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# Malaysia twins up with DoT

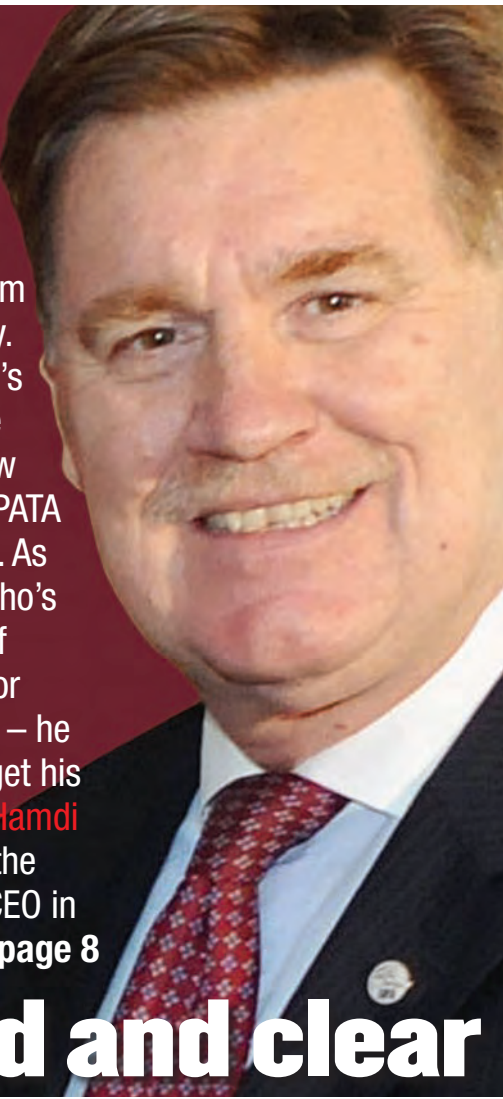
Air access catalyst of NTOs' new strategy

**By N. Nithiyananthan and Marianne Carandang**  
**KUALA LUMPUR/MANILA**  
Malaysia and the Philippines are in a new pact to bolster tourism arrivals as air links between the two neighbours rise significantly.  
From March 25, Malaysia Airlines (MAS) is stepping up its Kuala Lumpur (KL)-Kota Kinabalu (KK) frequency to thrice daily. SEAir will launch thrice weekly Clark-KK service on May 1. Cebu Air has reportedly filed paperwork for flights to Kuching, its third Malaysian destination, while Zest Air is looking to mount flights to KL mid-year.  
Malaysian tourism minister Dato Sri Ng Yen Yen and Philippine Department of Tourism (DoT) secretary Ramon Jimenez Jr met recently. It is understood that they discussed the possibility of jointly promoting high-end UNESCO heritage tours in Boracay and KK.

The effect of that meeting is

already trickling down. Tourism Malaysia's acting director-general Azizan Nordin told *TTG Asia* that the NTO was widening the number of airline partners it worked with, in addition to MAS. To attract more tourists from the US and Russia, for instance, it will work with the Philippines and South Korea. MAS offers only thrice weekly flights to the US, while Trans Aero operates the only link, and only one weekly, between KL and Moscow.  
The Philippines, in turn, can leverage on Malaysia's strengths in the European, Middle East and Indian markets. "If tourists from these countries come to Malaysia, they would be tempted to visit a second destination in the region," he said.  
The trade, however, has its eye focused closer home, where the Malaysian and the Philippines markets are in themselves a huge

Continued on page 3



You can hear Martin J Craigs from a mile away. He's big, he's loud and he wants a new 'Next Gen' PATA to be heard. As someone who's not afraid of conflicts – or the Internet – he might just get his way. **Raini Hamdi** chats with the new PATA CEO in Bangkok – page 8

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# Air NZ takes flight

Bali says there is enough room, though its peak season

By Mimi Hudoyo

**JAKARTA** Air New Zealand will operate direct twice-weekly services between Auckland and Denpasar, for a start only during the peak period from June to October.

The new service, using a Boeing 767-300 aircraft, will add some 600 weekly seats to the island during the peak international and domestic holiday season when rooms, especially in Bali's south like Kuta and Tuban, are usually crowded.

As it cuts the travel time by at least four hours, the trade sees it as an opportunity to boost traffic from New Zealand.

"Travellers from New Zealand previously needed 12 to 14 hours to get to Bali without a direct flight, averaging about 700 passengers per week. With the direct eight-hour flight, we are confident we can double the number," said Herdy Sayoga, Bali Village marketing group executive director.

Bali Village will work with Air New Zealand on a roadshow in Auckland this May to drum up support for the direct service.

The AOT Group, which owns 50 per cent of Air New Zealand Holidays, has appointed Pacto to handle rooms and transfers for its groups in Bali.

Umberto Cadamuro, Pacto director of operations and business development, said: "At the moment we hold an allotment of 150 rooms daily, and are still negotiating with several hotels to reach the target of 300 rooms daily so as to satisfy demand."

The appointment comes as Pacto works to reduce its dependence on the traditional European market and expand its share of the Asia-Pacific market.

Concerns of overcrowding in Bali are being brushed off by the trade, which contends the island can accommodate the expected influx of travellers from the new service.

Ismullah Lahsin, general manager of White Rose Bali Hotel & Villas and Sun Island Boutique Villa & Spa, said: "Generally, there is a room crunch in Bali, especially in the southern area, and the domestic market is huge. On the other hand, there are many new two- and

three-star hotels opening in areas off the beachfront, and the domestic market likes to stay there."

"Therefore, I don't think there will be much of a problem with room allotment for the Australian and Kiwi markets. Besides, we have already started getting room allotment requests in anticipation of the (arrival of the) Kiwis," he added.

Bali Village's Sayoga said the number of travellers from New Zealand might not be that big, but "they are willing to spend more and stay an average of 10 days". He expects both business travellers and holidaymakers to use the new direct service.

Nia Niscaya, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy director of international promotion, said that the direct flight offers "the opportunity to boost the (New Zealand) market".

"Hopefully the flights will not stop after one season only," she said.

As part of its promotion efforts, the ministry is collaborating with the Indonesian Embassy in organising cultural and culinary events in Auckland and Wellington in April.



Niscaya: Bali to tap NZ market

# Kingfisher's cutbacks see mixed impact

By Shekhar Niyogi

**KOLKATA** Flight cutbacks by beleaguered Kingfisher Airlines are hitting the domestic market the most, while the impact on the regional market is less severe.

The airline has stopped flights to several key domestic destinations, cancelled flights to Bangkok, Kathmandu and Dhaka, and may scrap flights to Colombo soon.

However, it continues to fly from Delhi and Mumbai to international destinations like London, Dubai, Hong Kong and Singapore. It also offers code-share flights to Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Brussels, Amsterdam, Paris, Lisbon and Manchester.

The impact on seat capacity has not been significant as there are other airlines flying those sectors. However, according to travel consultants, the reduction in number of seats overall has caused air fares to soar in recent weeks.

A Delhi-Patna-Delhi flight that normally costs Rs8,000 (US\$161) now sells for Rs13,000, while a one-way business-class seat from Mumbai to Delhi has increased by Rs5,000.

Mamta Panjani, general manager, Mercury Travels, said: "The

overall demand has slowed since December, and the impending escalation of fares due to flight shortage in key sectors will impact aviation growth.

"I see a temporary rise in fares and then a scramble for more passenger load at lower prices as a long term price war can only harm the airlines."

Expressing concern over the reduced flights between India and Thailand, Virat Chatturapitak, Association of Thai Travel Agents vice president, said: "The cutback of Kingfisher and Air Asia X flights are impacting the outbound flow from India."

Huge accumulated losses, a mass exodus of pilots and the freezing of bank accounts by Indian tax authorities have caused the cash-strapped Kingfisher to seek a bail-out. Only 28 of its fleet of 64 aircraft remain in operation.

There is a silver lining amid the gloom though. The Civil Aviation Ministry has allowed domestic carriers to fly under-utilised international routes with bilateral air traffic rights, thus maintaining the growth momentum of the outbound travel market and fulfilling the government's target of 10 million inbound tourists by 2015.

## TTG Intelligence

Analysis by Murray Bailey

## Travel stock prices fall

TBA-100 world travel stocks index

Region	% Growth		Index*	
	2011	2008	2011	2008
Asia Pacific	-30.0	-51.6	87	54
Europe	-47.0	-40.0	45	43
World	-16.4	-49.4	74	44

Source: Travel Business Analyst (TBA). Notes: \*Base - prices end-2006

Stock prices of international travel companies in Asia-Pacific stock markets fell by 30% in 2011. However, this was less severe compared with a 52% dive in travel stock prices during the 2008 financial crisis that saw the collapse of Lehman Brothers.

The fastest growth in 2011 was recorded by AirAsia, whose stock price was up 49%. Falling furthest was India's Jet Airways, down 77%. These two companies were also the fastest and slowest in January 2012 compared with December 2011 – but in the opposite direction! AirAsia fell furthest (-6%) while Jet was up most (+43%). That gives an indication of the roller-coaster world for investors in travel stocks.

## China outbound travel

A semi-official report from China estimates China outbound travel growth in 2011 at 21% – which would give a total 69 million travellers, based on official 2010 figures. Estimates from Travel Business Analyst (TBA) are higher, at 23.8%, which would take the 2011 total to 71 million travellers.

In the two top outbound destinations, China arrivals in Hong Kong rose 24% over the year, while Macau saw a 22% increase.



# 'We're not Lost Paradise'

By Feizal Samath

**COLOMBO** Maldivian tourism officials are lambasting the media for continuing to air images of violent protests in the Maldives some weeks back, concerned that the unfair coverage will hurt Chinese arrivals further.

China, now the Maldives' biggest source market, has been affected by the crisis: Charters operated by Chinese airlines from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Kunming, Chengdu and Hong-kong have stopped since February 17 due to weak demand, causing a loss of some 8,000 travellers.

According to Klaus Song from leading Chinese travel consultant China CYTS Tours, most clients are worried about the safety of the destination since the Chinese are unfamiliar with the Maldives' geography and characteristics. "They think the Malé issue will affect the entire country."

Unlike Western travellers who are often repeat visitors, the Chinese are mostly first-time tourists to the Maldives.

British and German travel consultants reported that apart from a few cancellations, the crisis had not affected these markets.

Shafraz Fazley, managing director of Viluxor Holidays, maintained however that the crisis had not deterred the upmar-

ket Chinese who fly on regular airlines and stay at five-star and above resorts.

"It's the volume traffic that has been affected – the three-star resort travellers."

"They are however using regular flights," he said.

**"It's the volume traffic that has been affected – the three-star resort travellers."**

**Shafraz Fazley**  
Managing director  
Viluxor Holidays

Mega Maldives, the country's only national airline, will resume flights by end-March while others have yet to confirm resumption dates, according to Fazley.

Other regular airlines have continued their flights without any disruption.

The Maldives is heavily dependent on tourism which, together with related industries, is estimated to account for 60 per cent of the country's GDP.

The crisis erupted just as the country is preparing to welcome its millionth traveller in a single calendar year in September

(TTGAsia e-Daily, February 8, 2012). Tourism Minister Ahmed Adheeb had appealed to the international media to report accurately on the situation. "The situation is under control, but there have been a lot of bad messages, exaggerated reports and misinformation going out through the international media," he said.

Sim Mohamed Ibrahim, secretary-general of the Maldives Association of Tourism Industry, reiterated that resorts were unaffected and travel is safe to the Maldives, but the bigger challenge is the adverse international media coverage.

"There is no major drop in numbers but the international media is putting a spin on the political crisis and visitors are jittery."

Peter Foreman, sales and marketing director of the Sheraton and W resorts in the Maldives, said guests were able to arrive at the airport and travel to their resorts without any hindrance. Businesses are operating as usual in Malé.

A Soneva spokesman said there had been a drop of about five per cent but the figure is expected to pick up soon.

Former President Mohamed Nasheed was forced to resign on February 7, after weeks of opposition-led protests resulted in a police and army mutiny.

# KL-Samui rivalry hots up

Bangkok Airways' entry sends Firefly flying into action to protect its share

By Raini Hamdi

**BANGKOK** Bangkok Airways' daily Kuala Lumpur (KL)-Samui flights from March 31, along with its aim to seal Malaysia Airlines (MAS) as its latest code-share partner by then, sees Firefly flying into action to protect its Samui marketshare.

Both airlines are banking on the medium and longhaul markets. Firefly has announced it is "working closely with the Tourism Authority of Thailand to promote Samui as an upmarket leisure destination as well as a destination for weddings, honeymoon, corporate team-building and incentive travel".

Firefly's head of marketing and communications, Angelina C Fernandez, said: "Demand for destination weddings and honeymoons are not just from locals, but also from foreign passengers from medium and long-haul markets. These foreign tourists arrive in KL, spend a few nights visiting various destinations in Malaysia and then continue their holiday to Samui to fulfill

their wedding and/or honeymoon plans.

Bangkok Airways, which is going after the same market, may have the upper hand as it flies from Kuala Lumpur International Airport whereas Firefly operates from Subang. With a planned airfare of "around US\$170 to US\$180 one-way", its president, Puttipong Prasarttong-Osoth, told *TTG Asia* he was confident of a load factor of "60 per cent plus" in the first year and "close to 70 per cent" by 2013.

Firefly's load factor is above 80 per cent since the airline started the service on October 26, 2008. The only competition it has now on the route is Berjaya Air, which also operates to Samui from Subang.

Prasarttong-Osoth said he picked KL because "we should open more gateways and expand the number of our code-share partners". "We have Hong Kong, Singapore and now KL, which is a potential hub for us, as there are flights from Europe, Austral-



Prasarttong-Osoth: Gateway

Bangkok or some other flights within the network. We really are having some success with our code-share partners," he said.

In January, Finnair was roped into the carrier's code-share network, which also comprises Thai Airways International, Etihad, KLM, Air France, EVA Air, Air Berlin and SilkAir.

Thus, even though it is a small airline – and one that charges premium fares for premium service – the carrier carried close to 3.1 million passengers last year, an increase of 16.5 per cent over 2010. Europeans comprise the bulk of traffic (70 to 75 per cent), even though it does

not fly to any European city. Profit rose 56.7 per cent to 1.22 billion baht (US\$4 million) last year. This year, it expects a 33 per cent rise in profit to 1.6 billion baht, on the back of a 16 per cent increase in passenger count to 3.6 million.

Samui is by far its most profitable route, accounting for 40 per cent of total traffic. This year, the airline will also increase its Samui-Hong Kong service from daily to 10 flights a week.

Other expansion includes an extra flight from Bangkok to Chiang Mai and Phuket and 12 weekly direct-flights from Bangkok to Lampang, all from March 25.

Prasarttong-Osoth, who was in Berlin for ITB, said Europe should continue to be "big" for Asian destinations like Thailand. "Look at Germany – 70 per cent of Germans travel. If we can only attract 10 per cent to come to Asia, that's a lot already. The south may be having a crisis, but north Europe is still travelling."

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Continued from page 1

## Budget rates an additional fillip

prospect. "As Manila and Clark are just an hour-and-a-half flight away from KK, it will be easy to persuade Sabahans to visit the Philippines," said Borneo Trails Tours & Travel general manager, Tan Kok Liang.

Travel Warehouse Philippines general manager, Jaison Yang, said: "Hong Kong, Singapore and Bangkok are saturated. Filipinos are discovering new destinations, like Vietnam and Cambodia. The launch of new budget hotels within the US\$75 range is also going to help with travel to Malaysia."

Promotional rates offered by low-cost carriers are also attracting new travellers, according to Elizabeth Pablico, president and general manager of Wintrex Travel Philippines, which offers twin- or triple-destination packages like Brunei-Kuala Lumpur-Singapore to give travellers more bang for their buck.

On the inbound side, Pablico said: "We have many customers from Sabah. They like to come here and see our churches in Manila and Pampanga. Catholic Malaysians are interested in going as far as Batangas."



## Steeb retires after 22 years with Centara

Gerd Steeb (centre) has retired as president of Centara Hotels & Resorts after 22 years of service, which sees the Thai chain expanding its footprint and fortifying its brand name and management capability. The board is selecting a successor and it is speculated that Thirayuth Chirathivat (second from right), SVP project management, is a strong candidate. The family, led by Suthikiati Chirathivat (second from left), hosted a farewell. Pictured too are, from left, TTG Asia's Michael Chow, Steeb's partner Pakarattee Narongrach and Centara's Supatra and Thirakiati Chirathivat. – Raini Hamdi

## Diethelm enters Hong Kong

By Raini Hamdi

**BANGKOK** Diethelm Travel Group (DTG) has filled a key gap in its Asian network – Hong Kong – by partnering Vigor Tours in the SAR, which will set up a dedicated Diethelm Travel Hong Kong within its office.

The marketing and fulfilment agreement will see Vigor handling DTG's clients in Hong Kong, and Vigor selling Diethelm's B2B services to Asians in Hong Kong.

"This takes our regional presence to 13 countries, with at least one more new opening planned," said DTG's CEO, John Watson.

Vigor is part of listed company Kwoon Chung Motors and has been in business since 2002 operating four divisions: air-



Watson: one more on the way

port bus shuttle service to 100 hotels, limousine service, DMC and Royal Vacations (focusing on deluxe travel). The latter is a six-month-old offering established by Richard Willis, who came onboard Vigor as corporate development director in January last year.

Vigor's strength was handling incentives from China, said Willis, who is Diethelm Travel Hong Kong's managing director.

DTG would bring groups from new markets such as Russia and South America, apart from its traditional Western European market, he said.

"And Diethelm has completed its last jigsaw puzzle in Asia, as Hong Kong is a must-see destination," he added.

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## Hot Jobs

Gold Coast Convention Bureau (Gold Coast Tourism) is looking to hire an account manager Asia for its Business Events division; Relais & Châteaux needs a support desk co-ordinator, Asia-Pacific; Sofitel Sydney Wentworth is on the lookout for a director of revenue

## Adam Tan



Join our mystery man as he examines how Korean music label Star Museum Entertainment, which manages top K-pop acts like Girls' Generation and Super Junior, has expanded into the travel and tourism industry by launching its own travel management firm

## Hot Deals

Silversea Cruises rolls out new corporate and incentive group programme; Hansar Samui (below) introduces Ultimate Luxury Package



## Hot Moves

Wildlife Reserves Singapore appoints Lee Meng Tat as CEO; Keith Hardie joins Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel and Towers Bangkok from Le Royal Meridien, Shanghai; Sofitel Krabi Phokeethra appoints Jidapa Niladhanadon as DOSM

# Your GDS says lots about you

TRAVEL professionals often grumble about not being able to attract fresh blood to join their businesses (just check out page 19 for example) – and for good reason.

While consumer buying experiences have been revolutionised in today's iPhone/Facebook age, attempting a booking within an agency environment is like harking back to an era when black screens and floppy disks were commonplace.

With a workforce increasingly used to intuitive and graphical interfaces, why would any young employee worth his salt put up with memorising cryptic commands required to operate a GDS?

Perhaps even more incredulous is the strong resistance from travel companies towards adopting next-generation tools meant to improve their productivity, even if fees incurred are nominal.

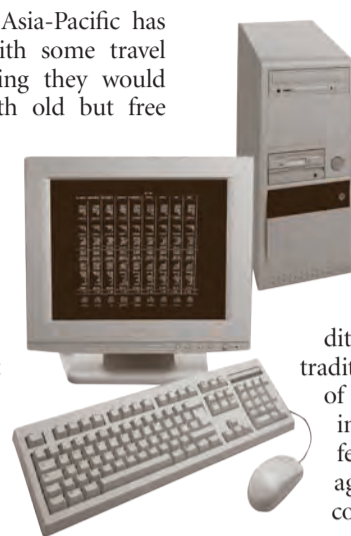
Travelport, for example, faced hostility from its customers in the Americas when it rolled out its latest Agility package, which comprises a suite of solutions designed to reduce operating costs, improve business efficiency and grow revenue.

Response in Asia-Pacific has been mixed, with some travel consultants saying they would rather stick with old but free GDSs rather than fork out money on something that promises to be faster and more user-friendly.

Curious, TTG Asia sat down for a demo of the technology provider's three main products being introduced to markets worldwide.

Significant differences include the increased reliance on a mouse to execute bookings instead of scribbled notes and furious keyboard punching (yes, one wonders why even this had to take so long); richer content and customer data, which makes it easier to sell ancillaries; and other cool 'iPhone push notification features' such as queue alerts that can be configured by users.

In short, navigating the GDS would be more akin to shopping on an airline's or OTA's website.



Travel consultants who were not comfortable migrating to the full desktop experience could also opt for bridging solutions that mix both traditional and non-traditional methods of booking. And in-built translation features mean that agencies can hire a competitor's staff

content coming online, a younger customer demographic and technology innovations creeping into the distribution network, he argued that travel agencies would need higher levels of work efficiency to compete.

He told TTG Asia: "This change is structural, not short-term. Doing nothing is probably the most dangerous thing. Sticking our heads in the sand isn't a course of action."

There is no doubt that bottlenecks must be watched in this competitive environment. But choosing to go with something because it costs nothing is just

Choosing to go with something because it costs nothing is just plain short-sighted.

who may have been trained in another GDS language.

Travelport's president and managing director Asia-Pacific, Simon Nowroz, outlined the tsunami of change sweeping across the travel industry: with record-breaking investment being poured into the region and more

plain short-sighted.

Remember the old adage that time is money? Why take 10 steps to reach your destination when you can achieve that in three? Money saved in the near term might just be a fraction of potential business lost in the long run.

## Most commented on www.ttgasia.com

### Pacific Royale a fillip to Indonesia-India tourism

Our story on Indonesia's Pacific Royale Airways launching domestic and international operations this month, with Mumbai being considered as one of its next routes, has Indonesian travel consultants based in India hyping up the potential impact of increased flight capacity between the two emerging markets.

Aditya Tyagi from New Delhi said: "Trust me...if you start flights from Mumbai to Indonesia, you will have no regrets at all...the route will be a big hit."

Willy Sihombing from Mumbai agreed. "With huge outbound traffic at the respective international airports in both countries, Indonesia must have at least one direct flight to India – it can be to either New Delhi or Mumbai," he said.

"We will always welcome new airlines to Indonesia."

### Malaysia Airlines attracts more brickbats

Malaysia Airlines (MAS), which reported a deficit of RM1.28 billion (US\$427 million) for the fourth quarter ended December 31, 2011, has attracted heightened criticism of its loss-making business practices.

Michael Lee from Hong Kong said: "Any Malaysian would be embarrassed to learn of the historic year-on-year losses of their national carrier. Who needs a loss-making national carrier?"

"When we travel with Malaysia Airlines, almost half of business class are pure upgrades. On-board pilferage – usually beverage and sales items (an open secret among the crew and management of MAS) – and fraud claims on staff benefits, are what contributes to the (relatively small increase in revenue versus large increase in operational costs)," he added.

### Readers reminisce about Asian Tours' Andre Horner

Several of our online readers have shared their personal experiences dealing with Asian Tours Centre Bangkok founder Andre Horner, who passed away on February 24, 2012.

Davina Russell-Wiig from New Zealand said: "Andre was a thoughtful, brusque travel (expert) of the old school who got along well with locals as well as international travellers. The original owner of The Ambassador Hotel in Bangkok, Chavalit Thangsumphant, who was a difficult man at the best of times, enjoyed the straight-talking Horner to such a degree that he allowed him to take over the travel counter in his hotel."

Kurt Ruflin from Bangkok said: "I can still see (Horner) sitting in his office in his black leather jacket, as it was when I made sales calls as a young hotelier. Only those who knew him well could see a heart of gold in Andre."

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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 consecutive times for the same award title have been honoured in the Travel Hall of Fame.

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. Joining this elite family are Hertz Asia Pacific, Star Cruises, Royal Cliff Beach Resort Pattaya, Abacus International, SilkAir and Lotte Tour



# Thank you for bringing MICE to Japan

Japan welcomed participants from around the world to the many international conferences and exhibitions that it hosted throughout the country in 2011 despite suffering a major natural disaster.



**Sapporo**  
International Union of Microbiological Societies 2011 Congress  
September 6-16, 2011/Sapporo Convention Center

**Sendai**  
The 17th MICROOPTICS CONFERENCE(MOC'11)  
October 30-November 2, 2011/SENDAI INTERNATIONAL CENTER

**Chiba**  
GLOBAL 2011  
December 11-16, 2011/Makuhari Messe

**Tokyo**  
UIA 2011 TOKYO The 24th World Congress of Architecture  
September 25-October 1, 2011/Tokyo International Forum

**Yokohama**  
International Surgical Week ISW2011  
August 28-September 1, 2011/PACIFICO YOKOHAMA

**Nagoya**  
Academy of International Business (AIB)2011 Annual Meeting  
June 24-28, 2011/WINC Aichi(Aichi Industry & Labor Center)

**Kyoto**  
XXIII Congress of the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis/57th Annual SSC Meeting  
July 23-28, 2011/Kyoto International Conference Center

**Osaka**  
inter-noise 2011  
September 4-7, 2011/Osaka International Convention Center

**Kobe**  
16th World Congress of the International Society for Criminology  
August 5-9, 2011/Kobe International Conference Center

**Fukuoka**  
Asia Petrochemical Industry Conference 2011  
May 26-27, 2011/Hilton Fukuoka Sea Hawk

**Okinawa**  
The 7th ACASA 2011/The 1st ACSET Congress  
July 7-8, 2011/Okinawa Kariyushi Urban Resort Naha

## Tokyo

Tokyo hosted a massive architecture conference, welcoming 5,100 participants from 110 countries

**UIA 2011 TOKYO The 24th World Congress of Architecture**  
September 25-October 1, 2011/Tokyo International Forum

**Architects from around the world marvel at the conference venue's beautiful form and hypermodern facilities**



UIA2011 Tokyo was a huge gathering of eminent architects, engineers and researchers from around the world. Its main venue was Tokyo International Forum, a giant convention complex in the heart of the metropolis just a five-minute walk from the world-famous Ginza commercial district. Its prime location, which is rarely seen elsewhere in the world, and its visionary glass-encased design earned high marks from authorities in the world of architecture. The comprehensive features of the sub-venues and a punctual, extensive transportation network providing smooth connection were also factors that contributed to the success of the large conference.



**Major advantages include convenient accessibility from two international airports**

Narita International Airport handles over 1,500 flights a week from over 90 cities throughout the world, while Tokyo International Airport (Haneda) handles established international routes from 17 cities around the world in addition to domestic routes. Comprehensive

networks of Shinkansen (bullet train) lines, conventional rail lines and expressways leading from Tokyo to all parts of Japan make Tokyo an attractive base for touring the country.



**Myriad pleasures await after business for the added delight of participants**

The fusion of traditional culture and entertainment with the recent pop culture, gourmet dining, shopping and other modern pleasures create an exciting sensory experience exclusive to Tokyo. The organizers of UIA2011 Tokyo readied opportunities to participate in traditional tea ceremonies, tour of Asakusa with its rich heritage of old Tokyo culture. The myriad pleasures that lie outside the seminars and lectures are consistently popular with all convention goers in Tokyo.



## Sendai

Sendai, a major city in northern Japan, regains its vitality after a big natural disaster to welcome a major conference

**The 17th MICROOPTICS CONFERENCE(MOC'11)**  
October 30-November 2, 2011/SENDAI INTERNATIONAL CENTER

**The ability to accommodate conventions, parties, exhibitions and other diverse MICE needs, small to large**



Sendai hosted the 17th Microoptics Conference for four days from October 30, 2011 without any problems to report despite suffering a devastating natural disaster earlier in the year. Sendai International Center where the conference took place suffered partial damage, yet it was already fully operational, with repairs completed in August. Guest accommodations in the city had steadily recovered in time as well. In Sendai, conference organizers can look forward to the full cooperation of local authorities, a convention bureau and more, with the city designated an international conference and tourism city. Organizers past and present have enthusiastically praised Sendai as a venue for international conferences, citing the city's significant advantages in terms of operations.

**Restored convenient transportation network sees Tokyo only 100 minutes away on the Shinkansen**

September saw the return of the bullet train line connecting Sendai and Tokyo to the schedules that were in place before the disaster. Sendai once again boasts superb accessibility, only an hour and a half from Tokyo and two and a half

hours from Narita. Sendai Airport was restored at an astonishing rate despite suffering grievous damage in the disaster. Regular routes to major domestic cities have already resumed. International routes have resumed as well, with flights to Guam, Seoul and Taipei resuming in October and flights to Shanghai and Dalian set to resume this March. The convenience of travel from both without and within the country has almost been restored to the pre-quake level.



**Sendai is popular for its unique local hospitality and close proximity to hot springs, the recently designated Hiraizumi World Heritage Site and other tourist sites**



One of the advantages of holding an international conference in Sendai is a wealth of tourism opportunities featuring unique local tastes, hot springs and much more. Even participants from overseas were effusive in praising the local cuisine, saké and more that grace the tables of parties. Akiu Onsen Sakunami Onsen and other famous hot springs lie nearby outside the city. Hiraizumi, which is registered as a World Heritage Site, is less than a mere hour away. Sendai's many offerings outside the convention itinerary can make any international conference an even bigger success and one to remember.





## Developing the family

By Glenn de Souza  
Vice President International  
Operations – Asia & the Middle East

In 2012, Best Western International will embark on a comprehensive series of training programs with the aim of boosting skill and service levels across all areas of the company.

For all new recruits, the 'Best Western Orientation' program will provide an overview of Best Western's company values and heritage, enabling our staff to service clients effectively from the very start of their Best Western careers.

Secondly, the 'Best Western – I CARE' program is designed to promote our company's commitment to service excellence. This half-day course teaches advanced customer service skills to enhance our employees' ability to interact with guests, anticipate and identify their needs, and create the sense of warmth and hospitality we expect in all our hotels.

Another key addition to our training agenda is 'BWI University'. This is a series of online courses that encompasses every area of hotel operations, from e-commerce to housekeeping. The program allows staff at all levels to complete a series of modules on their chosen subject. Through this scheme we aim to allow our employees to develop both personally and professionally, boosting the skill levels on offer at our corporate offices, reservation centres and hotels across the globe. This program will also enable us to transfer skills and knowledge between offices, hotels and departments, thus boosting internal recruitment opportunities.

Finally, we're offering a 'General Manager Training' program. Starting in Vietnam and Laos, we'll eventually travel to every country in the region meeting our GMs and offering practical advice on how to work with owners and the travel trade to maximise the potential of their properties.

At Best Western we realise that our most valuable resource is our staff. By creating these training programs we are enhancing our ability to deliver the Best Western brand promise, offering the best value, quality and superior customer service.



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## A-Zs of Successful Agencies



In this column debut, Adrian Caruso, founder and CEO of TA Fastrack Australia, dishes out advice to travel experts. A former travel agency and hotel owner/operator, Caruso now coaches travel, tourism and hospitality businesses throughout the region.

I have a saying every travel consultant should repeat every day: "Your clients are somebody else's prospects." With others in the marketplace vying for the attention of your clients, it is important for you to consider exactly how accessible the public perceives your travel business to be.

Being accessible means that you are easy to remember and find, approachable, likable and trustworthy. The public's perception of your accessibility is shaped by how often they see your brand and the brand image projected.

If elements of your branding indicate a luxury travel niche, some portion of the market will find you unapproachable. If you emphasise family travel in your branding, then you will very likely attract that demographic. There is nothing wrong with either approach, but it is vital that the brand you intend to project is indeed the brand that is reflected in your marketing efforts.

Key visual elements should also appear consistently in



every marketing effort, for example, the company's name, logo and contact details. This creates familiarity, and people will feel as though they already know who you are and what you do.

Likewise, the more "present" you are in your community, the more networking you undertake and the more events you sponsor or volunteer for, the better known your brand.

Engage your clients on an emotional level and remind them that you are there. How often do you reach out and

## Accessibility

touch each and every client in a personal way? How about a phone call, a handwritten letter or a lunch? Not to sell anything, but just to say "hello". Want clients to think of you as accessible? Begin by first approaching them.

Your marketing should also be personality-driven. People do business with people. If your company has a flat, dull persona, clients are likely to see you as unapproachable.

All this means a personal investment in time and energy because as a travel consultant, you are your own brand.

## New luxury programme by Come & Go Vietnam



Guests can stay at properties such as The Nam Hai

**HO CHI MINH CITY** British-run boutique tour operator Come & Go Vietnam has launched a new Luxury Vietnam itinerary.

The customisable tour takes travellers to and from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, with stops at destinations such as Hoi An, Halong Bay and the Mekong Delta. Featured hotels and resorts include the Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi, The Nam Hai and Park Hyatt Saigon, with extension possibilities in properties such as the Six Senses Con Dao. Local and international cuisine can also be sampled at Restaurant Bobby Chinn and Didier Corlou's famous La Verticale.

Come & Go Vietnam founder and managing director, Tim Russell, said: "Vietnam has a reputation as a challenging destination to visit, but luxury travellers can now enjoy VIP arrival services at the country's main airports as

well as choose from a large and growing selection of luxury hotels and resorts, while still enjoying a programme that gets them off the tourist trail and into the real Vietnam."

He added that travel consultants buying the tour would usually get a 10-15 per cent discount off the published rate, although no commissions were given out.

Russell explained that most of Come & Go's clients customised their own programmes hence itineraries listed were just samples. Luxury, he stressed, was less about ostentation and more about privacy, intimacy and unique experiences.

Guests can add on some of the company's specialist products such as history/architecture walks with local experts, trips with professional travel photographers, cooking classes/tours with famous chefs and private blessing ceremonies at temples.

## Retailfront

Ocean Travel China's attentive service is great, but it needs to work on its image



**PRESENCE** Located in south-central Beijing, a historic neighborhood gradually associated with skyscraper malls, Ocean Travel is near both high-end business and residential areas. However, finding the fifth floor office in Beijing Business World was like playing a game of hide and seek in a warren of hallways. Its hidden location may seem unfavourable at first thought, but since the company focuses on upscale leisure travellers, this could also work to its advantage as Chinese consumers tend to appreciate exclusivity.

**APPEARANCE** The office is a classic example of function over form. On the afternoon I arrived, the sight I was greeted with was eight staffers dressed in uncoordinated business attire who were hard at work. Their desks were in a state of disarray, a bookshelf held a disorganised mix of outdated and new magazines as well as plaques waiting to be hung up, and an open box lay next to the reception counter.

The only design element was a traditional Ming-style wooden bookshelf and two cushioned chairs, but these were located in the main walkway and were uncomfortable to sit on.



**EASE** The service was incredible, despite some moments of flurry. The receptionist was nervous when I walked in but understood enough to call in a more senior employee who attended to my queries and got to work, quickly finding the information I needed.

Another employee graciously offered a cup of tea, invited me to sit while waiting and checked if I experienced any difficulty in locating the office. It felt familiar and cosy, rather than corporate and streamlined. There were no bells and whistles, but staff were efficient.

**SUGGESTIONS** Put up more prominent signage on the building facade and near the office's entrance. Consider playing light and unobtrusive music in the background to create a soothing atmosphere. Encourage a simple dress code that will indicate professionalism like a colored combination or accessories such as a scarf or pin. Also, if customers call up asking for directions, staff should be more specific in identifying the appropriate building entrance and street name. This would certainly help bring in more prospective clients. – **Manuela Zoninsein**

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**PATA**

You can hear Craigs from a mile away. He's big, he's loud and he wants a new 'Next Gen' PATA to be heard. As someone who's not afraid of conflicts – or the Internet – he might just get his way. **Raini Hamdi** chats with the new PATA CEO in Bangkok

# Loud and clear

### So why did you want the job as PATA CEO?

(Laughs) I was approached and advised on this job during the Paris Air Show in June last year. Like many people, I was invited to put my name in. Initially, I was not sure it was a job I was entirely equipped or suited to do because I'm not a tourism specialist. But I was assured that PATA's main role going forward would be advocacy, would be creating new value for members, and would relate to how we deliver and communicate our services. And those, I'm interested in.

Now about four months into the job, it has become clear to me that I had accidentally been in training for the job in the last three years, through a taste of the travel business in civil aerospace (Craigs held senior positions at aviation firms such as BAE Systems and Saab-Scania). And, if nothing else, through being a high frequency traveller myself.

### When did you first hear of PATA?

The first time must be around 1986, my first year in Hong Kong (where he was previously based for the past 25 years). I had the pleasure to meet the CEO of Cathay Pacific at the time, Peter Sutch, and in the course of conversation, he told me he was going to the PATA conference the following week – it was the best fun event of the year, he said. I had filed that away, thinking this PATA must be a good organisation.

### After a long search, and even the debacle of a candidate getting cold feet, do you think your job is a hot seat?

PATA's had its fair share of ups and downs in recent years. I just look at it as the inevitable result of change – any long-standing association has to change with time and technology.

In many ways, the Internet has somewhat been an enemy of PATA – and thousands others, as people have been disintermediated – but that does not mean there is no value in having an organisation that links people together face-to-face and online – it's not as if you can only do one and not the other. No, no, the whole point about life generally is finding a balance. And it's a non-stop process.

It is fair to say it is a hot seat, but in a good way. The PATA CEO is given great respect and hospitality whenever he goes to an event. It's not me personally; it is the 60 years of work PATA has done to build a reputation for itself. It is a responsibility that has to be respected and built on.

### You came in when the direction had been set by an interim CEO in the form of the PATA Future Strategic Focus. Would you have preferred that you got to set the direction yourself as the new CEO?

No. It's logical – serendipity, in fact – that someone of Bill (Calderwood)'s experience and mindset did the interim CEO job thoroughly. He restructured internally,

made the organisation leaner, streamlined a lot of the activities, but he consciously did not embark on a new voyage in terms of the messaging for the Next Gen. I didn't regret that a lot of the organisation had been shaped by Bill. I felt, to use an analogy, that I had a fairly waterproof ship that had been repaired in the harbour and was now ready to go out on the open seas.

Now, I'm on it and of course we want to catch the wind at the back, getting the support of members, media, etc, by acting in smart and insightful ways. You've got to win hearts and minds to a new way of thinking; it's not just about cold, hard spreadsheet numbers.

### How will you fatten PATA's coffers again?

Innovation, by not depending solely on membership fees but finding new revenue streams and retaining members so

Thai Airways International and Tourism Authority of Thailand to turn up, but they did, and so did a good number of people.

Basically, we have to engage people face-to-face and we can't just depend on our two iconic big events (PATA conference and mart) and the adventure travel mart. We will continue to deliver those in a professional and vigorous way, but we also need to go out and reach the markets.

So instead of expecting everyone to come to us once or twice a year, we go to them and we will try to inject new perspectives on issues critical to those hubs. The next one we plan to do is the Singapore PATA Hub City Forum on May 22.

Another philosophy of mine is clustering. I hear from the senior people I meet that they get so many invitations and they

**“I come from Northern Ireland and conflict resolution, as someone once said to me, must have been built into my DNA...”**

you are doing less selling and more auto-renewals. Fundamentally, it is showing the PATA Next Gen activities and then money should flow in the right direction.

### Tell me more about this new tagline which you've adopted.

It's a mixture of enhancing our ability to deliver events, research and membership value by making the Internet an ally and, in concrete terms, delivering new-style events.

Examples: webinars on topical subjects, live-streaming highlights from our forums or even our AGMs. Or giving bites of information members might not have picked up through a monthly regional directors' digest, potentially podcasting these as well. Or delivering meaningful insights from our vast amount of aggregated data through mobile platforms (from April 2).

### Let's talk more about creating new value for members. Have you figured out how?

I want to be truly marketing, not selling. I want to be shaping the product – the value proposition of PATA – according to what the majority want. That to me is real marketing and showing empathy.

What I try to do in the first few months is walk the talk. Do it. That's why I started the PATA Hub City Forum very quickly (the first was in Bangkok on January 30 with the PATA Thailand Chapter) and people thought I was crazy to do it at a month's notice and expect the head of

want to make their trips as productive as possible. If they can get two or three events out of one trip, that's more value for them.

So if we can overlap events, we will. For example, the Airports Council International (Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly, Conference and Exhibition in Singapore, May 22-25), which is immediately after our events. Now this body has (577 members operating 1,689 airports in 179 countries) and airports are part of the travel and tourism cycle. Yet, they are often seen as the weakest link in the chain because they don't always offer the convenience and comfort.

It is also PATA's job to point out where the weak links are – hopefully politely and subtly – because when an end-user rates his travel experience, it's not just the hotel bed or the restaurant food, but



a whole chain of events. If they are kept waiting 45 minutes to an hour at the airport, that's not a good memory.

#### Is that an airports or an immigration issue?

Immigration, but the point is, customers think it is an airports issue. An example: Hong Kong generally does a good job of processing people. But in recent years, it has been noticed that there have been sporadic backlogs of people waiting well over an hour. I met the commissioner of tourism and he told me that 96 per cent of people were processed within 15 minutes. Sounds good. However, that's still a couple of million people who were kept waiting – four per cent of 50 million.

I read a letter in a UK publication from a lady who was really mad she was kept waiting an hour-and-a-half to get into Hong Kong. She got madder when she read in the papers that Hong Kong needed to invest US\$17 billion on a third runway and asked why it couldn't invest US\$17 in an extra hour of an officer's time, which I thought was a reasonable observation. So my job is to politely raise that up to the system through the people I meet.

#### What inspired you in the last four months as PATA CEO?

Meeting the very experienced and the youngest members of the industry – Khun Kusa (Panyarachun, managing director, World Travel Service Thailand) who, at 93 years of age, spoke eloquently from the floor during our Bangkok PATA Hub City Forum. Then, I was asked to give a lecture at a university in Beijing. A 19-year-old was tasked to make a welcome speech and she spoke about the dream of travel so emotively, that you realise how travel and tourism touches people's lives over and above the usual experience of business. And therefore, to be part of it is genuinely a privilege.

#### How do you unite PATA given the diversity – just look at that age gap, for instance.

Of course there will be problems within PATA; how could you not expect different opinions when you represent roughly 50 different countries and, on top of the national culture, is the functional culture – this person a GM, the other accountant, government minister, media member. So it is completely expected for there to be 101 different opinions on what PATA should prioritise or do. The pleasure is how to harmonise that to a reasonable consensus.

#### It is a pleasure?

I come from Northern Ireland and conflict resolution, as someone once said to me, must have been built into my DNA because I'm used to seeing conflict all around me in its most serious forms. And after 700 years we've solved that little problem in Northern Ireland. Terrorists are now ministers. So, after seeing that at close range, you can't say that the kind of conflict that goes on inside of PATA is to be feared or to be avoided.

To do this job, you have to take the views, but someone has to decide to do something or not to do something. In a multinational, multifunctional organisation, when someone decides to do something or not to do something, it will divide to a certain extent. But if you don't decide at all – that's the worst. Then you will drift.

My approach is to decide and take responsibility for that decision. It does not

mean I won't learn some lessons along the way. You've got to accept that this (PATA) is a learning organisation in a middle of an incredibly fast-moving industry, in the world's greatest growth market. There couldn't be a better time to start talking and delivering PATA Next Gen.

#### Who influenced you recently?

You can't not pay attention to the Facebook phenomenon, an idea in one guy's mind lying on his bed at Harvard and now a business whose market capitalisation is estimated to be worth more than Boeing.

One quote (Mark) Zuckerberg made in his IPO which I read two weeks ago was, 'you need to move fast and break things'. Speed is the competitive weapon and you don't need to worry along the way something will drop off the table. As I understand it, it's the graffiti at Facebook that 'done is better than perfect'.

Since coming onboard, I've had to move fast; hopefully I haven't broken anything substantially.

I had the luxury of reading a bit more about PATA before assuming the role end-October, and I found that there had been

an enormous amount of analysis, introspection almost, on PATA, a lot of it very worthy and eloquent thoughts, like Prof Chuck Gee's comments in the PATA 50<sup>th</sup> book. They were mulling over challenges going forward 10-20-30 years ago and it has been an evolution challenge since the start of the Internet, since PATA and every other association became disintermediated.

To do this job, you do have to move fast, you will break things and you won't please all of the people all of the time.

But 'done is better than perfect'.



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*Legend of the Seas*

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# Road less

Sick of run-of-the-mill, same-old itineraries, experience-seeking Asian travellers are snapping up action-packed holidays that deliver on novelty and give them bragging rights.

At the recent PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart 2012 in Bhutan, the US-based Adventure Travel Trade Association reported that international adventure tourism was valued as a US\$89 billion industry in 2010, growing at an estimated 17 per cent a year versus just four per cent for mainstream tourism.

Europe and the US still constitute the bulk of adventure travellers globally, but there are clear indications that a small but mushrooming number of seasoned Asian travellers now desire such trips.

“There is certainly huge potential in the Asian market as we’re currently seeing double-digit growth in the region,” said G Adventures Canada managing director Australia and New Zealand, Pete Rawley.

One reason is the rise of a media- and travel-savvy generation that needs to be kept excited, said Cathy Thang, managing director, Green Island Tours Singapore.

She explained: “Exposure to traditional media and other new media creates a multiplier effect, motivating experienced Asian travellers to look for new, exciting destinations to explore, particularly where they can recharge their batteries and reconnect with nature.”

While Asia still remains the most popular for such ventures, there is also demand for destinations farther afield.

According to Rawley, 40 per cent of the firm’s Asian clients travel within the region, with Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia being particularly popular; another 30 per cent head to Latin America; and the rest are spread equally across Europe, Africa and North America.

A spokesperson for Intrepid Travel Australia added that the top three choices

for Asian adventure travellers were India, Nepal and Peru.

Sunil Sakya, chairman, KGH Group of Hotels, Resorts and Travels Nepal, told *TTG Asia* that Asians preferred “softer activities such as hiking, canoeing and visiting cultural or religious sites, although some might opt for short treks lasting one to two days and easy river rafting”. Stays tend to be in luxurious properties at one fixed location, with an average duration of seven days.

He added that business volume from Asia grew by 15-20 per cent in 2011 compared to just 10 per cent for both Europe and the US.

Willem Niemeijer, co-founder and CEO of Khiri Travel Group Thailand, underscored that in order to nurture a love for adventure holidays among Asians, educating customers about new destinations outside the main tourist trails was essential. Operators should also develop itineraries that offer “a combination of sightseeing to religious and cultural sites and soft adventures like zip lines that give Asian customers the adrenaline rush, but without the worry (of safety hazards)”, he said.

Clients need to know that adventure travel is not just about extreme activities such as long treks and bungee jumping, added G Adventures’ Rawley.

Eco Adventures Worldwide Singapore managing director, Timothy Tan, noted that a big plus point about the market was its general immunity to economy fluctuations. Decisions are based on “the potential and ability of a destination to ignite positive, emotive connotations”, he explained.

Said Tan: “Adventure travellers are a psychographic group and thus cannot be defined by demographic parameters alone. (Travel providers should focus on) a brilliant portfolio of products that captures the romance of travel.”

## Undiscovered places offer sense of adventure, novelty



### Bhutan

The exclusive Kingdom of Bhutan is working towards transforming itself into a year-round destination, while encouraging tourists to venture beyond the well-worn trails surrounding Thimpu, Paro and Punakha, especially to rural areas in the south and east.

Star-rated hotels and more airports are being developed across the country, making the kingdom more accessible. Two domestic

airports – Yonphula in Tashigang, east of Bhutan, and Bathpalathang in Bumthang, central Bhutan, have opened. They are served by national airline Druk Air and the country’s first private airline Tashi Air, both of which commenced operations to the airports last December. Tashigang is known for its traditional arts and crafts, while Bumthang Valley is the spiritual hub of the nation and is home to its oldest Buddhist temples and monuments.

International visitors currently arrive during a five-and-a-half-month period, with the US and European markets more interested in Bhutan’s treks and Asian ones attracted by its cultural offerings. Most tourists arrive in Paro, a small frontier town lying in Paro valley dotted by quaint villages. Paro is also the gateway to Bhutan’s most prominent structure, Taktsang Monastery (pictured), which is perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the valley floor.

The Trashie Chhoe Dzong (Fortress of the Glorious Religion) in enigmatic Thimpu, Bhutan’s capital, is another must-visit. This imposing building, decorated with elaborate carvings and Buddhist symbols, now houses the offices of the king. – **Linda Haden**



### Palawan, Philippines

Once a backpackers’ retreat, infrastructure improvements and a recent award achievement have helped the province find its way into travel guidebooks.

Three areas are popular: Busuanga, known for its limestone formations and shipwreck diving; Taytay, with its beach resorts; and Puerto Princesa, home to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed underground river (pictured),

which created a buzz when it was named one of the New7Wonders of Nature in January.

Palawan’s main airport in Puerto Princesa now has a dozen daily flights – up from one previously – while plans are in the pipeline to turn it into an international airport. The city also received its first four-star hotel last year, and more inventory will be added soon.

The area around the Puerto Princesa Underground River is a protected national forest park with a mountain-to-sea ecosystem of its own. Visitors will encounter a thick mangrove cover, karst limestone formations and emerald crystalline waters.

Up to two hours away is Sabang town, where the 8km-long river is located. The cave offers views of stalactites and stalagmites and a rich eco-habitat with unique living species. Trips to the underground river are increasingly in such high demand that advance bookings are required due to a newly-imposed cap of 1,000 visitors a day.

Puerto Princesa offers supporting attractions such as a crocodile farm, a butterfly garden and zip lines. Honda Bay, with its unspoilt white sand beaches, six islands and dolphin watching possibilities, also deserves a day tour. – **Marianne Carandang**

# travelled

The adventure travel market is alive and kicking – and it's growing faster than mass tourism worldwide, discovers **Linda Haden**

## Who's up for an adventure?

### Japan

Emerging as a key market for adventure travel in the 90s, Japan remains a major Asian source today.

Freme Travel Services Brunei's manager-inbound & MICE division, Sugumaran Nair, said the company handled 3,000-4,000 Japanese visitors every year and this was expected to grow by 20 per cent this year, as there had been talk of new flights between the two countries.

"Soft ecotourism, encompassing trekking and rafting are high on the agenda for Japanese adventure travellers to Brunei, and most prefer mid- to high-end accommodation," he explained, saying that they favoured customised itineraries.

Masaru Takayama, president, Spirit of Japan Travel said he sends out some 200 pax on such trips each year, with last year seeing a 25 per cent jump, driven partly by the appreciation of the yen.

He explained that because Japanese-speaking guides were necessary for such trips and not all destinations were able to



provide this, itineraries were limited.

"By and large, the Japanese prefer Asian destinations including Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand, Borneo and Indonesia. Their stays last for about four to five days on average, and most prefer upmarket accommodation. Activities carried out (by the Japanese) are overwhelmingly soft, such as short treks and rafting."

### Singapore

A growing interest in authentic adventure holidays among Singaporeans has caught the attention of even mass-market outbound travel companies.

Opening its first self-owned franchise last year selling an array of adventure-oriented itineraries, Chan Brothers Travel has seen brisk business so far, said its director of business development, Mary Kheng. Sales are expected to rise by 50 per cent this year.

Chan's World Holidays has introduced a 13-day Trans-Siberian Experience featuring three nights onboard the longest railway in the world; a 10-day Antarctica Adventure, which includes a cruise, and a range of cycling packages in Taiwan,

Cambodia and China lasting from six to eight days.

Timothy Tan, managing director of Eco Adventures Worldwide Singapore, said cycling, diving and gentle rafting topped the wish list of travellers. Singaporeans, he said, were heading to the Himalayas, Indonesia and Christmas Island.

His company has gone from fewer than 50 bookings five years ago to around 300-400 bookings annually now.

"The majority of my clients are well-travelled. For them, going on (adventure) trips is not about cultivating status at all. Singaporeans who seek adventure simply want to immerse themselves in new experiences that they can take back with them," said Tan.



### China

Chinese travellers are increasingly opting for adventure packages, although the trend is still in its infancy.

Jens Thraenhart, president of digital marketing agency Dragon Trail China and PATA China Board chairman, observed: "Unlike Western adventure travellers that are motivated by the cultural and activity

possibilities in a destination, Chinese adventure travellers are still overwhelmingly motivated by status. That is, travel that bestows bragging rights."

However, he added that individuals from the top-tier cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou were becoming "more aware of adventure and ecotourism", making them potential sources of future adventure tourists.

In a report published by Xola Consulting in 2008, the firm suggested that travel consultants should consider developing itineraries incorporating food- and shopping-related activities, led by Chinese-speaking guides.

### India

Despite its mammoth potential, India continues to lag behind more mature markets when it comes to taking adventurous journeys.

Willem Niemeijer, co-founder and CEO of Khiri Travel Group Thailand, said: "There is some demand from Indians, but this is growing at a slow pace. Overall, about 20-25 per cent of our Indian market goes for an adventure-type activity during their trip. However, this is often only for a day."

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Hotel rates continue their upward climb, driven by strong demand

# Building on shorthaul

Regional markets deliver solid numbers and a new trade portal will be launched. By **Prudence Lui**

**Arrivals** In another record year, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) reported 41.9 million visitor arrivals in 2011, an increase of 16.4 per cent. Mainland Chinese visitors continued to lead the market with 28.1 million arrivals, followed by Taiwan, Japan, the US and South Korea. While Japanese arrivals dropped 2.4 per cent due to the tsunami crisis, HKTb noted that growths in the South Korean (14.7 per cent) and South-east Asian (9.3 per cent) markets made up for this. Up by 1.7 per cent, longhaul arrivals stood at 4.8 million. Total expenditure from inbound tourism for 2011 is expected to exceed HK\$253 (US\$32.6) billion, 20 per cent more than in 2010.

**NTO** HKTb will launch in June the new PartnerNet, its on-line marketing information portal for travel professionals selling the destination. Catering to key markets such as South Korea and Japan, it will be available in 13 languages, up from three. There will also be greater interactivity, allowing trade partners to manage their own profiles and display relevant offers. Also in the

pipeline is a B2B e-Marketplace for buyers around the world to network with potential suppliers and initiate business opportunities.

In 2012-2013, the NTO will invest in 20 key source markets including emerging ones like Vietnam and the Netherlands. HKTb executive director, Anthony Lau, anticipates the short-haul market will expand by 3.6 per cent while longhaul traffic will fall by 1.9 per cent. "China remains strong, with about 7.6 per cent growth. We'll raise the investment in non-southern China and open up new visitor sources, especially in second- and third-tier cities," he said.

**Hotels** Benefiting from robust inbound traffic, hotels enjoyed a fruitful year. Average occupancy rate was 89 per cent in 2011, up two per cent, while average room rate stood at HK\$1,356, up 16.4 per cent.

As of last December, the city had 190 hotels and some 62,830 rooms. HKTb estimates that by year-end, there will be 219 hotels offering 68,000 rooms.

General manager of Cosmopolitan Hotel and Cosmo Hotels, Anita Chen, said: "We achieved



"The sheer number of mainland Chinese visitors has raised hotel room rates. We also sense that the new generation of Chinese visitors comes with higher expectations. They want more than just a room."

**Anita Chan**

General manager  
Cosmopolitan Hotel and Cosmo Hotels

95 per cent occupancy last year at Cosmopolitan Hotel Hong Kong and 98 per cent for Cosmo Hotel Hong Kong. This is a remarkable record, and we are confident of staying in the same position in 2012. To some degree, the sheer number of mainland Chinese visitors has raised hotel room rates.

"In terms of average daily rates, I project an overall five to eight per cent increase in view of the current economic situation facing the US and Europe."

**Aviation** The signing of an air service agreement between Hong Kong and Taiwan last December – which set no limits on the number of airlines allowed to launch services from each side and will see further seat capacity increases – has given the destination a boost. Hong Kong Airlines commenced flights to Taipei and Kaoshiung on March 1. Separately, it also launched a longhaul service to London on March 7.

Shenzhen Airlines and Air Astana were recently given permission to begin flights from Jinjiang (January) and Almaty (March) respectively. Batavia Air will also kick off flights to Jakarta

once its application is approved.

In 2011, 13 new destinations were added to Hong Kong's flight network, which now has 164 international connections. New ones include Wuxi and Yancheng in China and the Maldives.

**Products** The former Explosives Magazine Compound built by the British army during the mid-19th century has been revitalised and now houses the Asia Society Hong Kong Center (ASHK). Located in Admiralty, this 1.4-hectare heritage site will, for the first time, be open to the public. Guests can access the visitor centre, which has a permanent exhibition detailing ASHK's history and the transformation of The Hong Kong Jockey Club Former Explosives Magazine, as well as a store with products and publications, meeting rooms and a theatre.

Over at the Hong Kong International Airport, Cathay Pacific's The Wing, the airline's flagship lounge, is currently undergoing a refurbishment. The Level 7 Business Class Lounge of The Wing recently reopened with a new look, and now serves specialty coffee and freshly-baked pastries.

# Cruise travel at a new level

A new terminal to be unveiled next year is set to trigger an inflow of inbound tourists, says **Prudence Lui**

**1 How are cruises in Hong Kong performing?** Preliminary estimates by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) show there will be around 80 to 100 sailings this year, including several maiden ones. HKTb executive director, Anthony Lau, said Orion Expedition Cruises and Celebrity Cruises were deploying their ships to Hong Kong for the first time in 2012. “With the opening of the new cruise terminal at Kai Tak in 2013, we expect more cruise ships will be deployed to Hong Kong for a memorable itinerary in the East,” he added. Other ships that will be calling at the destination this year include the *MS Zaandam*, *Seabourn Quest*, *Athena*, *Orion II*, *Costa Victoria*, *Voyager of the Seas* and *Celebrity Millennium*.

According to HKTb, Hong Kong’s international cruise passenger throughput totalled 660,000 in 2010 while the figure reached over 702,000 in 2011, representing a year-on-year increase of 6.3 per cent. The average length of stay of transit cruise visitors was one night and per capita spending was over HK\$2,000 (US\$258). Cruises with destinations (including transit and home porting cruises) also showed stable growth, from 94 calls in 2009 to 104 calls last year.

**2 What challenges are Hong Kong facing in growing its cruise industry?** Ocean Terminal, currently the SAR’s only cruise terminal, is so busy that it limits incoming traffic. Miramar Travel cruise department manager, Winnie Chan, said: “This is why the *Crystal Symphony* would not come in 2011 and 2012. Whether it will come in 2013 depends on availability at the new terminal. Undoubtedly, the new terminal means more space for ships to be berthed.”

Costa Cruises vice-president of Asia-Pacific & China, Buhdy Bok, said the new terminal would also allow more cruise capacity to enter the destination. He explained: “The existing infrastructure faces constraints given that the current trend is to deploy larger ships to Hong Kong. Hong Kong remains one of our three homeports alongside Shanghai and Singapore in the Asia-Pacific region. With its state-of-the-art facilities, the Kai Tak terminal will allow Costa Cruises to deploy even larger ships to Hong Kong.”

**3 How will the new cruise terminal boost inbound traffic?** Owen Yau, president of Travel Asia (HK), felt Kai Tak would elevate the city’s status as a leading cruise hub in Asia, resulting in a growing fly-cruise market that travel consultants could tap. “Hong Kong may benefit from pre- and post-cruise tours as passengers may travel a few days in advance to explore the city or stay on for a couple days



Artist's impressions of the new Kai Tak Cruise Terminal

after their cruise trips. However, this will also depend on the tariffs levied on airlines and cruises,” he said.

W Travel Service managing director, Wing Wong, also foresees an increase in demand for land excursions incorporating shopping and dining experiences.

Yau added: “As more of the younger generation favours cruise travel, we have observed a growing demand for heritage tours, such as to the Tai O Heritage Hotel on Lantau Island.”

The new terminal might also bring more MICE business, but demand for such itineraries has been weak so far.

Pacific World Hong Kong travel account director, Ivy Sung, said: “I understand there will be a direct drop-off point for coaches at the new terminal, which means better accessibility when compared to the Ocean Terminal. (This makes) new MICE products like half-day meetings or theme dinners on cruises feasible.”

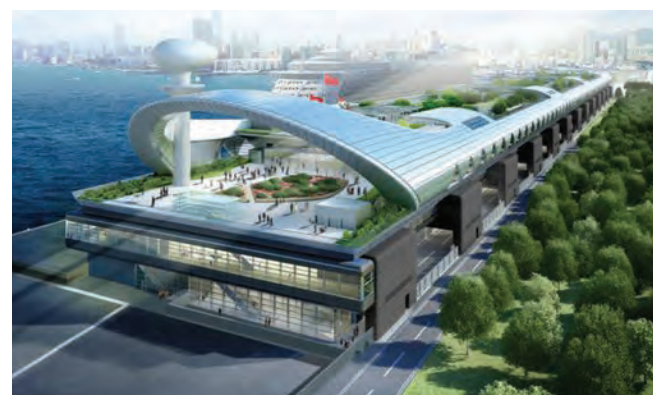
However, she has not received any queries from clients to bring their corporate events onboard.

**4 How is the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal progressing?** The terminal building and first berth are expected to come into operation in mid-2013 as scheduled. The second berth is set to be completed in 2014.

Cruise veteran, Richard Willis, a member of Hong Kong’s Advisory Committee on Cruise Industry (ACCI), said: “The most pressing issue is who is going to manage the facility. The tender process was delayed, and it is vital for the trade to know information such as berthing tariffs because the industry is anxious to make plans.

“ACCI’s last meeting was in November 2011 and we did an onsite inspection to see the actual hardware. We are happy with the Tourism Commission because it listened to trade views and involved us throughout the consultation process.”

A government spokesperson told *TTG Asia* the results of the tender would be announced shortly.



Courtesy of the Hong Kong SAR government

**5 Aside from hardware, does Hong Kong have the necessary software to build its cruise market?** Awareness of cruise products among the trade and consumers has grown in the last five years, making the market ripe for take-off.

Sightseers (HK) managing director, Linda Yuen, said: “Outbound travel experts like Hong Thai, Morning Star and Wing On have invested in cruise selling by setting up dedicated teams. The results are headcount increases and more knowledgeable staff serving clients.

“Consumers also have a better under-

standing of (cruise) products.”

Meanwhile, academic institutions have introduced cruise-related courses for students to gain relevant knowledge, while the Travel Industry Council and trade associations such as the Hong Kong Association of Travel Agents have held cruise seminars for travel experts.

Since the establishment of ACCI in 2008, seminars and ship tours have also been organised for tourism and hospitality teachers to enhance their understanding about Hong Kong’s burgeoning cruise industry.

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“Hong Kong may benefit from pre- and post-cruise tours as passengers may travel a few days in advance to explore the city or stay on for a couple days after their cruise trips.”

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## Test drive

# Sai Kung East Country Park



**Prudence Lui** explores a rustic part of Hong Kong – and finds herself charmed by the sweeping landscapes

**WHY** Despite its status as a frenetic city, about three quarters of Hong Kong's territory are made up of scenic countryside, most of which lies within a 30-minute access. Those tired of standard ecotourism products in the city will find a jaunt in the country park refreshing – the trip is not tough, and this is one experience that blends nature, culture and sightseeing elements.

**WHAT** Covering 4,477 hectares of uplands and coasts, Sai Kung East has the largest number of bays and coves among all country parks. Here, a wide choice of country trails are on offer.

Starting my hike from Pak Tam Chung – a popular gathering point for locals on the weekends – I first made a stop at the government-run visitor centre

to get an overview of the area's geological history, culture and biodiversity. Being an amateur hiker, I opted for the Sheung Yiu Country Trail, a short route that took me past the pristine Lung Hang river, shrines shrouded by bamboo and a coastal inlet.

Along the way, I visited the Sheung Yiu Folk Museum, a restored 19th century village that pays homage to the livelihoods of original Hakka inhabitants through historical artefacts and exhibits. Entrance to the row of eight houses is free.

Following the trail back to the Sai Kung Man Yee Road, I was greeted by views of the High Island reservoir – said to be the city's largest – under my feet while the emerald Sai Kung harbour sat on my right.

From here, several paths lead down to Pak Lap, a village set within a bay which visitors may wish to explore. Most villagers have moved out but city dwellers flock here on weekends to experience the local hostels.

Reaching the renowned High Island Geopark at the end of my

three-hour hike, I was rewarded with striking vistas of jagged rocks dominating the coastline. I spent almost two hours here.

To save time, it would be wise to hire a taxi to take you back to Pak Tam Chung. Otherwise, take a leisurely walk along the High Island reservoir to loop back to the starting point.

**HOW** Travel consultants can arrange a half-day outing to Pak Tam Chung and Sheung Yiu Country Trail for customers with tight schedules. Various trails are suitable for MICE groups who may want teambuilding activities such as orienteering.

At High Island Geopark, free guided tours are available every

**Name** Sai Kung East Country Park

**Rate** Free admission

**Contact details**

Tel: (852) 2792-7365

Websites: [www.afcd.gov.hk](http://www.afcd.gov.hk) and

[www.geopark.gov.hk](http://www.geopark.gov.hk)

Sunday and signages are prevalent. There is also no separate admission charge. However, it is located in a restricted area with only taxi access.

Pak Tam Chung is less than half an hour away from the Sai Kung Town Centre by public bus or taxi. Driving is also possible, as there is ample parking space.

**VERDICT** A great way to clear your mind in this 'backyard garden of Hong Kong'.



Prudence Lui



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Linda Haden

# All seems calm for now

More flights and hotels will come, but economic outlook is main uncertainty. By **Linda Haden**

## Arrivals

International visitor arrivals to Singapore peaked at 13.2 million in 2011, exceeding the Singapore Tourism Board's (STB) 12-13 million forecast. Top market in 2010, Indonesia stayed ahead with a 12 per cent growth in 2011, while China, the second largest market, saw the biggest increase (35 per cent) in arrivals. The only key market to register a decline (four per cent) was the UK, which dropped two spots to 10<sup>th</sup> place. Preliminary tourism receipts for 2011 were estimated at S\$22.2 billion (US\$17.7 billion), up 17 per cent from 2010. Sightseeing and entertainment raked in S\$5.5 billion, a 37 per cent increase over 2010.

However, STB chief executive, Aw Kah Peng, expects growth to moderate this year due to the uncertain economy. At a recent media conference, she said while bookings were "fairly strong" until June, it was harder to see beyond that.

## NTO

STB unveiled its first differentiated marketing campaign last December. Targeted at China, the New Discoveries programme comprises tie-ups with

Chinese OTA Ctrip and promotions on social media platforms such as Renren and Douban. An STB spokesperson said similar campaigns for Australia and India were underway, with plans for Malaysia and Indonesia to follow.

At press time, STB had not revealed its detailed plans for this year, which is usually done at the Tourism Industry Conference in March.

## Hotels

While Horwath HTL notes that a further 1,540 rooms will be built in 2012, this is a 23.9 per cent dip from the 2011 figure.

Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) opened the 172-key Equarius Hotel and 22 exclusive Beach Villas last month. The island will have over 3,100 rooms in its 13 hotels by end-2012 when W Hotel Sentosa Cove and the heritage wing of Mövenpick Hotel open.

In the downtown CBD, the 363-room Parkroyal on Pickering is also slated to open this year.

As of 2011, Singapore had some 41,624 rooms, almost six per cent up from 2010, according to Horwath HTL. Most of the new additions were in the mid-tier category.



"Singapore needs to focus on developing its software – its manpower and providing tourists with unique experiences – rather than just the hardware."

**Michael Lee**  
Director  
Luxury Tours & Travel

STB estimates put hotel room revenue at S\$2.6 billion in 2011, up 27.8 per cent. Average room rate (ARR) rose by 13 per cent to S\$245 in 2011, while average occupancy rate stayed at 86 per cent. Recording the biggest ARR increase across all hotel categories were upscale hotels, which saw a 14 per cent increase.

"Hotels face a happy problem: high occupancy and room rates. This should not change much this year because of the anticipated (strong) demand," said Anthony Ang, director of sales, Destination Asia Singapore.

## MICE

Feedback garnered by STB from hotels and venues indicates a generally optimistic outlook for corporate MICE bookings in the first half of 2012, with demand from Asia expected to stay relatively strong.

To attract more MICE business, STB is working with government agencies, international organisations and MICE partners to co-create and attract strategic clusters of key events and conferences such as TravelRave.

Suntec Singapore ended 2011 on a high note with 1,600 events and 7.1 million guests, up five per cent and four per cent re-

spectively. The venue's S\$180 million facelift programme is scheduled to start in mid-2012.

At Marina Bay Sands' Expo & Convention Center, over 2,740 deals were sealed and some 1.1 million participants welcomed since its opening in April 2010. Its rival RWS hosted more than 2,400 events. Last year, the resort served over 530,000 event guests, and it has some 1,100 event confirmations so far for this year.

## Access

On March 26, Singapore Airlines' (SIA) regional arm SilkAir will introduce services between Singapore and Darwin, its first Australian destination. Come mid-year, SIA's new LCC, Scoot, will also begin operations with flights to Brisbane and Sydney. Then in September, Bhutan's Druk Air will launch Paro-Singapore flights.

Seven new carriers including Lao Airlines, Finnair, Hong Kong Airlines, Air Macau, IndiGo, and TransAsia Airways started operating at Changi International Airport last year. The hub managed 46.5 million passengers and 302,000 aircraft movements in 2011, an increase of 10.7 per cent and 14.5 per cent respectively on 2010.

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- Gain access to the IT&CM China 2012 MICE exhibition on the 18 and 19 April 2012 参与2012年4月18日至19日举行的中国(上海)国际奖励旅游及大会博览会
- Complimentary entry to the Keynote Address on 17 April 2012 by Mr Martin Sirk, CEO of ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association)  
免费参与2012年4月17日由国际会议及大会协会首席执行官Martin Sirk先生带来的精彩主题演讲

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作为一个日益增长的全球性经济强国, 有迹象显示中国正通过举办国际会议以及借助会议平台向世界各地推广其专长, 从而使其荣升成为全球顶级会议之一的目的地。

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#### 18 April 2012 • 2012年4月18日

- How to Organise a Successful China Outbound MICE Trip  
如何组织一场成功的中国出境MICE旅游
- Global Meetings Procurement and China  
国际会议采购及中国
- Innovation in Meetings Payment Solutions  
会议支付方式的革新
- Strategic Meetings Management (SMM)  
会议管理的战略前瞻

#### 19 April 2012 • 2012年4月19日

- Training and Retaining MICE Staff  
培训及聘用MICE员工
- How International Associations Make their Meeting Decisions  
国际协会如何做出他们会议决策
- Mobile Technology and the Impact on the Events Industry  
移动技术及其对会展行业的影响
- Fundamentals of selecting a DMC or PCO  
选择DMC或PCO的基准

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Ms Jennifer Gao  
Citibank, China



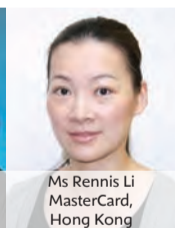
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BCD Meetings &  
Incentives, Singapore



Ms Rennis Li  
MasterCard,  
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Mr Martin Sirk  
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### IT&CM China 2012 is proud to be part of the Shanghai Business Events Week.

2012中国(上海)国际奖励旅游及大会博览会荣幸成为由上海市旅游局举办的“上海会议周”的系列活动之一。  
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# A not-so-premier destination?

Cookie-cutter programmes need a rethink in order to cater to well-heeled clients, says **Linda Haden**

Singapore has carved a name for itself as a first-class destination featuring a bevy of high-end attractions, spanking new hotels and celebrity gourmet restaurants. But is it really?

Despite the constant chatter of wanting to draw high-net-worth visitors, international luxury buyers and members of the inbound trade have observed a gap in Singapore's offerings: a lack of specialist players who can deliver on unique, high-end itineraries.

Paul Humphreys, chairman and CEO, dmAsia Hong Kong said he had trouble locating a suitable groundhandler to service luxury clients. "What existing players offer is great for the mass market, but the companies I've met so far have not been able to come up with creative ideas that translate into one-of-a-kind experiences. Moreover, the products offered are too similar."

Little attention has been paid to developing products that convey Singapore's USPs, noted local operators.

Luxury Tours & Travel Singapore director, Michael Lee, said: "Singapore is known for its iconic attractions and buildings, but little else. To most outsiders, we are just another shiny Asian city."

Anthony Ang, director of sales, Destination Asia Singapore, argued that it was bad enough that the destination already had a handicap. He said: "Singapore is also surrounded by numerous destinations who can offer so much more, owing to their vast natural, historical and cultural resources."

"As such, it is very difficult for us to compete head on (with neighbouring destinations) as we do not have any distinctive experiences to offer."

Resources required to create a dedicated luxury inbound travel firm already exist, but no one has taken the plunge, pointed out Ram Samtani, general manager of Ramesh Travel Service Singapore.

"In theory, it should be easy for anyone to become special-

ist travel providers to the luxury market, but I suppose one has to first have the creativity and means to put it all together and pull it off," he said.

Siam Express Singapore managing director, Jacklyn Yeoh, said what was needed was for the

could come up with fresh ideas, Yeoh added.

Ironically, it seems, Singapore has no shortage of brilliant minds, although not many end up joining the industry.

Said Luxury Tours & Travel's Lee: "We've been quite impressed

**"What existing players offer is great for the mass market, but (I've not seen) creative ideas that translate into one-of-a-kind experiences"**

**Paul Humphreys**  
Chairman and CEO  
dmAsia Hong Kong

trade to attract qualified workers with relevant skill sets.

"As a DMC, we have to contend with event planners and organisers as well, who are coming up with innovative product ideas and experiences," she said.

It was important to hire passionate, talented individuals who

with the quality of graduates we've seen. However, the schools and students prefer to engage hotels and not inbound professionals like us. In fact, they don't often understand what a DMC is or what it does."

Another labour challenge will come on July 1, when local com-

panies within the service industry will only be allowed to have 45 per cent of their workforce comprising foreign employees, down from 50 per cent previously. Levies for foreign workers are also set to go up in July 2013.

Lee said he was already struggling with manpower issues and had to turn away a large MICE group this year. "The service sector should have been excluded, as we cannot use technology alone to resolve all our labour shortages. After all, the key differentiator for (the tourism) business is the human touch."

Bestlink Travel Singapore managing director, Mike Eng, added: "Given that our main sources of business are China, Vietnam and Cambodia, we are highly dependent on foreign workers in our day-to-day operations. They communicate and coordinate with overseas agents, and are indispensable. The government's move would unquestionably have a big impact on us and definitely curb our growth."

## Checking in

## Oasia Hotel Singapore



**Linda Haden** discovers that Far East Hospitality's new brand appeals to both the business and leisure traveller

**LOCATION** Oasia's flagship property is located within the prime Novena district in central Singapore. It had its soft opening last August, and was fully operational by end-2011.

Housed in a gleaming, contemporary glass building, the hotel is within walking distance of two malls and a subway station that will allow guests to arrive at the main Orchard Road shopping area in just a few minutes. Oasia's close proximity to the Novena Specialist Center and Tan Tock Seng Hospital also makes it a natural choice for medical tourists.

**ROOMS** Upon entering the lobby, guests are greeted by a high ceiling, a spacious wooden seating area and a boulder-encrusted wall, which all make for interesting conversation pieces. Wood and metal are used liberally in public areas.

There are four club suites, 100 Oasia club rooms, 224 deluxe rooms and 88 superior rooms, all of a standard expected from an upscale property. Corner rooms afford slightly more space than

those along the corridor, which measure 25m<sup>2</sup> in size. Suites consist of a separate living space.

Designed by Japanese architect-cum-designer, Takashi Sugimoto from Super Potato in collaboration with Singapore-based architectural firm Ong & Ong, the minimalistic rooms are decorated in warm, neutral hues, embellished with Asian touches.

Built around the three key values of Oasia – thoughtfulness, respect and care – there is a lot of attention to detail, from the small reading lamp on each side of the bed to the shelves under the sink that are designed to precisely fit three rolled-up towels. Gadget lovers will also love the fact that all rooms and suites have been equipped with an iPod docking entertainment system.

The queen-size bed in my room made for uninterrupted sleep while the bathroom, which featured a wet room, was draped in cool white. Though the view was not jaw-dropping, I had a good vantage point of Singapore's cityscape and skyline from my room.

**F&B** Dining within the hotel is limited to only one outlet for non-club floor guests. Zaffron, which seats 120, is an all-day facility on the ground floor serving up a delectable range of international and local a la carte selections, as well as buffet spreads.

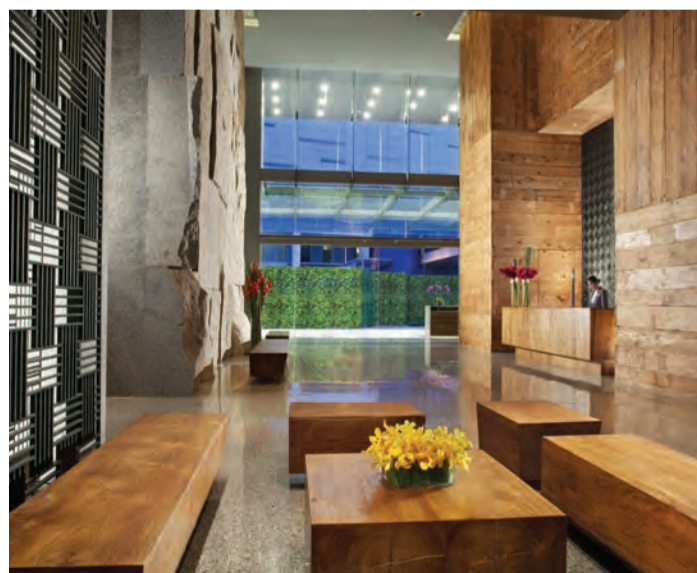


Privileged guests on the four club floors can have a leisurely al fresco breakfast at the Living Room on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor. Evening cocktails and canapés are served from 18.00 to 20.00 daily, while coffee and drinks are available throughout the day.

**FACILITIES** Recreational facilities for all guests are located on the eighth floor, including a state-of-the-art gym, swimming pool and tranquil terrace, featuring bamboo trees, stones and natural surroundings. Sunken deck chairs in the pool add a nice touch, providing guests the opportunity to cool off without having to exert themselves.

Oasia club guests have exclusive access to one of the highest hotel pools in Singapore, which is adjacent to the Living Room.

Business travellers can also avail of 223m<sup>2</sup> of meeting facilities, such as three function rooms and a boardroom, which can cater to seminars, corporate functions and intimate banquets.



**SERVICE** Staff are polite and unobtrusive. They have a pleasant demeanour and are eager to please.

**VERDICT** A chic, upmarket hotel that blends a host of bold design elements to offer a comfortable and enjoyable stay.

**Name** Oasia Hotel Singapore

**No. of rooms** 428

**Rate** From S\$220 (US\$170) for a superior room

**Contact details**

Tel: (65) 6664-0333

Fax: (65) 6664-0300

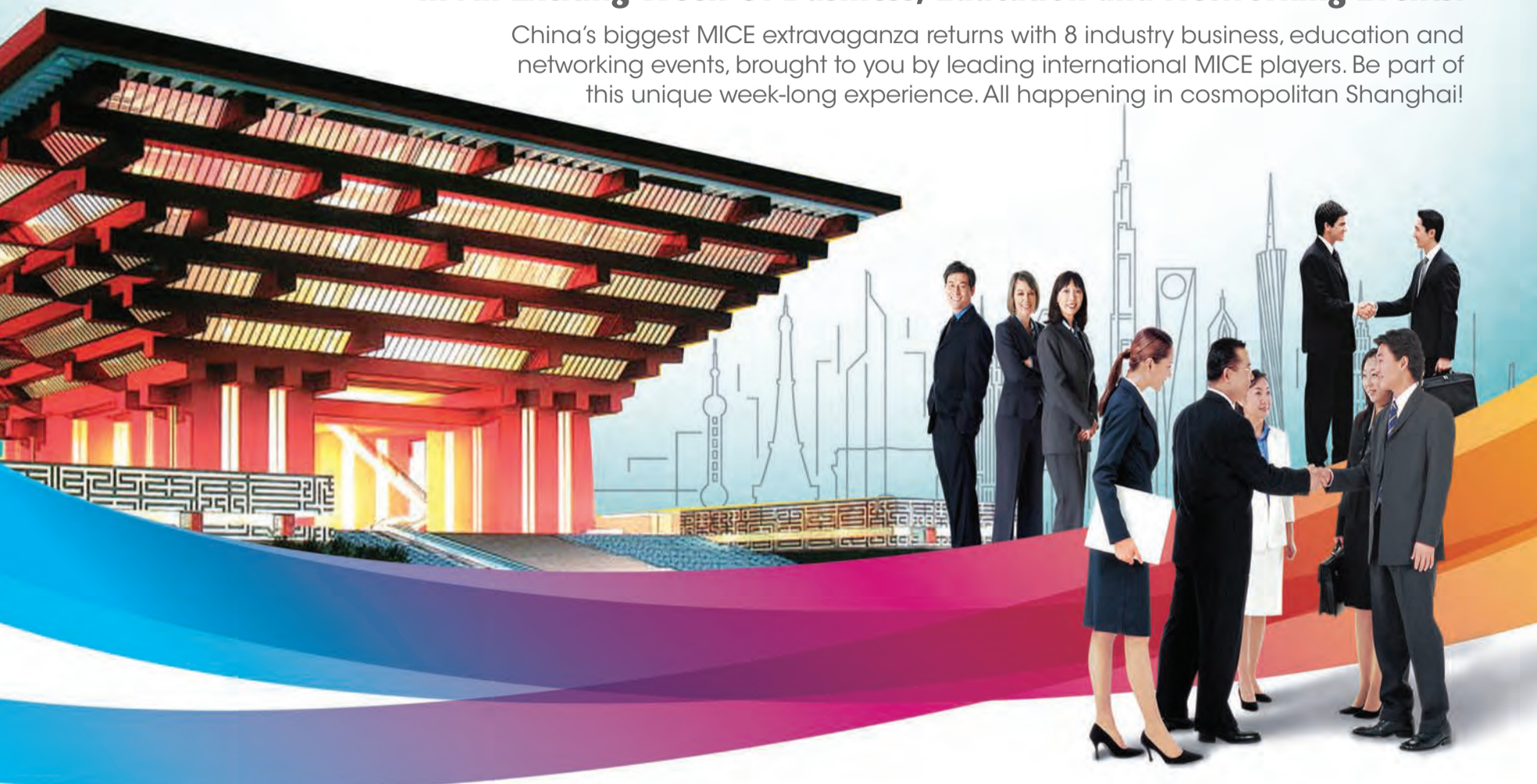
Email: [info@oasiahotel.com](mailto:info@oasiahotel.com)

Website: [www.oasiahotel.com](http://www.oasiahotel.com)

# Where The MICE Industry Comes Together In Shanghai.

## In An Exciting Week Of Business, Education and Networking Events.

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## Shanghai Business Events Week 2012 Highlights



### China (Shanghai) International Meetings & Conferences Forum

[www.cimcf.org](http://www.cimcf.org)

**16 to 17 April 2012** | Shanghai Marriott City Centre

Learn how to organise and manage international and domestic association meetings and corporate meetings successfully and professionally in China. Get

expert advice through keynote speeches, panel discussions, educational presentations and case studies at this one-and-a-half day forum.



### Association Professionals Competencies PAE Course <sup>NEW</sup>

**17 to 18 April 2012** | InterContinental Shanghai Expo

Specially tailored for personnel working in societies and associations, this course is made available for the first time in Shanghai through IT&CM China. Structured as a higher education programme, the course culminates in the Professional Association Executive (PAE) accreditation which will give participants an immediate edge in the industry. Course content is based on the internationally acclaimed Certified Association Executive (CAE®) designation offered by the Australian Society of Association Executives and the Canadian Society of Association Executives.



### Fundamentals of Business Travel Management™ Course – Associate Level

**17 to 18 April 2012** | InterContinental Shanghai Expo

Ideal for all professionals involved in Business Travel planning, decision-making and purchasing. This starter programme (formally the Corporate Travel Expert™ Course) has been re-formulated with the latest globally accepted best practices, concepts, tools, skills and know-how required to optimise company's travel spending and Corporate Travel ROI. Completing this intensive 1.5-day programme is the pathway towards attaining the Global Travel Professional (GTP) Certification, and the first step to a manager-level course. Both will be launched in 2013.



### IT&CM China 2012

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

**17 to 19 April 2012** | Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center

Since 2007, IT&CM China has established itself as China's leading international Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) business, education and networking event, dedicated to "Promoting China to the World and the World to China". Featuring 3 days of exhibition, business appointments, seminars and networking events, IT&CM China is the platform for international and leading Chinese players in the MICE industry to explore business opportunities on all fronts – inbound, outbound and domestic. IT&CM China 2012 is co-organised by TTG Events, a business group of TTG Asia Media, CITS International M.I.C.E. and MP International.



### ICCA Association Database Workshop

**18 April 2012** | Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center

During this 3-hour workshop, ICCA members will learn a variety of database skills including the use of the ICCA database, how to locate business leads and the use of other ICCA business tools. The training will be conducted in English and is suitable for all levels of database users.



### IMEX-MPI-MCI Future Leaders Forum

**18 April 2012** | Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center

Aimed at nurturing the future leaders of the MICE Industry, this full-day programme is catered to students pursuing degrees in meetings and events management, tourism or related business or administration studies. It offers the best and brightest students a chance to experience real-life industry challenges and an insightful glimpse into a dynamic MICE career. This event is held in conjunction with IT&CM China 2012.



### TTG China Travel Awards 2012

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

**19 April 2012** | Shanghai Marriott City Centre

The TTG China Travel Awards has been recognising the best of Greater China's travel industry since 2008. This prestigious annual event honours stellar Travel Suppliers across Airlines, Hotels & Resorts, Serviced Residences and Travel Services segments in the region. Respected as one of the travel industry's most prestigious travel awards, The 5th Annual TTG China Travel Awards 2012 will applaud 60 exemplary industry partners for their success in maintaining quality standards to ensure a stellar experience for all. This TTG Travel Trade Publishing event is proudly organised by TTG China, with the support of TTG-BTmice China, TTG Asia, TTG India and TTGmice.



Strategic marketing management  
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### Strategic Marketing Management for Conference <sup>NEW</sup>

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

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