

Our thoughts are with Japan in its darkest hours.

As this issue of *TTG Asia* goes to bed, the natural calamity of a magnitude not seen in the country since WWII has resulted in thousands of lives lost and billions of dollars in damage. Let us join hands in remembering Japan, and in wishing our partners and friends in Japan's travel industry safety, strength and speedy recovery as they battle the tragedy.



No. 1629/March 25 – 31, 2011



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# Fallout from Japan

Agents accepting of losses from crisis-hit market, uncertain about rest of the year

By TTG Asia reporters

**SOUTH-EAST ASIA** The trade in the region is bracing itself for a dramatic slash in Japanese clients this year, following the tragic earthquake and tsunami that hit the country on March 11.

As expected, bookings from Japan, mainly for the March-April period, have been wiped out since the event, which occurred during the low season for Japanese travel to most South-east Asian countries. Further losses are expected from refunds and waiving of cancellation fees for Japanese bookings.

For H.I.S. International Travel Singapore though, March is the high season for top market Japan. Noting that most cancellations were emotional in nature due to the somber mood, inbound general manager Christina Chiang said: "We'll be in trouble if the Japanese don't travel for the rest of the year, but I don't think this will happen. Once the (nuclear plant) problem is solved, business will return."

## Protracted recovery

6

The minimum number of months before the Japanese market is expected to bounce back: ASITA official

Others are less than hopeful of a full recovery of the Japanese market within the year and are already cutting their losses.

Malaysia's SMI Holiday expects just 40 to 50 per cent of its Japan target to be met this year. Planning manager Tanaka Miho said: "The peak travel season to Malaysia is July and August, but it is still too early to gauge demand. (So far,) almost all book-

ings coming from all parts of Japan have been cancelled."

Jacqueline Lee, hotel and reservation manager of Japan Travel Bureau in Malaysia, also expects 2011 to be "a tough year".

Baron Travel Corporation Philippines' president and CEO, Marilen Yaptangco, is looking at the upcoming Golden Week (April 29 to May 5) to determine the health of Japan's outbound market. "If the market doesn't pick up for the Golden Week, our forecasts will have to be revised as arrivals may not pick up again until August/September."

Indonesia has suspended all its marketing programmes in Japan for the next few months, moving funds allocated for the market to alternatives such as South Korea, China, Australia and India.

Tourism Minister Jero Wacik said: "The people of Japan are suffering from the disaster, so it is best that we halt marketing activities there for a while. If it were only the earthquake and the tsunami, Japan could have

been back on its feet soon. (But the nuclear leak) can prolong the recovery process."

Indonesia was aiming for 400,000 arrivals from Japan this year, and Wacik projects a 20 per cent fallout from the crisis.

Indra Sjahbirin, secretary general of the Indonesian Tours and Travel Agencies (ASITA), believed it would take six to 12 months before Japanese started travelling in earnest again.

Some 38 hotels in Bali have lost 1,298 Japanese roomnights so far, according to Indonesia Central Board of Statistics director Rusman Heriawan, who said: "We can't expect people to travel under such circumstances."

The Philippines, which counts Japan in its top three markets, is maintaining its targets for the country, said Department of Tourism assistant secretary for international tourism promotions Benito Bengzon. – **Reports by Ollie Quiniquini, Mimi Hudoyo, S Puvaneswary and Karen Yue**

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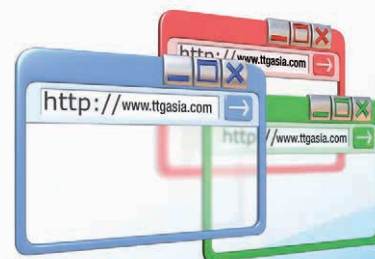
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# Asian sale winds down

Travel in region to cost significantly more in the coming season

By Ollie Quinquini

**BERLIN** A number of Asian destinations will be at least five to 10 per cent more expensive in the coming season, as currency appreciation, fuel surcharges and in some cases, new taxes, inflate price tags of programmes.

Marintur Indonesia executive director Ismail Ali expected rates in Bali to increase by 18 to 25 per cent. With other parts of the country also poised for slight increases and fuel prices ballooning airfares, overall tariffs of Indonesian programmes would be around 15 per cent higher than last season, he said.

Panorama Tours Indonesia managing director Rocky Praputranto's estimate was a 10 per cent increase in package prices, which he noted was still "value for money, especially for Bali".

He said: "Bali's rates have always been very low. So, yes, we should increase rates but at the same time, we must promote the destination well to prove that it is still worth visiting."

In-demand Myanmar is seeing an average hotel rate increase of 20 to 25 per cent, but Exotissimo



Praputranto: still good value

Myanmar general manager Richard Moreau still expects a 30 to 35 per cent gain in business this year. Properties in Vietnam have inched their rates up too, but mainly by five to 10 per cent to cover inflation, said Threeland Travel product manager Dawn Nghiem Thuy Ha.

Still, even this modest increase could indispose an already ailing longhaul market, she said.

"Vietnam is expensive, all the more so since it is relatively new. Clients have lots of options in the region, so to get them to Vietnam, we have no choice but to take the hit. We will maintain the rate for our partners and cut our profits instead."

Pham Ha, CEO of Luxury Travel Vietnam, also pointed to competition from other destinations as one reason for hotels to go easy on rate hikes. Halong Bay properties, he said, had pushed

rates up by 10 per cent, "which could affect demand a bit".

For Huw Owen, director of sales and marketing of Trails of Indochina, Laos is the destination with the steepest increases this year. But this is not expected to dampen demand as "there is a very powerful urge now for people to go to less-visited destinations. The pent-up demand for Luang Prabang is tremendous, so people will still visit," he said.

Over in the Philippines, rates have remained relatively steady, with just super deluxe properties making rate amendments for the season, said Baron Travel Corporation president and CEO, Marilen Sandejas-Yaptangco.

Tour operators in India report moderate hotel rate increases, if any, but are more concerned about the impact on Indian tariffs of the proposed new five per cent service tax on rooms and increase in air travel taxes.

Tourism India Management Enterprises managing director M K Chatterjee said: "Taxes and rising oil prices will make programmes three to five per cent more expensive."

# Fuel hike only spoilsport

By Raini Hamdi

**BERLIN** The biggest German tour operator to the Far East, Rewe Touristik, is seeing in excess of 15 per cent growth in bookings to the region, with chief Michael Frese saying the only blip on the horizon is rising fuel costs.

Political unrest in the Middle East has sent oil prices over US\$100 per barrel, with airlines being forced to increase their fuel surcharges.

"If this continues, it will for sure have an impact on longhaul travel, as flying will become expensive. If you have to spend 250 euros (US\$354.27) just on taxes, clients with certain limitations will think twice. Now, it is not yet a problem, but if (the price of) oil goes up, bookings will be affected," Frese said.

Rewe, which operates DERTour, Meier's Weltreisen, Jahn

Reisen, ITS and Tjareborg, is seeing an overall 12 per cent rise in bookings, with growth being even to all places: 11 per cent to North America, 14 per cent to the Mediterranean, 20 per cent to Africa, even seven per cent to Australia despite the recent natural disasters.

"No one's a 'loser', save for Egypt and Tunisia, where bookings are down 60 per cent."

In Asia, there are no surprises, with Thailand, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Singapore remaining stable and Vietnam coming up strongly. But the real star is Sri Lanka, "which is really booming and is going to be one of our key destinations soon", said Frese.

The revival of Sri Lanka is timely for Rewe's new set-up, Go Vacation Sri Lanka, a 40:60 per cent joint venture with Jetwing Travels (see box).

## ITS, Jahn move to Go Vacation Sri Lanka

Go Vacation Sri Lanka would be handling ITS and Jahn Reisen effective summer 2012, Frese said. The accounts are now handled by Diethelm Travel Sri Lanka (Hemttours). On top of DERTour and Meier's, also effective summer 2012, they represent at least another 10,000 pax for Go Vacation Sri Lanka. "Rewe has been a good partner, even in bad times. I'm glad we can consolidate our position with them and we can prosper together now that tourism is back," said Shiromal Cooray, MD, Jetwing Travels.

# PATA to examine its value to members during 60<sup>th</sup>

**BANGKOK** PATA's future role is up for debate at the association's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Conference.

Taking the anniversary theme, Building Tourism: Past. Present. Progressive, Plenary 1 will consider PATA's impact over the past 60 years, its relevance today and its commitment to the future.

Lead presenter Robert Broadfoot, Political and Economic Risk Consultancy managing director, will provide an overview of factors influencing the changing landscape of the region's travel industry, including rising incomes in Asia and the rapid growth of outbound tourism from China and, to a lesser extent, India.

The panel discussion, moderated by *Time* magazine's Liam Fitzpatrick, will feature personalities representing the government, carrier, hospitality and industry sectors, as well as a PATA Life member and the PATA 2011 Face of the Future competition winner.

Business Events Sydney CEO, Jon Hutchison, who will speak on behalf of PATA Life members, said: "PATA... should be leading issue debates on matters important to tourism and assisting in growing specific sectors of tourism, such as environmental tourism and events." Hotelplan Holding vice chairman and CEO, Hans Lerch, representing the industry, believes PATA should put itself forward as the foremost authority of Asia-Pacific travel and tourism by, for example, showing a strong reaction to what had happened in Japan.

Another highlight of the conference is the keynote session, where Space Adventures co-founder and chairman Eric

Anderson will be interviewed on stage by CNN's Richard Quest.

Plenary Three: New Realities of Travel will tackle critical issues shaping the travel industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, notably in the fields of aviation, technology, distribution, demographics and "good tourism".

The Boeing Company executive director Michael Maple and AirAsia X CEO, Azran Osman-Rani, will discuss the future challenges and opportunities in Asia-Pacific aviation, which is poised to grow by 6.8 per cent annually over the next 20 years. This phenomenal growth will lead to a requirement of 10,320 new aircraft, 180,600 additional pilots and 220,000 more maintenance workers.

Ctrip CEO, Min Fan, and MakeMyTrip India owner and founder Deep Kalra will take on the demand-driven distribution sector, which is being pressured by today's travellers to become better, faster and more personalised. They will examine the role of the traditional travel agent as online and mobile bookings gain prominence, and suggest ways for distribution providers to leverage social media as an effective marketing tool.

Meanwhile, Tavalea Nilon of Samoa has won the 2011 Face of the Future competition, besting five other finalists. Coming in as runners-up were Sitpasu Thongsuk of Thailand and Hsu Htet Hlaing of Myanmar. In her five-minute video entry, Nilon, who happens to be Miss Samoa 2010, highlighted the need for renewable energy options, better waste disposal methods and the promotion of Samoa as a culturally-rich destination.



Hutchison: lead the debates

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# Myanmar becomes longhaul darling

Country red-hot as a “sexy” Asian alternative, with a growing appeal even rate increases cannot dampen

By Gracia Chiang

**BERLIN** Emerging from a strong rebound after three dismal years, tour operators and hotels are expecting that demand for Myanmar will continue to grow in 2011, despite an impending increase in room rates.

Exotissimo Travel general manager for Germany, Pantanida Jantsakool, said Myanmar was the fastest-growing destination for the Bangkok-based DMC, with sales doubling in 2010 compared to 2009.

“We’re seeing a big, big increase for Myanmar. Demand dropped a lot because of the cyclone and political problems in the last few years, but now the country is calm and stable again,” Jantsakool said.

Yangon-based Golden Trip Travels & Tours director Tilly Sand said business had also increased by at least 50 per cent from the Belgian, French and Dutch markets for the high season from October through March this year. “We’re seeing both groups and adventure-seeking travellers, who do trekking, bike and eco-tours.”

As a sign of the booming market, Myanmar Airways International is planning to fly to Dubai in October to bring in more European travellers through a code-share with Qatar Airways, said the airline’s marketing & commercial executive Aye Mra Tha.

But Golden Trip’s Sand said the next peak period might see a shortage of rooms, especially in tourist areas such as Inle Lake where the hotels are small in size. She added that hotels, after maintaining prices for two years, were now also trying to raise their rates for 2011/2012 contracts.

Hotels confirmed that they were intending to hike rates by 10 to 30 per cent,

citing strong FIT and corporate demand, particularly from new markets such as the UK, Scandinavia and Australia.

Chatrium Hotel Yangon assistant GM, marketing & operations, May Myat Mon Win, said most international four- and five-star brands in Yangon had been run-

ning at around 95 per cent occupancy for half a year. “I don’t think it’ll affect demand. Myanmar is still value-for-money compared to (international upscale hotels) in other Asian countries.”

Mandalay Hill Resort Hotel general manager Richard Mayhew was also look-

ing at a 10 to 20 per cent rate hike, pointing out that “we are coming from a low base”. His average room rate is US\$75.

Exotissimo Travel’s Jantsakool said: “We hope it won’t end up like Vietnam, where we lost some clients when prices increased too much as it started getting sexy.”

## Hong Kong twins up to attract longhaul


By Raini Hamdi

**BERLIN** Hong Kong is stepping up multi-destination development to attract the longhaul market and has inked joint promotion pacts for the first time with Yunnan and Shanxi provinces in China.

Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) chief Anthony Lau said: “Hong Kong, being a cosmopolitan city, complements well with the natural beauty and minority communities of these provinces and this will keep the longhaul markets interested.” HKTB already does joint promotions with Guangdong province.

Lau said longhaul arrivals grew 10 to 11 per cent last year, and shorthaul 17 to 18 per cent. “Yes, China remains the driver, with a 27 per cent increase, but we’re seeing growth from all markets, with arrivals increasing 22.8 per cent last year to surpass the 36 million mark. I expect this momentum to continue. If there is no volatility, we can do another 10 per cent growth this year,” he said.

HKTB will also expand promotion in India to Bengaluru and Chennai, from only Mumbai and Delhi now. India arrivals rose 44 per cent last year to over 500,000. The board will also invest marketing dollars in Russia, the Netherlands, Vietnam and the Gulf markets. Lau said this was not a shift in dollars from existing markets, but a 10 per cent rise in funds and streamlining costs for greater efficiency.



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PATA’s premier media partner CNN has generously sponsored anchor and correspondent Richard Quest, host of Quest Means Business and CNN Business Traveller, to moderate. Bringing his famously inimitable style to the conference stage, this promises to be an exciting and dynamic session.

The plenary session will commence with an overview of today’s travel and tourism industry from lead presenter Amitabh Kant, Managing Director, Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (former Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India).

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Poll

Which destination will you find hardest to sell over the next few months? Share with us your views and see what others are saying.

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# A transformational GTA buy

Consolidation of Europe's big tour operators has taken a turn with Kuoni's attention-grabbing move to buy Gullivers Travel Associates (GTA, see *TTG Asia e-Daily*, March 7, 10 and 16). In the past decade, we've watched the big European companies merging for economies of scale (eg, TUI with First Choice, Thomas Cook with My Travel). Kuoni's acquisition of GTA, on the other hand, is not about consolidation. It's about transformation.

The GTA deal, which is expected to be completed by end-April, is in line with Kuoni's asset-light strategy and catapults the company as a global market leader in the B:B destination management services, which is continuing to grow and evolve, unlike the traditional tour operating business, which is continuing to shrink.

It also signals that the next round of M&As will no longer be among traditional tour operators, but among online B:B players or traditional operators jostling for a firm position in that space by buying them.

It is Peter Rothwell's biggest acquisition yet, and sources said it won't be the last. The young British CEO (From the Top,

*TTG Asia*, November 19, 2010) has been snapping up a few companies here and there in the past few months (Lime Travel Sweden, Best Tours Italy, Best Tours Belgium brand), but now we know they are a precursor to this magnum opus of an acquisition. As a company, too, Kuoni has throughout its 105-year history bought travel companies, hotels, private safaris, airlines, and even attempted a merger with First Choice (how different its course would be had this merger gone through) but the GTA buy, costing US\$720 million, is probably

"It all depends on what they make of it, not whether they paid 10 per cent more or less."

its biggest and most expensive. It is expensive? One source pointed out that Kuoni was paying eight times the EBITDA multiple for a business that he said could be out of date by two years and could be set up fresh by Kuoni itself for much less. But on the whole, there were more admiring views than there were skeptical ones. Even Peter Diethelm, the former head honcho of Kuoni

## GTA allows Kuoni to address these dynamics: Kuoni

Market dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Trend towards independent travel</li><li>Growth in outbound emerging markets</li><li>Increasing share of online distribution</li><li>Disintermediation</li></ul>
Kuoni strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>"Trusted advisor" (brands, distribution, customer access)</li><li>"Destination insider" (global footprint, knowledge, content)</li></ul>

Source: Kuoni's GTA investor presentation

UK, who had sewn several deals for Kuoni in the past, could hardly contain his applause when ap-

whether they paid 10 per cent more or less," Diethelm added in an email interview.

The man who will be taking over the responsibility of GTA once the deal goes through, Rolf Schafroth, Kuoni Destination Management CEO and Procurement & Production EVP, told *TTG Asia* in an interview he had a few ideas, but would also like to listen to the GTA folks on how to develop the business further.

As the sale had not been completed, Schafroth was not able to share the ideas or give future earnings expectations. One thing was clear, however: If Schafroth's enthusiasm, passion and good intentions are anything to go by, this deal would fly.

## Most commented on www.ttgasia.com

### Beere out: A major loss for Tourism Australia

THE DEPARTURE of one of Tourism Australia's best-known faces, Richard Beere, reported on March 3, was met with much dismay from readers.

Australia's Steven Howard said: "This will be a major loss for Tourism Australia. There are not many people with more knowledge and professionalism

in the Australian tourist industry than Richard Beere."

Indonesia's Elly Hutabarat agreed. "I know Richard as a 100 per cent 'tourism man'. He is for tourism all the way. I am sure it's going to be a loss for Tourism Australia and also for our tourism community," she wrote.

Beere has been with both the

Australian Tourist Commission and Tourism Australia for over 20 years, responsible for managing marketing programmes and business development activities across eastern tourism markets including Japan, North and South-east Asia and the Gulf countries. Francis Anne Keeler will head Marketing Operations.

### Bali's example shows urgent need to give priority to eco-tourism

WE published on March 8 that Bali's popular Kuta beach was off limits for days due to bacterial contamination and debris.

Eric Sinnaya, managing director of Morahols Travel and Malaysian Nature Society Langkawi branch chairman, warned that islands in South-east Asia were just seeing the tip of the iceberg.

He explained that many tourism development plans for destinations were focused on short-term gains.

"We kill Mother Nature at the expense of fast money. The money we strive to get on tourism, by disregarding the basic care for nature, will end up being spent on repairs after the backlash of

destruction by Mother Nature."

Sinnaya suggested that non-governmental organisations get involved to educate authorities and locals on the need to protect a country's natural heritage and preserve it for generations to come.

"Action is important and just not lip service," he added.

## Sound bites

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

**Rolf Schafroth**, the man who will be in charge of GTA (see above story) in explaining Kuoni's integration style – *TTG Asia e-Daily*, March 10

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

**Holger Baldus**, Marco Polo Reisen managing director, on the GTA deal

**CORRECTION**  
NORWEGIAN Cruise Line's contact centre in Manila has 15 reservation consultants, and not 16 as reported in the *TTG Asia* February 25 report on Cruise Lines.

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**Travel Hall of Fame**

The Travel Hall of Fame, displayed in the Raffles Hotel Museum on the third level of Raffles Hotel Singapore, showcases accolades, artefacts and memorabilia of the region's most exceptional travel organisations.

Since 2002, luminaries who have won the prestigious TTG Travel Award at least 10 times have been conferred the title of Travel Hall of Fame Honorary.

Singapore Airlines and Singapore Changi Airport are the Travel Hall of Fame's pioneering honorees, having been voted by Asia-Pacific's travel trade as Best Airline of the Year and Best Airport of the Year respectively, for more than a decade. Hertz Asia-Pacific joined this elite family in 2005. Recently inducted were Star Cruises, Royal Cliff Beach Resort Pattaya, Abacus International and SilkAir.



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# More rafting options on Bali's Ayung

BAT enhances portfolio with longer rafting trip, better activities and package possibilities. By **Mimi Hudoyo**

**JAKARTA** Bali Adventure Tours (BAT) has come up with a longer rafting trip with more exciting rapids in the "new, unspoilt and pristine section" of Ayung River in Ubud.

The new journey was made possible by the company relocating its Bali Adventure Rafting Centre further up the Ayung River to Payangan and building a new end point at Kedewatan.

BAT managing director Nigel Mason said: "The route is 2km longer, to almost 10km now. But the main attractions up-river are even more scenic views and half a dozen more superb rapids. One of them, which we call 'the chute', is by far the best rapid on the entire Ayung River."

The new rafting expedition is suitable for travellers from five to 75 years of age. On most days, the river is classified as grade three, though this may climb should there be excess rainfall in the mountains.

Also new are rest points along the river and a teambuilding area. The rest points

are "lookouts" where guests can stop on their way down to the river to rest or take pictures. Meanwhile, the teambuilding "bales" offer groups shelter from the sun or the rain during their challenges.

The new upriver location brings the rafting expeditions just 20 minutes away

from BAT's sister facility, the Elephant Safari Park, compared to the previous hour.

Agents can package white-water rafting in the morning with elephant safaris in the afternoon, or cycling, rafting, a safari park tour and spa treatment. More options are available at [www.baliadventures.com](http://www.baliadventures.com).

BAT can take up to 350 people for rafting and 250 for elephant safaris a day. By mid-year, this will grow to 500 pax with the arrival of new equipment from Australia. BAT will then start tapping the Chinese market, on top of its Australian, Russian, Indonesian and European staples.

## Is this your agency?

TTG Asia is disappointed when enquiring with Enesty Travel & Tours, Kuala Lumpur



**TTG** Hi. I'm calling about your ad in The Star newspaper on the three-day/two-night full-board package to Bandung. It said the package starts from RM399 (US\$130.58) per person. How much is the total package?

**Enesty** RM599.

**TTG** Are you sure? That's a very big difference from what's in the ad.

**Enesty** Hold on, please. (He talks to someone who doesn't seem to be aware of the ad. Two minutes later...) RM399 nett on weekdays, inclusive of twin-sharing accommodation, breakfast, return transfer to the airport and hotel, touring and journey, all meals and an English-speaking guide. There's a RM25 surcharge per room per night on weekends.

**TTG** What is touring and journey? Is that sightseeing?

**Enesty** Hold on, please. Let me check. (Long pause.) Yes, Tangkuban Perahu and Sariater Hotspring tour. It's the only sightseeing item in the package.

**TTG** The ad said the booking period is December 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011. How much will it cost after this period?

**Enesty** I can't say. The price may go up or down, depending on the operators we work with.

**TTG** A friend of mine holds a Sri Lankan passport. She'll be visiting me in April and might be keen on this tour. Would she need a visa?

**Enesty** Hold on, let me check. (Another long pause, this time with the call on mute so I could not hear any background chatter.) I am sorry to keep you waiting. We have no idea.

**VERDICT** I would never book a tour with someone with such poor product knowledge as this travel consultant. When I checked the itinerary that was emailed to me, I realised he was wrong when he said there was only one sightseeing item. Also included were a Bandung city tour and visits to factory and retail outlets. — **S Puvaneswary**

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# Taking off in clear skies

The gloom and doom is over as ASEAN flag carriers grow revenue and spread their wings this year

	Performance	Network	Expansion
<div><b>Royal Brunei Airlines</b> By S Puvaneswary</div>	<p>Royal Brunei Airlines (RBA) performed well above targets last year and has set even higher goals this year. The airline's optimism stems from the warm reception of its refreshed B777-200ER product and the projected growth in demand spurred by booming economies in the markets where it operates.</p>	<p>Shanghai was the only addition to RBA's network last year. The airline launched four weekly flights between Bandar Seri Begawan and Shanghai on March 28, 2010. The Chinese city brought RBA's network to 18 destinations across Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the Middle East.</p>	<p>RBA will introduce four direct weekly flights to Melbourne on March 29.</p>
<div><b>Cambodia Angkor Air</b> By Steve Finch</div>	<p>Cambodia Angkor Air (CAA), which took to the skies in July 2009, was the sole operator on the lucrative Phnom Penh-Siem Reap sector last year. The airline thus saw load factor on this route almost double year-on-year, to around 60 per cent by the third quarter. Cabin factor on its Siem Reap-Ho Chi Minh City flights also averaged 60 per cent, while its Phnom Penh-Ho Chi Minh City operation did slightly better at more than 60 per cent load factor.</p>	<p>CAA did not add any new points to its network last year, as it concentrated on consolidating its monopoly on the Phnom Penh-Siem Reap route. For the winter season from November 2010 to March 2011, it added a daily flight on this sector, bringing frequency to five times a day.</p> <p>Although the government had said at the start of 2010 that CAA would launch services to China, South Korea and Japan by year-end, these destinations were not included in CAA's winter schedule.</p>	<p>CAA officials said flights to the three North Asian countries would be launched this year, or after the airline has taken delivery of two newly ordered Airbus A321 aircraft. CAA is also considering services to Bangkok, Hanoi, Singapore and Dalat in Vietnam's Central Highlands.</p> <p>The airline has yet to operate flights to the country's other international airport in Sihanoukville, despite negotiations with airport operator Societe Concessionnaire des Aeroports.</p>
<div><b>Garuda Indonesia</b> By Mimi Hudoyo</div>	<p>In the first nine months of 2010, Garuda Indonesia (GA) achieved a 15.5 per cent hike in revenue to 12.7 trillion rupiah (US\$1.41 million), from 11 trillion rupiah the previous year. GA's net profit, however, fell by 81 per cent to 194 billion rupiah, compared to one trillion rupiah in 2009.</p> <p>GA president and CEO Emirsyah Satar said: "The decline was caused by the higher cost of operations as the airline opened many new domestic and international routes. We are, however, expecting higher revenue and lower operational costs in 2011."</p> <p>GA went public on February 12, releasing up to 27.98 per cent of its stake in the hopes of gaining US\$475 million. At press time, the price per GA share was 570 rupiah.</p>	<p>GA resumed its Jakarta-Dubai-Amsterdam service on June 1 last year after a six-year hiatus.</p> <p>GA also strengthened its South-east Asian network last year by introducing new routes, aircraft and upping frequencies to Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. It restarted services to Hong Kong from Bali and Surabaya, doubled frequency between Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta, and added two daily flights to its complement of five on the Jakarta-Singapore leg. It also turned its thrice-weekly Jakarta-Sydney service into a daily flight from December 20.</p> <p>At press time, GA was maintaining its services to Japan. The airline had launched daily Jakarta-Tokyo flights last August and converted its five-weekly Denpasar-Osaka flights into a daily service in October.</p>	<p>GA plans to add at least three more regional points – Brisbane, Taipei and a city in India – to its network this year.</p> <p>Agus Priyanto, the airline's executive vice president sales and marketing, said: "We are planning to fly Jakarta-Taipei. While waiting for more aircraft to be delivered, we are making market evaluation studies on Brisbane and India. We have yet to decide on which Indonesian point to use for the latter two."</p> <p>Fleet-wise, GA is to take delivery of 11 aircraft, consisting of Boeing B737-800NGs and Airbus A330-200s, this year.</p>
<div><b>Lao Airlines</b> By Bernie Rosenbloom</div>	<p>Lao Airlines enjoyed a cabin factor of more than 60 per cent, with 302,000 passengers in the first nine months of 2010, a sharp improvement over its 2009 average of 57 per cent with 364,000 passengers.</p> <p>The airline hoped to end 2010 with 420,000 passengers and nab 480,000 in 2011, bringing its load factor closer to 65 per cent.</p> <p>Lao Airlines planning director Noudeng Chanthaphasouk said the Vientiane-Bangkok sector had a good run with 65 per cent load, but the return leg suffered from passengers opting to fly back from Udon Thani in Thailand to avail of cheaper airfares on low-cost carriers. The airline's Bangkok-Vientiane flights only managed an average load factor of 50 per cent.</p>	<p>Lao Airlines introduced thrice-weekly Vientiane-Pakse-Ho Chi Minh City flights in October and a twice-weekly service between Vientiane and U-Tapao (Pattaya). It also turned its domestic thrice-weekly Vientiane-Xieng Khouang service into a daily flight.</p>	<p>Lao Airlines will concentrate on strengthening its position on existing routes this year. It will increase its thrice-weekly Luang Prabang-Siem Reap flights to five a week and turn its Luang Prabang-Hanoi flights into a daily service, from the current schedule of four times a week. The airline is also considering increasing the frequency of its Savannakhet-Bangkok flights, from thrice-weekly to five times a week.</p> <p>Fleet upgrades are also on the agenda. Lao Airlines took delivery of two new ATR72-500s last November to replace a pair of aging ATR72-200s and plans to have a medium-haul jet by 2012, in time for Visit Laos Year. Chanthaphasouk said the airline would decide early this year whether to lease an Airbus A320 aircraft or purchase a 90-seat Chinese ART21. The new aircraft will service Bangkok, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Kunming. "We may also use it to open a Guangxi-Kunming-Vientiane route."</p>
<div><b>Malaysia Airlines</b> By S Puvaneswary</div>	<p>Malaysia Airlines (MAS) reported a drop in net profit last year to RM237 million (US\$77.8 million), from RM522 million in 2009.</p> <p>Revenue grew 14.5 per cent year-on-year to RM12.98 billion, but expenses also ballooned by nine per cent to RM13.32 billion.</p> <p>Capacity grew by four per cent and load factor was 76.2 per cent.</p>	<p>MAS launched thrice-weekly flights from Kuala Lumpur to Dammam, Saudi Arabia, via Dubai on May 5. Daily flights were introduced between Kuala Lumpur and Bandung, Indonesia, on July 16. Also new to the network were thrice-weekly flights from Kota Kinabalu to Haneda from November 15 and a thrice-weekly service between Kuala Lumpur and Riyadh from December 17.</p>	<p>On January 15, MAS started flying four times a week between Kuching and Seoul via Kota Kinabalu, thrice a week between Kota Kinabalu and Perth, and twice weekly between Kota Kinabalu and Osaka.</p> <p>The carrier will take delivery of four Boeing B737-800s and five Airbus A330-300s this year. Replacing MAS' fleet of B737-400s, the B737-800s will be deployed on domestic and Asian routes, and considered for new points in China, Japan, India and South Korea. The new A330-300s will serve Australia, North Asia and South Asia.</p> <p>Over the next four years, the airline will take delivery of up to 55 new B737-800s, 25 A330-300s and six A380s. MAS gets its first A380 next year.</p>



Performance

Myanmar Airways International

By Rahul Khanna

Despite strong competition from legacy and low-cost carriers, Myanmar Airways International (MAI) enjoyed a good year-to-date performance up to October 2010, said the airline's assistant general manager Ye Jhan.

According to Jhan, MAI dominated the traffic on the Yangon-Kuala Lumpur route with a 56 per cent marketshare. On the Yangon-Bangkok sector, MAI's share was just 20 per cent due to strong competition from Thai Airways International, Bangkok Airways and Thai AirAsia. MAI's marketshare on the Yangon-Singapore route, which SilkAir also plies, was 33 per cent.

Network

MAI kicked off its regional expansion last year with daily Bangkok-Singapore flights in November. The new service beefed up MAI's regional network that already included Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Gaya in India.

MAI's Yangon-Kuala Lumpur sector got an additional weekly service from end-October, bringing the airline's flights to the Malaysian capital to six. The daily Yangon-Bangkok flight also became a twice-daily service from end-October.

Expansion

MAI introduced twice-weekly services between Yangon and Siem Reap on February 23 and between Yangon and Guangzhou on March 3. On the cards for this year are Yangon-Singapore-Jakarta and Yangon-New Delhi flights. MAI plans to eventually also service Tokyo, Seoul, Dubai, Doha and Bali.

Also in the works is a charter flight service that tour operators can avail of for group tours in the region. For instance, MAI added six to nine Yangon-Guangzhou charter flights this month to cater to higher demand during the country's Gem Emporium.

MAI takes delivery of a new Airbus A320 this month, bringing its fleet to four aircraft.

Philippine Airlines

By Ollie Quiniquini

Philippine Airlines (PAL) earned a modest profit of US\$15.1 million from October to December last year, the third quarter of its 2010-2011 fiscal year.

From April to September, the airline posted profits of 2.44 billion pesos (US\$55.6 million). Passenger traffic grew by 16.4 per cent during this period while yield improved by 13.4 per cent. Revenues reached 37.52 billion pesos.

The airline enjoyed a particularly strong second quarter (July to September), raking in US\$28.2 million in profits, courtesy of a 33 per cent jump in revenues to US\$399.5 million. Expenses, however, grew seven per cent to US\$371.2 million.

PAL relaunched services to Brisbane last March, only to pull out of the sector seven months later.

The airline operated twice-weekly Manila-Melbourne-Brisbane-Manila flights on Airbus A330-300s, but weak demand led it to suspend the service on October 31. Manila-Melbourne flights were also cut down to thrice-weekly from the previous five.

PAL is also pulling out of Riyadh on April 2. It introduced four-weekly flights to the Saudi Arabian city on March 28 last year after a four-year absence, but is dropping the service due to losses and strict government regulations on aircraft type.

PAL will add India to its network, with six-weekly flights to New Delhi from March 27. Of the six, three will be nonstop flights and the other three, via Bangkok.

PAL president and COO, Jaime Bautista, said: "In 2011, Philippine Airlines will launch a new route to New Delhi, opening up the Philippines to the enormous and high-potential Indian outbound market. Starting operations to new markets in the past like South Korea, Japan, China, Canada and the US has helped boost tourism (to the Philippines) and we expect the same to happen in India."

Singapore Airlines

By Gracia Chiang

Singapore Airlines (SIA) made an operating profit of S\$378 million (US\$294 million) in the quarter ending December 31, 2010, the third quarter of its 2010-2011 financial year.

The airline carried 4.37 million passengers that quarter, bringing its total from April to end-December to 12.56 million. Load factor during those nine months averaged 79.5 per cent.

An SIA spokesperson said demand patterns and forward bookings have been encouraging, with the business class market returning particularly strongly. He added that SIA was now adding new routes and reinstating capacity that was cut during the 2009 economic downturn.

SIA launched five-weekly flights to Munich on March 28 last year and turned this into a daily service from September 1. It also introduced twice-daily flights to Tokyo Haneda on October 31, complementing its existing daily services to Tokyo Narita.

Capacity was beefed up on several sectors, including Hong Kong, New Delhi, Colombo, Dhaka, Mumbai, Seoul and Houston (via Moscow).

SIA's all-Business Class services to Newark and Los Angeles returned to daily operations, from five times a week, in January and October respectively.

The airline, however, suspended twice-weekly operations to Pakistan and Nanjing.

SIA will add a sixth continent to its route network on March 28 with the launch of thrice-weekly flights to Sao Paulo via Barcelona, making it the only carrier with direct services between South-east Asia and Brazil.

The airline will also increase frequencies during the Northern Summer Schedule (March 27-October 29). Flights will be added for Hong Kong, Taipei, Osaka, Malé, Athens and Rome. During that same period, SIA had also intended to extend Airbus A380 services between Singapore and Los Angeles via Tokyo Narita. This, however, has been postponed until further notice due to the calamities in Japan.

SIA expects to take delivery of up to seven A380s this year.

Thai Airways International

By Sirima Eamtako

Last year, Thai Airways International (THAI) had an average cabin factor of 73.7 per cent, a 0.8 per cent increase over 2009. Available seat kilometre rose five per cent while revenue passenger kilometre registered a 5.9 per cent increase.

THAI attributed the modest increase to key events last year that stilted growth. These include the closure of European airspace last April due to the volcanic eruptions in Iceland and Thailand's political problems from mid-April to May 2010.

Nevertheless, the airline managed to post a net profit of 15.4 billion baht (US\$507.5 million), up from 7.3 billion baht in 2009.

THAI returned to the Bangkok-Johannesburg sector with four-weekly flights last June after suspending the service in January 2009. Other new additions last year were a daily Bangkok-Tokyo Haneda service from October 31 and a thrice-weekly Bangkok-Maldives service from December 30 through a codeshare with Bangkok Airways.

For this summer season (March 27 to October 29), THAI has increased frequencies from Bangkok to Milan, Brisbane, Auckland, Narita, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and Mumbai, and from Phuket to Hong Kong. But frequencies to Oslo and Moscow have been reduced. THAI will reroute its Bangkok-Perth-Phuket service as Bangkok-Phuket-Perth from April 16 and reenter the Bangkok-Gaya-Varanasi sector with four flights a week from October 1.

THAI has set aside 457 billion baht to acquire 75 new aircraft from this year to 2022. This is on top of existing orders for seven Airbus A330-300s and eight Boeing B777-300ERs to be delivered from now to 2013 and the six A380-800s joining the fleet in 2012 and 2013.

The carrier will gradually decommission 21 aging aircraft by 2024, reducing the average age of its fleet from 11.9 years in 2010 to 8.5 years in 2017 and eight years by 2024.

Meanwhile, THAI has inked a shareholder agreement with Tiger Airways for a new regional low-cost carrier (LCC) Thai Tiger Airways. The LCC was slated to take off this month but its launch has been delayed by opposition from Thai authorities.

Vietnam Airlines

By Sirima Eamtako

Vietnam Airlines (VNA) aims to become South-east Asia's third top airline by 2015 and second best by 2020.

As of December 27, the airline estimated its 2010 revenue to grow 47.3 per cent over 2009 to VND36.2 trillion (US\$1.86 billion). Pre-tax profit for the year was expected to reach VND350 billion, up 130 per cent year-on-year.

VNA is gunning for more than 14 million passengers this year, with revenues coming up to VND45.5 trillion.

VNA officially joined SkyTeam in June 2010 and introduced several new routes last year. These included services from Hanoi to Yangon, Shanghai and Osaka, from Ho Chi Minh City to Yangon and Shanghai, and from Danang to Hong Kong. Also added to the network was a new Danang-Ho Chi Minh City-Narita service. The Ho Chi Minh City-Nagoya route was likewise revived last year.

Frequency was boosted on the Ho Chi Minh City-Tokyo and Hanoi-Osaka sectors, while a codeshare agreement with Air France added six flights to the existing seven on the Paris-Vietnam sector.

New domestic routes included flights from Hanoi to Vinh and Chu Lai. Ho Chi Minh City-Can Tho-Phu Quoc and Ho Chi Minh City-Danang-Da Lat services were also added to the network.

VNA plans to develop more routes to ASEAN destinations, as well as cities in South Asia, North-east Asia and the South Pacific. In the planning stage are new services to Indonesia and the Philippines between 2011 and 2013, and to India between 2013 and 2016. Flights to the Americas and Africa are on the drawing board.

VNA will also boost capacity between Vietnam and Russia, adding two more flights a week this year to the existing five. It presently operates thrice-weekly Ho Chi Minh City-Moscow and twice-weekly Hanoi-Moscow flights.

The airline's fleet is set to grow to 115 aircraft by 2015 and 165 by 2020, with delivery in phases of eight Boeing B787 Dreamliners and 10 to 12 Airbus A350-900s. VNA's fleet presently comprises 70 aircraft.



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# The art of wellness

It's no longer just about pampering. Ravi Chandran, SVP/MD – spa operations, Banyan Tree Resorts & Spas, tells **Raini Hamdi** how spas are evolving



“Travel professionals need to understand that one size no longer fits all...”

**1 What's the next big thing for spas?** Current travel trends reveal a convergence of health, travel and hospitality. The spa industry is emerging to fulfil these needs by embracing wellness and focusing on experiences. Discerning guests are increasingly visiting spas for holistic wellness and pampering, relaxation and unique destinations that offer a sense of place.

In the past, spas were commonly an extended facility of hotels; the clientele were mainly in-house guests and it was a 'one-off' spa experience.

**2 How is this changing the way clients buy travel?** Riding on the continual phenomenal growth and extensive publicity on the wellness industry, we expect the spa to be an important factor in vacation planning in the next five years. It will increasingly be an essential component in hotel accommodation packages to provide guests with all-encompassing vacations.

**3 How can agents sell spas better?** Clients today are savvy travellers, with a discern-

ing taste for quality experiential vacations. To leverage on the spa advantage, agents can offer a greater customisation of their services to attract customers with diverse preferences. With spas offering a wide range of services and experiences nowadays, they provide agents with added options to infuse more variety into travel packages, which traditionally comprise only flights, accommodation and F&B.

With the inclusion of innovative spa concepts in packages, clients will be impressed. Travel professionals need to understand that one size no longer fits all and frequent travellers are more drawn towards services which cater to their individual preferences, and which offer a 'wow' and unforgettable experience.

**4 So the multitude of spa choices agents have today are boon rather than bane? How can agents make effective spa choices?** Although price is a factor customers consider when choosing travel packages, we believe it is neither the only nor the determining factor. Confronted with so many options today, consum-

ers often make choices based on how unique they perceive the travel packages to be. To differentiate oneself from competitors, creativity is always an advantage. The willingness to go the extra mile to provide customers with the most unique experience will allow agents to attract new clients and retain their loyal base.

**5 Quick update on Banyan Tree and Angsana Spas' expansion.**

Banyan Tree and Angsana Spas' expansion is paving the way for 13 more spas this year, in Abu Dhabi, China, Hong Kong, India, Kuwait, Malaysia, Macau, Mauritius, Singapore and Taiwan. We are expecting further growth from next year onwards with more spas in China, Morocco and Vietnam. By 2013, we will have over 100 spas worldwide around the globe.

Chandran: 100 spas



## Euphoria over eforea

Hilton Hotels & Resorts, which introduced its global spa concept, eforea, in Q310, is rolling out the spa in 48 locations worldwide.

There are five in operation now, the first at Hilton Short Hills US, followed by one in DoubleTree Hilton Sanya and three just opened in Millennium Hilton Bangkok, Hilton Pattaya and Melbourne on the Park. Many of the 48 additional locations are in Asia, according to Tyra Lowman, senior director – spa brands, Hilton Worldwide.

The chain enters a market dotted with famous Asian brands but Lowman claims no lack of takers. Dave Horton, global head, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, added: “We are providing a cost-effective, easy-to-implement spa for our owners that takes the guesswork out of spa development and operations.”

Competitive features of eforea include a “thoughtful” modern design and an interactive retail space featuring travel-sized products of its three signature treatments. As well, men get their share of attention: Eforea has partnered Australia's Vitaman for a range of treatments specifically for men. “In many spas, men are an afterthought and female products are repackaged for men,” Horton pointed out.

Agents benefit from spa developments. Lowman said: “Blended travel is a current travel trend that creates great opportunity for agents. Business travellers are increasingly bringing their partners along for a business trip or extending their business travel by a few days to allow for some leisure time.” – **Raini Hamdi**

## Checking in

# No boundaries



A spa in the hotel? No, it's a hotel in the spa. **Raini Hamdi** checks into Ban-

yan Tree Samui and discovers the meaning of a convergence of health, travel and hospitality in wellness

**LOCATION** Chains such as Banyan Tree Resorts & Spas are pushing the boundaries to achieve a convergence of health, travel and hospitality in wellness, redefining the term 'holistic experience'. I realised this at its newest property, Banyan Tree Samui, which opened last July.

It is in the way the property is located. The drop-dead-gorgeous design of the whole resort, spa and the villas. The way it welcomed me. And among the most motivated and superbly-trained staff I have ever encountered.

It is destination, service-minded and quality-oriented – a total package that dissolves the traditional separation of spa from resort and is the most aspirational point of wellness to me.

Samui does not come to mind as an aspirational destination, certainly not Lamai Bay, where this resort is located (19km from the airport in the south-eastern coast). But 78 twinkling all-pool villas, on cascading terraces of a neat verdant hill looking out to the ocean, are a sight to behold and remind one that nature heals like no other. This, surely, is the first point of reference for any spa treatment.

Serenity comes next. How often have I been to a spa at a resort, then head for the beach to extend the indulgence, only to be jarred by noisy water-scooters and pesky touts? The U-shaped bay here may boast only some 200m worth of beachfront, but hugged by green hills on two sides, it has character, is romantically private and secluded, and, mark this, has *easily* the cleanest beach in the whole of Samui. I know this, because I've been watching the staff – from the comfort of the outdoor sun bed in my villa – sweeping all day any leaf or debris washed ashore.

**ROOM** Again, boundaries have been smashed. My 155m<sup>2</sup> Ocean

View villa has more than half its space devoted to the outdoors, fielding a prime-position sun bed area for two, an infinity swimming pool, a *heated* jacuzzi, a feet pool, a shaded sala and a dining area. This is a resort and spa in its own right.

Being on a hill gives me vantage views of the whole resort and the beach below, yet I feel I'm right on the beach, or in the resort proper, as the only thing that separates us is a transparent glass panel that might as well not be there.

**SPA** I allowed myself a 180-minute Rainforest Experience, the first and complete hydrothermal experience on the island.

The first hour or so was spent on a walk through simulated rain, steam, shower, *rasul* (therapeutic mud body mask), more showers, sauna, ice fountain, sole therapy – I have to admit that being impatient and unused to relaxing, I found it arduous and asked to cut short the time for each of the remaining processes. But when they got me to a huge 'vitality pool' comprising hydro massage jets for lower body and upper body, waterfalls for head, neck and shoulder, foot spa and a body massage lounger, I finally let go. It was too good.

The massage that came afterwards was one of the best I have ever had, probably because I was already relaxed by the time the

**Name** Banyan Tree Samui  
**No of rooms** 78  
**Rate** From 29,300 baht (US\$967)  
**Rainforest Experience** 7,000 baht  
**Contact** Tel: (66-77) 915-333  
Email: reservations-samui@banyantree.com  
Website: banyantree.com

therapist, Cheer, laid her expert hands on me. She analysed my needs and devised her own combination of Thai and sports massage that hit all the right points and soothed my aching muscles.

**VERDICT** Simply splendid. Hats off to Banyan Tree and GM Fredrick Arul for raising the bar in the never-ending quest for a holistic experience.







King's Cup Elephant Polo Tournament

# Festive endeavours

Hua Hin sizzles with enchanting events to keep arrivals on the rise. By **Sirima Eamtako**

**Arrivals** Hua Hin recorded 1,043,907 guests in its accommodation establishments last year, a 5.45 per cent increase over 2009, according to data from Thailand's Ministry of Tourism and Sports (MoTS). Of the total, 714,605 were domestic visitors, a 6.4 per cent increase over 2009.

The number of foreign guests grew by 3.4 per cent over the previous year. The top 10 markets were Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, the UK, Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Switzerland and Russia.

Showing much promise is the Indian market, which has been diligently sending wedding and incentive groups to the coastal town. Group sizes, however, have been limited to 120 to 125 pax due to limited allotment at hotels, said Hua Hin Marriott Resort and Spa general manager Naowarat Arunkong.

**NTO** The Prachuap Khiri Khan office of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) continues to rely on events marketing to bring in the numbers (*TTG Asia*, May 14, 2010).

More events and festivals are in the pipeline, while the estab-

lished Hua Hin Jazz Festival is being finetuned as Prachuap Khiri Khan joins other Thai provinces in celebrating His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 84<sup>th</sup> birthday on December 5.

The Hua Hin Jazz Festival 2011, tentatively dubbed Jazz for the King, may be pushed back to December from its original June playdate to coincide with the royal birthday festivities, said Pinnat Charoenphol, director of TAT Prachuap Khiri Khan office.

But June will not be left without any rhythm as the TAT Prachuap Khiri Khan office has brokered a deal with Plearnwan faux-retro market and The Cicada weekend market to stage jazz festivals in their venues throughout the month.

**Events** The King's Cup Elephant Polo Tournament will return to Hua Hin from September 5 to 11 and become an annual event in the beach town "for the moment", said Anantara Hua Hin Resort and Spa general manager Tim Boda. The event, which started in Hua Hin in 2001, moved to Chiang Rai as organiser Anantara Resorts wanted to promote tourism to Thailand's portion of the Golden Triangle.



"Hua Hin is a premium destination, with upscale hotels, golf courses, attractions and events. The West knows Hua Hin, but more marketing is needed to raise awareness in Asia."

**Sammy Carolus**  
General manager  
Hyatt Regency Hua Hin

New events are also making their way to Hua Hin. Hot air balloon operator Earth, Wind and Fire has teamed up with Banyan Golf Club to hold the 2011 Thailand International Balloon Festival in the town from December 2 to 4. The festival will also showcase luxury cars such as Maserati and Ferrari.

InterContinental Hua Hin Resort, which stages the annual tournament of leading women tennis stars every January and the Kiteboarding World Cup every March, will host a Hua Hin carnival at its Centennial Park from March 30 to April 30 and a beach polo tournament on April 9.

Other entries in the Hua Hin calendar include the Mountain Bike Race in November and the Vintage Car Parade and Long Boat Race in December.

**Hotels** More rooms are being added to Hua Hin's inventory, which had 7,015 rooms in 233 hotels last year, according to MoTS data.

ONYX Hospitality Group will open a mixed-use Amari Hua Hin project, comprising a 210-unit condominium and 223-room residence, by 2012.

Accor will open the 210-room

Ibis Hua Hin in the third quarter and will bring the 118-room Veranda Resort & Spa Hua Hin-Cha Am into its M Gallery Collection on April 1.

Suwat Liptapanlop, owner of the InterContinental Hua Hin Resort, is in talks with the InterContinental Hotels Group to build a Crowne Plaza convention hotel with more than 300 rooms, slated to open within two years.

Facing delays though, are a 74-room Centara Resort and 63-key Best Western. Opening dates for both remain unclear.

**Rates** According to a competitive set performance of five upscale international hotels in Hua Hin and Pranburi made available to *TTG Asia*, participating hotels ran at 51.9 per cent AOR last year. The top performer chalked 67.3 per cent in occupancy, while the fifth placer came in at 44.2 per cent.

The report had the hotels fetching an ARR of 3,982 baht (US\$131) last year, with the rates ranging from 5,165 baht and 2,976 baht (see page 13).

Hua Hin hotels said five-star properties normally enjoyed an ADR of 5,500 baht from December to February.



# Rate challenge

Hua Hin attempts to match its peers, reports **Sirima Eamtako**

**1** How do Hua Hin rates compare to those of Phuket and Koh Samui? Last year, Hua Hin had the lowest ADR of the three, according to the 2010 competitive set performance reports of five-star properties. Hua Hin and Pranburi's five upscale international hotels fetched an ADR of 3,982 baht (US\$131). ADR of five luxury villa-style resorts in Phuket was 13,280 baht, while five upscale villa-style resorts in Koh Samui commanded 6,408 baht. Five regular five-star properties in Koh Samui fetched an ADR of 3,611 baht.

**2** Did Hua Hin do better with other indicators? No. Hua Hin hotels lagged behind their peers in Phuket and Koh Samui in AOR and RevPAR too. The five upscale international hotels in Hua Hin and Pranburi had an AOR of 51.9 per cent and RevPAR of 2,068 baht. The Phuket set enjoyed 54.7 per cent AOR and 7,261 baht in RevPAR. Koh Samui's upscale group registered AOR of 52.7 per cent and

3,378 baht in RevPAR, while regular five-stars ran at 58.7 per cent AOR and 2,119 baht in RevPAR.

**3** How is the coastal town expected to fare this year? Hua Hin is looking forward to a better year after a difficult 2010.

Dusit Thani Hua Hin is out to woo all market segments, especially meetings and events during the low season, to achieve its 2011 AOR target of more than 80 per cent, said general manager Victor Suksee.

At the Hyatt Regency Hua Hin, general manager Sammy Carolus is targeting 60 to 65 per cent AOR this year, with room rates growing by 10 to 15 per cent, thanks to newly upgraded rooms. The resort spent 120 million baht to turn half of its inventory into Regency Club rooms that were unveiled last December.

Anantara Resort Hua Hin general manager Tim Boda is also upping rates by 10 to 15 per cent, as ARR in the first two months already surpassed the average in the property's competitive set.

**4** Should Hua Hin raise its rates? Yes, said Carolus, who enthused: "Hua Hin is a premium destination and should be allowed to ask for good rates."

Andreas Pfister, InterContinental Hua Hin Resort's general manager, agreed, saying strong demand from local and international markets allowed the property "to be stubborn" on rates. In its first year, the resort ranked third out of six in its competitive set, but at flat AOR and RevPAR.

**5** Any challenges? Hua Hin cannot hold a candle to Phuket and Khao Lak, said Go Vacation Thailand managing director Christoph Mueller. "If Hua Hin hotels want to compete with the south, they have to maintain their rates," he added.

But Suksee retorted that Hua Hin hotels deserved a gradual rate increase from all markets. He said that while Thai visitors paid high rates during the weekend, "We need a strategy to spread the risk, rather than have just two days of business."

## Checking in

### InterContinental Hua Hin Resort



Hua Hin's latest international hotel has been operating for a little over a year, so **Sirima Eamtako** came a'callin



**LOCATION** The resort stretches from the Petchkasem Highway to Hua Hin Beach. Though the property is sandwiched between high-rise condominiums, I like how the guestrooms are allocated to the low-rise buildings, creating a perfect frame for the inner courtyard housing the ceremonial hall and infinity pool.

**ROOM** My Grand Deluxe room was spacious and modern, offering perfect sea views and a 24-hour private butler, who met requests promptly and efficiently. Another plus was the serenity of its location, near the front entrance and far from the din of the swimming pool action. Those seeking fun and frolic would love the guestrooms surrounding the pool, while couples and honeymooners can avail of any of the three Ocean Front Pool Villas. There is also the 19th-century-style

Name InterContinental Hua Hin Resort

No of rooms 119

Published rate From 12,000 baht

Contact details

Email: rsvn@ichuahin.com

La Residence Royale House, going for 150,000 baht (US\$4,919) a night, which can be rented for private parties.

**F&B** Six. Pirom serves authentic Thai dishes, while beachfront Azure whetted my appetite with delicious international fare.

**FACILITIES** A spa, lawn for yoga sessions and parties, function room for 40 to 120 pax, fitness centre and library.

**SERVICE** Friendly & courteous.

**VERDICT** Utterly charming.

## Checking in

### SALA Samui



Thailand is not short of homegrown groups carving a name for themselves in the luxury segment. **Raini Hamdi** checks into one of them

**LOCATION** The first of the SALA Resorts & Spas, SALA Samui is located on Choeng Mon Beach on the north-east corner of the island, about a 10-minute drive from the airport.

What a compact and neat development this resort is and every bit what a "sala" should be – relaxed and intimate, rather than a grandish or opulent sort of luxury.

**ROOM** I'm not entering a room, rather a garden, with one of the most inviting villa pools I have ever seen. Immediately, I visualise lazing on the sala daybed by the pool. There is also the tempting thought of soaking in a bathtub full of warm suds and a bubbly in hand because the villa design has created an open-air bathroom. How clever. Who on earth needs a room?

The room itself is modern Thai in furniture and furnishings, its use of white linen, cushions and drapes lending an air of the breezy tropics.

Internet access and speed in room need fixing. Ah, just as well as I was quite happy to abandon work. More importantly, for a beach resort, the iPod dock works and in no time, I was lounging on the daybed in my music-filled room, book in hand.

**F&B** SALA Samui Restaurant is something to write home about. It serves both Thai and international, but the Thai is so heavenly this is one place to recommend



Name SALA Samui

No of rooms 69 villas and suites

Rate From 10,400 baht or US\$341 (low season, SALA Pool Villa, 106m<sup>2</sup>)

Contact details

Tel: (66-77) 245-888

Email: info@salasamui.com

for excellent Thai food in Samui even if your clients are not staying at the resort.

The chef somehow is able to give ordinary Thai dishes an edge. My prawn and pomelo dish, for example came with a generous topping of a light foam, which was so tasty I want to lick the plate clean.

Further enhancing the dining experience at this beachfront restaurant was a British musician who sang like a dream and whose repertoire ranged from Tracy Chapman to Michael Jackson, which was wide indeed.

But wider still was the wine list! I believe it is difficult to find a better wine list in Samui than this.

**SERVICE** Friendly, relaxed and earnest, which for me seals the SALA experience.

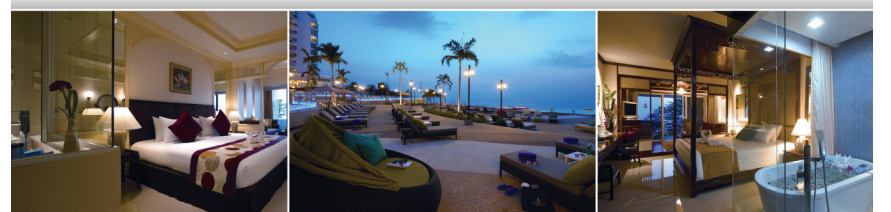
**FACILITIES** Two beachfront swimming pools, beach bar, pasta and pizza bar, gym, spa, guest lounge, boardroom (for up to 12 pax), library and business services.

**VERDICT** No wonder SALA has made a name for itself quickly in the luxe market.



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Traditional Barong mask

# Balinese interludes

Island burgeons with new wares but market sentiment raises concern. By **Mimi Hudoyo**

**Arrivals** Tourist arrivals to Bali are continuing their uptrend, with the island seeking to outdo its record-breaking 2010 intake of nearly 2.5 million visitors with a harvest of 2.6 million to 2.8 million this year.

Www.balidiscovery.com reports that January already had a 19.9 per cent month-on-month increase, with 202,660 arrivals.

The trade is cautious with forecasts now though, as arrivals from Japan, Bali's second biggest market, which had been sliding in the last couple of years due to the recession, are bound to dip even more following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

Europe is another cause for concern, as the euro's devaluation and rising fuel prices may dampen longhaul travel.

**Rates** Bali hotels are raising their rates by 15 to 25 per cent, causing package prices to jump by 15 per cent, said Marintur executive director Ismail Ali. "The rising price of oil will cause fuel surcharges to go up as well. Lufthansa has said its fuel surcharge on longhaul flights would be 90 euros," explained Ali. "All in all, it will cost a lot for

travellers to come this way." Germany would be the biggest challenge, said Ali, who believed the Dutch, French and Belgian markets were "still all right".

Bali hotels, however, doubted that their rate hikes would improve bottomlines if the Indonesian rupiah kept its momentum. The currency, which stood at 9,044 rupiah per US dollar at end-December, has appreciated in value, hitting 8,780 rupiah per US dollar at press time.

Jayakarta Hotels & Resorts group director of sales and marketing Ellies Halim said: "We have increased our selling price in US dollar by 15 per cent over last year, but with today's exchange rate, that is almost nothing in rupiah."

At the same time, operational and overhead costs in rupiah keep going up, said Halim.

**Hotels** Bali's upmarket room inventory is being injected with at least 600 rooms and 80 villas this year, thanks to the opening of three hotels in Legian and Seminyak. Accor's Pullman Bali Legian Nirwana, which made its debut on February 28, has 353 rooms and suites, as well as prime con-



Ismail Ali  
Executive director  
Marintur

"We have to be very creative in packaging to get (the Dutch, French and Belgians) going."

ference space. General manager Philippe Battle said the hotel is targeting leisure, corporate and MICE travellers.

W Retreat & Spa Bali – Seminyak welcomed the first guests to its 158 rooms and 79 villas on March 1.

Finally, Amadea Resort & Villas, which will open in Seminyak in the second quarter, will add 93 rooms and seven pool villas to Indonesia's Prime Plaza Hotels & Resorts' portfolio.

**MICE** The island is getting a new convention centre this May. The Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center (BNDCC), located in the Nusa Dua Resort Complex and within walking distance of the Bali International Convention Centre, occupies 70,000m<sup>2</sup>, of which 25,000m<sup>2</sup> is taken up by the convention facility.

Owned by Kompas Gramedia Group, BNDCC will be the largest convention centre in Bali and the second largest in Indonesia, after the Jakarta Convention Center. Its convention hall will be able to accommodate up to 5,000 pax theatre-style. BNDCC will also have 14 breakout rooms, three boardrooms and a 1,800-seat plenary hall.

Agus Adiprasetyo, COO of Kompas Gramedia Group and president commissary of BNDCC, said: "Building a venue of this scale in a city like Jakarta will not have as significant an impact as in Bali."

BNDCC, which is expected to compete with facilities in Singapore and Malaysia, is eyeing to host the 19<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit and Related Summit in October, and has already bagged a couple of association meetings for later in the year.

**Products** The 650-seat Bali Nusa Dua Theatre will open in mid-June behind the Bali Collection shopping area.

Its DevDan show, *Treasure of the Archipelago*, will run four times a week, featuring traditional dances, contemporary hip-hop performances and aerial acrobatics. General manager Stephen Lomax said the show would perk up nightlife in Nusa Dua.

New Kuta Green Park, a five-hectare water park, opened last December in the Pecatu Indah Resort. With flying fox, bungee trampoline and 17 water slides, the park caters to families and corporate groups. Seven more slides will be built by next year.



# Regional aspirations

Central Java strives for greater recognition in tourism scene, reports **Mimi Hudoyo**

**1 What does Central Java hope to achieve?** The province is focusing on direct arrivals from ASEAN, with Singapore and Malaysia as its first targets since these have direct flights to provincial capital Semarang. Batavia Airlines has thrice-weekly Semarang-Singapore flights and plans to launch Kuala Lumpur-Semarang services. AirAsia is also said to be mulling Semarang-Kuala Lumpur flights.

The government and trade recently held their first regional roadshow, with Singapore as the first stop, as the province gears up for Visit Central Java 2013.

**2 What is Visit Central Java 2013's goal?** The plan, according to Central Java Promotion Board chairman Andy Irawan, is to attract more domestic, regional and international

tourists to Central Java. "National and regional promotions are one way (of doing so), as seen in Bandung's and Surabaya's experience," he said.

Central Java will thus participate in national and international events and improve provincial infrastructure, such as toll roads between cities. Also on the drawing board is a convention centre.

**3 What are the province's chances of making it big?** Central Java's Borobudur and Prambanan Temples, Dieng Plateau and, to a certain extent, Losari Coffee Plantation, are on the tourist circuit, though mainly on Java-Bali overland tours.

Their proximity to Jogjakarta, however, leads Borobudur and Prambanan to be packaged with that city-province, instead of Central Java. And most cruise

tourists to Semarang use the city as a stop for Borobudur.

Losari Spa Retreat & Coffee Plantation sales and marketing manager Arman Suparman said: "Half of our business is Europeans on Java-Bali overland tours. The rest fly from Bali to Jogjakarta and then Losari."

Garuda Indonesia formed a Singapore agent consortium for a 3N Semarang-Losari package when it had Semarang-Singapore flights in 2009. "But the flight was dropped before the market could grow," said Suparman.

**4 What would appeal to the regional market?** TX Travel Srdol Semarang director Andi Tjipta Hardianto said: "Semarang doesn't have much, but the golf courses, spas and agro-tourism sites outside the city would appeal to the ASEAN

market. The Wali (pilgrimage) tour to Kudus, Demak and Jepara is popular among Malaysians."

Gallery Hotel Kresna Wono-sobo general manager Ita Patiradjawane said: "One possible package in the north is Semarang, Jepara, Lasem and Pekalongan (wood carving and batik)."

Hardianto agreed, saying present packages covered the central and southern regions. "With Semarang as gateway, we can develop northern attractions."

**5 What needs to be done?** Aside from promotions and new packages, The Borobudur, Prambanan and Ratu Boko Parks Management director Agus Canny suggested learning from Jogjakarta. "Its groundhandlers work closely with Bali inbound operators. That's the best way to get international tourists."

## Silver spoon

### Café Degan, Seminyak



A café on Bali's Jalan Kerobokan Kelod professes to serve authentic Indonesian and Thai dishes. **Mimi Hudoyo** verifies its claim

**MENU** As the café had separate Indonesian and Thai menus, I picked my appetiser from the Thai menu and my mains from the local selection.

The crunchy, sweet-spicy-sour Som Tam Gai Yang papaya salad was the perfect starter. I had *sayur asam* (assorted vegetables in spicy tamarind broth) as a side dish and it reminded me of my mother's home-cooked meals.

For the main course, I had *dagang sambal hijau* (spicy beef with green chillies) and *ikan panggang kemangi* (slowly-simmered white snapper, with Thai basil). The beef reminded me of *empal* (Javanese sweet fried beef), but the hotness of the green chillies and the fragrance of the kafir lime leaf and lemongrass made this a much better complement to the steaming hot rice. No wonder this is one of Café Degan's signature dishes, aside from the coriander- and ginger-marinated fried duck, which I vow to try on my next visit. The fish was also superb – thick, juicy meat and well-marinated.

Dessert was interesting. Owner chef Degan Septiadji recommended the tiramisu and the Black Forest cake, which sell well at the café's pastry shop. I would not have thought these would go with my Indonesian dinner but was pleasantly mistaken.

**AMBIENCE** Café Degan is set in a *joglo* house, an open-air pavilion on a raised teakwood platform. Javanese carved designs adorn the tiered ceiling and antique lights, batik fabrics, terracotta floors and wooden dining tables accentuate the traditional feel. A new pastry shop, being built in the foreground, will allow walk-ins to partake of the café's French pastries.

**SERVICE** The servers were friendly, efficient and fast. The waiter helped me plan my dinner. Dishes were thoughtfully served on warm plates.

**PRICING** From 25,000 rupiah (US\$2.70) to 72,000 rupiah, but portions are good for two to three people. A meal for two comes up to 200,000 rupiah or more.

**TRADE APPLICATION** The dining area has three sections: the patio with 12 covers, upper level for 46 and lower level for 32. The sections can be reserved for groups or private events.



**Name** Café Degan

**Number of seats** Up to 90

**Contact details**

Tel: (62-361) 889-3271

Email: [cafedegan@indosat.net.id](mailto:cafedegan@indosat.net.id)

**Verdict**

## Checking in



### Banyan Tree Ungasan, Bali



Banyan Tree's second resort in Indonesia had its grand launch early this year.

**Mimi Hudoyo** paid a visit

**LOCATION** Perched on the southernmost cliffs of Bali in Ungasan some 45 minutes from the airport, the resort is far from the madding crowd and very much in keeping with the Banyan Tree promise of privacy and tranquility. Tourist attractions such as the Uluwatu Temple, Garuda Wisnu Kencana Cultural Park and Balangan Beach are nearby.

**ROOM** Villa 102 had an ocean view, giving me a glimpse of the Indian Ocean in the distance beyond the rooftops of other villas down the hill.

Going through the private villa gate, I felt like I had entered a floating compound. The pathway is lined with waterways leading to the 10m infinity pool facing the living room and bedroom.

Further enhancing the serenity of the villa are the fountain at the end of the pool and the sound of bubbling water in the jet pool next to the Balinese bale. Yet another treat is the luxurious bathroom, which has a large

**Name** Banyan Tree Ungasan

**No of rooms** 73 villas

**Published rate** From US\$830

**Contact details**

Tel: (62-361) 300-7000

Email: [ungasan@banyantree.com](mailto:ungasan@banyantree.com)

sunken bath, as well as indoor and outdoor shower areas.

The villa is spacious, minimalist and utterly Balinese in design and feel. The resort has 73 villas, each with its own landscaped garden, kitchenette and free broadband Internet access.

**F&B** Ju Ma Na serves delicious food and remarkable views of the cliff edge and the Indian Ocean – no wonder it is a favourite for weddings. Meals at Tamarind Restaurant in the spa area are based on the tri-dosha Ayurveda concept of Vata (to enthuse), Pitta (to shine) and Kapha (to keep together). Bambu Restaurant's breakfast buffet was varied but the food, especially the local selection, could use taste pointers from the other two outlets.

**FACILITIES** A spa, meeting facilities and a library.

**SERVICE** Professional, efficient and friendly. The resort staff always greeted me by name. More importantly, the free Internet access and its speed were much appreciated, at least by me.

**VERDICT** An idyllic and perfect place to recharge.



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