market.

An audio commentary, available in several languages including English, Italian, French, German, Russian and Spanish, offers an insight into Macau's history and culture. There are 10 departures per day, from 09.30 to 16.15.

The tour costs HK\$150 (US\$19) per adult and passengers can enjoy free Wi-Fi onboard.

4 Macao Cultural and Creative Map

Travellers who would like to explore Macau at their own pace can now rely on the Macao Cultural and Creative Map and complementing mobile app. Designed to guide tourists to Macau's cultural and creative spaces, the first edition of the map covers the destination's seven parishes, introducing each with text and animations. Information on World Heritage sites, museums and bus routes are also available. Location services on the mobile app help guide users to even more products and activities.

The Map is distributed at 158 locations across Hong Kong and Macau, including immigration checkpoints, attractions and hotels. For mobile app download, visit www.macauccei.com/app/.



HOW TO DO MACAU

Day 1 Start the day with a walking tour around the Historic Centre of Macau, with visits to the Ruins of St. Paul's, Senado Square, St. Dominic's Church, St. Augustine's Square, A-Ma Temple and the picturesque Guia Fortress.

After your lunch break, continue on your heritage excursion through Taipa and Coloane Old Towns where you will find beloved landmarks like Taipa Houses Museum. Explore Rua do Cunha, a narrow pedestrian street in the town centre of Taipa island.

Day 2 Get ready to eat your way through Macau today, as you dive into local eateries to explore the destination's unique blend of Cantonese and Portuguese cuisine. First stop, Lord Stow's Bakery which specialises in traditional Portuguese egg tarts, followed by Restaurante Nga Tim's for a delightful fusion meal. Next, visit



The House of Dancing Water

one of Koi Kei Almond Cookie Shop to sink your teeth into a selection of almond cookies. The feasting continues as you stroll down the streets where local treats are aplenty. Don't forget to stop for some serradura, a chilled pudding made of vanilla whipped cream and crushed biscuits.

End the day at Fernando's Restaurant on Hac Sa Beach with a Portuguese Wine Tasting Experience and dinner. Must-haves at this laid-back establishment include roasted suckling pig and fried prawns with garlic.

Day 3 After a whole day of eating yesterday, it is time to get active today. Head to the top of Macau Tower and sign yourself up for the world's highest bungee jump. It will take you on a free fall at a speed of up to 200km/h. If that sounds too much for you, how about an easier skywalk or tower climb to enjoy the breathtaking cityscape?

Break for lunch at Macau Tower's 360° Café, before continuing onwards to Macau Motorsport Club for a spot of go-karting.

You can also choose to spend the afternoon learning to make leather craft or Portuguese tiles.

After the sun sets, head to the City of Dreams integrated resort to catch *The House of Dancing Water*, a live performance that incorporates theater, dance, gymnastic artistry and high-performance diving.

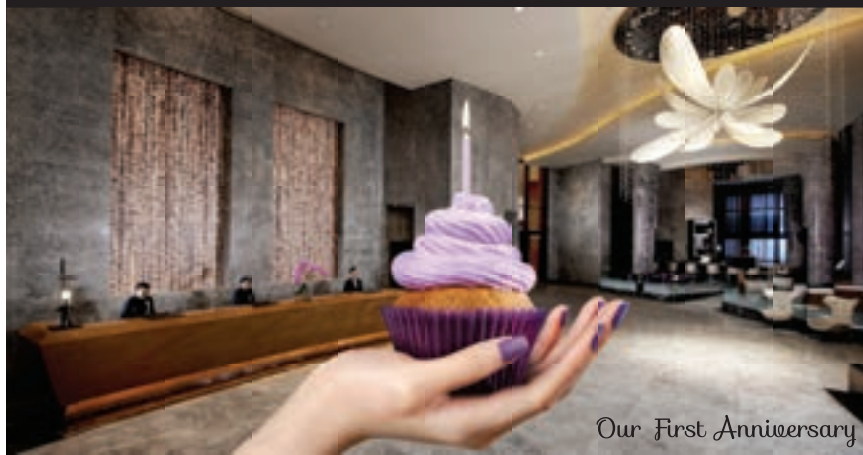
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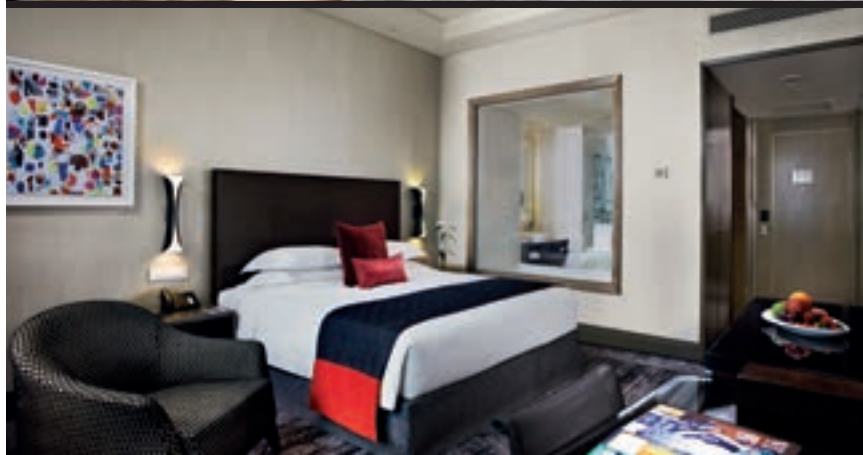
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Finally in Myanmar, one of 21st Century Asia's most exciting emerging markets, BEST WESTERN Green Hill Hotel provides the ultimate in modern convenience, in the very heart of Yangon. Overlooking the golden spires of the stunning Shwedagon Pagoda, this stylish midscale hotel represents the modern face of accommodation in this historic city. All 187 guest rooms are large, light, and offer such amenities as free Wi-Fi, work desks with power sockets and flat-screen TVs with satellite channels.

These three new hotels, in three of Asia's most exciting destinations, represent the modern face of Best Western. Phnom Penh, Phuket and Yangon are welcoming a rising number of new tourists, often representing the next generation of Asian travelers.

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BEST WESTERN Green Hill Hotel, Yangon, MYANMAR

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PLUS

PREMIER

The World's Largest Hotel Chain®

Best Western Embarks on Bright and Stylish Future



With a rich history dating back almost 70 years, Best Western has become famous across the globe for providing comfortable and convenient hotels, backed up with excellent service standards.

But in the 21st Century – the Asian Century – this legendary hotel group is developing a contemporary collection of modern midscale hotels that offer a new sense of style and cutting-edge connectivity. The latest example of Best Western's design-led Asian portfolio is the BEST WESTERN Patong Beach.

Located in the heart of one of Thailand's foremost resort areas, this modern hotel is set to revitalize Phuket's midscale hotel sector. With a sleek and stylish design concept, this brand new hotel provides a series of facilities that make the most of the hotel's stunning tropical setting.

An outdoor, infinity edged swimming pool overlooks the Andaman Sea, while a light and spacious restaurant serves up delectable local and international cuisine.



BEST WESTERN Patong Beach, Phuket, THAILAND



BEST WESTERN Patong Beach, Phuket, THAILAND



BEST WESTERN River Palace Hotel, Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA



BEST WESTERN River Palace Hotel, Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA



BEST WESTERN River Palace Hotel, Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA

Best Western's new generation of hotels has also arrived in Cambodia's fast-growing capital Phnom Penh, where BEST WESTERN River Palace Hotel provides the ideal base from which to explore the city. Set on the banks of the Tonle Sap River, this grand hotel not only offers contemporary accommodation in a desirable waterfront setting; it also provides an extensive spa featuring hot and cold jacuzzis, a steam bath, fitness center and the only Turkish hammam in Cambodia.

Destination India



City Palace in Udaipur glows at night

Weaving new tourism dreams

Better visa facilities, fresh destination branding and new tourist circuits are being rolled out, inspiring hopes of better business among local players, writes **Rohit Kaul**

The year 2014 began on a positive note for India's tourism sector, with foreign arrivals hitting 3.52 million in the first five months. It represented a year-on-year growth of 6.6 per cent, a more energetic climb compared to the same period from 2012 to 2013 which registered a 2.6 per cent growth.

The year has also started out with an improvement in visa facilities – the Indian government extended visa-on-arrival and Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) to tourists from 180 nations.

According to local tour operators, this development, along with the devaluation of the Indian rupee and the increased frequency of roadshows led by the Indian tourism board in international markets, has reaped benefits for the inbound sector.

Speaking to the *Daily*, Prashant Narayan, COO and head leisure travel inbound business, Thomas Cook India, said: "We have observed a 10 to 12 per cent growth in our inbound business over last year. The rupee devaluation has added more appeal to the summer travel season."

Narayan added that Kashmir, Leh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Goa and the Golden Triangle Buddhist circuit have been "extremely popular among inbound vacationers".

Ravi Gosain, managing director of Erco Travels, shared that traditional markets such as Germany, France, the UK and the US have been "progressing well so far".

He hopes that new business opportunities will arise from roadshows conducted by the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) and the Ministry of Tourism in new markets such as Mauritius, South Africa, Poland, Hungary and Romania.

Rishi Puri, vice president of Lords Hotels & Resorts India, welcomes the change in India's tourism fortunes this year, saying: "The Indian hospitality industry was on a decline the past two years. However, since 1Q2014 we have seen substantial growth in inbound business. (In terms of corporate business) we have seen arrivals from German, French and other European pharmacy sectors, as well as Japanese and South Korean technology sectors.

"With global economies improving

now, leisure travellers from the UK and the US have also contributed significantly to our inbound business."

Despite the rosy beginnings, some Indian travel trade players are not celebrating too soon. Government elections this year had caused business travellers to hold off their trips to India, as they chose to wait and watch how the new government would shape investment policies.

On a positive note, the new government has made tourism one of its key areas of development. In its maiden Union Budget 2014-2015 presented in July, the government had proposed the creation of five tourist circuits to the tune of US\$83.2 million. The Sarnath-Gaya-Varanasi Buddhist circuit would also be developed with world-class tourist amenities.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Tourism has joined hands with Experience India Society to revamp the country's international image through a publicity campaign that will first be launched in the UK, Germany, the US and Japan.

"The inbound season begins in September and early bookings (have indicated) that this year will be a very productive one," said Karan Anand, head of relationships, Cox & Kings. "The new government has ushered in changes and this has led to an improvement in business sentiments. More (foreign) companies will be encouraged to send their executives to India to initiate business with Indian firms, thereby fuelling corporate travel traffic."

Sharing the same observations, Subhash Goyal, president of IATO, said: "Business travel has increased after the new government announced a slew of investment friendly policies (and) we expect inbound tourism to grow 30 to 40 per cent once (the new e-visa system) is implemented."

Destination in numbers

4.68 million

The number of foreign tourist arrivals to India between January and August this year

WHAT'S NEW

1 Keys Ras Resort, Silvassa

Located in picturesque Silvassa, on the shores of the Damanganga river, Keys Ras Resort occupies 10 acres of lush greenery. Guests can choose to stay in rooms that offer views of the river or garden, or in Portuguese-style suites. Facilities include banquet and conference spaces, a business centre, a spa and wellness centre, and a swimming pool. Sports and recreational activities are also offered to guests.

2 The Deltin Hotel and Casino, Daman

The Deltin integrated casino resort in Daman offers 176 suites, a casino with 1,000 gaming positions, four restaurants, three bars, MICE facilities that can support events with 20 to 2,000 guests, and other recreational options. The property is accessible from major urban centres.

3 Porterhaus

Located at DLF South Court Mall, Saket in New Delhi, Porterhaus is a new gastro pub that specialises in hearty steaks. The extensive menu also features non-beef options such as sautéed scallops and salmon ceviche. Porterhaus' lush interior, thematic retro music and regal cigar room come together to offer diners a memorable experience.

4 Farzi Cafe

Located at Cyber Hub, Cyber City in Gurgaon, Farzi Cafe is a place where guests can experience the finest modern Indian food, prepared by using strong elements of molecular gastronomy, showcasing some iconic dishes of India as well as some of the popular dishes from around the world with an Indian touch. It offers a

casual dining ambiance, where the guests can enjoy a tapas style menu, showcasing some fusion dishes from around the world along with an array of molecular cocktails and liquor options to choose from.

5 Adlabs Imagica

Adlabs Imagica is located at around 75 km away from Mumbai. The theme park has been built using world-class technology and boasts of 26 attractions and 5 themed restaurants. The theme park is spread over 300 acres of land. Adlabs Imagica is divided in six zones namely Viva Europa, Arabia, Asiana, Americana, India and Zambo Africa, with each having its own attractions and restaurants.

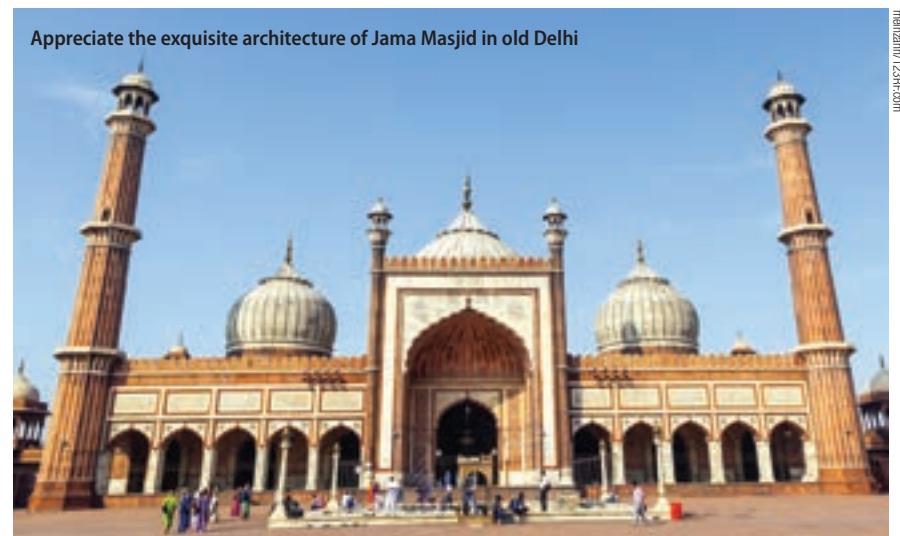


Adlabs Imagica

6 Sanskriti Vedic Retreat

It is located in Rishikesh about 250 km from New Delhi. Rishikesh is known as the Yoga capital of the world. The resort situated next to river Ganges offers yoga and meditation workshops. These workshops help one to discover the mystical secrets of life and creation. The schedule here will make you relax and free you from all the worldly stress. One can experience the amalgamation of the best of ancient Indian traditions of Ayurveda, Yoga, meditation and spirituality here.

HOW TO DO DELHI AND ITS SURROUNDINGS



Appreciate the exquisite architecture of Jama Masjid in old Delhi

Day 1 A Yatra.com representative will meet you at a convenient location in Delhi upon your arrival, and transfer you in an air-conditioned vehicle to your hotel. In the afternoon, embark on a half-day city tour of Delhi, accompanied by an English-speaking guide. Visit the historical sites of the city such as Qutab Minar and India Gate, and enjoy a drive past the Rashtrapati Bhawan (President's estate), Parliament House and Secretariat building.

The night is free for your own activity.

Day 2 After a hearty breakfast in the hotel, you will set off for a half-day tour of Old Delhi which includes visits to Raj Ghat and Shanti Van, cremation sites of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru (respectively), and Jama Masjid mosque. Catch a glimpse of the majestic Red Fort and

Chandni Chowk, a traditional shopping hub, from the comfort of your car.

Come afternoon, you will exit Delhi and head to Agra, some four hours away by car. After arrival and check-in at your hotel, you will have the rest of the evening to explore the city at your own pace.

Day 3 The excursion of Agra begins after breakfast. First stop, the iconic Taj Mahal. Then, visit Agra Fort and hear from your guide its fascinating history. You will get to see its different apartments and prison cells, and appreciate the magnificent architecture.


In the afternoon, leave for Delhi by road. You can choose to spend the night in a hotel or proceed straight to the airport for your next part of the journey.


Itinerary by Yatra.com


Palawan

Above ground and underground



 The Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's New 7 Wonders of Nature. It is teeming with life - over 150 animal species and over 800 plant species, including 300 types of trees.

 **Getting There:**
Accessible via air from Manila, Cebu, Iloilo, and Davao.

 **More Things to Do:**

- Go island hopping in Honda Bay.
- Try spelunking at Ugong Rock.
- Take a mangrove paddle boat tour in Sabang.
- Be enchanted by fireflies on the Iwahig River Cruise.
- Visit one of the country's last tribes at the Batak Cultural Village.



Destination Thailand

Reclaiming lost ground

Protracted unrest has crimped arrivals, but the NTO has scaled up its efforts to woo back tourists. By **Greg Lowe**

Domestic politics has clouded Thailand's tourism industry for the majority of the last twelve months, leading some operators to expect flat growth as a best-case scenario for the year, although others say stronger performance can be achieved through customer segmentation and targeting more resilient markets like Europe.

Either way, the outlook for Thai tourism this year is gloomier than last year's 18.8 per cent growth and record 26.5 million international arrivals. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has revised down its 2014 target from 28 million arrivals and 1.3 trillion baht (US\$40.8 billion) to 25.9 million arrivals and 1.2 trillion baht in revenue. Next year's target has been set at 29 million international arrivals and 1.4 trillion baht revenue.

This projection is supported by the Department of Tourism's 1H2014 figures, during which Thailand received close to 11.8 million international visitors, down 9.9 per cent from 13.1 million over the same period in 2013. The most significant regional declines were from East Asia (-17.2 per cent), Middle East (-14.8 per cent) and South Asia (-13.3 per cent).

Fewer visitors from Asia is particularly problematic as the region accounts for more than half of foreign arrivals to Thailand, including big spenders from Hong Kong (-39.1 per cent) and Singapore (-24.1 per cent). Double-digit declines were recorded in the Thailand's two largest source markets – China fell 20.4 per cent to some 1.9 million and Malaysia slid 20.5 per cent to 1.1 million – while the kingdom also saw a 5.3 per cent decline

in arrivals from the US and a 4.5 per cent drop from Canada in the first half.

On the upside, despite a slew of cancellations during the peak of the political crisis, Russia – Thailand's third largest inbound market – grew 8.7 per cent to 971,127 arrivals. Europe as a whole was also up 6.4 per cent with 3.8 million arrivals, with only Sweden showing a slight dip.

Performance has improved slightly after the May 22 coup d'état ended months of protracted anti-government protests, according to Patricia Weismantel, product manager at Spice Roads.

"At the beginning of the year bookings were performing well, but sales dropped as the situation escalated," she said. "Bookings have started to increase again since the military has come into power."

The impacts vary from business to business and also depend on operators' main source markets, said Stephen McEvoy, managing director of Asia World Enterprise. Showing clients first-hand that Thailand remains a safe destination is the best way to restore confidence, he opined.

"We are encouraging media and trade FAM trips, as is the TAT, so we can bring influential people here to view the real situation," he said. "For some time now, we also been showing live video of major tourist attractions to help our (consultants) feel more confident in the product."

TAT has also been on the media offensive and organised a number of events in line with the military-run National Council for Peace and Order's (NCPO) "happiness" campaign. Concrete initiatives include a three-

month visa fee waiver for visitors from China and Taiwan, launching the Thailand Travel Shield insurance, installing new taxi kiosks at Suvarnabhumi International Airport and supporting a number of the junta's enforcement initiatives like breaking up taxi mafias and cleaning up public beaches in Phuket.

Despite a more stabilised situation, the fact that Thailand remains under martial law continues to put off many foreign visitors, remarked Duangkamol Chansuriyawong, tour manager at Wild Thailand.

"Even though Thai people feel that there is no threat and things are quite okay now, that is not the case for international tourists who still feel this (political) uncertainty and are very sensitive to the political situation and the coup," she said.

"The best chance for Thailand tourism industry this year is zero growth due to the negative figures for international tourists and martial law declared by the NCPO-led government."

According to STR Global's 1H2014 data, Thailand's hotels have been severely affected by the crisis with occupancy plummeting 17.3 per cent to 61 per cent; average daily rate still managed to grow slightly as most hoteliers have avoided slashing rates to attract guests.

VIEWPOINTS How has the political crisis affected your business?

Stephen McEvoy, managing director, Asia World Enterprises

"We've seen positive performance from France, the UK and Russia and negative performance in MICE and from Asia and North America. OTAs have gotten even stronger, as have flash sales companies, (while average) length of stay has been reduced."

Songkran Grachangnetara, owner and operator, Seven Seas Resort Koh Krachang

"This year has actually been pretty good for us. We've seen growth. A lot of that has to do with our customers, who are mostly from Scandinavia and Europe. They know Thailand and have been here many times so they tend to be more resilient to problems (than group tours or first-timers)."

HOW TO DO BANGKOK

Day 1 After breakfast, depart for Wat Dhammakaya in Pathum Thani Province. This modern temple is quirky – its followers pay for the moulding and installation of a million Buddha images.

Next, head for Wat Pho, The Grand Palace and Wat Phra Kaew. Wat Pho is one of the city's oldest temples, the birthplace of traditional Thai massage, and home to a 15m high and 43m long reclining Buddha. Wat Phra Kaew and The Grand Palace are two of the most important sites in Thailand, combining the former official residence of the Thai monarchy and the King's temple.

Lunch is served at The Deck at Arun Residence.

After filling the belly, travel by longtail boat to Baan Silapin Artist House and traditional Thai puppet performance. Tour the Thonburi canals after the show.

Take the afternoon off to rest and recharge for a fun night out. As evening approaches, head to Gler for sundowner cocktails and excellent views of Chinatown. Dinner at Chyna follows and the night ends on a high note over drinks at the luxurious Sirocco, State Tower.

Day 2 Do good today by visiting and making a donation to the Mercy Centre in Klong Toey, run by Father Joe Meier. The centre provides education for thousands of slum children through its network of schools and also runs an AIDS hospice for people from the community.

In place of lunch, embark on a Taste of Thailand food tour around the Bangrak area of Bangkok.

In the evening, explore Asiatique The Riverfront. Dine at Baan Khanitha Thai restaurant, then catch the *Muay Thai Live: The Legend Lives* show.

Day 3 Tai Chi class in Lumpini Park comes optional. You may also choose to start the day later at 11.30 with Sunday Jazz Brunch at Trader Vic's at Anantara Riverside Bangkok.

The rest of the day is free for you to do what you fancy.

Have a fun conclusion to the three-day tour with cocktails at Mixo Bar, So Bangkok, and dinner at Nahm, Metropolitan Bangkok.



Lumpini Park

WHAT'S NEW

1 Novotel Phuket Karon Beach Resort and Spa

Opened on October 15 on Karon Beach, the 224-key new-build features rooms and suites with amenities such as flatscreen TVs and Wi-Fi connection, an array of dining choices, two pools, a Kids Club Pool, a Kids Club, a spa and a fitness centre. Visit www.novotelphuketkaron.com for bookings.

2 Ozo Pattaya

The seaside town of Pattaya has welcomed Ozo Pattaya. It offers 164 guestrooms, free Wi-Fi throughout the property, an all-day restaurant, a grab-and-go service, a rooftop swimming pool and a gym. Visit www.ozohotels.com/Pattaya.

3 Muay Thai Live: The Legend Lives

A great choice for those wanting some martial arts theatrics without the blood and gore, *Muay Thai Live: The Legend Lives* is a highly choreographed performance detailing the 300-year history of Thailand's uncompromising martial art. The daily shows at 20.00 are held at Asiatique The Riverfront, the city's main riverside attraction. Visit www.muaythailive.net for details.

4 Central Embassy

After several delays, Central Embassy finally opened its doors in May to of-

fer a new luxury shopping option in Bangkok. The mall offers eight floors of upscale retail brands, both international and domestic, scores of high-end restaurants, bistros and cafes as well as Embassy Diplomat Screens for an indulgent cinematic experience. The connecting Park Hyatt Bangkok is tabled to debut next year.



Spice Roads Cycle Chinatown

5 Spice Roads Cycle Chinatown

Spice Roads' new Chinatown tour takes visitors on a pedal-powered excursion through the back alleys of the Yaowarat district before crossing the river to explore the smaller communities that have existed along the river banks for centuries. Stop-offs include the Portuguese church, Wat Arun and other sites. The trip takes about four hours, including breaks, and covers 15km. Visit www.spiceroads.com for details on the programme.



Thailand's floating markets are a tourist attraction

Destination Vietnam

View of Halong Bay



Going strong

Despite a dip in arrivals from top source market China, Vietnam manages to register growth in total international footfalls. **Greg Lowe** reports

Vietnam's tourism industry is posting steady growth despite anti-Chinese riots in May which dampened the performance of a destination that was already faltering due to structural issues such as deteriorating product quality and a lack of strategic vision at the administrative level, travel specialists say.

Arrivals from China, the country's key source market, still rose 26 per cent in the first seven months of the year, according to Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT). In July, however, they declined 28.8 per cent on the same month a year earlier, showing the heavy price the industry has paid as a result of violent protests in response to Beijing's expansion in the South China Sea.

Edouard George, president of Phoenix Voyages Group, said there has been some recovery since May with more requests for longhaul MICE business, though regional corporate travellers remain cautious.

"VNAT is trying hard to restore confidence (in the destination) but with limited effects. Everyone was caught by surprise (by the riots). Hopefully, we will see more action towards the third and fourth quarters," said George.

Given a lack of tourism infrastructure and product diversity, Vietnam will find it increasingly difficult to compete with regional destinations unless VNAT develops a clear strategy for the industry which includes high-quality marketing campaigns and efforts to attract higher spending visitors, said Pham Manh Ha, CEO of Luxury Travel Vietnam.

"Our government should focus more on investment and comprehensively upgrading infrastructure... VNAT should focus on strategic planning to develop tourism before even (increasing fees)," Pham urged.

"Raising (visa) prices without upgrading service quality will reduce the number of visitors to Vietnam. Look at the other South-east Asian destinations like Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore – they always have policies to encourage tourists for each season. These policies (come) from their government (so ours needs to play a more active role)."

Some industry players take a more positive view of the sector's performance. Josephine Lim, vice president global sales Asia Pacific and regional director South-east Asia at Preferred Hotel Group, is confident Vietnam will reach VNAT's target of 8.2 million visitors by 2015, mainly thanks to increased air access.

During the first seven months of the year international arrivals rose 15.6 per cent to 4.9 million over the same period the year before, according to recent data from VNAT. Figures had risen steadily from January to April, with both month-on-month and year-on-year increases for every month except March. Then after the fracas in May, foreign visitors declined each month when compared with the previous year, falling 4.9 per cent in June and 14.2 per cent in July. Cumulative year-to-date growth remains positive thanks to strong performance in the first four months of the year.

Leisure and business travel have been

team is at hand to help clients make the best use of the facilities which include seven meeting rooms, pre-function space and a grand ballroom. Visit www.ihg.com for details.

3 Vietnamese Culinary Journey Remote Lands, a luxury travel specialist, launched its Vietnamese Culinary Journey tour this year which gives food lovers the chance to spend up to 14 days immersing themselves in Vietnamese cuisine, from grazing at local markets to dining in Ho Chi Minh City's top restaurants. Prices from S\$460 per person per day. Visit www.remote-lands.com for details.

VIEWPOINT How do you rate tourism authorities in Vietnam?

Lothar Pehl, senior vice president, operations and global initiatives, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Asia Pacific

"The Vietnamese government has launched a new website which is expected to ease the visa application process for visitors. The new website tackles the industry's feedback about the inconvenience of its visa application and the high fees involved. (This) demonstrates strong commitment from the government and its tourism body to attract more MICE groups as well as leisure travellers."



equally affected by the troubles, with the former dipping by 15.4 per cent to a total 2.9 million tourists in the first seven months and the latter declining 13.9 per cent to 815,000.

Overall the hotel sector, which STR Global data shows has 494 properties with 47,770 rooms, remained steady with slight increases in both average daily rate and RevPAR despite a slight dip in occupancy. There are another 44 hotels with 9,499 keys in the pipeline.

"There is an increasing supply of new room inventory into the country, with both international and independent hotel brands planting flags in gateway and secondary cities," said Lim. "This reflects the potential that multinational companies and international tourists see in Vietnam as both a business and leisure destination of choice in the region."

Lothar Pehl, senior vice president, operations and global initiatives, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Asia Pacific, observes similar trends.

"Short-haul Asia business continues to grow year-on-year with markets such as South Korea and Japan leading percentage growth. In the longer-haul markets, we are seeing growth from Russia and Australia."

MICE travel to Vietnam was also on the rise, he said.

Destination in numbers

2.9

The year-to-date percentage decline in average occupancy rate of hotels in Vietnam at June 2014, according to data from STR Global. Hotels saw an average occupancy rate of 62.2 per cent

4.4

The year-to-date percentage gain in average daily rate of hotels in Vietnam as of June 2014, reaching 2,762,038.39 Vietnamese Dong (US\$130.50)

HOW TO DO HANOI

Day 1 Check into JW Marriott Hanoi Hotel and head straight to a cooking course to master the art of making *goi cuon*, traditional soft spring rolls, and other local delicacies.

After lunch at JW Cafe, take a trip to downtown Hanoi and see Hoan Kiem Lake, the pagoda and remains of the giant turtle which once inhabited the waters. A rickshaw tour of the Old Quarter will follow. Later, travel on foot to St Joseph's Cathedral and spend an hour browsing local shops and drinking Vietnamese coffee.

Welcome the evening at Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi Hotel, one of the city's most iconic properties – first with cocktails at Le Club, then with dinner at Spices Garden Restaurant.

Day 2 Leaving the hotel early in the morning, you will make your way to Hoa Lu, the capital of Vietnam in the 10th and 11th centuries. A coffee break will be taken along the way.

Visit the Temple of Dinh Tien Hoang, built to honour the first emperor of the country, then walk to the nearby Temple of Le Dai Hanh. Both temples provide classic examples

of architecture from the era.

Continue on to Ninh Binh province, a journey which takes about 45 minutes. Embark on a 15km cycling tour of the local area, travelling around the lakes and stopping off at Bich Dong pagoda, a 15th century structure built into the mountain and caves.

Lunch will be had at a local restaurant.

Later, journey by sampan along the Ngo Dong River and through a limestone gorge and cave complex at Tam Coc.

At 16.30, transfer back to Hanoi and proceed to dinner at Quan An Ngon restaurant in downtown Hanoi.

Day 3 Transfer to Van Phuc village, which has been renowned for its fine silkmaking for the past millennium. Most of the local community is involved in the trade and visitors can watch the entire process from silk extraction, to dyeing and weaving.

After lunch at a local restaurant, transfer to Ha Thai village, an epicentre of artisans who produce Vietnamese lacquerware. After this, return to hotel and the rest of the afternoon is free for you.

Dinner tonight is at Club Opera, an upscale Vietnamese restaurant.

WHAT'S NEW

1 JW Marriott Hanoi

JW Marriott Hanoi is the first five-star branded property to open in Hanoi for seven years. The 345-room property features 17 meetings rooms, five restaurants, a bar, fitness suite and Spa by JW. Visit www.marriott.com for more details.

2 InterContinental Nha Trang

Located a 40-minute drive from Cam Ranh International Airport, the beachfront InterContinental Nha Trang features 279 rooms, three F&B outlets, Spa InterContinental and three pools. A MICE



Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi Hotel

Destination Sri Lanka

Cultivating foreign interest

Sri Lanka's marketing campaigns overseas have paid off, leading to an arrival surge from China. Feizal Samath reports



Take in glorious views from Ella Rock

Bouyed by increasing arrivals from China, bullish inbound trends in January to August 2014 has lifted the industry outlook of Sri Lanka's tourism performance this year.

Tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka in the first eight months rose 23.1 per cent to 1,001,643, with year-end arrivals expected to reach 1.5 million, up from 1.2 million last year. India continued its dominant position as Sri Lanka's top source market to account for 151,427 arrivals, followed by the UK (98,347) and China (81,682) – the latter has dislodged Germany (68,137) from its former third spot into fourth position.

Rumy Jauffer, managing director of Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB), shared that the NTO's aggressive pro-

motion in China has paid rich dividends.

"Our figures from China will triple this year. We have promotional advertisements running on 200 buses in four cities – Beijing, Shanghai, Chendu and Guangzhou – in addition to road shows," said Jauffer, who added that similar advertising campaigns are also running on buses, taxis and trains in target markets like the UK, Germany and France.

"We are expecting a strong winter," said Ajit Gunawardena, deputy chairman, John Keells Holdings (JKH). "Things are looking very bright."

Besides introducing Sri Lanka's first weekly charter flight operated by SriLankan Airlines on a 140-seater A320 aircraft from China's Chongqing on June 30, JKH is also involved in its own promotional

VIEWPOINT

What else is needed to attract more visitors from China?

Chandra Wickramasinghe, chairman and managing director, Connaisance de Ceylan

"While the Chinese market is growing, there are a few issues that need to be sorted out. One such issue is the lack of sufficient Mandarin-speaking tourist guides. Sri Lanka's tourism authorities have hired 10-15 young students to work in travel agencies as escorts and translators but more are needed."

campaign actively using social media and events, Gunawardena revealed.

He also anticipates Chinese president Xi Jinping's visit to Sri Lanka in September, the first visit by a Chinese head of state in nearly three decades, to further stimulate the Chinese market.

While the Chinese market is making inroads in Sri Lanka due to aggressive promotion by SLTPB, travellers from hitherto small markets like the US and Australia are showing interest too, noted Amal Goonetilleke, regional director – sales, Taj Hotels Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

"The US has started bookings for winter to 2015. They are high-profile travellers with the propensity to spend," she said. "They are looking at culture, nature and experiences."

However, Sri Lanka saw a drop in Middle Eastern arrivals in June-July, in part due to recent violent clashes between headline Buddhist groups and Muslims in Aluthgama, a coastal town in southern Sri Lanka.

"Traditionally June-July is a slow period for Muslim visitors owing to the Ramadan but the (Aluthgama) clashes have aggravated the situation," said Gunawardena.

On a more positive note, Sri Lanka has welcomed an influx of new hotels this year. These openings include the Ozo Colombo (158 rooms), Citrus Waskaduwa (150 rooms), Ananthaya Resort & Spa Chilaw (88 rooms), Centara Ceysands Resort & Spa (165 rooms), Earl's Regent Kandy (70 rooms), Aliya Resort & Spa Hotel (96 rooms), Jetwing Yala (80 rooms) and Best Western Elyon Colombo (60 rooms).

Destination in numbers

71.7

The average room occupancy, in percentage terms, last year, up from 71.2 per cent in 2012

156.5

The average daily spend in US dollars by foreign tourists in 2013

16,223

The number of registered rooms in 2013, up from 15,510 in 2012

WHAT'S NEW

1 Yathra by Jetwing

Jetwing Group has launched the country's first leisure houseboat – Yathra by Jetwing – on the southern Bentota River, similar to houseboats that ply the backwaters of Kerala in India. Crafted from bamboo, thatch and metal, the houseboat boasts two cabins with attached bathrooms and private balconies as well as private dining areas.

2 ON14

Located on the 14th floor of the recently launched Ozo Colombo, ON14 is reportedly the city's highest rooftop bar and lounge. Operating since May this year, the venue offers innovative cocktails and cuisine, plus striking views of the Indian Ocean and Colombo's Marine Drive.

ON14 is said to be the city's highest rooftop bar



3 Jet Airways

Jet Airways will step up its daily service between Mumbai and Colombo to twice-daily from November 5. The additional service will depart Mumbai at 18.05 and arrive in Colombo at 20.35. The return flight will depart Colombo at 21.35 and arrive in Mumbai at 00.15. The current daily flight departs Colombo at 20.45 and reaches Mumbai at 23.20, returning to Colombo at 04.45 after departing from Mumbai at 02.10.

4 Arcade Independence Square

Surrounded by wide spaces and extensive greenery, the Arcade Independence Square debuted in July in the heart of Colombo. The new shopping and entertainment complex was converted from several old colonial-style buildings, with over 8,360m² of floor space housing 42 designer stores and restaurants.

5 Kaema Sutra

Owned by restaurateur Dharshan Munnidasa and Sri Lankan-born Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandez, Kaema Sutra opened its door earlier this month at Arcade Independence Square. Signature dishes at this Sri Lankan restaurant include the spicy roast chicken cooked using a 22-year-old secret recipe and the giant eight-inch hopper (normal hoppers measure eight centimetres in diameter), a crispy, bowl-shaped pancake made from rice flour, wheat flour and coconut milk.

HOW TO DO SRI LANKA

Day 1 Arrive at the Bandaranaike International Airport, Katunayake, then proceed either by car or coach to Habarana, about 175km north of the capital, Colombo. After a three-hour drive, check in at the Cinnamon Lodge, Chaya Village or one of the many hotels available.

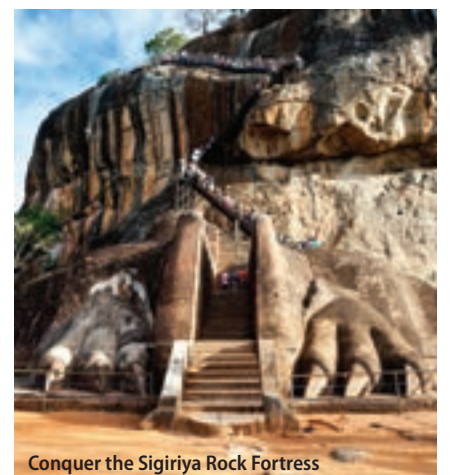
At 16.00, hop into jeeps and proceed to the Minneriya National Park and witness one of the most awesome sights on earth – a gathering of over 200 elephants on the lake bund. This elephant gathering normally occurs between August and October during the dry season.

Day 2 After breakfast, head to nearby Sigiriya to scale the world famous Rock Fortress, a 200m structure built by a king in the fifth century to fend off enemies. The base of the fortress is surrounded by a moat and rampart as well as extensive gardens.

With 1,200 steps to conquer each way, the Rock Fortress will take one around three hours to reach the top and head back down. Take time to enjoy the famous frescoes of the Heavenly Maidens.

Return to the hotel for a rest and a refreshing ayurvedic massage. The rest of the day is free for you to explore the city on your own.

Day 3 Today you will depart for Kandy after breakfast, the second largest city in Sri Lanka after Colombo.



Conquer the Sigiriya Rock Fortress

Pay a visit to the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, a Buddhist house of worship and one of the most sacred Buddhist sites in the country. It is located in the royal palace complex of the former Kingdom of Kandy. Monks conduct daily worship in the inner chamber of the temple, with rituals performed thrice daily: at dawn, noon and in the evening.

From here, head towards Colombo and make a stop at the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage in Kegalle town and watch the friendly giants frolic in a nearby river. Great photo opportunities are available.

Break for a hearty lunch at the Thirst Aid Station which also serves invigorating factory-fresh tea.

The tour concludes here and you will be transferred to the airport.



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Marketplace

Lufthansa rolls out a new class of travel

Lufthansa now boasts a Premium Economy Class with seats offering up to 50 per cent more room than Economy Class.

First announced in March this year at ITB Berlin, the new travel class kicked off bookings in May and started to be available from November 2014, initially on Boeing 747-8. The entire longhaul fleet is expected to be fitted with the new seats within 12 months.

Premium Economy offers seats with more space and comfort – up to 3cm wider and 10cm more room at the side – than Economy, yet it is priced closer to Economy than Business Class. It is a separate compartment between Business and Economy and contains 21 to 52 seats depending on the aircraft type.

It also offers additional services and product features, such as baggage allowance of two items weighing up to 23kg each, twice as much free luggage compared with Economy; access to Lufthansa Business Lounges for an extra 25 euros (US\$32); a welcome drink on board; a high-quality amenity kit at the seat; meals presented on a menu and served on porcelain tableware; and an entertainment touchscreen monitor at least two inches bigger than that in Economy.

Booth: E/P27



Malaysia's Hello Kitty theme park throws a birthday carnival

Sanrio Hello Kitty Town Nusajaya, the first official Hello Kitty Town experience outside of Japan, will host a three-day carnival from October 31 to November 2 to celebrate the popular cartoon character's 40th anniversary.

The interactive experience will feature four main highlights – Hello Kitty Friends Gathering, Hello Kitty Friends Fiesta, Hello Kitty Friends Catwalk and Hello Kitty Friends Rock Music Festival – and offer fans and theme park visitors a chance to purchase limited edition merchandise.

Hello Kitty Friends Fiesta will feature roaming magicians and performers, minute-to-win-it games, a food bazaar and a birthday

party parade.

Hello Kitty Friends Gathering, an extension of the Fiesta, aims to set a record for being the largest gathering of Hello Kitty Fans in South-east Asia.

Hello Kitty Friends Rock Music Festival will see Hello Kitty and friends take to the stage with popular Malaysian J-rock band Fly1ng Pan and Malaysian pop punk band BunkFace.

Hello Kitty Friends Catwalk will be a grand finale to the celebrations and see Hello Kitty taking on a glamorous look as young Malaysian designers compete to showcase a two-piece Hello Kitty inspired collection.

Booth: F/G55

Park Hotel Group to open new hotel in a lush part of Singapore

The 442-key Park Hotel Alexandra, slated to open in 2015 on the fringe of Singapore's central business district and close to the evergreen Hort Park, will offer facilities that cater to both leisure and corporate guests.

Guestrooms are elegantly designed with natural wood accents and earthy tones, and come furnished with modern conveniences such as wireless Internet access, mini-bar and cable TV.

Guests who are housed in Crystal Club rooms will enjoy exclusive benefits including personalised check-in and check-out services at the private Crystal Club Lounge, buffet breakfast, all-day refreshments and

complimentary business facilities.

To keep guests' bellies happy, Park Hotel Alexandra has an all-day restaurant that specialises in wood oven-fired pizzas and an international buffet spread.

Guests can unwind at the hotel's gym, outdoor pool and pool bar.

Meeting planners have a choice of four function rooms with removable partitions that allow the venues to transform into a larger ballroom. Each function room can host theatre-style seminars with 24 guests or round-table gatherings of 20 pax. In the ballroom format, the space can accommodate a 60-pax cocktail reception.

Booth: F/F16



Cirque du Soleil seeks to fire up travel buyers' imagination at ITB Asia 2014

Québec-based entertainment organisation, Cirque du Soleil, will be highlighting its nine resident shows in the US at this year's ITB Asia.

Of these nine resident shows, eight are performed in Las Vegas and one in Orlando.

Travel buyers at the annual travel trade event can expect to learn more about *Mystère*, which performs Saturday through Wednesday, 19.00 and 21.30, at Treasure Island Casino and Resort, Las Vegas; *KÀ*, which puts forth a gravity-defying production Tuesday through Saturday, 19.00 and 21.30, at MGM Grand Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas; and *Zarkana*, which entertains Friday through Tuesday, 19.00 and 21.30, at ARIA Resort & Casino, Las Vegas, among others.

Cirque du Soleil is able to customise its programmes to suit any travel needs.

Booth: T05



Photo: Isaac Brecken Costumes: Alan Hranitelj © 2014 Cirque du Soleil

Strong first-year performance for Carlton City Hotel Singapore

The 386-room upscale Carlton City Hotel Singapore, which celebrated its first anniversary in August this year, has reported a three-fold growth in business since opening and occupancy that has exceeded expectations.

General manager Mark Bulmer told the *Daily* that while he had expected the new hotel to see an average occupancy rate of 70 per cent by end-2013, the year had in fact closed at over 80 per cent.

"We've enjoyed strong occupancy every month year-to-date ranging 85 to 95 per cent, with the past few months in the low- to mid-90 per cent range. While we are encouraged by current occupancy levels, there's always room for further growth and a focus on higher yielding market segments," he said.

The corporate segment, particularly the banking and finance sectors, has emerged the strongest source of business for the hotel, contributing 60 to 70 per cent of weekday occupancy. Bulmer believes that the hotel's location in the Tanjong Pagar business district helps to attract these clients.

The hotel's inventory of "functional and good-sized rooms compared with other new hotels in Singapore" is also a winning factor among business travellers. Its Deluxe, Executive and Carlton Club rooms all measure 32m², while the Carlton Suite offers 64m² of space.

Complimentary Wi-Fi across the hotel is available to all guests. Other facilities include a Club Lounge on the 28th floor, four dining outlets including a rooftop bar that is available for private event hire, and an outdoor pool with a Jacuzzi.

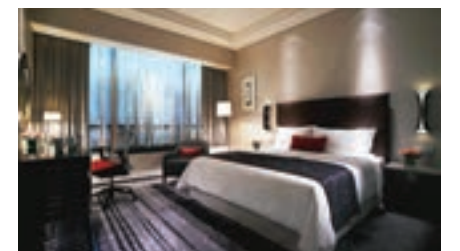
The hotel's convenient location close to Chinatown and at a "comfortable mid-point between the two integrated resorts" has also earned it a following of leisure travellers.

"The leisure market is very important to us, in particular over the weekends and holiday periods when corporate demand is softer. We have strong demand from the Asia-Pacific region but also quite a lot of business out of the US, UK and Europe," he said, adding that leisure demand is emerging out of Japan, Hong Kong, China and Australia.

To maintain the growth momentum, Carlton City Hotel Singapore will participate in various tradeshow and sales missions in conjunction with WorldHotels whom it is affiliated with, and invest in online activities.

"We are active with online platforms, using social media to engage with the online community (and to) further push our brand and product visibility. The hotel's brand website is always refreshed with attractive promotions targeted at local and international audiences, featuring room packages and promotions as well as special dining deals. Our new mobile website will be launched by November."

Booth: F/F35



Garuda brings Europe closer to Indonesia

Garuda Indonesia has launched the first of its five weekly flights from Jakarta to London via Amsterdam. The capital city of the UK forms the airline's second gateway in Europe after Amsterdam.

The new service will shorten passengers' travel time from Jakarta to Europe and vice versa to less than 14 hours, while providing the quickest connection not only between Indonesia and Europe but also the South-east Asia region and Europe.

Commenting on the move, executive vice president marketing and sales of Garuda Indonesia, Erik Meijer, said: "There are strong business, educational, and cultural ties between Indonesia and the UK, and we believe this new service will further boost those activities among the two countries, while of-

fering easier access for travellers from the UK to Indonesia, which is now one of the fastest economic growth centres in the world."

The new service is operated by Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, capable of carrying 314 passengers in a three-class cabin configuration including First Class, Business Class and Economy.

The fleet is equipped with Inflight Connectivity facilities, including onboard Wi-Fi and live TV for passengers in all classes. First Class passengers will enjoy culinary delights dished out by a chef on board.

Following the carrier's entrance into the SkyTeam global airline alliance in March, Garuda made Amsterdam its hub for Europe and beyond.

Booth: F/C15



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News/Snapshots

Asia on VietJet's map

Vietnamese LCC set to link Vietnam and India; Cambodia, Japan are also on the radar

By Hannah Koh

VIETNAMESE low-cost carrier VietJet is on an expansion drive, having launched flights to Singapore, Siem Reap, Seoul and Taipei in quick succession this year, and now – India.

The carrier signed an MoU with India's Air Costa on Monday to explore opportunities, while VietJet Thailand – set to commence in December with flights connecting Vietnam and India – inked a tripartite partnership with Thailand-based Angel & Fairy Travel and South-East Asia University.

Speaking to *TTG-ITB Asia Daily* at the show, its first participation, Luu Duc Khanh, managing director of VietJet, said: "Singapore is one of our key target markets for this region...it is only imperative that we build greater connections with our partners and customers (in Singapore)."

"The creation of new routes is fuelled by trends and travel patterns observed among locals such as a growing affluent class in Vietnam now spending more on outbound travel and an increasing number of Vietnamese residing in these overseas markets," he added.

Cambodia and Japan are next on VietJet's radar, Luu revealed.

Load factors on international and domestic routes are a healthy 90 per cent while VietJet has recently increased daily flights on the Ho Chi Minh City-Bangkok route to twice-daily or 5,040 seats per week, according to Luu.

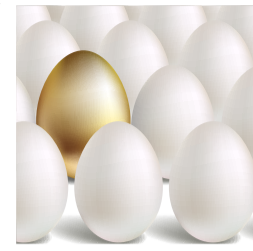
Ho Chi Minh City-based Lac Hong Voyages's director-business development, Robert Tan, who already bundles VietJet flights into his packages, hopes VietJet will launch flights to India in future. While Jet

Airways will link Ho Chi Minh City and New Delhi via Bangkok from November, the flight timing is "not attractive", he said.

Nguyen Hoang, deputy director of Hanoi-based Handspan Travel Indochina, is not sure VietJet's expansion would have a direct impact on his business though. He said: "Vietjet could bring new markets into Vietnam, and India has a big population and an improving economy."

Despite not using VietJet, Pham Ha, CEO of Luxury Travel Vietnam, opines that the airline's expansion will definitely pave for more international arrivals into this region and raise the interest of travellers in South-east Asia.

"We would be happy to make Myanmar accessible and Yangon would be a great place to land, following the boom the country is enjoying," he added. "(A Hong Kong link) would be nice too."



UNIQUE PRODUCT

Jump into frog-spotting action with Straits Central Travel & Tour Agencies

A LEAP FORWARD

By S Puvaneswary

STRAITS Central Travel & Tour Agencies, an inbound tour operator based in Kuching, Sarawak, is promoting its latest tour product at ITB Asia and it has to do with... frogs.

The tour takes four to five hours at Sarawak's Kubah National Park, and will appeal to nature lovers, especially those from the European market. According to the company's managing director, Samuel Chung, guests will spot at least 15 species of frogs during the tour. A guide and a specialist in amphibians accompany the tour. Chung can be contacted at sam@borneo4u.com.

Enjoying a night of revelry

Great live music and good company make up the opening night function at Marina Bay Sands Wednesday evening. By Ken Tay



Omeir Holidays UAE's Dinesh Nair, Tedjo Express Tours US's John Hartanto, Lac Hong Voyages Vietnam's Tran Vinh Loc Jonathan, Smiling American Express Indonesia's Gracia Matthias, Air Safety Equipment US' Captain Rajan, Lac Hong Voyages Vietnam's Tan Robert and Best Tour Indonesia's Johnny Judianto



TTG Asia Media Singapore's Darren Ng, ITB Asia Singapore's Nino Gruettke and Marina Bay Sands Singapore's Benny Zin



Ctrip Singapore's Ru Yi, Winland Travel Singapore's Michael Xiao, Marina Bay Sands Singapore's Fiona Zhuang, Winland Travel Singapore's Ji Rong and Six Stars Tours & Services Singapore's Liu Ying



Santa Claus Foundation Finland's Velimatti Voorela, Travel Tray Finland's Johanna Orpana, Holiday Club Resorts Oy Finland's Nina Fagerlund-Anttila and Santa Claus Foundation Finland's Jari Ahjoharju



Vee Bee Tours & Travels India's Jagdeep Bhagat, Chhatwal Tour's & Travels India's Gurmeet Singh, Sharma Travels India's Pankul Sharma and Hi-Times Holidays India's Harkamal Singh Gill



Luxury Escapes Australia's Paul Gorman and Mark Hoenig, and Neesh Property Australia's Michael Sanz



Free Style Incentives The Netherlands' Ben Gosman, AP Best Travel Deals Greece's LaiWah Chow, Loco Enzo The Netherlands' Roger Schreurs and Red Dot Explorer Singapore's Mark Lee



Resorts World Sentosa Singapore's Debajyoti Ghose, Asia Pacific Network Information Centre Australia's Alana Pound and Marcela Gutierrez, and TravelShop Turkey's Murtaza Kalender

News

Winning the dragon

Avenues to attract Chinese are as diverse as the Middle Kingdom itself

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

AS TRAVEL demand from secondary cities in China continues to grow rapidly, industry players need to understand the diverse consumer needs and preferences across China as there is no “one-size-fits-all” model.

While first-tier cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou led the growth in outbound travel in the last decade, strong potential now lies in secondary cities like Wuhan and Chongqing as the expanding middle class population there shows an increased propensity to travel.

However, overseas destinations need to tailor their strategy to each Chinese market accordingly to better meet their demands, a common sentiment shared during yesterday’s panel discussion on Winning the Chinese Travellers from Secondary Cities organised by the Singapore Tourism Board and ITB Asia.

Donald Yu, chief executive, Tuniu Corporation, a Chinese

OTA, said: “There is a higher chance of FIT travel from first-tier cities because they have direct air connectivity to many countries. But it is different with the other cities – their travellers

Travellers (in other Chinese cities) tend to rely very heavily on travel (consultants) to arrange their trips.

Donald Yu
Chief executive, Tuniu Corporation

will as a result tend to rely very heavily on travel (consultants) to arrange their trips.”

Wang Rongguo, director of international tourism marketing, Shandong Provincial Tourism Administration, agreed: “It is very important for the destinations to work and partner local agencies very closely because

they have to be fully aware of local customers’ needs.

“Different cities require different strategies. For instance, the frequency of outbound travel would be different already because they may have their own travel season. You cannot simply generalise the whole country,” he said.

Yu added: “For instance the travellers from the first-tier cities may prefer high-end tour packages, while the Chinese from the other second- or third-cities could be looking for a more in-depth localised experience.”

Edmund Chua, general manager, Singapore-based Lex Travel, which specialises in the China market, said: “Many people from the first-tier China cities have already been to Singapore so we need to also think of how to re-attract them back to the country.

“But for the secondary cities in China, we have to first let them know where Singapore is and build awareness around our destination,” he added.

Phu Quoc fishes for tourists amid infrastructure growth

By Hannah Koh

VIETNAM’S southern island of Phu Quoc is jostling for a bigger slice of the regional tourism pie, but the trade wants more knowledge of the destination to sell it better.

Since March this year, the Vietnamese government has implemented 30-day visa-free entry for international visitors to Phu Quoc. The local airport also saw an upgrade last December to raise its annual passenger capacity to one million.

Vietnam Airlines, sales and marketing, Giang Bich Nguyen told *TTG-ITB Asia Daily* that the state carrier will commence direct services between Phu Quoc and Singapore and Siem Reap on November 2.

As infrastructure ramps up, the destination is starting to see a flurry of new openings.

Vinpearl Joint Stock Company is opening a 750-key resort, an amusement park and an 18-hole golf course on the island on November 1, with another 750-key resort planned for 2015, according to the company’s director of sales & marketing Beverley Lim.

“Our guests are coming from Vietnam, China, South Korea and Japan,” she said. “We hope that Phu Quoc will eventually be able to compete with other destinations like Bali and Phuket.”

Said Nguyen Dinh Toan, executive director of the new 121-key Salinda Premium Resort and Spa Phu Quoc: “We welcomed our first guests on October 15 and are running at 50 per cent



occupancy.”

Nguyen anticipates the resort’s occupancy to reach 60-70 per cent for the coming winter and summer seasons.

He noted that Asia-Pacific markets like Hong Kong, Australia and Singapore account for 30 per cent of traffic to Phu Quoc during the summer, while local and corporates make up the rest. Winter is dominated by Western markets such as Russia, Scandinavia, the UK, France and Germany.

Christopher Low, general manager of Lac Hong Voyages, said: “Phu Quoc could be a 3D2N trip for Singapore travellers, as they are always looking for new places.”

The destination is currently more in favour among Western travellers than Asians though, observed Continental Travel Services Hanoi’s director, Hoang Hau Duong. “Phu Quoc has beautiful beaches and resorts are being built, but it will require more marketing and promotions through the media to let people know about Phu Quoc.”

FTI readies to claw back longhaul business with Huwiler on board

By Mimi Hudoyo

FTI Touristik is eager to regain its leading position in the German longhaul market as the company kickstarts its strategy to expand its longhaul business, most notably with the appointment of Matthias Huwiler as the tour operating managing director.

Huwiler, who worked for FTI for 13 years before joining TUI, was asked by the owner of FTI to rejoin the company recently. He brought along 18 members of his production team to specially develop the company’s longhaul business.

“The company has been selling package tours and focusing on destinations like Egypt, Canary Island, etc. There was nobody taking care of the longhaul destinations, no investment in people,” said Huwiler.

“The business was going down piece by piece.”

Currently, the biggest longhaul market for FTI is the US, followed by Thailand and Cana-

da, and Huwiler expects Asia to form an important part of the company’s rejig.

“Because of the growth of the (Middle Eastern) airlines, Asia will see much bigger growth of seat capacity than the US, which means the flow of (traffic) by air seat is to Asia and Australia.

“For us, between three and five years we will double our business to Asia,” he said.

With increasing airline seat capacity, airfares to Asia will eventually be reduced and Huwiler reckons a shift of demand from destinations like Egypt as well as new segments opening up to longhaul travel with the lowering of airfares.

As for FTI’s strategy, Huwiler said the short-term action would be to create quick-win products, the mid-term action would be to redevelop partnerships with suppliers and create new products, and in the long term develop its own IT system and create flexible online products.



THANKS FOR READING US

TTG-ITB Asia Daily proves it has legs as delegates snap it up daily and pore over the latest news presented in a glossy, high-quality paper. Thank you from all of us and we’ll be back next year, brandishing our *TTG* logo in red, as our models beautifully flaunt at the show.



UNITY’S THE WAY TO GO

By Hannah Koh

FRAGMENTATION is a multifaceted challenge that travel consultants increasingly cannot ignore, especially as options burgeon to meet consumer demands in tandem with the growth of the travel market.

Noting the proliferation of content from different airline suppliers, Ming Foong, director, OTA Asia Pacific & business development North Asia, Travelport, said: “Travel consultants

can no longer rely on content from only a handful of sources, but need to connect to multiple sources to provide a complete service to their customers.”

He noted that some 90 per cent of Asian hotels are independent and not consolidated, posing “a large revenue opportunity and a risk to Asia-Pacific consultants if they have no means of acquiring and aggregating the content”.

As well, fragmentation also affects compliance in the corporate travel sector, said Foong. “Corporate travel consultants need to be flexible and quick in adopting new content sources, providing their customers with relevant and compliant options to reduce delinquency.”

Added Foong: “The key here is for travel consultants to find efficient ways to acquire and aggregate content and more importantly, have the right technology to make the content rel-

evant to their customers.”

He highlighted Travelport’s Universal API (uAPI) solution, launched last year, as a tool to help consultants navigate the complex travel trade landscape.

The solution’s aggregated search ability produces relevant results drawn from different sources to save the travel consultant time and money. These features are further sharpened with Travelport’s ePricing technology and ePricing Meta for OTAs which use metasearch, and the recently unveiled Search Control Console that allows travel consultants to choose how search results are displayed and filter searches better.

“We are working with a number of travel consultants across the region to develop their custom solutions using uAPI,” Foong shared. He added that fast-growing OTAs like Goibibo from India and Bestjet in Australia are using the uAPI.

Snapshot

Let the good times roll!

Spirits remain high as sellers showcase their best offerings on the second day of ITB Asia. By **Ken Tay**



Brand USA's Anna Klapper and Jennifer Ross, NYC & Company US' Makiko Matsuda Healy, San Francisco Travel Association's Tom Kiely, Brand USA's Jay Gray, Embassy of the United States of America Singapore's Darrel Ching, Brand USA Taiwan & Hong Kong's Reene Ho-Phang, Enterprise Holdings US' Jerry Mosiello, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority's Jesse Davis and Mendez Media Marketing US' Robert Mendez



The Jayakarta Suites Komodo-Flores' Agus Tabah Wardhana, Asia Escape Holidays Australia's Jamie O'Brien, The Jayakarta Yogyakarta's Nur Winantyo and The Jayakarta Lombok's Ida Bagus Okayana



Gardens by the Bay Singapore's Alloysius Teng and Mabel Tan



Sutera Harbour Resort Singapore's Maria Leow



Ramada and Days Hotels Singapore At Zhongshan Park's Lisa Ros and Macy Cheng



Jin Jiang International Hotel Management Company China's Victor Lim, Jin Jiang International Loyalty Program China's Minie Zhang, Jin Jiang International Hotel China's Cinn Tan and Jin Jiang International Loyalty Program China's Eva Zhang



Sheraton Xishuangbanna Hotel's Yuki Dong and Damian Chua



South Beach Consortium Singapore's Ian Tan, Connie Choo and Henry Ng, and RMG Tours Singapore's Clement Tan



Singapore Tourism Board's Lynette Pang, Terrence Voon, Neeta Lachmandas-Sakellariou (centre) and Kenneth Lim, together with their tour guides, welcome visitors to the Singapore booth



Melia Hotels International China's Ruben Casas (centre) and his team give a heartfelt welcome to visitors



Sentosa Leisure Management Singapore's Steven Chung (centre) leads his team to put up a good show



Movenpick Hotels & Resorts Singapore's Julie Ong, Movenpick Resort Bangtao Beach Phuket's Kornrawee Ekabutr, Movenpick Heritage Hotel Sentosa's Irene Tan and Geraldine Wong, Movenpick Hotel Mactan Island Cebu's Claire de Rosario-Bernabe, Movenpick Hotels & Resorts Singapore's Markus Mueller, Movenpick Resort & Residences Aqaba Jordan's Marine Favre and Movenpick Resort & Spa Karon Beach Phuket's Kitiphong Nilpraphaporn

AWARD-WINNING ASIAN HOSPITALITY

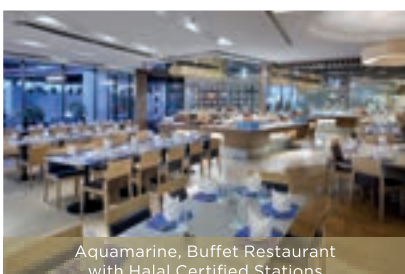
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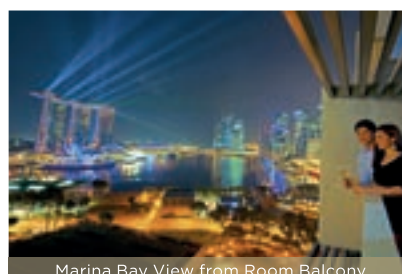
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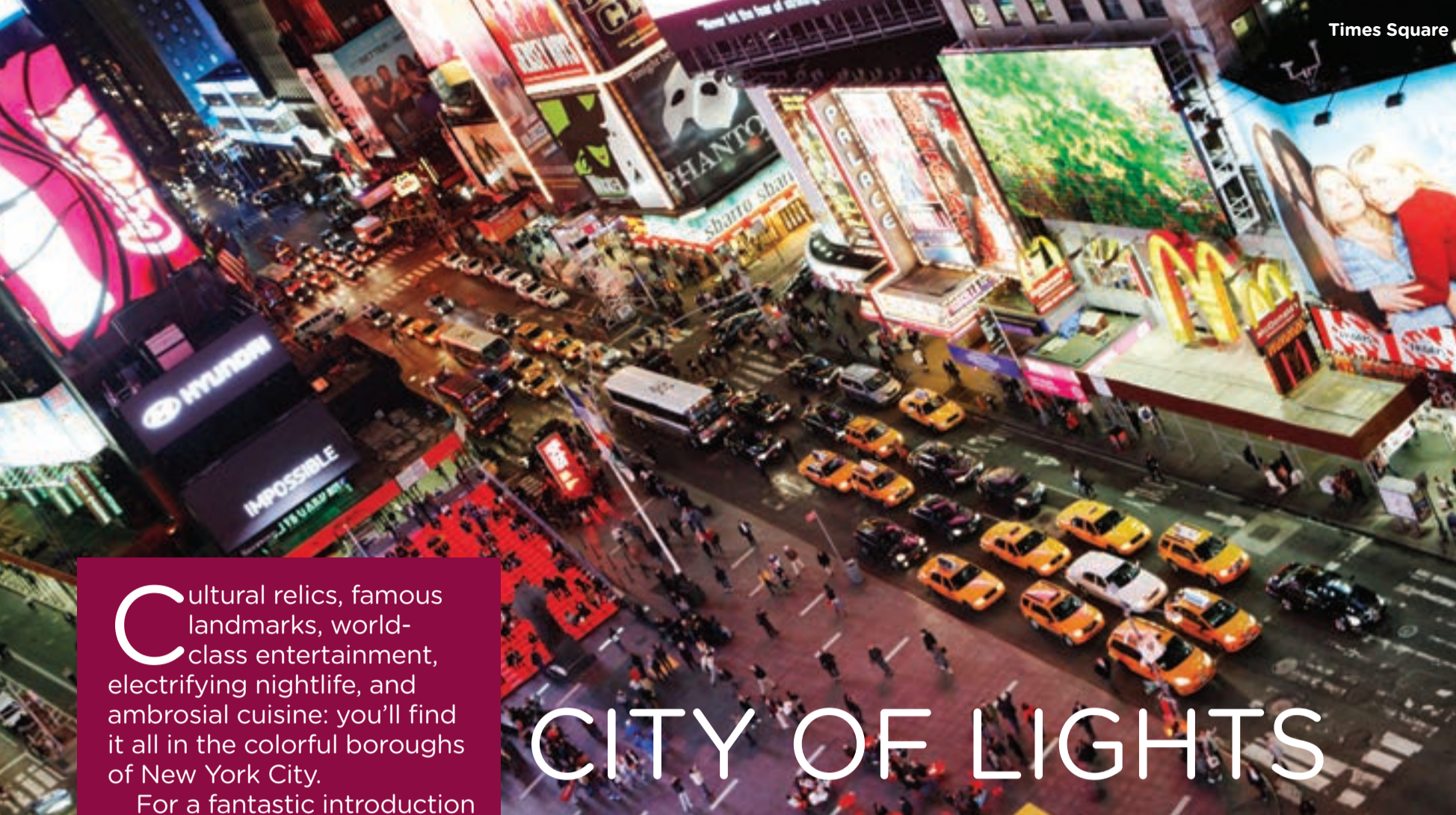


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Immerse yourself in culture on Museum Mile, with institutions like The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Away from the Mile, there's also the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the Brooklyn Museum.

Take a breather at picturesque Central Park to enjoy its tranquil beauty. Kids will love the petting zoo, sea lion show, and penguin house at Central Park Zoo. If you want to visit a larger zoo, head down to the world-famous Bronx Zoo.

End your day by sampling New York City's diverse nightlife offerings. Live it up at the Lower East Side bars, visit a comedy club, or watch a live gig at the star-studded Apollo Theatre.

CULINARY NEW YORK CITY

A bite of the big apple is going to be pretty satisfying, no matter what sort of food you prefer.

Go back in time with a few of New York City's classic restaurants. **Keens Steakhouse** is rich in history – after all, it's been serving quality steaks and giant lamb chops to New Yorkers since 1885. **Peter Luger Steak House**, two years younger at 127, is Brooklyn's answer with marbled porterhouse beef.

Eating out of food trucks is a quintessential New York experience. These Vendy Award winners serve up delicious flavors that span continents, and are easy on the pocket to boot.

Look out for **Big D's Khao Cart**, which serves Asian rice dishes like lemongrass-grilled pork over jasmine rice, and loco moco, a Hawaiian dish comprising a hamburger patty, fried egg, white rice, all drenched with brown gravy. Grab Mediterranean-style falafel balls with homemade hummus from **GoGo Grill** right before catching your ferry to Ellis Island. Social enterprise **Snowday** impresses with its Canadian fare like cheddar grilled cheese with maple syrup and bacon.

You'll find even more ethnic cuisine in Queens. A fun place to start would be **Sik Gaek**, a Korean joint where you cook your own meals with inlaid grills. Try the spicy crab stir-fry and seafood pancakes, and if you're feeling adventurous, the live octopus, chicken

feet, and beef intestines. Ecuadoran food is available at **Barzola**. Its ayacas (leaf-wrapped sweet cornmeal with chicken) will whet your appetite before you take on the formidable bandera platter (tripe stew, goat stew, shrimp cocktail, ceviche, cassava, and rice).

Get a break from all the concrete in these stylish al fresco dining restaurants. Enjoy the laidback vibe at the sunny **Back Forty**, where you'll feel like you've been transported to a beach. It serves up a New American cuisine, including burgers, its famous beer-steamed blue crabs, cornbread, fruit cobbler, and fresh, pesticide-free salads. A romantic option is **Vinegar Hill House**, where you dine with your loved one on delicious farm-to-table food among trees, vines, and vintage furniture.

Escape into New York's sea-faring past by paying a visit to City Island, where you'll get plenty of fresh seafood. The **City Island Lobster House**

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cooks up a mean Maine lobster, and serves king crab legs and baked clams. If crab's your thing, go straight to the **Original Crab Shanty** for crab cooked in a variety of styles: sautéed, stuffed, and broiled just to list a few.

Fine dining is taken very seriously at Thomas Keller's **Per Se**, with its strict dress code and reservation system. In return, you get a flawless tasting menu done to perfection, including a luxe oysters-and-caviar starter. Chef Cesar Ramirez's luxurious 15-course small plate dinner is served in an intimate, dinner-party setting at **The Kitchen at Brooklyn Fare**. Diners sit around a prep table as they enjoy tiny portions of intricate concoctions, like Kumamoto oyster on crème fraîche and yuzu gelée. An eclectic option is Wylie Dufresne's outlandish inventions in a 12-course tasting menu at **wd-50**. You'll get a taste of the rather bizarre "riffs on the humble" (air-puffed pizza pebbles) and the "exalted" (a creamy ribbon of foie gras).

Wind down at **Cove Lounge**, a classy cocktail joint in Harlem with an industrial design scheme and well-dressed crowd. Its innovative cocktails are eclectic spins on old favorites, and are paired with Caribbean-influenced dishes. If you like your drinks with good music, head to **Brooklyn Academy of Music's BAMcafé Live** where you'll be treated to a mix of live music and performances.

NEW YORK CITY ADVENTURES

It's hard to imagine there being many outdoor activities in such an urban setting, but New York City will surprise you with its pockets of green oases. Its five

boroughs contain 51 recognized nature preserves, covering a total of 8,700 acres.

Tree-huggers will love Staten Island, New York City's greenest borough. Go horse-riding or hiking through **Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve** and admire its pitch pine woodlands, rare wildflowers, diverse wildlife, streams, and wetlands. You'll also find the **Greenbelt** on Staten Island, which is home to New York City's largest forest preserve. Explore its parks, wetlands, meadows, and hiking trails, and climb **High Rock Park's** Mt. Moses, for a stunning panoramic view of the city.

While Staten Island also contains two beaches, **South Beach** and **Midland Beach, Rockaway Beach**, which is located in Queens, holds the only two surf beaches in New York City. Try your hand at surfing under the tutelage of competitive surfers Cliff and Will Skudin at Skudin Surf on Rockaway Beach. Those who prefer more sedate activities will have miles of coastline to enjoy.

Pay a visit to yet another beach, **Orchard Beach**, on **Pelham Bay Park** at Bronx, for picnics and amazing views of neighboring City Island. Head north to the **Hunter Island Marine Zoology and Geology Sanctuary**, which protects a rugged shoreline containing boulders deposited during the last ice age, an oak forest, and a rare intertidal marine ecosystem.

Take an antiquated seaside trolley over to **City Island**, and go deep sea diving with Captain Mike, who organizes both beginner and expert dives. Expect

wreck diving, lobster and fish hunts, as well as searches for antique 1700's bottles in the Atlantic Ocean.

If you have more time on your hands, take a short trip out of New York City to see the breathtaking **Niagara Falls**, right at the border of New York State. Visit **Goat Island** for its spectacular view of the falls, then the **Cave of the Winds**, which is right beneath the Bridal Veil Falls. Take a helicopter ride or helium balloon ride for aerial views of the falls.



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Key Facts

- 374 destinations (airports served)
- 233 domestic destinations (airports served)
- 141 international destinations (airports served)
- 59 countries served
- 5,229 daily departures
- 139 million passengers in 2013
- Voted Best Airline for North American Travel in 2013 by Business Traveler magazine.
- Awarded 2013 Eco-Aviation Airline of the Year Gold Winner by Air Transport World.

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Manhattan Skyline



SUNSHINE STATE

CULINARY FLORIDA

It's tough to pin down a "signature" Florida taste because of its unique geography. It's a spectrum that parallels the shape of its peninsula - running southwards from the borders of Georgia and Alabama and ending just north of its Latin American neighbors. Florida's cuisine also draws strongly from the local produce - from citrus and hearts of palm, to seafood straight from its coasts.

Barbecue, a Southern special paired with a relaxed, casual setting, wins its following with tender meat, and savory, mouth-watering sauces. Visit **4Rivers Smokehouse** in Orlando for its delicious brisket with pulled pork Burnt End sandwich. 60-year-old classic Jacksonville favorite, **Bono's Pit**

Bar-B-Q, won't disappoint with its mustard-based barbecue sauce.

Along Florida's coasts, freshly-caught seafood is the crown jewel of its cuisine. Head to the west coast to try raw oysters and Caribbean fire roasted lobster tails at **Salt Rock Grill**, where steaks and seafood are grilled to perfection over a natural oak and citrus wood pit fire. **Sam's**

Beach Bar cooks up a delicious blackened Florida grouper and coconut shrimp.

For a waterfront experience with a great ambience, "Venice of America" Fort Lauderdale's **Blue Moon Fish Co.** serves its shellfish panroast and grilled local swordfish on a dockside over the water.

Try Florida's iconic "Floribbean" cuisine, a mix between typical Southern fare and exotic Caribbean flavors. Sample seared mahi mahi and fried conch with hearts of palm slaw at **Pilar Restaurant** in Aventura. **BALEEN** in Naples serves a chili marinated short ribs pasta and seared yellowtail

Try Florida's iconic "Floribbean" cuisine, a mix between typical Southern fare and exotic Caribbean flavors. Sample seared mahi mahi and fried conch with hearts of palm slaw at Pilar Restaurant in Aventura.

Florida's balmy climate, amazing scenery, amusement parks, and exciting night-life will keep any visitor to this sunshine state in a perpetual state of sunshine!

For more than a century, Florida has been a popular holiday destination for those hoping to seek refuge in its balmy climate from frigid winters, evolving into one of the most popular tourist destinations in America. It attracted 93.7 million visitors in 2013.

Experience picking oranges in the fragrant citrus groves of Polk County. Visit the amusement parks of Orlando, the "Theme Park Capital of the World". You'll be spoiled for choice with the thrilling rides in Universal Orlando Resort and Walt Disney World Resort.

As the most south-eastern state of the USA, Florida is heavily influenced by Spanish pioneers and the neighboring Cuba. Explore the streets of ancient city St. Augustine to learn more about the early Spanish settlers, and enjoy the city's old-world charm.

Finally, hit the Miami beaches to party the night away at its exhilarating beach nightspots.

snapper with mojo marinated shrimp in a perfect beach setting with views of the Gulf of Mexico and an expanse of pristine white sand. Miami's **Bolivar Restaurant** makes a perfect ceviche, crafted with passion fruit and canchita in a relaxed tavern setting.

For dessert, try Florida's official pie, Key Lime Pie, at **Kermit's Key West Key Lime Shoppe** in Key West. Hooked on its tangy flavor? Taste it again in master chocolatier **Kristie Thomas's** artisan chocolates, which are infused with island flavors like key lime pistachio fudge, pirate's coconut rum, and banana daiquiri truffles.

FLORIDA ADVENTURES

Just like its cuisine, the range of outdoor escapes you'll discover in the Sunshine State is incredible.

Florida's miraculous beaches are its pride and glory. Dig your toes into the cool, soft 99% pure quartz sand of **Siesta Beach**, and you'll understand why it's regarded the "whitest, finest sand in the world". Stoop for seashells on **Sanibel Island**, which is characterized by its ankle-deep layer of seashells strewn across the beach by the tide. The crowd-shy can retreat to **St. Joseph Peninsula State Park**, which has remained relatively unspoiled because of its remote location.

Kayakers will fall in love with **the Ten Thousand Islands** - which is actually just a couple of hundred keys. Unwind and escape the bustle with the serene tranquility of the Islands. Camping on its uninhabited islands is challenging and requires a permit, but is an unrivalled way to get close to nature for a night.

The **Everglades National Park** is the USA's largest subtropical wilderness, and has been named a World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve. Walk the Anhinga Trail through its dense mangrove forests, and keep a lookout for the many endangered species residing in the park. Canoeing and kayaking through the waterways are also permitted.

Up north, you'll find lush forests bursting with wildlife and rare plants. In **Apalachicola National Forest**, discover War of 1817 artifacts at the site of Fort Gadsden among its longleaf pine, freshwater springs, and lakes. Venture down rugged trails to the forest's huge sinkholes, limestone formations, and extensive underwater cave system. Meanwhile, Timucuan Indian culture is embedded in the sand pine scrub forest in the **Ocala National Forest**.

Divers can begin with **Key Largo**, where three huge shipwrecks add an intriguing twist to the colorful reefs and fish. Get acquainted with schools of tropical fish among the **coral islands west of Key West**, where some of the North America's best snorkeling and diving can be done. Go inland and try beginner's cave diving in **Devil's Den** and **Blue Grotto**, or ditch your spurs for fins to snorkel with the manatees in **Crystal River**.

Universal Studios Florida

Be the star at Universal Studios Florida! Visitors are thrown right in the middle of all the action of their favorite movies.

Besides nail-biting rides you'll take careening through the movie, there are plenty of shows for the family to enjoy.

Universal Studios Florida, and two other theme parks, Islands of Adventure and Wet N Wild, collectively form the Universal Orlando Resort.

The integrated resort also offers options for hospitality, nightlife, dining, and shopping.

Rides:

- Despicable Me Minion Mayhem
- The Simpsons Ride
- TRANSFORMERS: The Ride 3D
- The Wizarding World of Harry Potter: Diagon Alley
- Hollywood Rip Ride Rockit
- Revenge of the Mummy
- MEN IN BLACK Alien Attack
- Shrek 4D
- Terminator 2 3D
- E.T. Adventure

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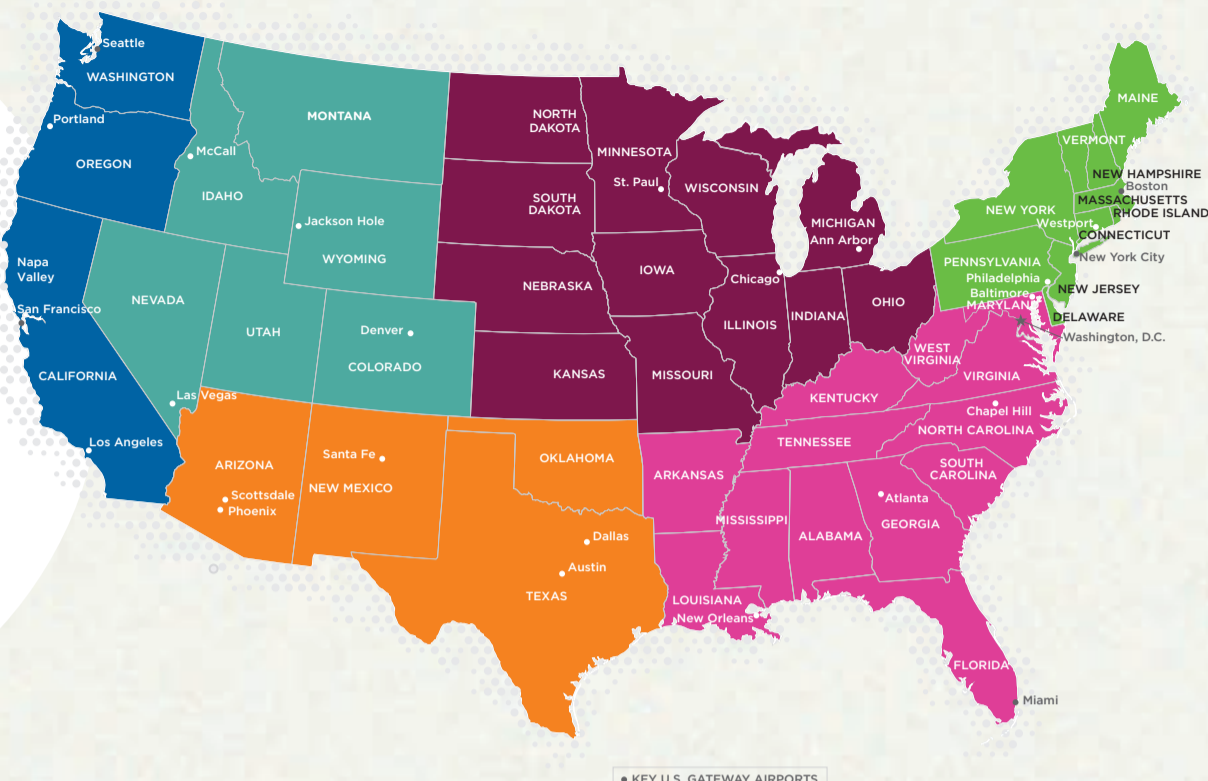
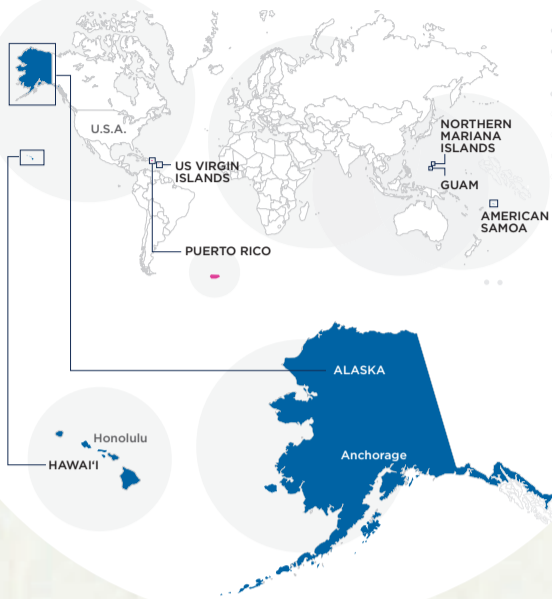
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WELCOME TO THE USA

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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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