



**TTG**  
ASIA

Live Large. Think Edge.  
Be Bold with TTG Asia.

An eclectic collision of creative energy and sophisticated appetites for your optimum advertising exposure and maximum impact.  
Reach out to 16,600 travel agents and suppliers.

Providing premium selections recognised as credible and committed in one concise read.

where ideas inspire.  
be part of us.

**TTG** | Publishing  
Travel Trade

www.ttgasiamedia.com | www.ttgasia.com



No. 1655/March 23 – 29, 2012



# Brand Maldives up in the air

## What directions for the next five years?

By Feizal Samath and Mimi Hudoyo

**COLOMBO/BERLIN** The Maldives, grappling with a political crisis that has impacted the tourism industry, its biggest earner, is preparing its next tourism masterplan while mulling over the fate of its new branding, Always Natural.

“We have not given up on the new logo but another big issue is to prepare the fourth masterplan for tourism as the third masterplan (drafted in 2007) ends this year (in August),” Tourism Ministry deputy director General Hassan Zameel told *TTG Asia*.

This year also marks 40 years of tourism promotion.

Zameel added: “We spent a lot of money in preparing a new brand. The Tourism Minister has said he would ask the Cabinet to decide whether or not to go ahead.” Authorities plan to meet the industry next month after a decision on the new branding is taken by the Cabinet.

Some US\$100,000 was spent on creating the Always Natural positioning. Bangkok-based brand specialist for the global tourism industry, QUO Keen, was commissioned for the project (see article, right).

The new branding was effective in January, replacing the 11-year-old Sunny Side of Life. It debuted at trade shows such as SATTE in New Delhi, FITUR in Madrid and BIT in Milan and the roll-out was to have continued at ITB. However, the political crisis in which President Mohamed Nasheed resigned led to many of his appointees, including Simon Hawkins, managing director of Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corp (MMPRC), quitting, pre-empting any further movement on the new brand. Newspaper reports suggested the government was reconsidering

reverting back to the old brand.

At ITB, the Maldives pavilion sported the old Sunny Side of Life branding. Hawkins could not be reached for comment, having left the Maldives after resigning on February 8, a day after Nasheed’s resignation.

While trade associations, including the Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators, Maldivian Association of Yacht Agents and Maldivian Association of Tourism Industry, have welcomed the rebranding, and were part of its year-long consultative process, they agreed that rebranding was a costly affair which stakeholders could not afford, and had no objection to restoring the old brand.

Kai Jellinghaus, destination manager of Germany’s REWE Group, said: “Tour operators are fine with the new or old logo. Every nationality is promoting the Maldives with their tour operators’ and their (own) logos.”

Meanwhile, Chinese arrivals to the Maldives – now its biggest source – have been affected as a result of the political crisis.

Let’s Go Maldives managing director, Mohamed Riyaz, said 12 per cent of its Chinese bookings had been wiped out. “The Maldives gets between three and five charter flights from China every day, so if we lose one or two flights that means we lose quite a large volume.”

MMPRC had started inviting tour operators and media, especially from China, for fam trips. According to Riyaz, these seem to have worked, as charter flights from China are scheduled to return to normal by April.

Rates too are holding although resorts had introduced tacticals such as stay-four, pay-three-night packages, which are not unusual in the low season which runs from May.



**Raphael Saw**

Far East Organization (FEO), Singapore’s largest property developer, now moves like Jagger in building hotels in the city. **Raini Hamdi** talks to Raphael Saw, who heads FEO’s hospitality business group as COO, about how FEO is rocking the Singapore hotel sector – see page 7

www.ttgasia.com

## Most popular

(as of March 20, 2012)

- 1 Singapore has Asia’s most expensive hotels
- 2 Hoteliers tip Singapore rates to rise further
- 3 New land-based services increase Thai-Laos connections
- 4 Jetwing Hotels bulks up in anticipation of Asian influx
- 5 Suvarnabhumi congestion necessitates earlier check-ins
- 6 Wyndham to grow newly-acquired brands in Asia
- 7 Myanmar’s financial, judicial hurdles keep hotel developers away
- 8 Indonesia props up low season with tacticals
- 9 Expedia extends travel expert affiliate programme to Thailand
- 10 Pan Pacific Singapore to undergo multi-million dollar facelift

To read these news, go to [www.ttgasia.com](http://www.ttgasia.com)

# Keen: ‘Naturally disappointed’

By Raini Hamdi

**SINGAPORE** David Keen, CEO of QUO Keen, the Bangkok-based tourism strategist behind the Maldives’ new brand, Always Natural, said he was naturally disappointed that two years of work could go down the drains (see article, left) but understood that “the government is going through a reconsideration period and, in the end, it would come out stronger.”

Asked if it was a step backward if the rebranding, already rolled out since January, was stopped in its track, Keen said: “It represents the will of the new government...I met with the new Minister of Tourism, who wants



Keen: new will

to come up with a stronger, more cohesive brand purely concentrated on tourism.”

The project was the first full destination brand strategy concept and roll-out under QUO Keen. “What we did was created a tourism strategy with the stakeholders in the industry, expanded the segmentation to retain the exclusivity of the destination but embrace other groups such as MICE, and showed multi-dimensional aspects to the desti-

nation, not just about the pretty sun but its strict sustainable policies, for example, solar energy conservation or energy from the current coming out of the ocean. Thus we use the Always Natural tagline to define the different areas of the country.

“Travellers today, be they tourists or businessmen, are exponentially more sophisticated than they were 10 years ago. They are interested in more than just the sights; they want to understand the people, other industries, how the country thinks, how it behaves.”

Asked if he was paid for the project, Keen said: “No comment.”



# Lombok wakes up

Massive tourism developments draw mixed feelings

By Mimi Hudoyo

**BERLIN** The tranquil island of Lombok will see its southern area buzzing with a large integrated resort development as early as 2015.

The Mandalika Resorts Lombok, which will cover 1,175 hectares and located within a 15-minute drive from the new international airport, is part of a special economic territory programme to develop West Nusa Tenggara as a tourism hotspot.

The state-owned Bali Tourism Development Corp (BTDC), which manages Bali's Nusa Dua area, was appointed the site developer and manager.

BTDC director of development, Edwin Darmasetiawan, said: "We want the resort to complement Bali instead of competing with it, as its attractions will be very different from Nusa Dua's. Bali is (strong with) culture, while Mandalika's products will be more futuristic."

Facilities earmarked for the integrated resort include an F1 race track, an integrated theme park, an underwater marine mu-



Kuta, South Lombok

seum, an eco park, meeting spaces and a concert hall. The developer also plans to invite Disney to "be a part of" the theme park.

Hotels, apartments, low-density residences and a golf course are also on the cards.

17 major Indonesian companies including Lippo Group, MNC Group, Gobel International and Rajawali Group have signed MoUs with BTDC for various developments.

"We are finalising the environmental impact analysis, which is expected to be ready by June. Road construction, five hotels and an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus golf course will follow," he said.

These, forming the project's first phase, are expected to be ready within three to five years.

Attractions, more hotels and residences will be developed in the second stage.

But not everyone is thrilled.

Panorama Destination managing director, Rocky Praputran-to, said: "The development will change Lombok, which is known as a tranquil, laid-back island.

"Do the people in Lombok, who are more conservative (than the Balinese), want this? Are they ready for the change?"

"As a tour operator, I cannot combine Bali and the future Lombok the same way as I do today because the destinations will attract different travellers."

Tischler Reisen president, Thomas Tischler, agreed that his European clients would not be attracted to the new Lombok.

However, Bidy Tour Lombok managing director, Yandianto Hamidy, welcomes the change and believes the destination will draw a wider market in the future.

"I don't think we will lose the traditional market as Mandalika is a new area in the south, while Senggigi and Rinjani will remain the same," he said.

# M'sia reinvents Desaru, ramps up development

By Brian Higgs

**BERLIN** The government's investment arm Khazanah Nasional is on a drive to expand its hotels and attractions portfolio across the country, with its crown jewel being the Desaru Coast Integrated Tourism Destination offering upscale resorts, golf courses and theme parks.

A 30-minute ferry ride away from Singapore, the revamped Desaru will target well-heeled Malaysians as well as families from existing core markets such as Singapore, the Middle East, South Korea and China.

Scheduled to open in 2014, it will feature a marine life park, a water theme park, a golf club with 18-hole and 27-hole courses designed by Vijay Singh and Ernie Els, a Riverwalk Dining & Retail Village, and hotels including Aman Country Club and Villas, Sheraton Desaru Resort and a five-star resort. There will also be 5,000m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition and conference space, with a 1,000-pax hall and four breakout rooms.

Undertaking the development are two wholly-owned subsidiaries of Khazanah, Destination

Resorts and Themed Attractions Malaysia, both present at ITB recently to kickstart marketing for the project and establish partnerships with airlines and operators in Singapore and Malaysia.

Eliena Ahmad Gaman, director, corporate strategy, Destination Resorts, said: "It's a repositioning for Desaru, which has been sleeping and under-managed for some time. We realised a fresh coat of paint wouldn't be enough, so we decided to alter the product mix and add new accommodation options."

Raja Zafura Raja Zain, senior vice president marketing, sales & communications, Themed Attractions Malaysia, added that the goal was "to create a reason for families to spend extra days in the country".

Besides Desaru, family-friendly attractions such as KidZania Kuala Lumpur, as well as Johor's Legoland Malaysia and Puteri Harbour Indoor Entertainment Theme Park have either opened or are scheduled to open this year. Another integrated cultural attraction will also be launched in the capital in 2014.

# Vietravel muscles up to be Asia's leading operator

By Duncan Forgan and Gracia Chiang

**HO CHI MINH CITY/BERLIN** Vietravel is looking to raise its status as one of Vietnam's leading inbound agencies to one of Asia's top operators.

It will expand into four new markets this year with the opening of offices in France, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore. The new offices will join Vietravel's existing ones in the US, Thailand and Cambodia, bringing it closer to achieving its 2015 target of 15 international offices.

Vietravel has remained strong despite the difficult economic climate, registering growth of over 30 per cent in 2010 and 2011. It raked in more than VND2 trillion (US\$96 million) in revenue last year.

"We are working hard to reach 500,000-600,000 visitors and achieve beyond VND5 trillion revenue in 2015," said Tran Doan The Duy, deputy general director of Vietravel.

Besides targeting traditional markets in South-east Asia, the company is seeking customers from Japan, South Korea, China and Europe. It also intends to explore potential growth markets in Australia and Africa, explained Vietravel inbound director Phan Ho Hai.

For example, it was at ITB recently to

introduce new products for its 2012/2013 programme: a heritage trail from north to central Vietnam and a green travel tour, which brings travellers to unspoiled islands and beaches.

The former includes Ninh Binh – described as a 'Halong Bay on land' and whose caves are in the process of achieving UNESCO World Heritage status – Hue and Binh Dinh, the old imperial city of the kingdom of Champa. The latter is a choice between one of three islands: Nha Trang, Con Dao and Phu Quoc.

The company also hopes to showcase its MICE expertise at IT&CM China in Shanghai next month, as it proposes a four- to five-day teambuilding itinerary to corporates, featuring destinations such as Ho Chi Minh City and Dalat. Its other products run the gamut from ecotourism and homestays to luxury travel.

"We realise that it will not be easy to get to where we want to be, but we are determined to invest and develop wherever necessary," added Tran Doan The Duy.

To achieve this, Vietravel is strengthening its PR and advertising strategy, organising fam trips for the media and focusing on staff development through recruitment drive and training.

"By 2020, we look forward to serve one million visitors and achieving our goal of becoming one of the 10 best tour companies in Asia."

Tran Doan The Duy, deputy general director, Vietravel



## WORLD ISLAMIC TOURISM MART

Islamic Tourism Leading The Way

**31 May - 2 June, 2012**

PUTRA WORLD TRADE CENTRE & SERI PACIFIC HOTEL  
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

**WITM 2012** is a ground breaking event for MATTA and the Malaysian tourism industry whereby for the first time an event is organized that will provide the opportunity for the tourism industry players to meet, network, sell directly to consumers and to share their knowledge and learn from experience people in the tourism industry.

BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS (B2B) TRAVEX	BUSINESS-TO-CONSUMER EXHIBITION OR FAIR (B2C)	WITM INCOMTHU CONFERENCE
<p>Opportunity to take up a booth as a Seller and promote your products and services to over 3,500 International tourism industry people when they visit your booths or make an appointment to meet and discuss. This is the perfect opportunity to expand your business within Malaysia and to overseas.</p> <p style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;"><b>FOR TRADE ONLY</b></p>	<p>Opportunity to take up a booth as an Exhibitor in the Fair and sell your products, tour packages, hotel stays, etc directly to the Consumers. Over 25,000 visitors are expected over the 3 days from 31st May-2nd June 2012.</p> <p style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;"><b>FREE ENTRANCE</b></p>	<p>Listen to prominent Malaysian &amp; International Speakers share their invaluable knowledge, hands on experience and learn how to profit and grow your business. Keynote Address to be delivered by YAB Dao' Najib Tun Razak (TBC).</p>

VENUE	
<p><b>Putra World Trade Centre</b> Level 3, 41 Jalan Tun Ismail, 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Tel : 603-4043 3999 Fax : 603-4043 3777</p>	<p><b>Seri Pacific Hotel Kuala Lumpur</b> Jalan Putra, P.O. Box 11468, 50746 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Tel : 603-4042 5555 Fax : 603-4041 7236</p>

facebook.com/witm.malaysia    twitter.com/witmmalaysia    my.linkedin.com/in/witmmalaysia

**WITM Secretariat :**

**WISMA MATTA**  
No.6, Jalan Metro Pudu 2,  
Fraser Business Park, Off Jalan Yew,  
55100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.  
Tel : 603-9222 1155 Fax : 603-9223 8555  
Email : info.witm@matta.org.my  
Website : http://witm.matta.org.my





# Wisdom of NTO partnerships

Jimenez shows how locking arms with neighbours is better than being up-in-arms for arrivals

By Gracia Chiang

**BERLIN** Months into his new job as the Philippines Tourism Secretary, Ramon Jimenez Jr is sparking fresh collaboration among ASEAN NTOs, convinced that leveraging on each other's different strengths is the way to go to increase the region's tourism pie.

In an interview with *TTG Asia* at the recent ITB, the Philippines Department of Tourism (DoT) chief explained that at the core of its cooperation with Malaysia (*TTG Asia*, March 9, 2012) was the development of the Muslim market.

The former advertising executive, who came into his NTO job last September, said: "The Philippines is a predominantly Chris-

tian country, so we have much to learn in terms of attracting and taking care of Muslim tourists," he said.

Jimenez hopes the country can also leverage on Malaysia's strength in the European market, while Malaysia will benefit from the Philippines' US connection.

He also revealed that similar discussions had been held with his Singapore counterpart, with the goal of creating packages combining both destinations.

Jimenez said: "I often joke that my favourite airport for the Philippines is Changi Airport...Now every (country in South-east Asia) is a possible gateway."

Increased airlinks between the Philippines and Malaysia is another reason why collabora-

tion between the two neighbours makes sense. From March 25, Malaysia Airlines is increasing flights to the Philippines to thrice daily, while SEAair will launch a thrice-weekly Clark-Kota Kinabalu service on May 1. Cebu Air has reportedly filed paperwork for flights to Kuching, while Zest Air is looking to mount flights to Kuala Lumpur mid-year.

Tourism Malaysia's acting director-general, Azizan Nordin, added that the NTO was also widening the number of airlines it worked with. To attract more tourists from the US and Russia, for instance, it will work with the Philippines and South Korea.

Aside from growing demand, the Philippines is embarking on capacity building, said Jimenez.

With a new law being implemented this year, 21 areas have been declared tourism enterprise zones, where investors will be offered incentives such as a moratorium on income tax for a property's first year of operation and there is no limit to the hiring of expatriate executives, said Jimenez. This is in addition to international airports that are being built and the expansion of cruise terminals across the country, the former meant to boost international arrivals, and the latter, South-east Asian arrivals.

Jimenez also revealed that a Singapore group had already expressed interest in turning the former post office in Manila into a hotel similar to The Fullerton Hotel in Singapore.



"I often joke that my favourite airport for the Philippines is Changi."

**Ramon Jimenez Jr**  
Secretary  
Philippines Tourism



**Vietravel**  
ASIA LEADING TOUR OPERATOR



- \* LEISURE TRAVEL
- \* GOLF TRAVEL
- \* MICE & BUSINESS TRAVEL
- \* EVENT & TEAMBUILDING
- \* AIRPORT SERVICES
- \* TRANSPORTATION SERVICES and more...



**Vietravel is honorable to win the prize of the 22<sup>nd</sup> TTG Travel Awards - year 2011**  
**Title "Best Travel Agency Vietnam"**



**ASIA LEADING TOUR OPERATOR**  
*Quality is always our first priority*










**HEAD OFFICE**  
190 Pasteur, Ward 6, Dist 3, HCMC, Vietnam  
Tel: (84.8) 38 22 8898 - Fax: (84.8) 3823 3778  
Email: info@vietravel.com.vn - Website: www.govietnam.travel

## Wooing India despite concerns

By Marianne Carandang

**MANILA** Despite flight setbacks and delays in plans to ease visas, Philippine agents are soldiering on with the Indian market.

Philippine Airlines' direct service to New Delhi was suspended around Deepavali last year, just months after its launch in March. Flights resumed recently at a reduced frequency of thrice weekly and with a technical stop in Bangkok.

Jet Airways' launch of a service linking Mumbai and Manila has also been delayed.

As well, visa-on-arrival (VOA) is still pending for India – and incidentally, China – even though India VOA for Philippine nationals has been in place since January.

Chief of tourism operations officer and head, Team India,

Glen Agustin, said: "We're trying to resolve the visa challenge. We're waiting for the Bureau of Immigration and Department of Foreign Affairs to provide us with the memorandum circular – hopefully within the first trimester of this year."

Agustin led a recent mission to India last month. He said the Philippines would continue to participate in tradeshows and conduct familiarisation trips and sales missions in secondary cities like Ahmedabad, Chennai and Bangalore.

It would also be spending more on advertising in India.

Indian arrivals to the Philippines grew 24 per cent to 42,844 visitors last year compared to 2010.

Shroff International Travel



**Shroff: Indian arrivals still up**

Care marketing manager, Kristine Shroff, said: "We've observed a consistent flow of (Indian inbound) groups, about one to two a month."

The number increased in August-September last year. Arrivals in January and February increased significantly compared to (the same months) last year."

Shroff also handles outbound MICE groups, mostly doctors and those from pharmaceutical companies, to India.

"Both ways, the market is mature. (Philippine groups are) ready for new destinations like Kashmir and Kerala," she said.

Nonetheless Judy Nieva, general manager of Select Travel, said that flights remained a challenge.

"The fewer direct flights are available, the more expensive the trip is and the more time-consuming it takes for visa-processing," she added.

## Jin Jiang, Meliá tie-up

By Karen Yue

**BERLIN** Jin Jiang International Management Co has formed a marketing alliance with Meliá Hotels International.

Cinn Tan, Jin Jiang's senior vice president marketing & sales, said: "Jin Jiang will tap into Meliá's well-established distribution and network in Europe, while Meliá will benefit from our expertise and reach in China."

Jin Jiang properties will be promoted at six selected Meliá hotels in China and Europe.

Tan said exact collaboration details were being worked out.

Details on Jin Jiang's plan to expand beyond China were still undisclosed, although Tan said the company intended to "leave footprints in every major city in the world".

Apart from its partnership with Meliá, Tan said the company would be investing "quite a lot" on marketing in the lead-

up to the unveiling of a series of new brands. Two of the new brands – six-star J and business-class Marvel – have already been launched. The rest will be announced within this year.

Jin Jiang's participation at ITB this year – a first for the company – is one such investment. "It is not cheap to participate at this show, but it is an investment the company is keen to make because it can take a Chinese brand farther," she explained.

Meanwhile, massive renovations have been planned for some of its hotels, such as Jin Jiang Hotel and Park Hotel in Shanghai. The company is also continuing its domestic expansion with two new management contracts. One is for a castle-like hotel in the upcoming Hello Kitty Land theme park in Zhejiang's Anji county and the other is a five-star property in Hangzhou. Both are slated to open by 2015.





Haven't been to our new home?

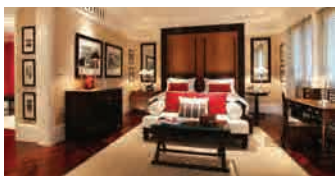
Here's what you've missed

## Tourism Data



Singapore hotels are still the most expensive in Asia, according to the latest Hotel Price Index by Hotels.com; Global hotel transaction volume continued on the path to recovery with US\$31.2 billion worth of deals in 2011, compared to US\$26.8 billion the year before

## Hot Deals



137 Pillars House Chiang Mai introduces travel trade industry rate; DoubleTree by Hilton Kuala Lumpur launches Maybank Malaysian Open 2012 room package; The Nam Hai offers guests who book at least two nights' stay an additional night free

## Hot Moves

The Ascott Limited appoints former Ascott Residence Trust Management CEO Chong Kee Hiong as its new chief executive; Giovanni Angelini comes onboard Kosmopolito Hotels International as independent non-executive director; JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong promotes Joyce Wong from director of group sales to director of sales

## Poll

Which is the up-and-coming Asian destination with the most potential?

- Myanmar
- Sri Lanka

# Paradise uninterrupted

THE MALDIVES has more things to worry about right now than its branding which – whether it is the 11-year-old Sunny Side of Life or the new Always Natural (see article on page 1) – is completely irrelevant.

What it needs to convey, as any crisis-hit country must, are messages, concrete examples and if possible, even guarantees of safety and security. And take to task any mainstream media directly if indeed they had been unfair in reporting and causing tourists to stay away.

What is even more critical is to draw up a new five-year masterplan which shows tourism investors and outbound tour operators globally that it is still interested in tourism or, just as quickly as islands could disappear, finds itself going back to “fishing and coconuts collection”, as one reader wrote to *TTG Asia e-Daily* on March 12 (see Most Commented section on [www.ttgasia.com](http://www.ttgasia.com)).

“Klaus”, who described himself as a European observer “crazy about Maldives”, wrote: “Several tour operators (have) already started to divert European tourists to the Caribbean (less



Courtesy of Coco Palm Bodu Hithi

expensive and safer)...I believe that survival takes priority over everything, on political, philosophical and even religious beliefs...Be smart and hold on very tightly (to) this treasure you have in your hands, tourism, and do not destroy it with senseless poor wars for power.”

A step backwards for the Maldives is not if it goes back to the old branding and ditches the new, but if there is no tourism vision for the next five, 10 years that would build on the achievements gained in the last 40 years of tourism promotion.

In the four decades, the Maldives had transformed itself

from a mere diving spot to an aspirational destination, not due to branding but massive investments in resorts that smashed the glass ceiling in terms of their imaginative concepts and levels of luxury. This, despite the high costs of land and construction, where everything has to be imported and piled from scratch.

How all this feeds the livelihoods of the local population cannot be underestimated. One shudders to think of the implications should these livelihoods be lost. So, set the hearts and minds to the real task at hand, which has got nothing to do about branding.

## Most commented on [www.ttgasia.com](http://www.ttgasia.com)

## Singapore: lacking in authentic travel experiences

David Song from Singapore has added his two cents' worth to the discussion on whether Singapore really has the capabilities to cater to the high-end segment.

“It's been a hot topic for decades since the facelift of cultural icons such as Lau Pa Sat, Clifford Pier, Marina South and the destruction of former icons like the

Van Kleef Aquarium,” he said.

“What Singapore lacks is a clear direction in its urban development strategies. Its fundamental planning foundation revolves around business, not pleasure, and as a result we are unable to compete with our South-east Asian neighbours in terms of travel authenticity.”

Song added: “The Singapore Tourism Board's recent non-participation, and its new campaign in Australia with its *Get Lost* slogan doesn't generate enthusiasm nor convey any qualitative messages. Sometimes, it's not about the hardware but the software - in this case, the experience that travellers need.”

## Travel expert clarifies stand on Travelport product dispute

Uniglobe Travel International Vancouver's Andrew Henry has sought to clarify the negativity that Travelport faced while rolling out its Agility package in the Americas, which *TTG Asia* attributed to travel experts' resistance towards adoption of next-

generation booking tools.

“The reaction had nothing to do with the tools themselves,” he explained. “The issue was that Travelport was not selling this tool to US travel (experts), but was forcing it (and its costs) upon them by bundling it with

essential features like queues and accounting interface.”

“Agencies reacted negatively to having to pay for these essential and previously free features, and that Travelport provided less than 30 days notice of the change in December,” he added.

## Letters

## Stability returns to the Maldives

As you are aware, the resorts in the Maldives are on separate individual islands.

Since the temporary turmoil we had was confined to Malé, the resorts are very safe as they always have been.

The situation in Malé has been grossly exaggerated in the media and by tour operators and it is essential that a more accurate image is portrayed.

The protests were restricted to a particular area of Malé itself. As you know, Malé is only a bit over 5km<sup>2</sup> and the fact that the protests were restricted to a small area of Malé should give an idea of just how contained the situation was.

This was the very reason that people could carry on with their daily routine while all the chaos was going on. Of course, there was a lot of vandalising that took place on a few inhabited islands away from Malé later on. But that was pure destruction carried out in retaliation and in no way with intention to harm the locals living on those islands.

The two days of instability were very shortlived and is now behind us. It all has been under control since the new President came into office. His first focus was to bring stability and peace to the disorder that was brewing.

Since all of the chaos has died down now, everyone is going on about their lives and daily routines peacefully.

With regards to cancellations, in the immediate aftermath of the chaos we did see sudden cancellations. However, as days go by, the cancellations have been declining now. I believe this is because tourists are becoming more aware of the geographical layout of the Maldives and its islands and that they know that their safety is a given on the resorts.

**Hilmy Hussain**  
Director  
*Coco Collection, Malé*

**TTG** | Publishing **Travel Trade**

TTG Travel Trade Publishing is a business group of TTG Asia Media

**EDITORIAL**

**Raini Hamdi**  
Group Editor ([raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com](mailto:raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com))

**Gracia Chiang**  
Editor, TTG Asia ([gracia.chiang@ttgasia.com](mailto:gracia.chiang@ttgasia.com))

**Karen Yue**  
Editor, TTGmice ([karen.yue@ttgasia.com](mailto:karen.yue@ttgasia.com))

**Brian Higgs**  
Editor, TTG Asia Online ([brian.higgs@ttgasia.com](mailto:brian.higgs@ttgasia.com))

**Linda Haden**  
Senior Reporter ([linda.haden@ttgasia.com](mailto:linda.haden@ttgasia.com))

**Liang Xinyi, Jayne Tay**  
Sub Editors  
([liang.xinyi@ttgasia.com](mailto:liang.xinyi@ttgasia.com), [jayne.tay@ttgasia.com](mailto:jayne.tay@ttgasia.com))

**Mimi Hudoyo**  
Editor, Indonesia ([ldmfasia@cbn.net.id](mailto:ldmfasia@cbn.net.id))

**Sim Kok Chwee**  
Correspondent-at-large ([aviasian.images@gmail.com](mailto:aviasian.images@gmail.com))

**N. Nithiyananthan**  
Chief Correspondent, Malaysia  
([nithi.nesadurai@ttgasia.com](mailto:nithi.nesadurai@ttgasia.com))

**Timothy France, Chamsai Jotisalikorn (Chami)**  
Correspondents, Thailand  
([timothy.france@ttgasia.com](mailto:timothy.france@ttgasia.com), [chamsai@fastmail.fm](mailto:chamsai@fastmail.fm))

**Marianne Carandang Rosa Ocampo**  
Correspondents, The Philippines  
([mcarandang@gmail.com](mailto:mcarandang@gmail.com), [rosa.ocampo@gmail.com](mailto:rosa.ocampo@gmail.com))

**Prudence Lui**  
Correspondent, Hong Kong ([prului@yahoo.com](mailto:prului@yahoo.com))

**Patricia Wee**  
Correspondent, Shanghai, China  
([wee.patricia1@yahoo.com](mailto:wee.patricia1@yahoo.com))

**Manuela Zoninsein**  
Correspondent, Beijing, China  
([manuela.zoninsein@gmail.com](mailto:manuela.zoninsein@gmail.com))

**Glenn Smith**  
Correspondent, Taiwan  
([glenn.smith@ttgasia.com](mailto:glenn.smith@ttgasia.com))

**Shekhar Niyogi**  
Chief Correspondent, India  
([shekhar.niyogi@ttgasia.com](mailto:shekhar.niyogi@ttgasia.com))

**Feizal Samath**  
Correspondent, Sri Lanka ([feizalsam@gmail.com](mailto:feizalsam@gmail.com))

**Redmond Sia, Haze Loh**  
Creative Designers

**Lina Tan**  
Editorial Assistant

**SALES & MARKETING**

**Michael Chow**  
Publisher ([michael.chow@ttgasia.com](mailto:michael.chow@ttgasia.com))

**Katherine Ng, Marisa Chen**  
Senior Business Managers  
([katherine.ng@ttgasia.com](mailto:katherine.ng@ttgasia.com), [marisa.chen@hk.china.com](mailto:marisa.chen@hk.china.com))

**Karen Cheung**  
Business Manager ([karen.cheung@hk.china.com](mailto:karen.cheung@hk.china.com))

**Jonathan Yap**  
Business Manager ([jonathan.yap@ttgasia.com](mailto:jonathan.yap@ttgasia.com))

**Cheryl Tan**  
Corporate Marketing Manager  
([cheryl.tan@ttgasia.com](mailto:cheryl.tan@ttgasia.com))

**Tan Ee Hiang**  
Marketing Executive ([tan.ee.hiang@ttgasia.com](mailto:tan.ee.hiang@ttgasia.com))

**Cheryl Lim**  
Advertisement Administration Manager  
([cheryl.lim@ttgasia.com](mailto:cheryl.lim@ttgasia.com))

**Carol Cheng**  
Assistant Manager Administration and Marketing  
([carol.cheng@hk.china.com](mailto:carol.cheng@hk.china.com))

**PUBLISHING SERVICES**

**Tony Yeo**  
Division Manager ([tony.yeo@ttgasia.com](mailto:tony.yeo@ttgasia.com))

**Agnes Loy**  
Senior Production Executive ([agnes.loy@ttgasia.com](mailto:agnes.loy@ttgasia.com))

**Nancy Lee**  
Desktop Publishing Executive ([nancy.lee@ttgasia.com](mailto:nancy.lee@ttgasia.com))

**Carol Wong**  
Circulation Executive ([carol.wong@ttgasia.com](mailto:carol.wong@ttgasia.com))

**TTG ASIA MEDIA**

**Darren Ng**  
Managing Director ([darren.ng@ttgasia.com](mailto:darren.ng@ttgasia.com))

**OFFICES**

**SINGAPORE** 1 Science Park Road  
Trade Publishing, a business group of TTG Asia Media. It is mailed free on written request to readers who meet predetermined criteria.  
#04-07 The Capricorn, Singapore Science Park II  
Singapore 117528  
Tel: (65) 6395-7575 Fax: (65) 6536-2972  
[contact@ttgasia.com](mailto:contact@ttgasia.com); [www.ttgasia.com](http://www.ttgasia.com)

**HONG KONG** 11/F ING Tower  
308-320 Des Voeux Road, Central, Hong Kong  
Tel: (852) 2571-9333 Fax: (852) 2806-0646

**BPA** Business Publication Administration  
TTG Asia is a product by TTG Travel Trade Publishing, a business group of TTG Asia Media. It is mailed free on written request to readers who meet predetermined criteria.  
Paid subscriptions are available to those who do not meet the criteria. Annual airmail subscriptions are US\$180 to Asia and US\$199 elsewhere. Cover price US\$5.  
MICA (P) 044/09/2011  
PPS 619/02/2012(022706)

Printed by Times Printers Pte Ltd  
16 Tuas Avenue 5, Singapore 639340

**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 honourees, 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



# Discover Japan with Best Western

Ancient temples, ultra-modern cities, trendy fashion hub,  
delectable meals, lightning-fast bullet trains...Japan has it all!

Stay 3 nights and receive a special 'Discover Asia' rate!

Valid from now until December 31, 2012.

Visit [bestwesternasia.com](http://bestwesternasia.com) or call toll free +800 0013 1779



THE WORLD'S LARGEST  
HOTEL CHAIN®



PLUS PREMIER





الملتقى  
Arabian  
Travel Market  
30 April – 3 May 2012

# روية معمقة Insight

حدث واحد، وجهات غير محدودة  
One Event, Unlimited Destinations  
Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre

Register for the Leading Travel Exhibition in the Middle East

Opportunity to connect with more than 2,200 exhibitors from up to 70 destinations.

Establish new business prospects, meet key contacts and discover developments that are driving the travel industry today.

Discover solutions to improve  
your future...

Register as a visitor now at:  
[www.arabiantravelmarket.com/registernow](http://www.arabiantravelmarket.com/registernow)

Scan the code below  
to register now



[www.arabiantravelmarket.com/registernow](http://www.arabiantravelmarket.com/registernow)



دائرة السياحة والتسويق التجاري  
Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing





**Raphael Saw**  
COO, Hospitality Business Group  
Director, Hospitality Operations  
Far East Organization, Singapore

Far East Organization (FEO), a household name property player in Singapore, now moves like Jagger in building hotels in the city, which is red-hot for investors. **Raini Hamdi** talks to Raphael Saw about how FEO is rocking the Singapore hotel sector

# Betting big on S'pore

**People ask me if hotels on city fringes are good investments. What's your experience with Oasia Hotel in the Novena area since it fully opened last October?**

It's a 428-room hotel in an area that is convenient – just two MRT stops from Orchard – and emerging, with residential developments but also more offices. It is also emerging as a medical hub, with The Parkway Group settling in sometime in the second half of this year.

We see that as the hotel gains better awareness, more corporates are coming. And, being two stops from Orchard, the leisure market is coming too. The mix is 50:50 but we want to grow the corporate business; 60:40 is ideal.

**What's the room rate and geographical mix? Is it going as you thought it should?**

Over S\$200 (US\$159). We're ambitious, so we can do better. Time is needed for the product to be known in the marketplace. Once more people know about the good design, nice environment and the convenience especially, we should be able to build the rate up to S\$250.

The mix is representative of arrivals to Singapore – the regional markets, Europe and the US.

**The hotel also launched your new brand, Oasia. What's behind the name?**

'Oasis' and 'Asia', so Oasia. It's an upscale brand and the promise is, when you stay in Oasia, you will find your own oasis after a long day, with Asian hospitality being part of that experience. A destination like Singapore will keep you busy, whether on business or leisure – you need an oasis to go back to. This is why our Club floor, for example, is one of the few in town that has its own dedicated pool and, if you look out, you will see a lot of greenery outside.

As well, a typical characteristic of Oasia is an interesting design

by an internationally-renowned designer. (For the first), Super Potato designed the public areas and Club floor.

**Ok, but you also have a brand called Quincy and in three years there's just the one in Orchard, and the Village brand. How do the three brands stack up?**

Quincy has touches of a boutique hotel. Its roomcount is smaller (108 rooms), so its service is more personalised. It has more design emphasis and is a bit more edgy in terms of experience. The rate is higher than Oasia (S\$300), partly because it is an all-inclusive product although guests do have a choice to opt for just room, breakfast and Internet.

The Village brand, on the other hand, is about hotels that are in interesting neighbourhoods. We bring neighbourhood touches into the hotel and also get guests to experience the wealth of the neighbourhood, be it culture, food, shopping, or the heritage of Singapore.

*(Editor's Note: There are four Village hotels and four Village serviced residences currently.)*

**So how are you growing these brands?**

We have many new projects. We've just launched PS/100 (in the CBD, Tanjong Pagar area), a mixed-use development comprising office space and our second Oasia Hotel, a 300-plus room, opening in 2014.

We will also be converting the shophouses at Far East Square (an FEO development), which are currently offices, into a charming, 37-room boutique hotel. We've not finalised the name yet, but it will be along the lines of what Far East Square is. It should open in the first half of 2013. There is always a shortage of hotels in the town area and the hotel offers a different choice in an interesting location which is right in the CBD. We're also building a new tower block, 300-

plus rooms, in Far East Square itself. It should open in 2014-2015.

**Will that be an Oasia?**

We're having internal discussions about it.

**Why do you invest on new brands and not fit your development into these brands?**

We will always consider using the (existing) brands but we won't insist on it, sometimes because the environment and the product we are creating do not fit into the brands.

**Would I be right to say FEO is not traditional in its hotel development approach?**

(Laughs) Of course we will still follow some of the traditions – there are certain reasons why certain traditions are there. But, as I said, if we need to break traditions, we are prepared to do so. It probably means we have to work harder in getting the awareness (of the hotel) out, but if you have an interesting offering or product, it can be done.

**What is more important, brand or product?**

They are both important. You create a brand because you want to offer a consistent experience and ride on scale of distribution, etc, but operation is equally important. After all, you've made a promise; so you have to deliver. This is an interesting part of our industry, especially if you are growing, and in an environment like Singapore, where labour costs are rising. There are challenges in recruitment and in space planning – the need to have efficient space to serve guests has become even more important or you'll end up hiring more people to do the

same job. This is why we work hand in hand with (FEO) project development (which also does residential and retail projects).

**How does having the property development background help in hotel development and vice versa?**

We're not afraid, for example, to venture outside the traditional catchment areas, although we are also in the city centre. We have been developing properties for over 50 years, so we have a good understanding of where the different locations are, what's happening there, what are the industries that can support the hotels.

Singapore has a better hotel market now. More visitors are coming and (the government is) growing the population. More businesses are setting up operation in Singapore and they have various accommodation needs. We have hotels if their need is for short-term, transient accommodation, or corporate leasing where they can rent our serviced apartments for two years. And if they like Singapore and want to call Singapore home, we hope they look at our (residential) properties for investment. So it is all inter-related.

**Why are you not expanding overseas?**

We are interested, but we really want to build our capabilities here. We now have close to 2,400 hotel rooms and more than 1,200 serviced residence units, with three more hotels and one serviced residence in the next five years. We want to take full advantage of Singapore as a growing destination and we want to build on our size, scale and talent.



**"If we need to break traditions, we are prepared to do so. It probably means we have to work harder..."**





## Creating a complete spa solution

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

### Best Western International

The spa and wellness tourism industry is booming, and nowhere is this trend more apparent than in the Asia Pacific region.

At Best Western International we are very conscious that our guests want to feel pampered when they are staying with us. This applies not only to leisure holiday-makers but also to business travellers seeking to rejuvenate their bodies and minds while on the road. With this in mind, Best Western has created a series of spa products catering for all our market tiers.

Initially Best Western offered a single spa product; Bhuvana My Spa. Rolled out in 2009, it provides authentic and affordable spa treatments offered by skilled therapists in an ambiance of relaxation and comfort.

Since this launch, the Best Western portfolio of brands has expanded with the refined BEST WESTERN PREMIER and the launch of BEST WESTERN PLUS. This caused us to reevaluate our spa offering, tailoring them to these new markets.

We recently launched Bhuvana Spa Lite for BEST WESTERN and BEST WESTERN PLUS properties. This offers an economic solution for hotels with high quality treatments offered either in rooms or by poolside, efficiently maximizing a hotel's space and resources.

Then catering for the higher tier BEST WESTERN PREMIER brand, Bhuvana Spa Luxe allows hotels to offer full-size spa facilities with highly-trained therapists and an entire spectrum of therapies and beauty treatments. Bhuvana Spa Luxe will be launched at the new BEST WESTERN PREMIER Dua Sentral in Kuala Lumpur, including four treatment rooms with private steam rooms and showers, three foot reflexology stations and one VIP Spa Suite with a plunge pool and steam shower. This level of luxury will fit perfectly into this outstanding new hotel, and we're confident it will prove incredibly popular with guests.

Across the region, our range of Bhuvana spa brands will enable Best Western to offer a complete spa solution, catering for both seasoned wellness seekers and first time spa-goers.



## AIRLINES

# Have a peach and scoot off

## Peach Aviation

A joint venture between All Nippon Airways (ANA), Japan's Innovation Network Corp and Hong Kong's Far Eastern Aviation, Peach Aviation is Japan's first homegrown LCC with a capitalisation of 15 billion yen (US\$179 million).

The first of three Japan-based LCCs starting operation in 2012, Peach will be competing with 10 foreign LCCs already present in the Japanese market. Its fleet of A320s will

operate on an 180-seat all-economy configuration, with 18 emergency-exit seats offering bigger legroom at a premium.

Standing for "Pan-Asia, Energetic, Affordable, Cute&Cool and Happy", Peach promises to deliver a Japanese standard of service; cabin crew sports casual uniforms and planes are outfitted in white, pink and fuchsia. Aspiring to "bridge Ja-



pan and other Asian economies", Peach will fly to regional destinations such as Seoul, Hong Kong and Taipei.

For the Osaka-Fukuoka route, Peach's fares in early March were priced between 3,780 yen and 11,780 yen, considerably lower than tickets offered by Japan Airlines and ANA (between 20,000 yen and 21,900 yen).

A ticket on the *Shinkansen* high-speed train – whose highly-convenient city-to-city connections pose the greatest competition to Peach on the domestic front – costs about 14,000 yen between both cities.

## Scoot Airways

Singapore Airlines (SIA) surprised the industry when it announced the launch of a new budget arm, Scoot Airways, in May 2011.

With a startup capital of S\$280 million (US\$221 million), Scoot will operate services of up to 10 hours from Singapore, beginning with daily flights to Sydney and the Gold Coast in Australia in June. Destinations in China and Japan are likely to be announced soon, while India, the Middle East, Africa and Europe are also on the radar.

Using B777-200s phased out of SIA's fleet, Scoot planes will have denser configuration, with a business-class cabin offering 38-inch

pitch and 22-inch wide seats. The economy-class layout has not been revealed but each row is expected to have 10 seats, an arrangement found even on such full-service carriers as Air France, Emirates and KLM.

Describing the airline as "quirky and memorable", Scoot's CEO, Campbell Wilson said that the carrier would not be solely dependent on Singapore's small market size, and its target segment was different from that of the parent company.

Services such as baggage, meals, preferred seating, extra legroom, priority boarding and carriage of sports equipment have been unbundled but some of these will be packaged with a seat booking. Bookings are expected to open by end-March.

"Scoot is SIA's answer to declining profits and an attempt to exploit the low-cost, mid-haul markets that are currently underserved," said Shukor Yusof, Standard & Poor's Asia-Pacific aviation editorial director. "Scoot is also a move to steal some of the thunder from Jetstar."

Scoot's main rivals, Jetstar Airways and Jetstar Asia Airways, will base a combined A300-200s and B787 Dreamliners fleet in Singapore for their growing Asia-Pacific network. Ironically, Scoot's launch of Sydney as its first destination finally prodded the Malaysian authorities to grant AirAsia X the rights to fly to Sydney – a route the Malaysia-based LCC has unsuccessfully lobbied for in the past several years.

## Cebu Pacific Air

To replicate its dominant domestic position in the long-haul market, Cebu Pacific Air (CEB) recently signed a lease for four Airbus A330-300s, which will be configured with more than 400 seats in a single-class layout. These planes will commence operation in the third quarter of 2013 on flights to cities with a high concentration of migrant Filipino workers, such as Hawaii, Saudi Arabia and the

United Arab Emirates.

CEB's CEO, Lance Gokongwei, said: "CEB plans to charge fares that are 35 per cent lower than our rivals, which would particularly appeal to the estimated 11 million Filipinos working abroad."

Europe, where over one million Filipino expats reside, is not a priority on CEB's expansion plans due to the wide geographical spread of Filipinos, high fuel costs and an EU ban on



Filipino airlines. The range of the A330s also meant that any destination beyond Istanbul and Moscow needs to be served with an intermediate stop, a similar situation affecting the US west coast cities such as San Francisco and Los Angeles.

With its extensive local network, CEB is the leading budget carrier in the Philippines, where LCC penetration is one of Asia-Pacific's highest at 80 per cent. Other local budget carriers include AirPhil Express, Zest Air, AirAsia Philippines and SEAir, most of which also compete in the regional markets.

## Thai Smile Air

For a brief period, Thai Airways International (THAI) flirted with Singapore-based Tiger Airways to establish a joint-venture LCC, tentatively named Thai Tiger Airways. (THAI also owns Nok Air, a domestic LCC.) By end-2011, all talks of Thai Tiger fell through, and in its place emerged Thai Smile – renamed from Thai Wings – the new LCC entity of THAI.

Positioned as a hybrid LCC between the no-frills Nok Air and the premium THAI, Thai Smile offers a two-class service with a cost base similar to a budget airline.

With Suvarnabhumi Airport as its base, Thai Smile will fly to popular domestic destinations such as Chiang Rai and Surat Thani, and intends to compete with Thai AirAsia to erode the latter's stronghold on the domestic LCC market.

The new carrier will commence operation on July 1 with a fleet of new 174-seat

Airbus A320s, flying to regional cities such as Kaohsiung, Shenzhen, Macau and Surabaya. Other planned routes include flying from Phuket to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Chiang Mai. Thai Smile expects to have a fleet of 11 A320s by 2015.



## Mandala Airlines

A private LCC that suspended operations in January 2011 after falling on hard times, Mandala Airlines was revitalised when Tiger Airways paid a token one US dollar for a 33 per cent share.

With its Aircraft Operator's Certificate now re-activated, the restructured airline will resume flights on April 4 on Airbus A320s provided by Tiger Airways, in addition to loans injected by Tiger and other Mandala stakeholders.

Mandala will compete with other Indonesian LCCs such as Lion Air, Citilink

and Indonesia AirAsia in the domestic and regional markets. It also has to contend with second-tier carriers such as Sriwijaya Air and Batavia Air.

As of early-March, Mandala has not announced its destinations but they are likely to be located within a five-hour flight time from Jakarta and Denpasar.



When low-cost carriers (LCCs) burst onto Asia's aviation landscape about a decade ago, they were initially greeted with scepticism due to restrictive bilateral air service agreements, lack of secondary airports and low Internet and credit card penetration. However, with creative collaboration (eg, working with convenience stores and post offices to distribute tickets), liberalised air service agreements and improved infrastructure, budget air travel swiftly took hold in the region, with South-east Asia seeing the fiercest competition.

Kuala Lumpur's Low Cost Carrier Terminal quickly reached its designated capacity and a huge replacement in Sepang – dubbed KLIA2 – with a handling capacity of 45 million passengers per annum (mppa), is due for completion in April 2013. In Singapore, budget travellers accounted for 25.8 per cent of Changi Airport's total passenger throughput in 2011; the existing Budget Terminal will soon make way for the 16-mppa Terminal 4, which is expected to be completed in 2017.

South-east Asia may be the most fertile LCC playing field but North Asia is fast making up for the lost ground. South Korea's handful of budget carriers has ventured beyond its shores and Japan is the next place to watch with three LCCs – Peach Aviation, Air Asia Japan and Jetstar Japan – making their debut services in 2012. But questioning the growth potential of LCCs in high-cost Japan, Standard & Poor's Asia-Pacific aviation editorial director, Shukor Yusof, said: "Rail travel remains a profitable and viable alternative because it's point-to-point as compared to air travel, plus there are few secondary airports in Japan."

The failed attempts of two longhaul LCC pioneers – Oasis Hong Kong Airlines and Viva Macau – have not dampened the enthusiasm or ambition of new players. Asia's longhaul LCC forerunners, Jetstar Airways and AirAsia X, are now getting imminent competition from Scoot Airways, Cebu Pacific Air and Tokyo-based Skymark Airlines, which is entering the fray with its Airbus A380s and A330s. – **Sim Kok Chwee**

**Flightcode** MM / APJ

**Primary base** Osaka Kansai Airport

**Current fleet** 3 A320s (leased)

**On order** 7 A320s (leased)

**Current destinations** Osaka, Fukuoka, Sapporo, Nagasaki and Kagoshima

**Planned destinations** Seoul-Incheon (starting May 8), Hong Kong (starting July 1), Taipei (starting September 30), Okinawa (second half of 2012)

**Website** www.flypeach.com

**Flightcode** Yet to be announced

**Primary base** Singapore Changi Airport (T2)

**Planned fleet** 4 B777-200s for the initial phase but up to 14 aircraft by 2016

**Confirmed destinations** Sydney, Gold Coast (starting mid-2012)

**Planned destinations** China, North Asia, more Australian cities, India, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. North America is not of immediate priority but has not been discounted

**Website** www.flyscoot.com

**Flightcode** 5J / CEB

**Primary bases** Manila and Cebu

**Current fleet** 20 A320s, 10 A319s, 8 ATR72s

**On order** 7 A320s, 30 A321NEOs, 8 A330-300s (to be leased)

**Current regional destinations** 19 cities including Bangkok, Singapore, Taipei, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong, Macau and Shanghai

**Planned long-haul destinations** Australia, India, Middle East, parts of Europe and the US

**Website** www.cebupacificair.com

**Flightcode** TG

**Primary base** Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport

**Planned fleet** 11 Airbus A320s by 2015

**Planned domestic destinations** Ubon Ratchathani, Udon Thani, Khon Kaen, Chiang Rai and Surat Thani

**Planned international destinations** Kaohsiung, Shenzhen, Macau, Surabaya, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur

**Planned routes** Phuket-Singapore, Phuket-Kuala Lumpur, Phuket-Chiang Mai

**Flightcode** RI

**Primary bases** Jakarta and Denpasar

**Planned fleet** 10 Airbus A320s

**Confirmed destinations** Yet to be announced

**Website** Yet to be announced but potentially via www.tigerairways.com

# PATA TRAVEL MART 2012

**PATA**<sup>®</sup>  
Pacific Asia Travel Association

**Next Gen**

**September 25-28, 2012**  
**SMX Convention Center**  
**Metro Manila, Philippines**

**Build your business at PTM 2012 in Manila, *Mabuhay!***

Glorietta, Ayala Center, Makati City

El Nido Resorts, Palawan

Puerto Princesa  
Underground River, Palawan

Fort Santiago, Intramuros, Manila



It's more fun in the  
**Philippines**

Host:



Official Carrier:



Official Publication:



Official Venue:



*Register Now at [www.PATA.org/mart](http://www.PATA.org/mart)*



# Europe is hot, hot, hot

Demand for European destinations among Asian travellers gets stronger as the euro weakens



Lake Geneva: A popular destination in Switzerland



A Thai soap opera gives Prague (above) the limelight



London: In demand, but 'expensive' due to Olympics

## Strong Singapore dollar goes far

Longhaul travel out of Singapore is up, spurred by a stronger local currency and thirst for exotic destinations.

Senior vice president of marketing and public relations at CTC Travel, Alicia Seah, said bookings to Europe rose about 40 to 50 per cent in 2011. "Uncommon destinations such as Turkey, Tibet, Croatia, Slovenia and South Africa have attracted many, especially the middle-aged and affluent experienced travellers," she added. There was also a clear shift towards exploring destinations in-depth.

Chan Brothers Travel's manager for marketing and communications, Jang Chang, expects a 30 per cent rise in longhaul bookings this year. Europe – particularly Switzerland, France and Italy – remains popular for Chan Brothers.

Seah added: "European NTOs in Asian markets promote their natural, cultural and historical attractions well, while the US is still only popular for its theme parks."

Las Vegas and Orlando are the main destinations for CTC Travel. However bookings to the US are up by only five per cent, as most Singaporeans are still deterred by the extended travelling time.

And longhaul destinations are still unable to shake off Singapore travellers' love affair with Australia, which, despite the rising Australian dollar, saw a 40 per cent growth in the last 12 months. Chang claimed bookings to Australia rose 80 per cent for Chan Brothers at the recent NATAS (National Association of Travel Agents Singapore) Travel Fair, fuelled by Singaporeans looking for winter respite during the June school break. – **Linda Haden**

## More Thais head for Eastern Europe

Severe flooding in Thailand late last year has hit outbound travel as Thai consumers cope with the cost of property repairs and cut back on spending.

But the good news is, strong currencies in Australia and New Zealand against a weakening Euro have triggered a swing to Europe among Thais who still have the budget to travel beyond nearby destinations.

Many travel consultants, including Chamnong Intarot, managing director of Sawasdee Holidays, said Europe was the most popular destination at the moment. Italy, Switzerland and France remain favourites among Thai travellers who gravitate towards major cities such as Rome and Paris. Yet, Eastern Europe is the fastest-growing destination. More Thai travellers are heading to Austria and the Czech Republic after Prague was featured in a popular Thai soap opera last year. Suthipong Pheunphiphop, vice president of Thai Travel Agents Association, said many travelling Thais had already visited Western and Southern Europe and, as the Schengen zone expands eastwards, travellers were looking towards the new frontier.

As demand centres on Europe, travel companies are responding. Traditionally an Australia and New Zealand specialist, Big World Holidays is now offering tours to Europe. Agents are also adapting itineraries to reduce the cost of package tours by shortening the length of stay and budget accommodation.

The trade still sees potential in the longhaul, including the US, but complicated visas procedures are a drawback. – **Timothy France**

## Philippine longhaul numbers 'steady'

Travel professionals in the Philippines are reporting steady longhaul business, with no major upsets except for pilgrimages to Israel and neighbouring Middle Eastern cities – still the bread-and-butter for some – due to news of armed conflict.

Helen Hao, vice president of Pan Pacific Travel Corp, GSA for Trafalgar, said: "I don't see a marked increase of tourists to Europe or the US – it's been the same."

At Rajah Travel Corp, business has been "good" and "a good mix of different destinations". President Aileen Clemente credits the stable Philippine peso, which has appreciated gradually over the years. "Last year, the US west coast was big – places like Las Vegas, where hotel prices had dropped tremendously," Clemente said.

She said that "hot" destinations were not always defined geographically. "What's 'hot' is river cruising in Europe, as opposed to sea cruising, which feels safer at this point," Clemente said.

But longhaul destinations appear to have new competitors in the form of Nepal and India, which are rising destinations for Philippine travellers.

Mamerth Banatin, president of Adam's Travel Corp, said: "Kashmir is opening up. Ten years ago it was a war zone; now it's up-and-coming," said Banatin.

The established pilgrimage tour company has developed six-day Delhi-Agra-Jaipur packages using Thai Airways flights. The tours offer extensions to Kashmir or the "mini-Tibet" area of Ladakh, or a stopover in Bangkok on the way back to Manila. – **Marianne Carandang**

## China consultants hail US visa easing policy, but those in Taiwan remain skeptical

Travel consultants in China are embracing President Barack Obama's call to expedite visa processing to increase travel and tourism to the US (*TTG Asia e-Daily*, November 25, 2011).

China International Travel Service (CITS) account manager, Candice Wang, said extended visa interview hours would allow more people to go after working hours.

Currently, visa applications are also hampered by high competition for them, especially during summer travel.

Travel consultants are hopeful that more visas will be issued following the call and expect leisure travel to the US, more than business travel, to boom. Yao Qian, whose firm manages international travel for students at Beijing Language and Culture University, also believes more students will travel to the US for fun, not just to study. Currently, they have to rely on student visas to enter.

In Taiwan, the possibility of a visa waiver to the US by September alone is unlikely to turnaround flagging leisure travel demand to the States, according to consultants.

Currently, individual travellers must obtain their own visa at the US embassy, a process that is time-consuming and costly. Travel companies cannot apply for group visas for travel to the US.

But consultants said the US was mainly for business travel, not leisure, as it was not as attractive as other popular shorthaul destinations.

Antonio Liao, Phoenix Tours president, expects a short-term bump at best. "There might be a 30 to 40 per cent increase in the first year after it goes into effect. The same thing happened when Canada and the UK launched visa waiver programmes," he said.

Star Travel Corp CEO, Vincent Lin, agrees, saying other barriers remain, especially high air fares. "Airlines have to reduce their fares by 30 to 40 per cent to see a big increase in tourism to the US," he said.

But Liao does not see this happening in the near future. He said: "China Airlines lost US\$22.5 million on the Taipei to New York route last year, and it just cut its London route. They want to recoup that loss." – **By Glenn Smith in Taipei and Manuela Zoninsein in Beijing**



US Embassy in Beijing, China



# Switzerland hikes effort

## Switzerland Tourism will open a South-east Asia office in Singapore in June, reports Raini Hamdi

Switzerland Tourism has named Ivan Breiter, its market manager-Belgium and Luxembourg, as market manager-South-east Asia based in Singapore effective June 1. Breiter will market the destination to the travel trade and media in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia.

South-east Asia is Switzerland's fourth "booming" market after China, India and Russia.

The move to step up presence in the region is hastened by declining arrivals from main markets such as Germany, Holland, Belgium, Italy and the UK due to the economic crisis. In contrast, South-east Asia grew 13 per cent to around 170,000 pax last year, said Switzerland Tourism executive vice presi-

dent-markets & meetings, Urs Eberhard.

"The decline (in the European markets) is quite prominent, up to 10 per cent. Because of their large numbers, it is substantial, although markets like France are not declining as much, say, three per cent, and those like Spain, Poland and the Nordic countries are still registering positive growth," he said.

Eberhard was in Singapore, Bangkok, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur with around 12 representatives from the various Swiss cantons to conduct a workshop for some 100 travel consultants.

Singapore is the largest South-east Asian market, accounting for some 35 per cent of total arrivals from the region, followed by Thailand (30 per cent). But growth is fastest from Indonesia, up 46 per cent last year.

Currently, Switzerland Tourism has a representative in Singapore and Malaysia in the form of an embassy staff who dedicates about 30 per cent of his time to tourism representation. This will be the first time a full-time dedi-

cated director is appointed to increase Switzerland's share of the South-east Asian market, with a target of 12 per cent annual growth. The director will continue to be supported by the embassy representatives in Singapore and Malaysia. In Thailand and Indonesia, there would also eventually be similar support by an embassy staff, said Eberhard.

The Singapore regional office, will be located within the Swiss embassy.

Eberhard said Switzerland Tourism believed in working with the travel trade and would be supporting travel consultants in conducting consumer promotions, joint advertising and raising awareness by organising fam trips to Switzerland, among other initiatives.

Lucerne Tourism overseas market manager, Mark Meier, said: "We have been pushing for Switzerland Tourism to have a dedicated person to promote Switzerland in South-east Asia. The figures are growing. We saw 20 per cent growth from Malaysia, for example."

## Rwanda on the road to recovery

After years of conflict, Rwanda is making remarkable recovery with new infrastructure, destinations and unique activities to boost its emerging tourism sector.

Rwanda welcomed more than 900,000 international visitors in 2011, a 36 per cent increase from 2010, with Germans accounting for 26 per cent. Visitors' spending reached more than US\$250 million. International inbound and outbound visitorship is expected to increase with international air access, in addition to new and upgraded parks and trails.

With the 2015 opening of the new Bugesera International Airport, south of Kigali, Rwanda is set to become a major transportation hub for Eastern and Central Africa. RwandAir is also expanding services with the addition of two Boeing 737-800NG, the first in Africa.

Rwanda is positioning its Nyungwe National Park as a world-class haven for birdwatchers and hikers. The Nyungwe Forest Lodge is billed as a first-class eco-lodge and is East Africa's only canopy walk suspended 60m above the forest floor, which is a spectacular way to explore the forest.

To further expand Rwanda's eco-tourism and cultural tourism attractions, the USAID-sponsored Nyungwe Nziza Project is helping to develop community tourism around Nyungwe National Park. Friends of Nyungwe Cooperative in Kitabi are building a cultural village, which will feature a campsite for tourists, a restaurant with catering services, and an agri-tourism site with tea plantation tours.

According to World Economic Forum Rankings, Rwanda is one of the world's safest and most tourist-, environment- and business-friendly countries.



A traditional Rwanda hut

Courtesy of Eilegon

*think. share. develop.*

**To know about the latest in Indian Meeting & Convention Industry from the finest experts, 'Conventions India' is the place to be, whether you are an association or a corporate.**

South Asia's most respected & credible show for the meetings and conventions industry

**Conventions India Conclave**  
20th - 21st Aug 2012

**IT & CM India**  
21st - 23rd Aug 2012

**Incredible India**

ORGANISED BY

COLLABORATING PARTNER



INDIA EXPO CENTRE  
GREATER NOIDA  
National Capital Region of Delhi (NCR)

**7<sup>th</sup> CONVENTIONS INDIA conclave**

in collaboration with **IT&CM India**

The 7th Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Events Conclave being organised by the India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) with the support of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, is an education - cum - business promotion event. The 2012 event will showcase not only what is one of India's top meeting - exposition venue, but also showcase NCR that have understood what the business of convention is all about. The participants will also experience one of the newest and finer airports in South Asia.

**India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB)**

(Sponsored by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India)  
Room 233 A, Ashok Hotel, Niti Marg, Chanakya Puri, New Delhi - 110 021, INDIA

Phone: +91 -11-2687 3612, 2611 2264, 2611 0101 Extn. 3186 | Fax: +91 -11-2687 4318 & 2687 3216  
Email: info@icpb.org, conclave@icpb.org | www.icpb.org





Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn) retains its charm in Bangkok

Lang Xinyi



# Bangkok bounces back

Capital rebounds from November floods and endures February's terror scares. By **Timothy France**

**Arrivals** Bangkok has rebounded from heavy flooding last quarter, with international arrivals at Suvarnabhumi Airport recovering from November's plunge of 27.5 per cent year-on-year.

By January, however, international arrivals to Bangkok posted a 4.2 per cent growth over January 2011 and, nationally, a rise of 7.7 per cent was recorded. This quick recovery is being driven, in part, by pent-up demand from the corporate travel sector.

Preliminary results from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), however, show a minor 0.4 per cent drop in arrivals to Suvarnabhumi in February, a likely impact of the February bombing incidents and related terrorism alerts.

**NTO** TAT helped buoy arrivals through the high season with the *Beautiful Thailand* campaign, which offered discounted air fares and hotel rates to inbound and domestic travellers.

The authority is now preparing to launch its new *Miracle Thailand* campaign at the end of March. Precise details have yet to

be released, though TAT governor Suraphon Svetasreni said the campaign would promote new tourism products from across the country.

**Hotels** Despite the soaking – and a room supply that runneth over – Bangkok hotel occupancies ended 2011 ahead of the national average at 63.2 per cent, with hoteliers indicating no ill-effects from the floods or February bombings.

While occupancies continue their protracted recovery, average daily rates however are among the lowest in the country and the region, ending 2011 at 2,991 baht (US\$97) while Phuket hotels charged 3,993 baht on average.

Jones Lang LaSalle Hotels has pinpointed oversupply as a potential threat to hotel investment in Bangkok.

Of the 18,769-room national pipeline, 53 per cent will be built in the capital. More than half of these rooms will contribute to the luxury and upscale sectors, but there is increasing development in the mid-market. A total of 4,098 mid-market rooms and 472 economy rooms are to be built in Thailand over the next



**“Thailand is now seeing resurgence in inbound travel due to pent-up demand from the corporate sector.”**

**Bert van Walbeek**  
Managing director  
of The Winning Edge and  
Chairman of PATA Thailand

five years. With a growing Asian middle class and the opening up of ASEAN over the coming years, the mid-market sector is expected to see rapid growth.

**Products** Hilton recently announced its first Waldorf Astoria in South-east Asia to open in Bangkok in 2015 with 170 rooms.

Hilton will also open the Hilton Sukhumvit Bangkok and DoubleTree by Hilton, Sukhumvit Bangkok in 2013.

These will accompany the Sofitel So Bangkok, which opened on February 28, and the Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit, opening in April.

Meanwhile, at the budget end of the hotel market, Tune Hotels is expected to open its first property in Bangkok in July.

Terminal 21 also recently opened in Bangkok's Asoke, adding to the city's broad selection of designer retail outlets.

**Access** Bangkok's secondary airport re-opened earlier this month. Nok Air is once again operating from Don Muang, however Orient Thai will remain at Suvarnabhumi, citing incon-

sistent state policy as the flood-forced closure has ignited debate over the future of the facility.

Airlines and IATA purport a single hub policy, but with Suvarnabhumi already operating beyond capacity, Don Muang could provide a temporary or longterm solution to congestion.

Bangkok is growing quickly as an aviation hub. Thai AirAsia has increased frequencies and introduced new routes to Trang, Lampang, Nakhon Phanom and, regionally, Colombo, though it is pulling out services to New Delhi and Hangzhou in March.

Bangkok Airways has also added an extra flight from Bangkok to Chiang Mai and Phuket, and 12 weekly direct flights from Bangkok to Lampang, all from March 25.

Meanwhile, Thai Airways International will launch its new premium carrier, Thai Smile, in July (see Airlines report, page 8), and is also planning to start up a new budget carrier to compete with AirAsia after the Tiger Airways joint venture fell through.

Based at Suvarnabhumi airport, Thai Smile will fly to Kaohsiung, Shenzhen, Macau and Surabaya, plus from Phuket to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Chiang Mai.



Checking in

# Hyatt Regency Hua Hin



The hotel has spent 120 million baht (US\$4 million) refurbishing its Regency Club facilities. *Raini Hamdi* checks into an old favourite

**LOCATION** To me, on the right end of the beach, where there aren't too many people and peddlers, the sand feels finer. At 200m, the resort has the longest beachfront of all Hua Hin hotels. The village is only some 10 minutes' drive away.

**AMBIENCE** I remember visiting this property when it opened 10 years ago and, seeing it now, age has only made its 6.5-hectare tropical garden more luscious while its Thai-style architecture has stood the tide of time.

**ROOMS** I check in at the Regency Club lounge and, without much delay, am escorted to my Regency Club Deluxe room on the ground floor, which is larger than Club rooms on the second and third levels. The room has

its own outdoor patio with direct access to the Club's private pool.

I like the refurbishment done to the sleek-looking room, which is appointed with warm colours and tastefully adorned with Thai artwork and decorative pieces. The new-generation Club room also comes with tech-savvy fixtures such as an iPod dock and free wired or wireless Internet (whose speed is a dream).

This particular room, however, is not that ideal for the overly conscious type, as the plants have not yet grown enough to cover it from prying eyes. I'm not shy; besides, there is hardly anyone walking around. Guests are just sleeping by the pool.

**F&B** True to the Hyatt brand, the hotel has a good selection of F&B outlets, notably the Italian Figs, Talay Thai restaurant and the McFarland House, which offers casual dining by the beach.

Club guests are spoilt for choice with free breakfast from 06.30-10.30 and happy hours from 17.00-19.00 with good and generous drinks options. As part of the refurbishment, the lounge



has been extended. So popular it is that even with more tables and seats, the place is abuzz with guests who, like me, just love a pre-dinner cocktail and people-watching at that time of the day.

**PRICING** This is the first time I have seen a Club package that bundles a spa treatment for one person per night, on top of other Club benefits. Thus, staying three nights, I have three spa treatments at The Barai and decide on a couple's treatment

(60-minute massage each) and another treatment for myself on another day. What a great idea to entice more guests to the spa.

**FACILITIES** I just love the free-form, never-ending main pool, which is a real joy to explore and swim languidly in. For kids – and those young at heart – there is also a 22m long, seven-metre high water slide and a beach pool.

**SERVICE** Led by the ever-hospitable GM, Sammy Carolus, the

**Name** Hyatt Regency Hua Hin  
**No. of rooms** 213  
**Rate** From 10,800 baht (US\$350) for a Regency Club Deluxe room (includes spa treatment for one pax per night and other perks)  
**Contact details**  
Tel: (66) 3252-1234  
Fax: (66) 3252-1233  
Email: [huahin.regency@hyatt.com](mailto:huahin.regency@hyatt.com)  
[www.huahin.regency.hyatt.com](http://www.huahin.regency.hyatt.com)

service is hard to fault.

**VERDICT** A hot favourite.

Vic3 Bangkok  
The Comforts of Modern City Living.



BEST AVAILABLE RATES  
STARTING FROM

THB1,500\*



Vic3 Bangkok  
No 89 Phahan Yothin Soi 3  
Phaya Thai, Bangkok 10400  
Thailand

**VIC3**  
Bangkok

Vic3 Bangkok is centrally located in the Phaya Thai district. Just a 3-minute walk to Sanam Pao skytrain station with easy access to the new airport rail link – Phaya Thai station, this contemporary hotel is also close to popular shopping spots, multi-national companies and government offices. Vic3 Bangkok is ideal for both leisure and business travellers alike.

For bookings or information, please call (66-2) 344 2500,  
1800 888 272 (Thailand toll-free) or email [enquiry.bangkok@the-ascott.com](mailto:enquiry.bangkok@the-ascott.com)

\*Terms and conditions Rates are subject to 10% service charge and 7% VAT. Advance reservation required and rooms are subject to availability. No-show charges apply for cancellations within 48 hours prior to arrival. Rates are subject to change without prior notice. A valid credit card is required to guarantee bookings.

Managed by  
**THE ASCOTT**  
LIMITED  
A Member of Capitaland

Vic3 Bangkok is managed by The Ascott Limited, a member of Capitaland. The Ascott Limited is the largest global serviced residence owner-operator in over 70 cities across more than 20 countries across Asia Pacific, Europe and the Gulf region.

## Enchanting & Magical

Phra Apai Mani is our symbol of strength, poise and charisma; and just like the harmonious charm of Phra Apai Mani and his extraordinary magical flute, the Royal Cliff Hotels Group embraces the ageless promise of a safe haven.

Upon entering the state of exclusivity and fascination all our valued guests and visitors are assured of a delightful and enchanting experience. It is a place where we genuinely care for all our guests whilst thriving to fulfill those unexpressed wishes.



**ROYAL CLIFF HOTELS GROUP**  
THE STATE OF EXCLUSIVITY & FASCINATION

"A LEGENDARY WORLD-CLASS HOTELS GROUP"

353 Phra Tamnuk Road, Pattaya, Chonburi 20150, Thailand.  
Tel: 038 250 421 | Fax: 038 250 511, 513 | Email: [relax@royalcliff.com](mailto:relax@royalcliff.com) | [www.royalcliff.com](http://www.royalcliff.com)





# WORLD ISLAMIC TOURISM MART

Islamic Tourism Leading The Way

**31 May - 2 June, 2012**

**PUTRA WORLD TRADE CENTRE  
& SERI PACIFIC HOTEL  
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA**



- ☒ **B2B NETWORKING SESSIONS**
- ☒ **WITM InCoMTHU CONFERENCE**
- ☒ **B2C CONSUMER EXHIBITION**

**Network, Enhance and Expand your Business to over 25,000 Buyers, Sellers, Exhibitors and Visitors at the Premium Muslim Tourism event in Malaysia. SIGN UP NOW to be a part of WITM 2012 by clicking on <http://witm.matta.org.my>.**

**WITM 2012 – the ideal platform to capture the affluent and fast growing Global Muslim Tourism market segment.**



#### **WITM Secretariat,**

Wisma MATTA, No 6, Jalan Metro Pudu 2, Fraser Business Park,  
Off Jln Yew, 55100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

**Tel:** +603 9222 1155 **Fax:** +603 9223 8555

**Email:** [secretariat.witm@matta.org.my](mailto:secretariat.witm@matta.org.my) or [info.witm@matta.org.my](mailto:info.witm@matta.org.my)

**Website:** <http://witm.matta.org.my>

**Contact Person:** Ms Sabihah: [sabihah@matta.org.my](mailto:sabihah@matta.org.my)  
Ms Shaidah: [shaidah@matta.org.my](mailto:shaidah@matta.org.my)



[facebook.com/witm.malaysia](https://facebook.com/witm.malaysia)



[twitter.com/witmmalaysia](https://twitter.com/witmmalaysia)



[my.linkedin.com/in/witmmalaysia](https://my.linkedin.com/in/witmmalaysia)

**Organized By:**



**In Collaboration With:**



**Official Airline:**



**Gold Sponsor:**



**Silver Sponsor:**



**Supported By:**



**Official Media Partners**



**Official Travel Magazines:**



**Sponsor:**



**Technology Partner:**





## Test drive

## Such golden views and hues



A cruise along the River of Kings on *Anantara Song* is music for the heart and mind, discovers **Raini Hamdi**

**WHY** Gives you a wide angle of how exotic Thailand really is as you cruise along Chao Phraya, the River of Kings. Gleaming *wats* and rustic lives along the riverside aside, what's on the river itself – the rice barges, for example – are pretty interesting. Plus, it's stylish and private if you charter, as we did, the whole *Anantara Song*, to celebrate a milestone birthday of a relative.

**WHAT** A two-deck solid boat made of teak and polished mahogany. I was amazed it could fit four 20-25m<sup>2</sup> staterooms (bedrooms) with ensuite bathrooms in the lower deck, and a spacious living/dining room and open-air lounge area in the upper deck. And that its tiny kitchen and bar could produce a spread of Thai dishes for lunch and dinner, and serve up tea as though we're at



**Name** *Anantara Song*  
**Rate** 59,000 baht (US\$1,921) for a normal 3D/2N cruise for two, but private charters can be arranged, such as this 2D/1N cruise  
**Contact details**  
 Tel: (66-2) 477-0770  
 Email: bangkokcruises@anantara.com  
 Website: <http://bangkok-cruises.anantara.com>

the Oriental. Good *mise en place*.

We had a crew of four, led by captain Johnny, whose pleasant demeanour and politeness added a touch of exquisiteness.

**HOW** We chartered the boat for a two-day/one-night cruise,

a shorter version of the vessel's normal three-day/two-night *Ayutthaya Thousand Golden Temples Tour*.

The boat set sail from a pier located in front of Anantara Bangkok Riverside Resort & Spa. While I would be content just to cruise, part of the highlight were the tours, which included a stop at the Temple of Dawn (Wat Arun) that dates back to the ancient Ayutthaya period, and at the Royal Barges National Museum, where a collection of these decorated boats could be seen upclose. A private guide was also assigned to us on all tours.

We moored for the night at Wat Niwet Thammapravat, which we toured the next morning. Dating back to 1878, it was built in the style of a Gothic church. A visit to the summer palace, Bang Pa-In Palace, came next. Such beautiful grounds, and I particularly liked the intricate Chinese temple, one of several buildings there.

**VERDICT** Exotic sights of Thailand, viewed at leisure and great comfort.

## So Sofitel opens

Sofitel So Bangkok has opened, the second in operation after the So Sofitel Mauritius.

So is a trendy and design-led take on the core Sofitel brand. For the Bangkok property, award-winning Thai architect Smith Obayawat and five famous Thai interior designers teamed up with celebrated French fashion designer, Christian Lacroix, on the design. Lacroix's contributions include the Tree of Life emblem, uniforms, the master piece in the lobby, Club Signature and decorative items.

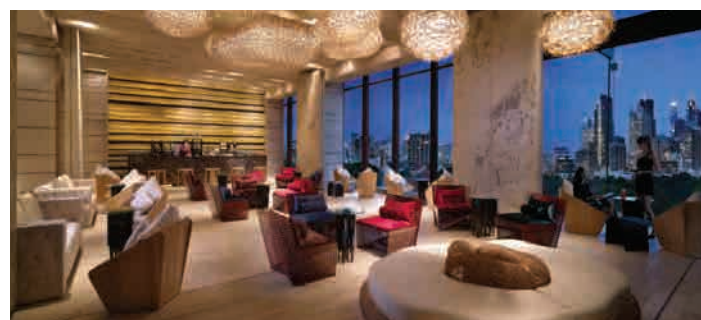
The hotel is in a prime location on the corner of Rama IV Road and Sathorn Road. A total of 238 rooms and suites based on the five elements of water, earth, wood, metal and fire are offered. There are eight room categories and, far from standard, they

range from So Cosy to So VIP. There are four restaurants and bars, a chocolate boutique, wellness areas and Apple Mac mini in all rooms.

The hotel also boasts creative meeting spaces, including the Social Club, inspired by a production house ambience and equipped with dedicated live cooking stations. The BOX is a suspended creative space (50m<sup>2</sup>) with glass walls suitable for intimate events.

Coffeebreaks revolve around – what else – but the five elements and other imaginative themes from the playful Alice in Wonderland to an elegant Paris night.

Meanwhile, a Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit will open in April, while the Sofitel Bangkok Silom will soon be rebranded a Pullman. – **Raini Hamdi**



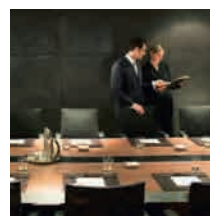
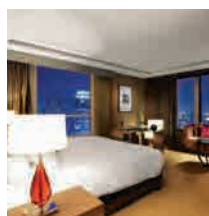
## SOFITEL BANGKOK SUKHUMVIT OPENING APRIL 2, 2012

### TWELVE MAGNIFIQUE WISHES

PARTAKE IN AN EXCLUSIVE CHANCE TO PICK ONE WISH PER DAY FOR THE LENGTH OF YOUR STAY. INDULGE IN TWO GLASSES OF CHAMPAGNE AND TAPAS AT L'APPART, OR A PRIVATE TASTING OF THE WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE BEER. EVERY DESIRE FULFILLED. YOUR WISH IS OUR COMMAND.

AVAILABLE TO ENJOY UNTIL JUNE 30, 2012.

189 SUKHUMVIT ROAD SOI 13-15, KLONGTOEY NUA  
 WATTANA, BANGKOK 10110 THAILAND  
 TEL: +66 (0) 2126 9999 - H5213@SOFITEL.COM  
 WWW.SOFITEL.COM



SOFITEL  
LUXURY HOTELS

Life is *Magnifique*





Courtesy of Melco Crown Entertainment

# Macau on the move

The fun has not stopped yet in the SAR, which has more new products. By **Deborah Cornfield**

**Arrivals** Macau's inbound visitorship hit a record number of 28 million in 2011, a 12.2 per cent hike from 2010, according to the country's Statistics and Census Service. Almost 25 million visitors came from mainland China, followed by Hong Kong and Taiwan. International visitorship reached almost three million, as compared to 580,000 when Macau SAR debuted in 1999.

Total visitor expenditure (excluding gaming expenses) soared by 20 per cent from MOP37.9 billion (US\$4.7 billion) in 2010 to MOP45.3 billion in 2011. The growth was attributed to increased visitorship and per capita spending.

**NTO** The Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO) is initiating a three-tier plan for tourism this year, following the government's stance to position Macau as the "World Centre of Tourism and Leisure".

MGTO will launch a new tourism website this year to provide easier access to tourism information. MGTO is also due to produce research results and recommendations aimed at achiev-

ing Macau's positioning as world centre of tourism and leisure.

Last September, the Macau Tourism and Cultural Activities Centre was launched as a one-stop tourist information centre featuring a "Virtual Macau" experience with activities and products showcasing Macau's rich cultural heritage.

**Hotels** Benefiting from the high inbound traffic, average occupancy rate was at 89.7 per cent in 2011, up two per cent from 2010. The number of hotels and guesthouses totalled 22,356, with five-star hotels accounting for 63.5 per cent.

Macau's integrated resorts model to develop the leisure and business travel market, and diversify the tourism product, is going strong.

One notable addition this year is the Sands Cotai Central, which will boost the market with 6,000 more rooms and increase Macau's MICE capacity further. The integrated resort will include three international hotel brands – Conrad, Sheraton and Holiday Inn – offering retail, entertainment and dining facilities, alongside some 20,000m<sup>2</sup> convention and meeting space.



**"2012 will be the beginning of a very important shift for the leisure and MICE market in Macau. The demand and supply situation will change in connection with the phased addition of inventory at Sands Cotai Central."**

**Josef Dolp**  
Managing director  
Sheraton Macau Hotel,  
Sands Cotai Central

Josef Dolp, managing director of Sheraton Macau, said: "It will take awhile to establish our product in the market and that is our first priority for 2012. At the same time, a key issue will be how to improve and develop further the necessary infrastructure in Macau in order to create a sustainable tourism model."

Galaxy Macau, which opened in May 2011, continues to attract visitors with its extensive leisure facilities such as a rooftop wave pool, multi-function cinema and more than 50 food and beverage outlets.

**MICE** The Economic Services Bureau will oversee the new Convention and Exhibition Stimulation Programme (previously known as the Strategic MICE Market Stimulation Programme) with an estimated budget of MOP80 million. The programme, running from January to December, will assist organisers and planners of conventions and exhibitions held in Macau.

In addition, the MGTO recently launched its Incentive Travel Stimulation Programme as an extension, to provide additional benefits for incentive

groups staying in Macau hotels.

MGTO director, João Manuel Costa Artunes, said that the Strategic MICE Market Stimulation Programme had supported 379 events and benefited over two million participants in 2011.

**Products** City of Dreams' *House of Dancing Water* welcomed its one millionth spectator on January 23. Since its opening 16 months ago, the entertainment extravaganza has staged 545 shows with 90 per cent occupancy.

Venetian Macau Resort Hotel's groundbreaking show, *Zaia*, ended its three-year run on February 19 with a poignant and moving final performance.

Meanwhile, Sands China is re-designing its multi-purpose theatre at the Venetian Macau while adding new entertainment options in the Sands Cotai Central.

Venetian Macau's vice president of Entertainment, Gus Liem, said: "We are incredibly excited about the new era of entertainment that's on the horizon for Macau. The company will again be investing to re-design the theatre to open up a new world of exciting entertainment options for Macau."



# MOST OPULENTLY YOURS

*The “Opulence Ball”—Grand Hyatt Macau’s new themed gala event package—will dazzle your delegates with the glitz and glamour of Belle Époque*

One of Macau’s most prestigious venues located at City of Dreams for events, Grand Hyatt Macau has kicked off 2012 with a new theme for its events package—the “Opulence Ball”. Inspired by the “Belle Époque”, an era of optimism, innovation and splendour in turn-of-the-century Europe, it is an elaborately styled and choreographed gala programme for corporate dinners, weddings and special events.

The package includes full event decoration in the hotel’s Grand Ballroom and pre-function lounge, elegant table settings, high-tech effects and the option of a range of musical entertainers and performers.

Guests can certainly expect showstopping performances and exquisite décor. With dazzling chandeliers and specially-designed eight-metre-high paintings of dancing couples, the hotel’s Grand Ballroom has been transformed into a vintage party palace of approximately 2,000 square metres—perfect for hosting, dining, dancing and turning any special occasion into a glittering affair!

The “Opulence Ball” demonstrates the extraordinary capabilities of the events team at Grand Hyatt Macau, which has managed to build a sterling reputation as one of Macau’s top meetings and events specialists.

In addition to this new package, Grand Hyatt Macau offers a variety of excellent meetings facilities to suit various requirements. Impressing guests since its opening is the pillarless 774-square-metre Salão do Teatro ballroom, with an open show kitchen for up to 20 chefs. Unique in Macau, it accommodates up to 360 guests for a banquet and is the only ballroom in



Macau blessed with natural daylight.

The alfresco Pool Deck on level 3 is one of the largest outdoor event venues in Macau, where a marquee can be set up to seat up to 420. The adjacent Pool House offers a bar and comfortable lounge-style indoor and outdoor spaces, seating of up to 120.

That’s not all. There are also eight naturally-lit meeting Salons available to meetings planners.

Since opening two years ago, Grand Hyatt Macau has also gained a strong following for its restaurants, bars and spa, giving event planners a diversity of options with popular appeal. Beijing Kitchen, serving northern Chinese cuisine, is today one of the signature restaurants at City of Dreams, whereas mezza9 Macau, an international dining attraction, stimulates not only the taste buds but also the senses of sight, sound, smell and touch with its elaborate counter displays and theatrical show kitchens.

The 2,323-square-metre Isala Spa is another treat for guests, where a delightful range of soothing treatments based on Traditional Chinese Medicine awaits.

Another highlight is the hotel’s aqua green-tiled, 40-metre heated swimming pool at the Pool Deck, which comes with a water lounge for guests to enjoy a cool drink semi-submerged and eight private VIP cabanas.

For entertainment, guests can also conveniently



THE “OPULENCE BALL” PACKAGE

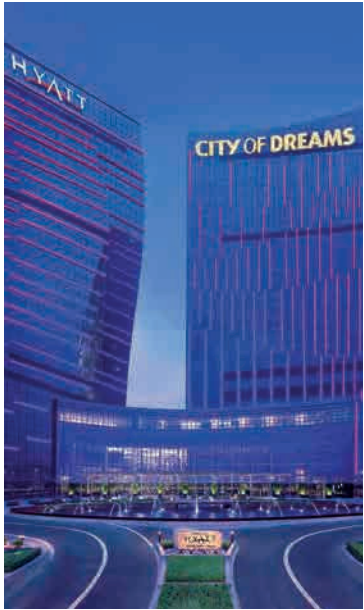
- Champagne Cocktail Party
- Gourmet gala dinner served by butlers in tuxedos
- Clients can choose from a range of entertainment: inspiring vocalists, sexy ballroom-dancers and a full orchestra performing classical, jazz, swing, tango, waltz, rumba and Big Band favourites.
- Available for events of up to 550 guests until December 2012

FULL DAY MEETING PACKAGE

- MOP660\* per person with use of venue from 9:00am to 5:00pm
- Welcome coffee and tea, and morning and afternoon coffee breaks
- Choice of lunch at function room or selected restaurants
- Meeting amenities, audiovisual equipment and Wi-Fi Internet access

\*Subject to a 10% service charge and may change without further notice.

*Above and right: Let your guests enjoy the “Opulence Ball”— the elaborately styled and choreographed themed gala programme for corporate dinners, weddings and special events at Grand Hyatt Macau.*



book a seat to see the world’s most spectacular water-based show called The House of Dancing Water at City of Dreams.

There are many other exciting attractions for visitors at Grand Hyatt Macau and City of Dreams. For MICE visitors, this is a great advantage as they need not travel far from their hotel to enjoy some of Macau’s best shopping, dining and entertainment.

When it’s time to retire for the night, Grand Hyatt Macau offers the peak of luxury. There are 424 rooms and suites at the Grand Tower and 367 rooms and suites at the premium Grand Club Tower. Event planners and guests alike will certainly appreciate the variety of choices and the utmost convenience and comfort here. ■



# Where The MICE Industry Comes Together In Shanghai.

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

China's biggest MICE extravaganza returns with 8 industry business, education and networking events, brought to you by leading international MICE players. Be part of this unique week-long experience. All happening in cosmopolitan Shanghai!



## 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 for conference  
April 19-20, Shanghai

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

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

**19 to 20 April 2012 | Shanghai**

This training program is designed to impart marketing know-how and skills that are unique to the needs of conference organisers.

Shanghai Business Events Week Is Brought To You By:



**中国上海 发现更多·体验更多**  
Shanghai China More Discovery More Experience

上海市旅游局 Shanghai Municipal Tourism Administration



# Getting in the game for more

Macau is not sitting on its laurels in getting more Chinese visitors to come, **Deborah Cornfield** reports

**1** How is Macau faring with China as the main market? Arrivals from mainland China, already Macau's top source market, reached an all-time high of 16,162,747 last year, up 22.2 per cent from 2010.

Per capita spending of Chinese visitors is also significantly higher than their counterparts from Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Per capita spending is MOP4,239 (US\$530) for overnight Chinese visitors and MOP813 for same-day visitors.

Josef Dolp, managing director of Sheraton Macau, attributed the higher expenditure to the growing wealth of Chinese visitors and their increasing ability to spend more.

China's fast-growing economy and the appreciation of the Renminbi are driving increased consumption and outbound travel levels, benefiting Macau.

Since July 2003, individual residents from the mainland can visit Macau under the individual travel scheme in accordance with the Closer Economic Partner-

ship Agreement (CEPA). The scheme now covers 49 Chinese cities with a total population of almost 300 million.

**2** What are Macau's plans to increase Chinese visitorship? With the launch of Sands Cotai Central, 6,000 more rooms will be available.

Enhancing the transportation infrastructure is also key to expanding visitorship. The new Zhuhai Gongbei station is slated to open in July, while the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge is scheduled to be completed in 2016. Both will shorten travel time between Macau and Zhuhai. China's high-speed trains connect Guangzhou to Zhuhai North in 40 minutes.

Several direct flights are currently available between Macau and many Chinese cities. Sea links include almost 200 sailings per day.

Bruno Simões, managing director of DOC DMC Macau, foresees that the new hotel and better infrastructure will benefit



St Paul's Ruins

A record figure

16

The number, in millions, of mainland Chinese visitors to Macau in 2011

Macau in the long run.

He said: "Macau is an emerging destination with the capacity and facilities to compete with other Asian cities. It offers the complete package: its local history and culture, proximity to China, and a multitude of rooms and MICE facilities."

Cindy Lui, director of sales and marketing, Grand Lapa Macau (Mandarin Oriental), said: "Macau is a marvellous destination with profound culture and historic sites that you will not find elsewhere."

**3** How is Macau attracting more meetings and incentives from China? According to Natasha Tomé, executive director of marketing, Sands China, Macau offers numerous benefits to the MICE delegate.

She said: "We have a dedicated media plan and initiative in place as China is one of the key markets for the Venetian Macau."

"Macau is a magnet for event delegates. Its proximity to mainland China as well as ease of en-

try regulations makes it a serious contender."

With the development of more hotels, event, dining and entertainment facilities, alongside concerted efforts between government and industry leaders to tap Chinese MICE, the segment is poised to grow.

**4** What is the Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO) doing to bring more Chinese leisure and MICE travellers? MGTO plans to strengthen regional co-operation with Chinese cities, widen the product mix and embark on innovative promotions to build Macau as a quality tourism and MICE destination.

Guangdong officials and the SAR government signed a Guangdong-Macau Cooperation Framework Agreement last March to address the development of tourism, MICE, cultural and creative industries, strengthen transportation infrastructure and facilitate cross-border processes.



## Banyan Tree Macau



**Brian Higgs** is blown away by the scale and extent to which the Banyan Tree Macau effectively replicates the beach resort experience in a city location

**LOCATION** Opening its doors last September, the Banyan Tree Macau is Banyan Tree Hotels & Resort's inaugural property in the former Portuguese colony.

Forming part of the Galaxy Macau integrated resort along with two other hotels, the property is located on Macau's Cotai Strip, and is a 15-minute drive away from Macau International Airport and 10 minutes from Taipa Ferry Terminal.

**ROOMS** I could not help but admire the massive suite I was housed in, which came complete with an in-room relaxation pool – perfect for a mid-afternoon soak – and a sleep-inducing bed that I'm sure could have accommodated four comfortably.

We were also given a tour of the resort's full-sized villas amid their own private gardens and swimming pools, which was amazing considering that they were a direct adaptation of the group's offerings in its other non-urban resort destinations.

**Name** Banyan Tree Macau

**No. of rooms** 246 suites, including the presidential suite and 10 pool villas

**Rate** Best available rate starting March 25 is MOP2,388 (US\$300) for a Grand Cotai Suite

**Contact details**

Tel: (853) 8883-6688

Fax: (853) 8883-6108

Email: macau@banyantree.com

Website: www.banyantree.com/en/macau

**F&B** There are two signature restaurants. Saffron offers international cuisine with an emphasis on local and South-east Asian culinary favourites, while Belon, an underwater-themed fine dining establishment, comes complete with a live oyster bar and a floor-to-ceiling wine vault.

**FACILITIES** MICE facilities are extensive, with two conference rooms divisible into four smaller function rooms for intimate gatherings, and a grand ballroom that can accommodate up to 1,200pax for a cocktail function or 420pax in a roundtable setting. Leisure amenities include a gym, an indoor swimming pool, and eight air-conditioned cabanas that open directly to a rooftop wave pool and artificial white sand beach. The highlight, of course, is the Banyan Tree Spa, which offers various signature treatments in 21 separate rooms.

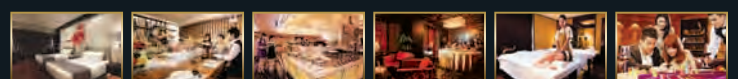
**VERDICT** A true paradise in an urban setting, Banyan Tree Macau effectively introduces the group's concept of pampered hospitality to Macau's avid gamblers.



## An Ultimate Luxurious Experience

**Grand Emperor Hotel**  
Reservations: +800 1668 1688  
www.grandemperor.com

**Emperor Palace Casino**  
24-hour Enquiry: +853 2822 9878  
www.emperorpalacecasino.com



No. 288 Avenida Comercial De Macau Tel: +853 2888 9988 Fax: +853 2888 9933  
Email: enquiry@grandemperor.com Website: www.grandemperor.com





*In Thailand, it's only natural  
to enjoy our beautiful environment.*

*Trek through breathtaking wilderness. Climb pristine mountains.  
Dive deep into clear blue waters. Or simply enjoy our surging rivers,  
dense rainforests and cascading waterfalls. If you are looking for  
an adventure with nature, Thailand has it all. From the North  
to the South, you will enjoy a natural paradise offering both  
the spirit of adventure and a get away from it all experience.*

*Amazing Thailand. Isn't it time you fell in love  
with our natural beauty?*



**amaz<sup>ng</sup>  
THAILAND**  
*Always Amazes You*

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





Live Large. Think Edge.  
Be Bold with TTG Asia.

An eclectic collision of creative energy and sophisticated appetites for your optimum advertising exposure and maximum impact.  
Reach out to 16,600 travel agents and suppliers.  
Providing premium selections recognised as credible and committed in one concise read.

where ideas inspire.  
be part of us.



www.ttgasiamedia.com | www.ttgasia.com



No. 1655/March 23 – 29, 2012



*Experience Japan*



THE WORLD'S LARGEST  
HOTEL CHAIN





# The Re

Almost one year ago, northeast Japan was rocked by the fifth strongest earthquake ever recorded and a devastating tsunami. The whole world knows the terrible impact of these dual disasters, which threatened to bring the world's third largest economy to its knees.

But far from being defeated, Japan has recovered with remarkable speed, especially in the field of travel and tourism. In September last year the country was the first in the world to receive of the state-of-the-art Boeing 787 Dreamliner. This year, three brand new budget airlines are planning to launch in the country, offering a major boost to domestic air travel. Japan is now planning to welcome a record nine million tourists in 2012, rising to 18 million by 2016.

And of course, hotel development is also continuing at pace. Far from being put off by the tragic events of 11 March 2011, Best Western International has taken a more long-term view of this vibrant market. Just weeks after the earthquake hit, Best Western launched its 14th Japanese hotel, at Osaka's Kansai airport. This has been followed by new additions in Kyoto, Nagoya and Yonezawa.

In fact, Best Western is now one of the largest international hotel operators in Japan, with 17 hotels operating in 15 key markets across the country. And with several more exciting developments planned, Best Western will continue to support Japan throughout its recovery and for many years ahead.

## BEST WESTERN IN JAPAN: 2,600 ROOMS AND COUNTING...

Best Western International (BWI) now offers more than 2,600 hotel rooms in Japan. Following the addition of four new hotels in 2011, Best Western's Japanese collection comprises 17 convenient hotels in 15 unique business and cultural destinations across the country.

From the northern snowfields of Hokkaido, where the **BEST WESTERN Hotel Sapporo Nakajima Koen** and **BEST WESTERN Hotel Fino Sapporo** offer more than 500 modern rooms, to the tropical island destination of Okinawa, home of the **BEST WESTERN Naha Inn**, visitors to all areas of Japan can enjoy the comfort and convenience of staying at a Best Western hotel.

"Japan is clearly a huge market for Best Western International and we are pleased to be able to offer such a broad range of hotels across the country. All Best Western hotels in Japan offer modern facilities including free Wi-Fi, offering the utmost convenience to guests," said Best Western International's Vice President International Operations – Asia & the Middle East, Glenn de Souza. "We're confident of our long-term future in Japan."





# Japan One Year On covery Blossoms

## Japan Explorer: OSAKA, A CITY OF SUPERLATIVES



Osaka is a city of superlatives. Home of Japan's oldest Buddhist temple, the country's longest shopping arcade, the world's third busiest railway station, and even its second largest aquarium tank, Osaka has now become the Japanese city with the largest collection of Best Western hotels.

Last year, **BEST WESTERN Hotel Kansai Airport** became the group's third hotel in the city, offering nearly 160 modern, convenient hotel rooms close to one of the world's busiest and most state-of-the-art airports.

A key hub for all of Japan's major airlines, including JAL and ANA, Kansai International Airport will soon become the home base for Japan's first ever budget airline. Peach Aviation will launch its first ever flights in March 2012, and the new stream of travellers arriving at or departing from Kansai airport will be able to experience a range of facilities, including free Wi-Fi, a choice of restaurants, a sauna and Japanese bath.

**BEST WESTERN Joytel Osaka**  
**BEST WESTERN Hotel Fino Osaka Shinsaibashi**  
**BEST WESTERN Hotel Kansai Airport**



## EXPERIENCE THE WONDERS OF JAPAN!

No matter what time of year you visit Japan, there will be a festival or event to enliven your senses. From the spectacular Sapporo Snow Festival, which attracts more than two million visitors each year, to the iconic spring cherry blossom and 'hanami' (parties to view the annual blooms); Japan has an entire calendar of inspiring events to keep visitors entertained all year round.

And of course, Best Western has a wide selection of hotels cater for guests visiting Japan's major events. Here are some of our recommendations:

FEB

**Sapporo Snow Festival**  
– one of the world's largest displays of snow and ice sculptures (stay at: **BEST WESTERN Hotel Fino Sapporo** or **BEST WESTERN Hotel Sapporo Nakajima Koen**)

MAR

APR

MAY

**Cherry blossom viewing**  
– See Japan's famed 'sakura' throughout spring at locations across the country (stay at: **BEST WESTERN Hotel Newcity Hiroaki** or any Best Western hotels across Japan)

MAY

**Hakata Donataku Festival**  
– Fukuoka's 800-year-old civic dance festival and parade (stay at: **BEST WESTERN Fukuoka Nakasu Inn**)

MAY

**Kanda Matsuri**  
– One of Tokyo's most famous festivals sees portable shrines paraded through the streets (stay at: **BEST WESTERN Shinjuku Astina Hotel Tokyo**)

JUL

**Gion Matsuri**  
– See floats and artworks paraded through the streets of Kyoto (stay at: **BEST WESTERN Hotel Kyoto**)

AUG

**Yamagata Hanagasa Matsuri**  
– One million visitors turn out to see 10,000 dancers with 'hanagasa', or flower hats (stay at: **BEST WESTERN The Japonais Yonezawa**, Yamagata Prefecture)

OCT

**Nagasaki Kunchi Festival**  
– The three-day festival includes dance, floats and parades (stay at: **BEST WESTERN PREMIER Hotel Nagasaki**)





## Enrich your travel experience with Best Western throughout Japan

Fukuoka | Hirosaki | Kyoto | Nagasaki | Nagoya | Naha | Oita | Osaka  
Sapporo | Sendai | Takayama | Tokyo | Wakayama | Yonezawa

Visit [bestwesternasia.com](http://bestwesternasia.com) or call toll free +800 0013 1779

