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# MAS still gets agents' vote

## Trade unfazed by turbulence-hit airline

By N. Nithiyananthan

**KUALA LUMPUR** Despite recent setbacks faced by Malaysia Airlines (MAS), major outbound travel agents have thrown their support behind the legacy carrier, banking on the imminent arrival of its new fleet and its 2012 entry into the oneworld alliance.

MSL Travel chief executive, Ramchand D., said: "Whatever destination MAS flies to, it will get our business."

A senior industry source who declined to be named added: "MAS is the national carrier, and it offers non-stop flights to major destinations, has a good team and delivers great service. We will stand by it."

Over the last few months, the airline has suffered a series of knocks.

Affected by high fuel costs, MAS posted a net loss of RM242 million (US\$81 million) for the first quarter of 2011, in spite of a 10 per cent increase in revenue

to RM3.2 billion. Second quarter results are not expected to improve.

The dismal result and preceding downward spiral in the airline's share price led to a hostile annual general meeting in June.

On July 3, MAS' head of sales and marketing, Bernard Francis, resigned on short notice while chairman, Dr Munir Majid, stepped down late last month. Rumours are also rife that the position of managing director and CEO, currently held by Tengku Azmil Zahrudin, is tenuous.

Manpower issues aside, MAS' ageing fleet has also been criticised as putting it at a disadvantage against regional competitors, especially in the premium category.

Agents, however, were hopeful of the airline's fleet renewal plan, valued at US\$8.4 billion.

According to the undisclosed

*Continued on page 2*

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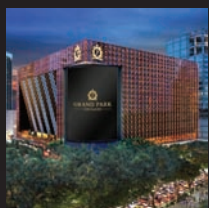
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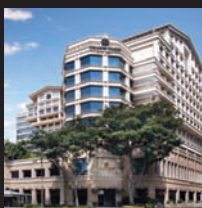
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Starwood president and CEO Frits van Paasschen tells Amy Fabris-Shi his plans for China, which is now the company's second-largest market outside the US

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# Thailand rebounds

Wave of Asian visitors brings business in a usually quiet period

By Sirima Eamtako

**BANGKOK** Renewed confidence and pent-up demand from key Asian markets are giving inbound tour operators in Thailand a much-needed boost during the low season.

Agents concur that while the surge in low-season bookings might not push hotel rates up due to a room oversupply, the cooling of the Thai political situation coupled with an increase in Asian outbound travel were lifting the number of arrivals.

General manager of Hana Asia (Thailand), Kim Chang Hun, said demand from South Korea, which rebounded immediately after Thailand's political turmoil ceased last year, had continued to rise due to the strengthening won and Thailand's "good pricing".

According to Kim, revenue from the South Korean market climbed by 40 per cent year-on-year for the first seven months of this year. He expects growth to continue on the same trajectory in the months ahead.

Bangkok, Pattaya and Phuket received the most interest, Kim noted.

Managing director of True Holiday Thailand, Wichukorn Kootrakool, also reported a good showing for Asian markets, from where year-to-date revenue for the same three destinations almost doubled. Hong Kong and China are leading in demand.

President of CCT Group, Wichit Prakobkosol, added that Chinese arrivals jumped 50 per cent in the first five months of this year and looked to surpass the 1.5 million mark by year-end.

While the calmer situation in Thailand has helped restore travellers' confidence, it is the kingdom's reputation as a value-for-money destination that has been the main draw for Asian visitors, said Wichukorn.

"Visitors pay half the price for the same international branded luxury hotels in Bangkok compared to other major Asian cities," he cited.

Currently, upscale hotels in

Bangkok only fetch an average daily rate of 2,100-2,500 baht (US\$71-US\$84) although occupancies are above 80 per cent.

Wichukorn concluded: "I would encourage five-star hotels in key Thai destinations to enhance brand awareness in Asian markets."

SI Tours CEO, Suwart Jitjom-mongmate, said industry players must market Thailand as a value-added destination instead of competing for business through a price war, especially as Thailand looks set to enjoy a strong high season.

However, the outlook remains weak for some despite the positive signs.

Chaladol Ussamarn, CEO of CBS Travel Asia, which runs B2B online reservation system Hotel-Club88, said: "Online booking numbers are up, but our offline business such as packages, transfer and sightseeing tours are still down."

He added that while there was an overall positive pace of bookings, rates were stagnant.

## Latest additions to editorial team

**KUALA LUMPUR/MANILA** As chief correspondent, Malaysia, N. Nithiyananthan will be in charge of Malaysia market coverage for all Travel Group titles, including *TTG Asia*, *TTG Asia e-Daily*, *TTG India* and *TTGmice*, from Kuala Lumpur.



N. Nithiyananthan

Nithi served as Malaysia reporter with TTG Asia Media from 2000 to 2004, before leaving to take up an appointment in Saudi Arabia.

Since his return to Malaysia in 2006, Nithi has been providing public relations consultancy services to non-travel related sectors.

TTG Asia Media is also pleased to name Marianne Carandang as correspondent, the Philippines.

Based in Manila, she is responsible for Philippine market coverage for all Travel Group titles.

Marianne served as managing editor of *Philippines Graphic* from 2003 to 2005 and features editor for *Hong Kong Business* from 2008 to 2009.

Marianne is currently a textbook editor for Anvil Publishing and contributes regularly to the Philippine edition of *Town & Country*.



Marianne Carandang

## New ways of reading TTG Asia

**SINGAPORE** TTG Asia Media has launched the digital version of TTG Asia. This move allows print copies of the publication to be accessible via email, significantly boosting the readership of the 37-year-old newspaper.

Over 25,000 travel agents and suppliers will receive an email with a link to TTG Asia Digital. This is an additional 10,500 readers, as both TTG Asia print and e-Daily subscribers are recipients of the digital publication.

Powered by DigitalDM, TTG Asia Digital has online, desktop and mobile versions.

### In brief

#### Furama enters Malaysia

Singapore-based Furama Hotels International (FHI) soft-opened four-star business hotel, Furama Bukit Bintang, in Kuala Lumpur late last month.

Located in the heart of the Malaysian capital, the 433-room hotel has meeting and conference facilities, an executive lounge, a full-service restaurant, a swimming pool and a jacuzzi, and a gym.

FHI CEO, Jason Peck, said: "We are forecasting aggressive expansion within the region for our three brands. We will continue with our hotel management plans for this year and beyond." The company targets 60 hotels in five years across Asia-Pacific, up from over 40 hotels now.

#### SATTE sets new milestone

India's key B2B travel and tourism platform SATTE has secured the support of all leading trade associations in the country for the first time.

This includes the Travel Agents Federation of India, Travel Agents Association of India and Association of Domestic Tour Operators in India.

The 19th edition of SATTE will be held at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi from February 10-12, 2012. Organised by UBM India, it will feature more than 600 exhibitors targeting over 6,000 qualified buyers.

An offshoot event, SATTE Mumbai West, will also be held from February 15-16, 2012.

# PATA ups presence across Asia

By Catherine Monthienvichien-chai and Mimi Hudoyo

**BANGKOK/JAKARTA** Cambodia is the next destination to get a PATA chapter following last month's relaunch of the Indonesia chapter, as the trade association embarks on a drive to re-invigorate its grassroots network.

Ben Montgomery, PATA director-chapter development, said a chapter workshop was held in Cambodia in June, while an executive committee was elected at the end of July.

New chapters in Chiang Rai and Myanmar are slated to be up and running by the end of this year, while Laos will get one early next year. With a goal to reach 50 chapters by the end-2012, plans are also underway to revive former chapters in Hong Kong, China and Sydney, added Montgomery.

She explained that chapters were initiated by active PATA members in a destination which recognised opportunities the network offers. Although there is no funding support from the PATA HQ, the central body helps to facilitate this process.

Said Montgomery: "We put together activities for the members, while also inviting local tourism stakeholders (members-to-be) to join these events."

"The rich content, insights and strong connection to our global tourism community are what PATA provides to our chapters to help them build their business."

In Indonesia's case, former

chapter chairman Meity Robot, president of Iwata Tours and Travel, said the newly-formed entity had to work hard to convince industry members that coming on-board would be beneficial, since there had been little activity in the last five years.

She explained that previously, membership fees became an issue when the value of the rupiah

### Growing network

# 50

The number of chapters  
PATA aims to establish  
by the end of next year

dropped and travel businesses could not afford to pay their dues. They then decided to re-focus their attention on survival, investing in sales and marketing activities that directly impacted their business.

However, Meity conceded that PATA remained "strong in its research and development programmes, and government agencies should be members to benefit from this".

PATA Bali and Nusa Tenggara Chapter board member Herdy Sayoga likewise acknowledged

PATA's strengths in training, and research and development.

"The PATA chapter here continues to exist and benefit the tourism industry in Bali," Herdy said.

New PATA Indonesia Chapter (PIC) member RajaMICE.com CEO, Panca Sarungu, said: "PATA is still the leading association in Asia. By becoming a member, I expect access to the expanding network in Asia and updated information on market development in the region."

"The privileges and discounts for participation at PATA events, such as the PATA Travel Mart, will also enable us to attend more of such events to network and grow our business."

PIC chairman Setyono Djuandi Darmono said: "Indonesia is lagging behind neighbouring countries in tourism. Seven million arrivals a year are too little for a country as big and rich in attractions as Indonesia."

He shared that the chapter had set a target of gaining 20 million arrivals by 2020, which it will achieve by promoting 100 destinations in Indonesia and bringing in more MICE events.

"MICE events are usually planned four to five years in advance. They will motivate a destination to plan and build infrastructure," said Setyono.

He urged tourism stakeholders to join hands to boost arrivals. "PIC provides a platform for private-public partnership," Setyono added.

Continued from page 1

## Outlook for MAS largely positive

industry source, "the delivery of the Airbus A380, A330 and Boeing 737 aircraft from this year will make MAS a value five-star airline with the youngest fleet among all airlines".

"The new fleet should help MAS meet its aim of being the top airline in Asia by 2015...We are looking forward to aggressively promoting MAS to our front-end customers when delivery takes place," said the source.

MSL Travel's Ramchand added that the carrier's ascension into oneworld next year would also boost its fortunes, as the alliance would "offer a lot of synergy and help to trim costs".

As for competition posed by homegrown low-cost player, AirAsia, "Firefly (MAS' wholly-owned subsidiary) is there to compete with AirAsia on many routes," the anonymous source said.

The source was unconvinced by comparisons drawn between MAS and its profit-making regional rivals.

"Comparisons with airlines like Singapore Airlines and Cathay Pacific are unfair as they do not have to cross-subsidise domestic networks."

Gem Travel & Tours business development manager, Let Boon Waat, summed up agents' sentiments neatly: "Frankly, what happens within MAS does not affect us. We will always support our national carrier."



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## Hot Moves

George Tanasijevich finally gets his dream job as president and CEO of Marina Bay Sands Singapore; Jack Anderson joins Crystal Cruises as senior vice president, marketing and sales; MyCEB appoints Tony Nagamaiah as general manager of its new International Events Unit.

## Hot Deals

Best Western is offering half-price introductory rates at its Hong Kong property; Ascott rolls out promotions at Citadines serviced residences in Kyoto and Tokyo; rooms at Peninsula's properties in Chicago (pictured), Beverly Hills and Manila for US\$10, US\$20 and US\$77 a night.



## Tip Sheet

Meliá Hotels launches its Opportunity Dates MICE booking platform; Wing On Travel introduces an online hotel booking portal, iWingon.com; Taj Hotels launches a specialist training programme for agents.

# What's that again?

India-listed Cox & Kings' planned takeover of Holidaybreak UK (*TTG Asia e-Daily*, July 29, 2011) forced us to do a double take for two reasons.

Firstly, thus far, the major travel acquisitions have been the other way round, i.e. European companies buying Asian companies, as Europe's growth stagnates while Asia's bubbling pot spills over.

Secondly, it made us wonder: What's a company like Cox & Kings, with a reputation in the high-end segment, doing in buying Holidaybreak, which specialises in the more humble school trips, adventure, camping and short breaks?

Cox & Kings is not an Indian company per se – it has roots in the UK; its leader, director Peter Kerker, is based in the UK; it is by now an international company with subsidiaries in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the US, the UAE, Germany, Hong Kong, Greece and Singapore.

Yet the deal is still a sign of the times. It is said to be the biggest overseas acquisition by an Indian travel company (Cox & Kings is listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange and National Stock Exchange of India) and is the ninth acquisition by Cox & Kings. It reflects changing travel patterns and capital flows, and travel organisa-

tions' constant need to strategise to secure their future survival.

A look at the prospectus that explains the background and reasons for the £312 million (US\$510 million) acquisition, which is expected to be completed end-September subject to shareholder approval, shows that somebody is thinking indeed.

Holidaybreak, under new group CEO Martin Davis, who joined in April 2010, has been

strategy that interests Kerker, who envisions a new market and product for Cox & Kings, enabling it to tap, for the first time, the younger-generation outbound travellers from Asia.

Holidaybreak's education division, already the most profitable for the company with a revenue of £121.1 million last year, is envisioned to gain a new Asian backyard whose peak outbound travel period coincides with Eu-

more exploratory audience, which we can't necessarily tap now given the constraints of the Cox & Kings upmarket image."

There is apparently a "latent demand" for European education programmes and facilities in India, according to Cox & Kings.

But while the strategic intent is sound, £312 million seems an awful lot of money and the success of the deal still lies in how the complementary nature of the



Thus far, the major travel acquisitions have been the other way round, i.e. European companies buying Asian companies...

transforming itself into an "education-focused business" – outdoor educational school trips – a recession-proof and less fickle market than leisure travel.

In December 2010, it expanded into the pan-European education market by buying into German-based student and school tour accommodation group, Meininger. At the same time, it started making selective disposals of its divisions such as West End Theatre Bookings.

It is this education-focused

rope's off-peak season, thereby reducing the seasonality of its business.

As Kerker said in an interview with *Financial Times UK*: "What we plan to do is boost their (Holidaybreak's) top line by bringing in new customers. I already have a captive base of customers in India, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and China."

He added: "It gives us the opportunity to tap India's fast-growing market of younger and

two businesses will be harnessed and what steps will be taken to transform Holidaybreak further. The group was already said to have been sounding out buyers for its Hotel Breaks division before Cox & Kings came in.

What's certain in the meantime is the deal portends a flow of capital from east to west, not just west to east, in the international travel business. And when that happens the next time, we won't be doing another double take.

## Most commented on www.ttgasia.com

### PATA Indonesia revival needs industry support

Some of our Indonesia-based readers have been rallying around the recently relaunched PATA Indonesia Chapter (PIC).

Jakarta's Elly Hutabarat urged private sector players to join the chapter. "PIC needs our minds and hands to keep it up. The government can't work alone," she said.

"It's also the private sector's duty to actively invite international visitors to Indonesia. We have a lot to offer. Together, we can give our ideas and make them happen!"

### Lao Airlines' Singapore service divides opinion

Thailand's Marcel Duvent was sceptical of whether Lao Airlines' thrice-weekly Vientiane-Singapore service using a leased Airbus A319 would be well-received.

"It has been years since Lao Airlines operated a modern jet aircraft. They will have great difficulty launching a new international sector with three months' notice," he said.

Lin from the US was more optimistic: "Lao Airlines will be fine. They have been planning the service for a long time."

### AirAsia Japan launch to usher in LCC domination?

AirAsia's plan to launch a low-cost carrier (LCC) operating out of Tokyo's Narita Airport had some of our readers predicting that an era of LCC-dominated air travel was imminent.

Kuala Lumpur-based Asraf Adnan said: "The next decade will see the LCCs dominating air travel."

He also had this forecast: "The top LCCs will work together and form a worldwide network which will be better than any other airline alliance."



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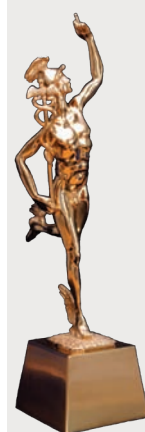
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Frits van Paasschen,  
President and CEO  
Starwood Hotels & Resorts

Having completed a month-long HQ relocation to Shanghai, van Paasschen tells Amy Fabris-Shi his plans for China, which is now the company's second-largest market outside the US

# Journey to the East

## Why did Starwood make the unprecedented decision to move its senior leadership team to China for a month?

It was based on the recognition that 30 per cent of the hotels we expect to open worldwide over the next three years will be in China. Our goal is to operate 100 hotels in China by the end

of 2012 (the company currently has more than 70 hotels in China and some 90 properties in the pipeline). With

such rapid growth, we need to continue to find the right balance of being locally

relevant yet globally consistent, and to build closer relationships with our colleagues and partners.

During the month, I visited more than 30 of our hotels, opened a couple and signed a few new deals. We held our board of directors' meeting and a strategic meeting with senior leaders from around world, and went to Taipei to assess the market.

At least 60 of us were in and out within the month and a core group of 10 was there the entire time. We don't even manage to be all in one place like that at home in New York.

## What kind of expansion in China are you planning?

China will be the first country outside the US where all nine Starwood brands are represented. The Great Wall Sheraton Ho-

## Where will most of your new properties in China be?

Like many companies we started in the tier-one cities, and we believe there are still growth opportunities in these markets. However, we're seeing extraordinary growth in the tier-two and tier-three cities.

## How different is doing business in China compared to elsewhere?

What I appreciate about our Chinese owners is that the vast majority are long-term owners. When we commit to opening a hotel, we have to consider the next 20 to 30 years.

Opening the right brand in the right place with the right configuration and right people is really key. This is accelerated in China because the cities themselves are changing so fast. It would have been hard in 1986 to know where

Starwood Preferred Guest loyalty programme, with a 71 per cent jump in Chinese enrolment last year.

Twenty-five million Chinese nationals go overseas each year for the first time and 100 million outbound Chinese travellers are expected by 2015. These travellers will gravitate to hotel brands they know from home.

To better help our guests feel at home, we've just introduced the Starwood Personalised Travel programme, offering Chinese-language and culture specialists, translated collateral and Chinese-friendly menu items. We've started this in 19 hotels, including those in cities like London, New York, Buenos Aires, Seoul and Tokyo.

## How does Starwood view itself?

We started as a US-based company with some hotels overseas, but today we see ourselves as a truly global company. We continue to believe that as business and travel patterns become more diverse, the strength of being a global brand is more important.

Eighty per cent of our pipeline is outside North America, and we plan to implement a month-long global relocation annually to high-growth target markets like Brazil, the UAE and India.

## Speaking of India, how different is your growth plan in that country?

Each country has its own trajectory and internal dynamics, and I'm very reluctant to draw comparisons even between India and China. Apart from them having a billion people or more and a rapidly growing economy on a relatively small income base, there is almost nothing else I can think of that's similar – whether it be local competitors, how contracts are done or what it takes to build a hotel. In India, we have 28 hotels and 18 in process. In pure numerical terms, it is several years behind China, but probably on a different path.

## On a personal level, what did you enjoy about the relocation?

I went on a mountain biking trip in Tibet and another ride through the streets of Beijing, which was a wonderful way to get a different perspective of the city. It was also great fun to see my 14-year-old son, who has been learning Chinese for three years, adapt his textbook knowledge to real-life situations.

“We started as a US-based company with some hotels overseas, but today we see ourselves as a truly global company.”

tel Beijing was the first international branded hotel in China in 1985, and Sheraton continues to be the biggest vehicle for our Chinese growth.

Today, we have 40 Sheratons in China and 35 in the process of opening. The presence of Sheraton as a first-mover in the market enables us to open Westins or W Hotels. Four Points and Westin are the next most important brands for growth in China. The biggest growth market for St. Regis is also China. On this trip we broke ground on an Element hotel in Foshan too, which when opened will complete our portfolio of nine brands in China.

to put the St. Regis in Shenzhen, when it was just a fishing village. And yet we are soon opening a St. Regis in a 100-floor building that I hope will still be there in 25 years.

## Are there any difficulties?

The biggest challenge for us is the sheer magnitude of attracting and developing the number of associates that we need. It has taken us 26 years to get to 30,000 associates, a number that could triple in the next five to six years. We have partnerships with 19 universities, and our focus is ensuring that we continue to get the pipeline of talent to match our pipeline of hotels.

## What about China as a feeder market for your hotels worldwide?

Sixty per cent of our guests in China are Chinese nationals, and they are going to be outbound travellers too. China is the second-largest market for our





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Jacob Abraham Van Hal | European Marketing Director, S.T Tours (1996) European Branch

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Christine Kim | JW Marriott Seoul

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As online increasingly becomes the channel of choice, seven hotel chains analyse how their branded websites are faring and reveal plans for the future, including initiatives for agents. Some offer a case study of their upscale brand, while others provide an insight into overall bookings. Compiled by **Gracia Chiang**

# Best face forward



**Best Western International**

**Glenn de Souza**, vice president of international operations, and **Chris Chen**, director, marketing services, Best Western International-Asia & Middle East

**Performance** Bookings generated from www.bestwestern.com contribute about half of all bookings. This is a nine per cent growth for the first five months of 2011 over the same period last year.

**Trends** We continue to see a migration of guests from traditional to digital channels. In 2010, reservations from Asian travellers were 20 per cent higher than they were in 2009. The booking window also continues to get shorter. Bookings on the branded website are mainly made within a week. Previously, a typical lead time was over two weeks. Their average length of stay is just under two nights.

**Strategy** Customers are estimated to research 20 different websites prior to making a reservation, so the challenge for us is to ensure that our branded website is reachable through all digital channels. We are now working on the revamp of our website, which is scheduled to be launched next year. We also leverage Best Western Rewards – the chain's loyalty programme – by encouraging guests to book Reward-eligible rates, which then drives them to book through the branded website. We will continue to offer a low-rate guarantee so customers don't have to shop around online for the best deal.

**Online initiatives for agents** There is a dedicated website for travel professionals (www.bestwestern.com/travelprofessionals). Commissions are paid for booking through the site and content is geared towards them. We have also developed DirectConnect for major travel agents to link their booking platforms directly to the chain's back of the house.



**Marriott International**

**George Corbin**, vice president, global e-commerce strategy

**Performance** Eleven per cent of gross revenue for Asia-Pacific hotels comes from www.marriott.com; revenue has increased 26 per cent year-on-year.

**Trends** Search engines are the main source of traffic to our site. We are also seeing extremely strong growth in revenue via mobile devices, which is up by almost 350 per cent year-on-year for Asia-Pacific hotels.

**Strategy** We will continue to boost the functionality of our websites, and to make them more localised to the market, including serving customers in our key markets in their native language. We will also grow our visibility and sales on channels where Asian travellers choose to shop, whether on search engines, regional online travel agents or other emerging travel shelves. Marriott is committed to making it easy for our Asian customers to find and book our brands online.

**Online initiatives for agents** We offer a website (www.marriott.com/travelagents) for Marriott's global travel agent partners. The site offers agents the ability to view commission statements online, and access and book Marriott's Fam-Tastic rates, among other features.



**Starwood Hotels & Resorts**

**Janice Chan**, director, online distribution and marketing, Starwood Asia-Pacific

**Performance** In the first half of this year, Starwood's branded websites have seen a 30 per cent year-on-year growth in revenue.

**Trends** In many Asian markets, travellers still prefer to make bookings by phone or via travel agents as they believe they will get better rates that way. However, we are seeing a change in behaviour, evident from our growth in web revenue. This is also why we have our Best Rate Guarantee to reassure them that Starwood's websites are the best place to book stays.

**Strategy** We are focusing on three key areas for our branded websites: to simplify the booking process, guarantee best rates and reward guest loyalty. At the beginning of this year, we launched our double-byte booking engine, enabling bookings in Chinese. We also give customers a 10 per cent discount or 2,000 SPG Starpoints if they can find better rates on other online sites. Starwood's websites are the only places online where customers can earn Starpoints through the Starwood Preferred Guest programme. Points can be redeemed for free nights, with no blackout dates.

**Online initiatives for agents** Agents who have an IATA number can book through our branded websites or sign up through StarwoodPro. StarwoodPro is a hub where travel professionals have greater access to everything Starwood: our best promotions and offers, a unique professional learning and development tool, commission information and news.





Marriott International

Starwood Hotels & Resorts

IHG's InterContinental

Hilton Worldwide's Hilton

Accor's Sofitel



### Radisson/Radisson Blu

**Lucinda Semark**, executive vice president, revenue generation, Carlson Hotels, Asia-Pacific

**Performance** Reservations on [www.radisson.com](http://www.radisson.com) and [www.radissonblu.com](http://www.radissonblu.com) account for 10 per cent of total room revenue with nearly 20 per cent year-on-year growth. We expect this figure to grow exponentially.

**Trends** New customers account for approximately 80 per cent of bookings on our branded websites. It is too early to see significant trends as we are still in the process of migrating our Radisson Blu hotels in Asia-Pacific to the Radisson Blu site, but we are noticing that the majority of customers who visit our websites will immediately book a hotel. This is a vote of confidence that our websites are effective not only in drawing traffic but also in converting that to roomnights. Most of our customers are booking an average of three nights and they tend to book between one and 30 days before their stay.

**Strategy** As part of Carlson's Ambition 2015 strategy, US\$12 million is being committed to driving branded websites and mobile growth globally. We have a robust online strategy that will involve various platforms including social media, microsites and mobile apps to enhance our web presence, create greater awareness for our brands and attract traffic to our branded websites. In addition, we want to ensure a streamlined booking experience.

**Online initiatives for agents** Travel agents have access to the latest information on room rates including the lowest available rates, corporate rates and promotions. They can make reservations without any additional channel fee. Our branded websites also offer localised information of hotels and links to the hotels' individual websites. In addition, Club Carlson's loyalty programme for travel agents, Look To Book ([www.looktobook.com](http://www.looktobook.com)), is dedicated to rewarding them with more points per booking, which can be redeemed for hotel stays and airline miles.



### InterContinental Hotels & Resorts

**Christian Binting**, director, distribution and relationship marketing, IHG Asia Australasia

**Performance** The InterContinental website ([www.intercontinental.com](http://www.intercontinental.com)) is a key driver for bookings in all the brand's hotels. Over the past few years, direct bookings through IHG channels have been growing despite the financial crisis. Globally, 68 per cent of total room revenue comes through the IHG system, which includes channels like the central reservations offices and branded websites.

**Trends** Mobile is a growing channel and IHG recently launched iPhone booking apps for all seven hotel brands within our portfolio. The InterContinental brand has mobile booking apps on BlackBerry and iPad too. Mobile transactions do not have to be an emotionless – we take this pre-booking stage as an opportunity to connect with our guests, and in turn, help them connect with their destination. With the launch of Concierge iPad applications to complement our Concierge websites, guests can obtain local recommendations from our hotel concierges even before they make a booking.

**Strategy** The ultimate goal is to extend the utility of the apps and the mobile web by integrating functionality beyond booking as the guest journeys from purchase to stay.

**Online initiatives for agents** All travel agents can book direct on the InterContinental branded website as long as they have an IATA number. IHG also has a website ([www.ihgagent.com](http://www.ihgagent.com)) which details our B2B programmes. IHG guarantees all commission payments as well as provides performance incentives to our preferred agents.



### Sofitel

**Orapan Hongchintakul**, director of online marketing and communication, Sofitel Asia-Pacific

**Performance** Overall, we have seen constant growth in room production from [www.sofitel.com](http://www.sofitel.com), as well as [www.accorhotels.com](http://www.accorhotels.com), our company website. Revenue from online bookings for Sofitel hotels within Asia-Pacific has increased year-on-year by approximately seven to 10 per cent.

**Trends** Our strong feeder markets for online bookings are Australia, New Zealand and Greater China. Mobile is also a new channel that shows great potential. Accor has a mobile app and mobile site, but not Sofitel at the moment.

**Strategy** The Sofitel branded website is now available in six different language versions. Each homepage provides localised content and guests can customise their viewing experience. A new version of the website will be launched in 2012, with more emphasis on search engine-friendly features.

**Online initiatives for agents** Accor provides several B2B websites designed for different needs at [www.accorhotelspro.com](http://www.accorhotelspro.com). These include [www.accorhotels.com](http://www.accorhotels.com) Travel Agencies for travel agents to make reservations, view commissions, and access learning modules and news; [www.accorhotels.com](http://www.accorhotels.com) Tourism for leisure operators; [www.accorhotels.com](http://www.accorhotels.com) Business for corporate clients; and [www.accorhotels.com](http://www.accorhotels.com) Meetings for MICE customers. These sites allow bookings at contract rates and feature offers for Accor hotels worldwide.



### Hilton Hotels & Resorts

**Philippe Garnier**, vice president, sales and regional marketing, Asia-Pacific, Hilton Worldwide

**Performance** Direct bookings from the Hilton Hotels & Resorts branded website ([www.hilton.com](http://www.hilton.com)) represent a significant portion of our total bookings and we are witnessing a steady year-on-year increase. As a corporate policy, we are unable to share specific figures.

**Trends** Global smartphone adoption has been on the rise, driven by data affordability and an increasingly mobile society. Recognising the growing strength of the mobile market and its role in our business, we introduced iPhone applications for both Hilton and Conrad in 2009. As a result, we have been experiencing exponential growth in mobile bookings.

**Strategy** Moving forward, we will continue to focus on driving both web and mobile delivery through our branded website. This will include launching our next-generation branded website that features a multi-functional booking engine in 12 languages and ensuring that mobile content is localised for all our key markets.

**Online initiatives for agents** We have a portal for non-leisure travel agents ([www.hiltontravelagents.com](http://www.hiltontravelagents.com)). There is also an incentive called Unlimited Budget but it is currently only available to travel agents in the US and Canada. In addition, there is a continued increase in the number of direct connection intermediary agreements with wholesale and tour operator accounts, giving them direct booking capabilities via [www.hiltonfamilyleisurerates.com](http://www.hiltonfamilyleisurerates.com).



# Adventures fo

Bungy jumping, cliff diving, or trekking through harsh terrain are some of the typical images conjured up by the term 'adventure travel'. This is certainly true of its earliest incarnation as a highly specialised, niche segment of the travel and tourism industry.

"Contemporary adventure tourism gained its footing in the 1970s as intrepid travellers ventured to remote regions in search of experiences to expand their body, mind and spirit. This evolved into expedition and physical activity-style travel, which flourished in the 1980s," explained Christopher Doyle, vice president of US-based Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA).

Adventure travel has long been inconceivable to the average traveller, due to the physical and mental strain associated with it. Today, it is a very different story.

Defined by ATTA as "any domestic or international trip that includes at least two of the following three aspects: physical activity, interaction with nature and cultural learning or exchange", adventure travel has freed itself from the narrow confines of strenuous, physically challenging activities to include everything from caving to mountain climbing ('hard adventure') to more leisurely pursuits such as camping, canoeing, cycling, rafting, and hiking ('soft adventure').

As a result, the sector is appealing to a much wider and larger group of travellers.

According to the Adventure Tourism Market Report, August 2010 (a study by The George Washington University School of Business, ATTA and Xola Consulting), which surveyed 855 travellers in Europe, North America and Latin America, some 26 per cent of respondents indicated they participated in adventure travel activities. Just under a third claimed they planned to take an adventure trip for their next holiday. However, only two per cent of travellers interviewed had embarked on a 'hard adventure'.

Doyle explained that while physical and psychological disabilities sometimes limit what can be done, most forms of adventure travel are open to people of all capabilities.

Tapping into this growing market is Thailand-based Asian Trails, which recently launched Explore, described as "out of the ordinary tours for everyone". Aimed at those seeking a more authentic travel experience, trips include cycling through the mountain passes of Laos, travelling in a convertible VW safari car through Bali and exploring the lakes of Myanmar by canoe.

Unlike conventional tours, explained group managing director of Asian Trails, Laurent Kuenzle, Explore tours are constantly refreshed, with new brochures featured every six months and new tours posted on the website every two months. "It's not a product that you create and then sell for

the next 20 years like a temple tour in Bangkok," he stated.

Kuenzle firmly believes that it is 'soft adventure' tours where most opportunities lie. "People no longer want a standard box trip, but they don't necessarily want an adventure," he said.

Geoff Manchester, managing director and co-founder of Intrepid Travel, Australia, agrees: "It's for people who want to see beyond the walls of a resort and really experience a destination – its food, its customs, its people," he said.

And, in Intrepid's eyes, this also means experiencing a destination in an environmentally responsible way. "All of our trips are carbon offset and we use local leaders, local public transport and stay in locally-run establishments. I think it would be more useful if all travel companies just consider being eco-friendly as a natural part of their business, rather than something left to niche operators," Manchester explained.

Intrepid is just one of a growing number of tour operators weaving ecotourism into its adventure travel products.

Award-winning tour operator Wild China adopts a slightly different approach. The firm offers photography tours through Xinjiang and hiking along 19th-century French explorers' routes, and it describes itself as a "premium, sustainable travel company".



Founder Zhang Mei prefers the term 'sustainable tourism' to 'ecotourism', because Wild China's tours go beyond natural areas to include many historical sites as well. This includes visits to the *hutongs* in Beijing, where storytelling and other interactive activities encourage a healthy exchange between travellers and local residents. Wild China hopes that its initiatives will make a positive rather than an exploitative impact on the local culture.

Other operators, while offering what might fall under ATTA's definition of 'adventure travel', prefer to stick to the 'ecotourism' label as it more accurately describes their

commitment to nature and conservation work.

Brunei's Mona Flora fauna Tours (MFT) is one such example. Managing director Mohd Daud Abdullah – or Jungle Dave as he is known – describes the company as an 'ecotourism specialist', taking tourists into the wild of Brunei's jungles to explore the rich flora and fauna on offer.

Every effort is made to ensure that tourists enjoy these experiences with minimal impact on the environment; tourists have to wear specially-treated MFT rubber boots to prevent the spread of

"People no longer want a standard box trip, but they don't necessarily want an adventure."

**Laurent Kuenzle**  
Group managing director  
Asian Trails





# r all

With a broader definition and a wider appeal, adventure tourism is no longer the niche sector it once was, reports **Catherine Monthienvichienchai**



bacteria in the rainforest, while treks are alternated between different zones to minimise environmental damage. MFT's profits are channelled towards conservation work, such as replacing termite-damaged trees.

Mohd Daud explained that people enjoy the tours because they not only get the chance to see animals in the wild, but also learn about their ecology and habitat.

"These days tourists like to get involved; they like to see things and touch things, and be a part of conservation efforts," he said.

Despite MFT's commitment to preserving Brunei's rainforests, Mohd Daud expressed concern about the future and the growing number of operators jumping on the ecotourism bandwagon.

"There are a lot of operators selling 'ecotourism', but how many are truly genuine?" he said, adding that people often enter the business looking for quick profits without thinking about the longer-term impact.

"The diversity of wildlife in the rainforest is increasing, but if a big operator suddenly comes in and wants to build a resort, that would be problematic," he admitted.

Similar concerns exist in the adventure tourism sector. Alex Narracott, co-founder of Muchbetteradventures.com, UK, which identifies genuine adventure travel experiences, said destinations must resist expanding carrying capacity. "Adventure travel is all about the independent, individual character of local providers and places, and enabling travellers to experience a sense of discovery," he said.

Meanwhile Doyle said that ATTA was working tirelessly to raise education and quality standards among its 700-plus members.

Despite such challenges, he is confident that there is a bright future ahead for adventure travel. "Adventure tourism is now recognised by the wider leisure tourism industry as a hotspot. Here at ATTA, we believe that adventure tourism is not just a fad. It is the future of leisure."

## Learn as you go

Education, adventure and volunteering are the unique combination offered by Pepy Tours, Cambodia, which aims to get people up-close and personal with real-life Cambodia, interacting with communities and learning about solutions to local problems.

"At the beginning, the idea was to offer voluntourism – people could come and give something, pat themselves on the back and then go home and save for their next trip," explained founder and director Daniela Papi.

However they soon realised this was doing more harm than good, concluding that you need to learn before you can help.

"So now our tourism is about learning – helping travellers to realise their own potential to create positive change," she said.

Activities on offer include bike tours, experiential educational trips and custom-made tours, all of which help fund education programmes throughout Cambodia. Each tour's cost is made up of two fees – one amount for the trip, the other a fundraising amount. "This means it's very transparent about where your money is going," said Papi.

[www.pepytours.com](http://www.pepytours.com)



# 2011

## 中国国际旅游交易会 CHINA INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL MART

### Organizers:

- China National Tourism Administration
- Yunnan Provincial People's Government
- Civil Aviation Administration of China

Time: October 27 (Thursday) to October 30 (Sunday), 2011

Venue: Kunming International Convention & Exhibition Center

Scale: Area: 50,000 sq m Number of standard shell scheme booths: 2,000

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- 中国国家旅游局
- 云南省人民政府
- 中国民用航空局

时间: 2011年10月27日(四)至10月30日(日)

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Canton Tower will fully open this October

# Guangzhou rejuvenates

New hotels, venues jostle for a piece of the city's changing skyline. By **Prudence Lui**

## Arrivals

Guangzhou achieved a record number of visitors in 2010, having hosted the Asian Games last year. It had 45.1 million overnight tourists, an increase of 13.4 per cent over 2009. Of that total, 36.9 million were domestic and 8.2 million were overseas. Foreign tourist receipts grew by 29.4 per cent in 2010, amounting to US\$4.7 billion.

The upward trend has continued for the first four months of 2011. Overseas visitors increased 6.8 per cent year-on-year to 2.3 million and the top five sources are Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Japan and the US in that order.

## Hotels

The pace of hotel development remains brisk, with at least three more international hotels debuting later this year.

According to industry statistics, at the end of 2010, there were 18 five-star, 37 four-star, 141 three-star and 59 two-star hotels in Guangzhou, providing 40,469 rooms.

For the first three months of this year, average room rates ranged from RMB202 (US\$31) for two-star hotels to RMB792 for five-star hotels. Overall occupancy was 63.6 per cent.

The Garden Hotel, general manager, Ronnie Cheng, said: "The room surge later this year really worries us because we have observed more people opting to do business in new countries like Vietnam and Cambodia. Cost is rising in China."

He added that he had started tapping new overseas markets like the Russians and the Arabs.

However, Dong Fang International Travel Service director of sales, Joe Zhong, said a high turnover of MICE visitors was keeping the large hotel inventory in check. "Rate wise, it is also acceptable and there is no overcharging at all," he added.

## MICE

Dubbed a trade fair hub, the city features exhibition venues of various sizes, with hotels now also reaching out for a slice of the MICE market with their lavish facilities.

The newly-opened Sofitel Guangzhou Sunrich offers two floors of meeting and function rooms that accommodate groups from 10-1,000 pax. General manager, Christophe Lauras, said: "MICE facilities have become must-include items for new hotels given Guangzhou's



"Apart from the two Hiltons and the Four Seasons to open later this year, brands like Jumeirah, Park Hyatt and Langham will soon set foot here. Everyone is showing up."

**Christophe Lauras**  
General manager  
Sofitel Guangzhou Sunrich

business destination status. We aim for medium-to-big events, and residential seminars are our key target. Weddings also deliver volume, and we sold 21 wedding packages in the last six weeks."

Century Holiday International Travel Service general manager, Creamy Chen, said: "In the past, we had to persuade corporates to host MICE events here. After the Asian Games and the government's efforts to add new tourism attractions and improve infrastructure, more companies are now willing to come."

Offsite events, on the other hand, were still not popular due to the limited choice of venues and the complex logistics involved, he added.

## Aviation

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport recorded 329,000 flights in 2010, up 30.9 per cent over the previous year. Total passenger numbers exceeded 41 million, showing 10.6 per cent growth.

Since January, new routes include Auckland and Vancouver (China Southern Airlines), Yangon (Myanmar Airways International), Istanbul (Turkish Airlines), Riyadh (Saudi Arabian Airlines), San Francisco (Delta

Air Lines) and Colombo (Sri Lankan Airlines). China Southern will also intensify frequency to Los Angeles, Paris and Singapore later this year.

The relaxation of visa rules for Chinese FIT tourists to Taiwan has also resulted in an increase of cross-strait flights from 370 to 558 per week, with an additional 48 serving the Pearl River Delta region.

## Products

The Pearl River New City in Tianhe District forms part of the new central axis of Guangzhou. Latest skyscrapers and landmark structures like the Guangdong Provincial Museum and Opera House can be found here. Coming soon later this year is the sprawling Mall of the World, offering high-end boutiques, cutting-edge electronics and an IMAX 3D cinema. It will be joined by TaiKoo Hui, a Swire Properties' development comprising a shopping mall, office space, and hotel rooms and serviced apartments (the Mandarin Oriental).

Meanwhile, the other side of the river has a new icon, the 600m Canton Tower, which features shopping, food, entertainment and meeting facilities.



My choices

Guangzhou

Compiled by Prudence Lui



**Peter Ng**  
General manager  
Chimelong Hotel Guangzhou



**Joe Zhong**  
Director of sales  
Dong Fang International Travel Service  
Guangzhou



**Angela Lam**  
Director of sales  
Canton Tower

What is your biggest challenge now?

High staff turnover at the rank-and-file level, mainly due to the arrival of international hotel chains to the city. A new minimum wage policy and high labour costs are also concerns.

Inbound traffic to Guangzhou has been dampened by the Japanese nuclear fallout. Meanwhile, demand from Europe and the US has dropped and clients are trading down to three-to-four-star hotels.

To be the most recognisable icon in Guangzhou with top-grade, international-standard service and facilities. However, we can't be promoting Canton Tower alone.

What needs to be done?

To secure staff loyalty and therefore ensure consistent service levels, we upped frontline salaries by over 20 per cent early this year. We have also increased the value of benefits and enhanced promotion, as well as service and product training opportunities.

Capitalise on outbound. While the number of tour groups is set to fall, there will likely be a spike in FITs. Guangzhou is poised to become one of the cities where Chinese residents can travel to Taiwan on FIT visas, and we have already designed itineraries for FIT packages.

The tourism board needs to work hand in hand with key attractions to up Guangzhou's international exposure. Guangzhou needs to be positioned not only as a top-of-mind leisure destination, but a MICE one too. We don't have enough regular MICE events.

What do you want from...

**the government?** The government needs to improve air accessibility. Guangzhou is connected to only 92 international destinations, compared to over 100 for Shanghai and Beijing. There is also a need for more attractions to increase tourists' length of stay.

**the rail operator?** Travellers are increasingly opting for high-speed trains. However, it is hard to sell these tickets as the business is state-controlled and agents need to subscribe to a separate reservation system. There needs to be more flexibility.

**agents?** Apart from lower-yield tour groups, we need agents to promote and bring in high-end corporate and MICE groups to experience all our bundled activities.

What are the prospects for the rest of the year?

I am optimistic about the next two seasons. During the summer, we expect an influx of leisure visitors, especially families. MICE normally picks up in the last quarter, and so far, we have filled most of our capacity.

More tourists are expected in 2012, as Guangzhou continues to diversify its attractions, spurred by the staging of the Asian Games in the city in 2010. Guangzhou is also cleaner and easier to navigate now.

We expect to see more regional, as well as repeat visitors, once all our adventure attractions, F&B and retail outlets open by October. We will also launch a corporate membership card to secure advance sales.

Behind every relaxing moment, there are people who care.



At the Garden.

Come, luxuriate at The Garden Hotel Guangzhou, where everything, from tension-banishing massages at our renowned Angsana Spa to perfectly appointed bedrooms, all exist for only one thing: your comfort in an elegant, 5-Star garden setting. Come and experience South China's famed "lingnan" hospitality on a truly higher scale. At The Garden.

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368 Huanshi Dong Lu, Guangzhou, 510064. The People's Republic of China. Tel : (86-20) 8333 8989 Fax : (86-20) 8335 0467 Website : [www.thegardenhotel.com.cn](http://www.thegardenhotel.com.cn)



## Checking in

## Sofitel Guangzhou Sunrich



**Prudence Lui** slips into French mode at the city's sleek newcomer

**LOCATION** In Tianhe District, the new CBD and battleground for international hotel chains. The twin towers housing the hotel and an office block overlook the hustle and bustle of Da Dao Zhong, the main thoroughfare connecting the north and south of the city.

Zhujiang New City and the Guangzhou East Rail Station are close by. It also took me less than 10 minutes to reach Canton Tower on the other side of the Pearl River.

**ROOMS** I had high expectations that the property would bring a touch of France to the city and I was not disappointed. Decor-wise, my spacious room was a blend of contemporary Asian and Parisian chic.

I immediately noticed the French poem woven into the

carpet, while scarlet accents like an armchair and art piece brightened up the room.

An all-things-French in-house booklet, containing classic and modern literature, CDs, scents and pictures, was also available for guests to thumb through at a leisurely pace.

I also liked the smart bathroom design. Two separate sliding doors – one connecting to the bed area and another, the corridor – allowed light from the floor-to-ceiling windows in the bedroom to seep in, while also providing guests easy access to the main entrance.

**F&B** The property emphasises dining experiences, catering to both guests and locals, who have a habit of eating out.

The Robata Grill and Bar, a Japanese fine-dining restaurant, is my favourite among the hotel's three restaurants and two bars. It features a *robatayaki* (Japanese charcoal grill), a sushi bar, a wine and sake bar, and also has a private room equipped with a large wooden table.

I had my breakfast at the 2 on 988, the all-day dining restaurant, which is equipped with five open kitchens. It serves a delectable selection of authentic French rotisserie and pastries, as well as Chinese cuisine.

Tea lovers should not miss the Mar Tea Ni lounge bar on the ground floor which serves a collection of rare teas. Tea sommeliers are on hand to help guests pair the specialty teas with French pastries.

**FACILITIES** The hotel has 17 meeting rooms spread over two dedicated floors, including a 900m<sup>2</sup> ballroom which can accommodate a banquet of 600 seats.

It also has ample leisure options. The L'Occitane SoSpa, SoFit 24-hour fitness centre and indoor panoramic pool with underwater music are examples.

Female guests also receive special attention at the hotel, with the offer of chauffeur-driven Mini Coopers for ground transfers. Kitted out with women-friendly amenities, the cars are available



for either business or leisure purposes. General manager, Christophe Lauras, explained that this service was introduced to cater to the rising number of female business travellers in China.

**SERVICE** Service was exceptional, and staff were courteous, friendly and attentive.

Getting a taxi in Guangzhou is a pain during peak hours, and I was impressed by the concierge's professionalism. When I needed help, one of the staff ran to the roadside and stood in the rain for more than five minutes to track down a taxi for me. When I thanked him, he was gracious and wished me a good day.

**VERDICT** A true embodiment of French elegance with great service to match.



**Name** Sofitel Guangzhou Sunrich  
**No. of rooms** 493  
**Rate** Published rate is from RMB3,160 (US\$490) for a superior king/twin room, excluding taxes  
**Contact details**  
Tel: (86-20) 3883-8888  
Fax: (86-20) 3883-3333  
Email: h6318@sofitel.com



**The Aegean Conifer Suites Resort Sanya.**  
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Leave your burdens at home and enjoy the Aegean experience in style.

Located on the pristine beach of Yalong Bay, the number one bay in Sanya the Aegean Conifer Suites Resort gives you the experience and feelings of Greece without having to fly the long distance to the Mediterranean. Surrounded by blue seas, green mountains and white sands the resort resembles a small town in Greece with its unique style and beauty.

Enjoy the infinite charms of the South Sea sun where you can step on to a white sandy beach and feel refreshed. Personalized service and privacy are features of the Aegean's unique style which are

most valued and give it a competitive edge. Here, you can relax and soak in the sea views if you have nothing to do! This is a place where time can stand still.....

The Aegean Conifer Suites Resort is a boutique all-suite resort. All suites are complete with high quality facilities and amenities you expect at your home away from home, including fully equipped kitchens and even washing machines. Every room has a European-style Jacuzzi massage bathtub on your large private balcony. Enjoy a romantic getaway in your own private world.....

On the beach, by the pool or

in the beautiful gardens enjoy a romantic candlelight dinner. For a private party in your suite or on your balcony for family and friends, no matter how many bottles of wine.... We will even provide your own personal chef on request to cook your favorite dishes.

Who says for romance you must go to Greece? From the moment you arrive you will feel peace and tranquility. Fall in love all over again at the Aegean.



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## For Your Industry Favourites Today

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finest luminaries**

Celebrating its 22nd year, the annual TTG Travel Awards  
presents 66 awards for your vote.

### **Your Vote Matters!**

You have an important role in deciding who should take home  
the coveted Hermes trophy. Simply vote for your favourite travel suppliers  
and travel agents through this voting form or vote online today.

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**Closing Date: 12th August 2011**

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Business Travel • meetings, incentives, conventions & exhibitions  
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## You are the judge

We value your opinions in bestowing the title of "industry's best". Your voice is the best embodiment of the travel industry's sentiments in recognising the top performers.

Vote for your favourites in these two categories (and its segments):

### Travel Supplier Awards

- Airline Awards
- Hotels • Resorts • Serviced Residences • Spa Awards
- BT-MICE Awards
- Travel Services Awards

### Travel Agent Awards

## TTG salutes the finest and most accomplished

In two other categories, exceptional individuals and organisations are identified and acknowledged for their accomplishments.

These two categories of awards are:

### Outstanding Achievement Awards

Under this category, TTG's editorial team determines the winners in these awards:

- Travel Personality of the Year
- Destination of the Year
- Most Entrepreneurial Travel Company
- Best Marketing & Development Effort

### Travel Hall of Fame

The Travel Hall of Fame honours organisations that have won at least 10 times at previous TTG Travel Awards. Although they will not be voted for again, these special award winners will be recognised at every TTG annual awards presentation ceremony.

Votes for them will not be counted. Travel Hall of Fame - Inducted Members are:

- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Singapore Airlines (2002)
- Hertz Asia-Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Beach Resort, Pattaya (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Abacus International (2009)
- Silkair (2010)

## How to vote

### Instructions and Guidelines

#### VOTE ON PAPER

(Please use the correct voting form)

There are two voting categories and accompanying forms

#### Voting Form A: Travel Supplier Awards

For voting by travel agents, tour operators and destination management companies only.

#### Voting Form B: Travel Agent Awards

For voting by hoteliers, airline staff, car rental companies, cruise operators, national tourism organisations, GDS companies and all other travel professionals (except travel agents, tour operators and destination management companies).

#### CRITERIA

To ensure that nominees are judged on an equal basis, each category has its own set of criteria. Please use them as a guide when casting your votes.

## AWARDS CITERIA

# TRAVEL SUPPLIER AWARDS

## Airline Awards

### Criteria

Best **airline** in its respective category in terms of:

- Providing the best service, network and schedules.
- Most agent-friendly in terms of reservations, confirmations and commission payments.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas, incentive programmes and servicing.

1. Best **North American** Airline  
Best airline based in North America operating Asia-Pacific routes.
2. Best **European** Airline  
Best airline based in Europe operating Asia-Pacific routes.
3. Best **Middle Eastern** Airline  
Best airline based in Middle East operating Asia-Pacific routes.
4. Best **South Asian** Airline  
Best airline based in the Indian subcontinent operating Asia-Pacific routes.
5. Best **South-east** Asian Airline  
Best airline based in Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand or Vietnam operating Asia-Pacific routes.
6. Best **North Asian** Airline  
Best airline based in South Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei, Macau or Hong Kong operating Asia-Pacific routes.
7. Best **China** Airline  
Best airline based in China operating Asia-Pacific routes.
8. Best **Pacific** Airline  
Best airline based in the Pacific operating Asia-Pacific routes.
9. Best **Regional** Airline  
Best airline based regionally operating Asia-Pacific routes.
10. Best **Asian Low-cost Carrier**  
Best airline based in Asia-Pacific that operates on a low-cost strategy.

## Hotels • Resorts • Serviced Residences • Spa Awards

### Criteria

Best **Hotel Chain** in its respective category in terms of:

- Most consistent in products and services.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas, incentive programmes and servicing.

Best **Hotel/Resort/Serviced Residence/Spa** in its respective category in terms of:

- Best services and facilities.
- Best range of value-added benefits.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.

### HOTEL CHAINS

11. Best **Global** Hotel Chain  
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties globally.
12. Best **Regional** Hotel Chain  
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties in the region.
13. Best **Local** Hotel Chain  
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
14. Best Hotel **Representation Company**  
Best company providing the most agent-friendly products and services and showing the best marketing effort in generating sales for member hotels via agents.
15. Best **Luxury** Hotel Brand  
Best hotel chain operating a network of luxurious properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
16. Best **Mid-range** Hotel Brand  
Best hotel chain operating a network of mid-range properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
17. Best **Budget** Hotel Brand  
Best hotel chain operating a network of economical properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.

### HOTELS – Individual Property

18. Best **Luxury** Hotel  
Best hotel catering to the upmarket traveller. This hotel must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting upmarket status.
19. Best **Mid-range** Hotel  
Best mid-range hotel catering to the traveller who seeks three- to four-star quality and comfort.
20. Best **Budget** Hotel  
Best hotel catering to the budget traveller.
21. Best **Independent** Hotel  
Best non-chain (ie not part of a network of properties) hotel.
22. Best **Boutique** Hotel  
Best small, fashionable and unique hotel.
23. Best **City** Hotel – **Bangkok**
24. Best **City** Hotel – **Delhi**
25. Best **City** Hotel – **Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City**
26. Best **City** Hotel – **Jakarta**
27. Best **City** Hotel – **Kuala Lumpur**
28. Best **City** Hotel – **Manila**
29. Best **City** Hotel – **Seoul**
30. Best **City** Hotel – **Singapore**
31. Best **City** Hotel – **Taipei**
32. Best **City** Hotel – **Tokyo**
33. Best **New City** Hotel  
Best city hotel that opened in 2009/2010.
34. Best **Airport** Hotel  
Best hotel – located within the vicinity of an airport – that caters to travellers in transit.

### RESORTS – Individual Property

35. Best **Beach** Resort  
Best resort located by a beach. This resort must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting local flavour.
36. Best **Resort** Hotel (Non-Beach)  
Best resort not located by a beach. This resort must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting local flavour.
37. Best **New Beach** Resort  
Best beach resort that opened in 2009/2010.
38. Best **Integrated** Resort

Best hotel offering comprehensive accommodation, shopping, dining, entertainment and sports.

### SERVICED RESIDENCES

39. Best **Serviced Residence** Operator  
Best serviced property catering to mid- and long-term staying guests.

### SPAS

40. Best **Spa** Operator  
Best managed and operated spa or network of spas in the region.

## BT-MICE Awards

### Criteria

- Best services and facilities catering specifically to the BT-MICE market.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing the BT-MICE market.
- Most desirable and attractive incentives and value added services to business travellers and MICE planners.

41. Best **Airline – Business Class**  
Best business class airline across the board.  
Refer to Airline Criteria.
42. Best **Business** Hotel  
Best hotel catering to the business traveller.  
Refer to Hotel Criteria.
43. Best **Meetings & Conventions** Hotel  
Best hotel catering to meeting and convention needs.  
Refer to Hotel Criteria.
44. Best **BT-MICE City**  
The city most friendly and desirable to business travellers and for MICE planners to host their events.
45. Best **Convention & Exhibition** Centre
  - Best facilities.
  - Best value for money.
  - Most flexible in catering to MICE planners.
  - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.
46. Best **Convention & Exhibition Bureau**
  - Most efficient, flexible and friendly in terms of response to enquiries and information.
  - Most effective in raising awareness of MICE at government and community levels.
  - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.

## Travel Services Awards

### Criteria

- Best product, services and facilities
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing

47. Best **Airport**
  - Best facilities.
  - Most user-friendly, efficient and hassle-free immigration.
  - Most organised baggage claim.
  - Best planned floor layout, with easy ground access.
48. Best **GDS (Global Distribution System)**
  - Most comprehensive network offering ease of operation and user friendliness.
  - Most efficient and reliable system.
49. Best **Cruise Operator**
  - Best product in terms of service, routes and schedules.
  - Best onboard programme and facilities.
  - Most agent-friendly in terms of reservations, confirmations and commission payments.
  - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas, incentive programmes and servicing.
50. Best **NTO**
  - Most efficient, flexible and friendly in terms of response to enquiries and information.
  - Most effective in raising awareness of tourism at government and community levels.
  - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.
51. Best **Theme Attraction**
  - Best ambience.
  - Best facilities and services.
  - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.

# TRAVEL AGENT AWARDS

### Criteria

Best **Travel Agency** in its respective category in terms of:

- Professionalism and excellence in staff.
- Best value-added services to client
- Best use of computer technology applications to help improve efficiency and effectiveness in services provided to client.

52. Best Travel Agency – **Australia**
53. Best Travel Agency – **China**
54. Best Travel Agency – **Chinese Taipei**
55. Best Travel Agency – **Hong Kong**
56. Best Travel Agency – **India**
57. Best Travel Agency – **Indochina (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam)**
58. Best Travel Agency – **Indonesia**
59. Best Travel Agency – **Japan**
60. Best Travel Agency – **Malaysia**
61. Best Travel Agency – **Singapore**
62. Best Travel Agency – **South Korea**
63. Best Travel Agency – **Thailand**
64. Best Travel Agency – **The Philippines**
65. Best **Corporate** Travel Agency  
Best travel agency specialising in serving the needs of corporate travellers.
66. Best **Online** Travel Agent  
Best online-based travel agent offering the most user-friendly and effective interface to meet client needs. This online travel agent must also boast the best sales and marketing network in terms of service innovation.

OR VOTE ONLINE!

[www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards](http://www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards)

12th August 2011



VOTING FORM A: TRAVEL SUPPLIER AWARDS

For voting by • Travel agents • Tour operators • Destination Management Companies      You Can Also Vote Online Now @ [www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards](http://www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards)

Do refer to the voting criteria on the facing page when casting your vote

**Voting Rules**

- Only one voting entry per person is allowed – using the voting form or online voting.
- All votes are confidential.
- Voting forms are published in TTG print titles and are available online at [www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards](http://www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards).
- No responsibility will be accepted by the organisers for voting forms lost, delayed or damaged in the post.
- There are no pre-nominated contenders for any voting awards.
- The results for TTG Travel Awards 2011 are final and no correspondence will be entertained.
- Voting forms will be independently tabulated and evaluated by an independent auditor in Singapore.
- The closing date is **12th August 2011**

**Submission**

Completed voting forms are to be returned to:

**SINGAPORE**  
Ms Lina Tan  
TTG Travel Awards 2011  
TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd  
1 Science Park Road #04-07 The Capricorn  
Singapore Science Park II Singapore 117528  
Tel: (65) 6395-7575  
Fax: (65) 6536-2972

**HONG KONG**  
Ms Carol Cheng  
TTG Travel Awards 2011  
TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd  
China.com Inc  
11/F ING Tower No. 308 Des Voeux Road  
Central Hong Kong  
Tel: (852) 2237-7272  
Fax: (852) 2806-0646

Organisation / Country		Organisation / Country	
<b>Airlines</b>			
1.	Best North American Airline	28.	Best City Hotel – Manila
2.	Best European Airline	29.	Best City Hotel – Seoul
3.	Best Middle Eastern Airline	30.	Best City Hotel – Singapore
4.	Best South Asian Airline	31.	Best City Hotel – Taipei
5.	Best South-east Asian Airline	32.	Best City Hotel – Tokyo
6.	Best North Asian Airline	33.	Best New City Hotel
7.	Best China Airline	34.	Best Airport Hotel
8.	Best Pacific Airline	<b>RESORTS – Individual Property</b>	
9.	Best Regional Airline	35.	Best Beach Resort
10.	Best Asian Low-Cost Carrier	36.	Best Resort Hotel (Non-Beach)
<b>Hotels • Resorts • Serviced Residences • Spas</b>		37.	Best New Beach Resort
<b>HOTEL CHAINS</b>		38.	Best Integrated Resort
11.	Best Global Hotel Chain	<b>SERVICED RESIDENCES</b>	
12.	Best Regional Hotel Chain	39.	Best Serviced Residence Operator
13.	Best Local Hotel Chain	<b>SPAS</b>	
14.	Best Hotel Representation Company	40.	Best Spa Operator
15.	Best Luxury Hotel Brand	<b>BT-MICE</b>	
16.	Best Mid-range Hotel Brand	41.	Best Airline – Business Class
17.	Best Budget Hotel Brand	42.	Best Business Hotel
<b>HOTELS – Individual Property</b>		43.	Best Meetings & Conventions Hotel
18.	Best Luxury Hotel	44.	Best BT-MICE City
19.	Best Mid-range Hotel	45.	Best Convention & Exhibition Centre
20.	Best Budget Hotel	46.	Best Convention & Exhibition Bureau
21.	Best Independent Hotel	<b>TRAVEL SERVICES</b>	
22.	Best Boutique Hotel	47.	Best Airport
23.	Best City Hotel – Bangkok	48.	Best GDS
24.	Best City Hotel – Delhi	49.	Best Cruise Operator
25.	Best City Hotel – Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City	50.	Best NTO
26.	Best City Hotel – Jakarta	51.	Best Theme Attraction
27.	Best City Hotel – Kuala Lumpur		

VOTER INFORMATION

Name:		Passport no.:	
Job title:		Company:	
Address:			
Country:			
Telephone no.:		Fax no.:	
Email:		Signature:	

Closing Date: 12th August 2011

VOTING FORM B: TRAVEL AGENT AWARDS

Do refer to the voting criteria on the facing page when casting your vote

For voting by • Hoteliers • Airline staff • Car rental companies • Cruise operators • National Tourism Organisations • GDS companies • All other travel professionals (except Travel agents, Tour operators and Destination Management Companies)

You Can Also Vote Online Now @ [www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards](http://www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards)

**Voting Rules**

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1 Science Park Road #04-07 The Capricorn  
Singapore Science Park II Singapore 117528  
Tel: (65) 6395-7575 • Fax: (65) 6536-2972

**HONG KONG**  
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TTG Travel Awards 2011  
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Tel: (852) 2237-7272 • Fax: (852) 2806-0646

Organisation / Country	
52.	Best Travel Agency – Australia
53.	Best Travel Agency – China
54.	Best Travel Agency – Chinese Taipei
55.	Best Travel Agency – Hong Kong
56.	Best Travel Agency – India
57.	Best Travel Agency – Indonesia
58.	Best Travel Agency – Indochina (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam)
59.	Best Travel Agency – Japan
60.	Best Travel Agency – Malaysia
61.	Best Travel Agency – Singapore
62.	Best Travel Agency – South Korea
63.	Best Travel Agency – Thailand
64.	Best Travel Agency – The Philippines
65.	Best Corporate Travel Agency
66.	Best Online Travel Agent

VOTER INFORMATION

Name:		Passport no.:	
Job title:		Company:	
Address:			
Country:			
Telephone no.:		Fax no.:	
Email:		Signature:	

Closing Date: 12th August 2011





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3. Best Middle Eastern Airline
4. Best South Asian Airline
5. Best South-east Asian Airline
6. Best North Asian Airline
7. Best China Airline
8. Best Pacific Airline
9. Best Regional Airline
10. Best Asian Low-Cost Carrier

#### Hotels • Resorts • Serviced Residences • Spa Awards

##### HOTEL Chains

11. Best Global Hotel Chain
12. Best Regional Hotel Chain
13. Best Local Hotel Chain
14. Best Hotel Representation Company
15. Best Luxury Hotel Brand
16. Best Mid-range Hotel Brand
17. Best Budget Hotel Brand

##### HOTELS – Individual Property

18. Best Luxury Hotel
19. Best Mid-range Hotel
20. Best Budget Hotel
21. Best Independent Hotel
22. Best Boutique Hotel
23. Best City Hotel – Bangkok
24. Best City Hotel – Delhi
25. Best City Hotel – Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City
26. Best City Hotel – Jakarta
27. Best City Hotel – Kuala Lumpur
28. Best City Hotel – Manila
29. Best City Hotel – Seoul
30. Best City Hotel – Singapore
31. Best City Hotel – Taipei
32. Best City Hotel – Tokyo
33. Best New City Hotel
34. Best Airport Hotel

##### RESORTS – Individual Property

35. Best Beach Resort
36. Best Resort Hotel (Non-Beach)
37. Best New Beach Resort
38. Best Integrated Resort

##### SERVICED RESIDENCES

39. Best Serviced Residence Operator

##### SPAS

40. Best Spa Operator

##### BT-MICE Awards

41. Best Airline – Business Class
42. Best Business Hotel
43. Best Meetings & Conventions Hotel
44. Best BT-MICE City
45. Best Convention & Exhibition Centre
46. Best Convention & Exhibition Bureau

##### Travel Services Awards

47. Best Airport
48. Best GDS
49. Best Cruise Operator
50. Best NTO
51. Best Theme Attraction

### TRAVEL AGENT AWARDS

52. Best Travel Agency – Australia
53. Best Travel Agency – China
54. Best Travel Agency – Chinese Taipei
55. Best Travel Agency – Hong Kong
56. Best Travel Agency – India
57. Best Travel Agency – Indochina  
(Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam)
58. Best Travel Agency – Indonesia
59. Best Travel Agency – Japan
60. Best Travel Agency – Malaysia
61. Best Travel Agency – Singapore
62. Best Travel Agency – South Korea
63. Best Travel Agency – Thailand
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### BEST WESTERN Bangkok Hiptique Hotel, Bangkok

On nearby Sukhumvit Soi 13, BEST WESTERN Bangkok Hiptique Hotel is a fresh trendy boutique hotel of 50 rooms. Sharing the same street as some of the city's hippest restaurants and nightclubs, the hotel's Grand Opening Promotion offers guests 40% off BAR, 10% off hotel dining, 10% off laundry and free Wi-Fi internet access (valid now – December 15, 2011).

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### BEST WESTERN Mangga Dua Hotel & Residence, Jakarta

Set amid an enormous shopping complex in Jakarta, the 168 room BEST WESTERN Mangga Dua Hotel and Residence is within the area's tallest building, at 33 stories. With its Grand Opening Promotion, guests can enjoy 40% off BAR (minimum 2 nights), welcome drink on arrival, 25% off hotel dining and 25% off laundry (valid now – August 31, 2011).



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# Datai: 'business as usual'

New management group assures quality experience will continue, enhanced even

By Raini Hamdi

**SINGAPORE** An earlier-than-expected takeover of the management of The Datai, Langkawi has caught the resort's staff by surprise and left overseas tour operators contacted by *TTG Asia* in the dark as to who the new management company, Archipelago Hotels & Resorts, is and whether the resort's quality and style will remain consistent.

The resort was managed in the past 17 years by Singapore-based General Hotel Management (GHM), which put it on the map as one of Malaysia's foremost hotels. Archipelago took over on July 28 (*TTG Asia e-Daily*, July 28, 2011). But a source at the hotel said while the change was impending, staff had expected it to happen only by the end of the year.

Last year, Khazanah Nasional, Malaysia's investment holding arm, bought a 70 per cent stake in Teluk Datai Resorts, the owners of The Datai, and subsequently formed Archipelago, its own hotel management company. Franz Zeller, who was Taj Luxury Hotels Resorts and Palaces' senior

vice president and COO, has been appointed managing director of Archipelago, and a corporate team to grow the portfolio assembled, including Vikram Singh (also previously with Taj)

UK luxury tour operator was concerned about "consistency of quality and style" following the change. He warned: "While we expect there will be changes, these need to be virtually seam-

The new GM at Datai is Anthony Sebastian.

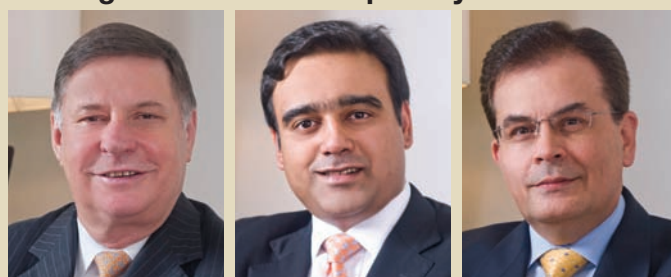
Contacted by *TTG Asia*, Archipelago's Zeller assured tour operators that the new management company would continue the resort's successful journey. "While the essence of The Datai Langkawi and its ancient rain-forest sanctuary will certainly be preserved, we can expect to see some small changes and embellishments in the coming years to further enhance the guest experience and quality aspects of the resort.

"All of the associates of The Datai are retained and our guests can expect the same warmth of hospitality and commitment to excellence that they have come to expect."

Archipelago aims to operate luxury city hotels, lifestyle resorts and luxury residences in key gateway cities and unique destinations within Asia-Pacific, the Indian Ocean, the Middle East and Europe, Zeller said.

GHM, meanwhile, said Malaysia remained important (see article below), with "exciting" projects in the pipeline.

## Driving Khazanah's hospitality ambition



Franz Zeller

Vikram Singh

Winston Reinboth

Winston Reinboth and Ian Crystal as, respectively, vice president, of operations, sales and marketing, and finance. In addition, Amjad Ali, Benny Williams and Adnan Butt are, respectively, director, of technical services, information technology, and training and human development.

A luxury tour operator based in Singapore said no one from The Datai had contacted him yet about the change, while a

less and gradual. Repeat clients, who make up a big percentage of The Datai's business, look for familiar faces and if they don't find them, start to look deeper and be critical."

The resort's general manager, Eleanor Hardy, had left GHM a few months ago. Its executive assistant manager, Guido Farina Guido, has been transferred to another GHM property, The Nam Hai, in Vietnam.

# GHM in new Malaysia projects

By Raini Hamdi

**SINGAPORE** General Hotel Management (GHM), which saw its Malaysia portfolio wiped out – Seri Carcosa Negara and The Club at Saujana Resort in Kuala Lumpur are also now managed by Archipelago Hotels & Resorts (see above story) – is charging ahead with new projects in Malaysia.

GHM president and CEO, Hans Jenni, said these developments included The Chedi Club & Residences, Kuala Lumpur (opening in 2014) – a 200-acre development comprising luxury residences, a hotel and a sports centre – as well as a project in Johor Bahru and another in Sabah.

Jenni said the separation with The Datai, Langkawi could be felt, as the resort was one of the first GHM properties. "That said, under our management over the past 17 years, the property went from strength to strength and continues to be rated as one of the best resorts in the world – an undeniable testament of GHM's success in redefining the travel experience in Langkawi. We're proud of this legacy and look forward to continuing to establish indelible imprints in new destinations as we widen our reach in the coming years," he said.

Jenni revealed that an MoU for the development of two hotels in Cuba had been signed.

The group is also going into Europe, India and China for the first time.

"The Chedi Andermatt (2013) will be unlike anything Switzerland has ever seen or experienced before; The Chedi Qutub in New Delhi (2014), with its location within a UNESCO World Heritage Site, will be quite the original; and The Chedi Suzhou in China (2012) will represent our very first truly urban hotel," he said.

The pipeline also includes Chedis in Amman, Jordan (2013), Tamouda Bay, Morocco (2013), Thracian Cliffs, Cape Kaliakra, Bulgaria (2014) and Taiping Lake, Anhui, China (2014).

## Tracker

An update on major issues and events from the past

### JTB makes Star buy

Japanese agency JTB acquired a 75 per cent stake in Singapore-based Star Holiday Mart a year ago as part of its strategy to target the non-Japanese inbound market in the region.

**THEN** Prior to the deal, more than 98 per cent of JTB's business originated from Japan or was Japan-related.

**NOW** JTB Asia-Pacific manager for corporate and strategic planning, global business and MICE business Tomoyuki Okagawa said the inbound non-Japanese market had grown five times since last year, adding that the recent crisis in Japan re-affirmed that the company made the right decision to diversify. Both parties, however, were tight-lipped about how exactly the alliance was performing. Dennis Law, managing director, Star Holiday Mart would only say "slow and steady" progress had been made. Okagawa added that JTB was also focusing on building its technical capabilities such as recruiting staff and restructuring purchasing processes to cater to the non-Japanese market.

**FUTURE** There are no immediate plans to open more JTB offices in the Asia-Pacific region. JTB will concentrate on driving sales from its bases in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, China and India. – **Linda Haden**

# 'One-aircraft Mega Maldives must do better'

By Feizal Samath

**COLOMBO** The Chinese market is poised to continue to grow for the Maldives, with new flights being launched by the country's only international airline, which began operations early this year.

Agents, however, pointed out that Mega Maldives needed to resolve certain issues in order to tap the market effectively. This includes its low flight frequency and its single aircraft fleet.

The carrier recently launched a non-stop Beijing-Male flight, and already has scheduled flights to Hong Kong and Shanghai.

Mega Maldives operates a to-

tal of 18 flights a month using a Boeing 767-300ER, with six flights each to the three cities.

Mohamed Mauroof, managing director, Get Into Maldives, said the less-than-regular flights were a problem.

"If a guest wants to return in two or three days, they would have to buy a ticket on another airline," he said, adding that many international airlines already had daily flights from China.

Shafraz Fazley, managing director, Viluxur Holidays, also noted that the airline's only aircraft meant that passengers would be stranded in the coun-

try for a day or two in the case of a breakdown.

Mega Maldives spokesperson Muzaffar Naeem said the airline planned to lease a second aircraft and add frequencies to China from September.

China is now the Maldives' biggest source market, with more than 65,000 Chinese tourists visiting the country in the first five months this year, up 56.7 per cent from the same period in 2010.

Agents said Chinese customers were helping to fill up hotels during the low season for Western travellers from May to October.