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# TTG

A S I A

No. 1686/June 14 – 27, 2013



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Build, design, own  
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## Flexibility key for consumers

### Trade urged to adopt dynamic packaging

By Greg Lowe

**BANGKOK** As dynamic packaging – essentially an online portal through which a customer organises and pays for every element of a trip in a single transaction – increasingly tilts the power balance in favour of travel consumers, it has the potential to create both challenges and new opportunities for brick-and-mortar businesses, said industry veterans at Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) 2013.

Speaking at the “DIY in tourism: Dynamic Packaging, the pros and the cons” forum during TTM+, Frank Oostdam, chairman of the Dutch Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents, emphasised the need for a paradigm shift among travel consultants and operators.

He said: “For travel (consultants), it really is create or die... The times when tour operators merely packaged a product are gone.”

He also urged: “Concentrate on consumers, areas and activities where online (technology) is lagging behind. Everyone will

have to become more of a tour operator and a retailer. At the end of the day, the person owning the customer relationship will succeed.”

While the trade generally agrees that dynamic packaging will transform the nature of their business, there is no consensus on how fast or extensively the technology will be adopted or who will benefit most from it.

DMCs, especially those operating in developing markets such as Thailand and South-east Asia, will continue to offer value to customers, but they must embrace the reality that dynamic packaging will irrevocably change the nature of their business, said Lutzi Matzig, CEO of Asian Trails.

Hans van der Born, managing director of Diethelm Travel Thailand, agreed: “Tour operators are trying to hold onto old beliefs, and that’s not going to work. We need to focus attention on the destination and give customers the choice to customise

*Continued on page 2*

## Peter Gautschi (1927-2013)

**ZURICH** Peter Gautschi, former president of The Peninsula Group and founder of Swiss-Belhotel International as well as the Studer Trust, died on June 6 in a tragic car crash in Myanmar (*TTG Asia e-Daily*, June 10, 2013)

The industry lost a great man whom friends and associates described as “the Swiss hotel pioneer in all of Asia”, “the grand man of hospitality”, “the best boss ever with a very kind heart” and “a truly strong man



(who put) smiles on children’s faces, providing an education which allows them to live a dignified life”.

Peter Borer, COO, The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, said:

“He was the inspiration in making our company what it is today, setting the foundations and high standards by which we still abide.

“He passed away doing what he loved best, helping the underprivileged and thus demonstrating what a fine human being he was.” – **Raini Hamdi**

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### Most popular

(as of June 11, 2013)

- 1 Peter Gautschi dies in car crash in Myanmar
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- 5 North-east India sees stronger travel demand
- 6 Philippines’ Enchanted Kingdom plans massive transformation
- 7 AirAsia announces first Bangkok-Naypyidaw link
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He’s won hearts in the industry with his youthful, helpful and humble ways. Can the new Singapore tourism chief win the battle for more high-yield tourists, which the capacity-constrained city needs? **Raini Hamdi** talks to Lionel Yeo

– see page 6

## Quality picks

## HKTBT must work harder: Indonesia

By Mimi Hudoyo

**HONG KONG** First-time travellers from Indonesia’s burgeoning middle-class, white-collar population have come onto the radar of the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTBT), which in late-May organised a familiarisation trip exclusively for outbound specialists from the South-east Asian market.

HKTBT executive director, Anthony Lau, said the bureau was keen to target this segment and have them make Hong Kong their first destination of choice.

The bureau’s director of projects, Angela Liew, also expressed interest in courting more repeat visitors from Indonesia, saying that the familiarisation programme aimed to allow “travel companies which have been selling (Hong Kong) to see and ex-

perience products that have not been included in their packages”.

However, Indonesian outbound travel specialists told *TTG Asia* that the tourism bureau would have to overcome several hurdles to win the hearts of first-time Indonesian travellers. Pricy airfares and hotel room rates as well as limited direct flights were causing this segment of travellers to skip Hong Kong in favour of neighbouring destinations, they said.

Mutiara Indah Tour & Travel Service operation manager, Lida Tjahaja, said: “Singapore hotels are expensive and its shopping options are not as varied and cheap as Hong Kong, but it – as well as Malaysia – is closer...and there are many flight options. In comparison, direct flights to Hong Kong are limited.”

Tara Tour Incentive & MICE supervisor, Elny Rosita, also noted that new Indonesian travellers were discouraged by the pricier airfares from Indonesia to Hong Kong. She said a promotional fare to Hong Kong cost US\$420, while a regular return ticket between Jakarta and Singapore was only US\$120.

Adding that Hong Kong had a strong competitor in Thailand, Elny Rosita said: “Hotels are cheaper – you can secure a four-star room for just US\$60 or US\$70 in Bangkok. And the Thai capital is getting very attractive for shopping holidays.”

Astrindo Travel Services operations manager, Bambang Mirawan, said: “Hong Kong has the potential to attract first-time

*Continued on page 2*

# Malaysia boost for Tassie

Tourism Tasmania widens marketing strategy to attract Muslims and secondary cities

By S Puvaneswary

**KUALA LUMPUR** Tourism Tasmania is strengthening marketing efforts to counter dipping arrivals from Malaysia, its biggest visitor source country in South-east Asia and seventh largest international source market.

Last year, Malaysian arrivals to Tasmania totalled 5,600 visitors, declining 33 per cent from 8,300 in 2011, the year Tourism Tasmania launched a successful joint programme with Tourism Australia and Air Asia X to offer the island state as a free sector from Melbourne.

Targeting a double-digit increment in Malaysian arrivals this year, Tourism Tasmania CEO, John Fitzgerald, recently led an inaugural delegation of five businesses comprising accommodations and attractions from Tasmania to meet with local outbound players and airline



**Fitzgerald: longer stays**

representatives in Kuala Lumpur. To boost the length of stay of Malaysian visitors to Tasmania from the current two or three nights to three to five nights, Tourism Tasmania is leveraging on a two-city, two-icon approach to develop itineraries beyond Hobart to include the iconic destinations of Cradle Mountain and Wineglass Bay as well as Launceston in the north, according to Fitzgerald.

In addition to familiarisation trips for the media, the tourism board has also invited a Malaysian television crew to film a food and wine programme in Tasmania in mid-June. "This will be the first show created for the

Malaysian market," said Fitzgerald, who added that Tasmania will be one of seven episodes featuring Australia.

He remarked: "For the last two years, we targeted mainly the Chinese population in Kuala Lumpur. Now we are reaching out to a broader segment, including the Muslim market and to secondary destinations outside of Kuala Lumpur.

"We recognise the cultural differences (of Muslims) and are working with operators to be Muslim-friendly," he added.

Said The Old Woolstore Apartment Hotel's business development manager, Scott Christie-Johnston: "While The Old Woolstore isn't halal-certified, we are able to source halal meals on request to cater for Muslim visitors."

Malaysian visitors to Curringa Farm are usually large families

of six to 10 people, according to owner and manager Tim Parsons. He said: "It's grown from a base of zero 12 months ago, and we get about two or three families per month."

And with 72 per cent of Malaysian arrivals to Tasmania last year as repeat visitors, a majority of whom were visiting friends and relatives, according to Fitzgerald, suppliers in the state are rolling out new products to rejuvenate the visitor experience too.

"Last year, we introduced a new tour, Paranormal Investigation Experience, at Port Arthur, where the visitor becomes the ghost hunter and uses high-technology equipment to record supernatural phenomena," said Andrew Ross, marketing manager of Port Arthur Historic Sites. Port Arthur is reportedly one of the most haunted buildings in the country.

Continued from page 1

## Technological limits

through a modular itinerary."

But an over-reliance on technology brings its own risks due to the lack of personal recommendations, he said, adding that the technology was unlikely to be adopted across the board.

Natalia Kortchouganova, regional operations director at Asia World Enterprise, pointed out that while younger travellers were most likely to use the technology, it was less suited for luxury customers and emerging markets though.

"If you look at countries like Russia where tourism is still growing, they still need to talk to someone who has been (to the destination), and there's also the language barrier," she said.

Furthermore, the significant costs of implementing dynamic packaging would likely squeeze out smaller firms to the benefit of bigger players, said Oostdam.

The costs of dynamic packaging platforms vary greatly, from US\$20,000 for a small five-user system to about US\$1 million for a large firm with 200 users, according to a Dubai-based travel technology provider.

## RBA's new charm offensive



Having unveiled its new livery and logo in October 2012, Royal Brunei Airlines (RBA) treated industry professionals, partners and the media to its sleeker hospitality standards during a cocktail session at Hotel Istana in Kuala Lumpur last month. Pictured above (from left) are Tourism Malaysia's Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, Sri Tiara Jacqueline (wife to Mohd Effendi Norwawi), Encorp's Mohd Effendi Norwawi, RBA's Dermot Mannion, High Commission Of Brunei Darussalam in Malaysia's Haji Ishaq bin Haji Abdullah, Brunei Tourism Development Department's Mariani Haji Sabtu and RBA's Karam Chand

Continued from page 1

## Stronger rivals

travellers from Indonesia but to grab (the attention of this segment) airlines, hotels and attractions must put together an enticing package."

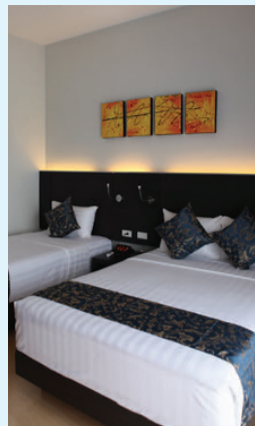
Indonesian buyers said a stronger destination marketing campaign from HKTB was all the more crucial when other destinations, such as South Korea, Japan and Turkey, were aggressively promoting themselves in the market.

While Hong Kong appears to face difficulty in winning over first-time travellers from Indonesia, Istana Tour vice president Andayani Halim noted that the destination had been popular with middle- to upper-class repeat travellers, although much

of the demand had been for customised multi-destination itineraries that also included China.

Ricky Tse, chairman of the Hong Kong Inbound Tour Operators Association and managing director of United Holidays Hong Kong, whose biggest source market lies in Indonesia, said: "There is a growing number of incentive and leisure traffic to Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta in the last two years. The combination of (Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Macau) with different attractions (shopping, culture and gaming) are the reasons why (Indonesians) keep coming back."

Acknowledging the feedback from Indonesian travel buyers, HKTB's Lau said his office would be investing more resources into destination marketing in Indonesia this year.



## Bright outlook for Best Western in Cebu

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

Best Western International is delighted to announce the continued expansion of our portfolio in the Philippines, with the launch of a hotel on the tropical island of Mactan, just off the coast of Cebu.

BEST WESTERN Cebu Sand Bar Resort is a modern contemporary, 58-room midscale hotel offering a wealth of facilities for both business and leisure travelers. These include a freeform outdoor swimming pool, entertainment center, playground and massage services, meaning that parents can relax and be pampered, safe in the knowledge that their children are being well cared for. There are also three meeting rooms and a ballroom for our corporate guests.

Since Best Western debuted in Cebu late last year with the BEST WESTERN PLUS Lex Cebu Hotel, the company has experienced strong demand, both from within the Philippines and elsewhere. With a strong local economy and stunning natural attractions, the future looks incredibly bright for Cebu and Best Western.

## TTG Travel Pursuits

Compiled by The Fox

1. Which destination in Asia appointed a new minister of tourism in April?
2. Which Singapore airline group is selling part of its company in Australia?
3. Which destination in Asia reported 50% growth in arrivals for the start of this year – Macau, Maldives or Thailand?
4. STC has signed a JV agreement with the Far East Organization. What is the brand name of STC's hotels?

5. History: Name one of the forerunner names of the UK-based InterContinental Hotels Group?



Illustrations by penith Krishnan

1. Thailand, Somsak Puresrisak became minister of tourism and sports, replacing Chumpol Silpa-archa who passed away in January.
2. Tiger Airways Holdings. Part of its Australian airline operation is being sold to Virgin Australia. The Singapore-based Tiger Airways remains unaffected by this plan.
3. Maldives up 50% Jan-Feb, Macau down 9%, Thailand up 19%.
4. Rendezvous. STC will hold 30% of the newly-formed Far East Hospitality Holdings, which will have 6,000 rooms under management.
5. Bass Hotels, Holiday Corporation, Grand Metropolitan.

## Humour Travel industry verses real world

Industry phrase	Real-world meaning
Visitors from Asia are strong	Visitors from Europe fell
The flight is direct	You stay on the plane during stops
We expect the delayed boarding will be in 30 minutes' time	Your flight is one hour late
We have no rooms available	We are holding rooms for someone more important than you
Occupancy was well above budget	We had no idea how many rooms we would fill



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TTG Intelligence Analysis by Murray Bailey

### Passenger traffic between APAC and Europe

Air France (with KLM) is the largest of the top five airlines serving routes between Asia-Pacific and Europe, having sold just under two million seats (+2%) in the first four months. Figures are not reported separately but it is believed Kuala Lumpur is producing most of the growth.

Growth this year has been slight – with falls recorded for Cathay Pacific Airways (a fractional -0.03%) and Lufthansa (-4%).

British Airways, the smallest of the five airlines on these routes, produced the biggest percentage increase at +4%.

Cathay Pacific Airways and Singapore Airlines do not publish traffic by region, but Travel Business Analyst (TBA) estimates the two airlines each sold 600,000-650,000 seats during the reference period from January to April.

**1.9** Seats sold, in million, on Air France-KLM's Asia-Pacific routes during the January-April period

**3%** Estimated growth of seats sold on Singapore Airlines' Europe routes during the January-April period

**650** Estimated seats, in thousands, sold on Cathay Pacific Airways' Europe routes from January to April

Sources: Airlines and TBA

### More but smaller hotels in the works for APAC

According to data from Smith Travel Research (STR), the number of hotels scheduled to be built in Asia-Pacific stands at 1,804 at end-April, 13% higher than at the same period in 2012.

However, based on the number of planned rooms, the average size of hotel would be smaller. The average room count in 2013 is 215, down 7% from the same period in 2012 – which already saw an 8% dip from 250 rooms in 2011.

Planned growth is fast – 13% more ho-

#### Hotel development pipeline in Asia-Pacific

Item	2013*	Growth,%	2012*	Growth,%	2011*	Growth,%
Hotels	1,804	13.4	1,591	36.3	1,167	16.2
Rooms	387,179	5.9	365,507	25.2	291,946	15.6
Rooms per hotel	215	-6.6	230	-8.2	250	-0.6

Notes: \*At end-April; calculations by Travel Business Analysts (TBA) from STR data  
Sources: STR and TBA

tels and 6% more rooms – although it is still much slower than the respective 36% and 25% recorded for the same period in 2012.

### APAC sees higher arrivals in 1Q2013

Estimates indicate that visitor arrivals in main Asia-Pacific destinations increased about 9% in the first quarter of 2013, but there are some surprises though:

- \*China's total arrivals fell 1%, mainly because unlike all other destinations, it cannot benefit from the region's booming market – China itself!
- Thailand is benefiting from a boom in arrivals from China and the other big market mover this year, Russia.
- Japan's strong growth (+18%) is surprising, considering the post-tsunami boost already took place in 2012. And as the political stand-off between China and Japan has reduced the Chinese inbound poten-



tial, this indicates that Japan is getting its growth from other markets.

- India is seeing weak growth though (+2%), as it does not get its fair share of visitors from China and Russia.
- Not surprising is Myanmar's continued fast growth (+47%), but it needs +69% to reach one million arrivals this year.

Two major destinations not yet reporting are Malaysia, which forecasts 4% growth this year, and Singapore, which still has not been able to restart timely counts following a change in the collec-

tion of visitor statistics.

*\*The UNWTO methodology for Greater China counts is different from most others. For instance, it counts some visitors into China from Hong Kong and Macau, but counts all visitors from China travelling in the opposite direction to Hong Kong and Macau.*

**CORRECTION**  
The South Beach Hotel & Club is a joint venture between City Developments Limited and IOI Corporation, not Capital Development Limited as we had reported in the May 31-June 13 issue of TTG Asia.



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Haven't been to our website?

Here's what you've missed

### Tourism Data

Bangkok came out tops in this year's *Global Destination Cities Index* by MasterCard Worldwide, trouncing defending champion London, which took second place. Rounding up the top five travel destinations for 2013 were Paris, Singapore and New York



Chao Phraya River, Bangkok

### Hot Moves

Robin Yap has been named non-executive chairman, and Nicholas Lim, president Asia, at The Travel Corporation; Mark Simmons is now vice president sales and marketing, Asia-Pacific at Outrigger Enterprises Group; Sharmini Moganandram has been nominated general manager, Parkroyal Serviced Suites Kuala Lumpur; Matthew Varley has been appointed chief operating officer at Wego



From left: Robin Yap, Mark Simmons and Matthew Varley

### Hot Deals

Elite Tours International, a Tashkent-based travel agency, is organising fam trips around Uzbekistan to introduce travel consultants to the country's tourism offerings. Contact [inbound@elitetours.uz](mailto:inbound@elitetours.uz)

# A forgotten treasure



What a forgotten treasure Asia's festivals are as destinations race to bring in world-class events.

Raini Hamdi  
Senior Editor



I was in Bali in April and little did I know it was during a period when the Balinese were celebrating the religious festival of Galungan and its pinnacle, Kuningan. Every street was lined with *penjor*, willow bamboo poles decorated with palm leaves and flowers. Every home had put them up at their gates, along with small bamboo altars bearing fruit offerings for the gods and the spirits of their ancestors, who were believed to be coming down to earth to join the festivities.

What an uplifting sight the *penjor*-lined streets were; it was as if the whole island had put up the festoon to welcome visitors.

It made me realise what a treasure Asia's festivals are – and how sadly forgotten – as we race to bring in world-class events or to create our own global this-and-that in order to enhance the destination appeal.

Yet, we've heard how the more global the world becomes, the deeper is the longing of travellers for something local. The crave for *authenticity*, the desire for *interaction* with the community, the need for a *meaningful* experience, etc, are all but expressions of today's travellers' longing for

a piece of truth about a destination.

What could be truer than the celebration of a long-held belief or tradition? What could be more moving than the spectacle of locals in their Sunday best performing a common ritual? I was moved to tears when, standing on the cliff directly opposite the famed Tanah Lot temple, I watched a procession of Balinese making their way down from the temple to a cave – there was so much dignity and beauty about it, which I felt privileged to

have caught.

The hotel I was staying at did not make it a point to inform guests about the procession or the other activities that were being held in the area to mark the end of Galungan.

Asia has the most valuable events under its noses. NTOs and private sector players should revive the importance of festivals to tourism. For a start, turn to our feature of some of the key festivals around Asia (pages 10 and 11) that you can hinge on to give clients a wow experience.



### Most commented on www.ttgasia.com

#### Airlines likely to raise social media budgets for 2013

In response to our article reporting that over 70 per cent of airlines intend to raise their social media budgets this year, Ivan Burmistrov from Estonia, wrote: "Travel industry social media budgets are wasteful in any case, without strategy or with strategy, no matter. Research shows this clearly enough."

#### Indonesians remain enchanted by Paris

Eka Moncarre from Paris, said with regard to our article on growing travel demand to France in Indonesia: "Indonesian tourists have to know that (visiting) Paris is not only for seeing the Eiffel Tower and shopping in Opera or Champs-Élysées, but there are many more other things to see and do, and other hidden places to discover."

#### CAPA lampoons lack of strategy in Indian aviation sector

CAPA India's recent report on the local aviation sector called for a transparent, cabinet-approved national aviation policy. Subhash from Delhi NCR commented: "We fail to understand why the Ministry of Civil Aviation or Directorate General of Civil Aviation in India are not in positions to come out with clear-cut guidelines for airlines in India. Indian airlines and Air India have suffered a lot."

#### SkyTeam gets second South-east Asian member in Garuda

Garuda Indonesia is set to become SkyTeam's 20<sup>th</sup> international member and second South-east Asian member. MK from Seremban commented: "A good move. Another landmark of success for Indonesia."



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#### Travel Hall of Fame

Since 2002, TTG Asia Media has honoured luminaries that have won the prestigious TTG Travel Award for at least 10 consecutive times for the same award title in the Travel Hall of Fame.

- At present, these exceptional organisations and their years of induction are:
- Singapore Airlines (2002)
- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Hertz Asia Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Abacus International (2009)
- SilkAir (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)

TTG Asia Media is pleased to announce that it is setting up a virtual TTG Travel Hall of Fame, which will enable us to showcase the accolades, artefacts and memorabilia of the region's most exceptional travel organisations in a far more effective way and to a global audience.



# What's on the shelves

In this new section, we round up the latest product news in the marketplace, from hotel openings and airline developments to new tours and tech solutions

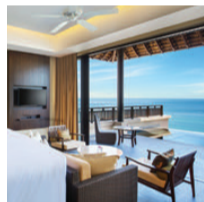
[ TRANSPORT ]

**Air China commences Chengdu-Frankfurt link** Chinese carrier Air China launched direct flights from Chengdu to Frankfurt on May 19, allowing passengers easy connection to destinations within the Star Alliance network. The thrice-weekly service is operated every Tuesday, Friday and Sunday using an Airbus A330-200 aircraft.

**Garuda strengthens Medan connection** Garuda started twice-daily Medan-Penang services and doubled flights to twice-daily to Palembang and Padang on June 1. These routes are served with Garuda's new fleet of Bombardier CRJ1000 NextGen with 96 seats, comprising 12 executive-class and 84 economy-class seats.

[ ACTIVITIES ]

**1 Dine around Vana Belle** Guests who value unique dining experiences are offered the opportunity to dine wherever that catches their fancy at Vana Belle, a luxury collection resort in Koh Samui, Thailand. The new *Creative Dining* concept invites guests to tailor their meal from an extensive menu and choose a preferred location, be it at the Secret Pond on Chaweng Beach while taking in the sunset, or on the yoga platform overlooking the Gulf of Siam, after a yoga session. Child-friendly dishes are available too.



**2 Dive and save the corals** Zeavola, a five-star PADI dive resort on Koh Phi Phi, Thailand, is combining luxurious dive holidays with opportunities for divers to save the Andaman coral reefs. Activities include a coral appreciation course, a guided *Coral Freedom* dive, the resurrection of the Phi Phi Don Coral Nursery and participation in the Coral Restoration Project in cooperation with the Phi Phi Village Dive School.



[ HOTELS ]

Best Western Green Hill Hotel, Yangon, Myanmar	Big Hotel Singapore	Renaissance Johor Bahru Hotel, Malaysia
 <p>Best Western International signed an agreement in mid-May to manage the Green Hill Hotel in central Yangon, a move that will see it take its midscale Best Western brand to Myanmar for the first time. The property will be re-branded Best Western Green Hill Hotel in an exercise expected to take three months. Located in Yangon's Tamwe Township, the hotel boasts 189 guestrooms equipped with free Wi-Fi and 32-inch flat-screen televisions with international satellite channels. It also offers meeting rooms and a restaurant serving Asian and international cuisines.</p>	 <p>Big Hotel, a new hotel by Singapore-based ERC Holdings, opened on Middle Road last month. Occupying a building that was once an office space, the 308-key hotel features a chic, Scandinavian-influenced interior. Guestrooms offer complimentary Wi-Fi access and a personal in-room tablet which comes loaded with an app that allows guests to control room temperature, TV and lighting and surf the Internet. The hotel is within walking distance to various attractions including the Singapore Arts Museum and is a short drive to the central business district.</p>	 <p>The 345-room Renaissance Johor Bahru Hotel is now open. The hotel is located in the township of Permas Jaya, close to the Johor Bahru city centre and the port and industrial area of Pasir Gudang, and within the Iskandar Development Region. Guests at the hotel can dine at any of the property's four restaurants and bars, including Café BLD for all-day dining, Wan Li Restaurant for contemporary Cantonese cuisine, The Chocolate Cake Company for pastries, and lobby bar R-Bar. The hotel also features an outdoor pool, a fitness centre and seven flexible meeting rooms with state-of-the-art technology.</p>








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Lionel Yeo, CEO, Singapore Tourism Board

# Quality picks

**Since the Tourism Industry Conference (TIC) in late April, where you charted a course for 'high-yield' or 'quality' tourism, what follow-ups have been done?**

We've been having follow-up conversations at specific industry levels, so as to go deeper into the implications for each sector. Every sector has its own set of challenges and opportunities. For instance, shortly after TIC, we got together with attraction owners and gave details of the masterclass on experience creation which STB (Singapore Tourism Board) and ASA (Association of Singapore Attractions) have developed. The first class will roll out in July. So for attractions, we've identified capability development (as a need) – how do we help them create a more compelling experience?

**What needs have you identified for inbound agencies?**

They have good connections with their counterparts in the source markets. They have a track record of putting together good programmes that showcase Singapore's best attractions. We would like to help them move into bespoke offerings, which will also appeal to the more discerning travellers. We see a few players doing it, but we think more should go that way.

**An example of such players?**

CTC Travel's Singapore Deep, which targets FITs, is one. FITs don't need agencies, yet CTC makes itself relevant to them by offering a simple menu of options – certain walks, package of entrance tickets to attractions, etc – that just makes it easier for them to enjoy Singapore. We want to encourage agencies not to compete on price. So they need to figure out what their USP is.

**This issue of competing on price is long-standing. Why aren't agencies able to make the shift and is it STB's role to help?**

It is our role to help them succeed. We would like them to succeed in a particular way, i.e. yield-driven. For some, the model may be to get as many visitors to Singapore, but going forward, we would like players to think a bit harder about how we can go after the target audience that can give us a better yield, i.e. the sort of traveller who appreciates what Singapore has to offer and rewards us with a higher spending. That's what we mean by a yield-driven approach. There is a misunderstanding that we're just going for the richest people in a particular market.

**If not the richest people, then who?**

If I can use an analogy, if we run a good steakhouse, would we indiscriminately go after the richest people to come? We would want to avoid the vegetarians or those who don't like steak, because even if we throw in a bottle of wine, they might come, but in the end, they might only order the salad on the menu. So they are not your target audience even if they are wealthy.

It's being clear about which market segments would find Singapore appealing and going after them. We believe they would make the most of their stay in Singapore and spend more.

He's won hearts in the industry with his youthful, helpful and humble ways. Can the new Singapore tourism chief win the battle for more high-yield tourists, which the capacity-constrained city needs? **Raini Hamdi** talks to Yeo

**What are your plans to help agencies with bespoke offerings?**

A couple of things, one of which is to share consumer insights gleaned from our regional offices. We've been developing capability around market intelligence and we've started sharing it with some agencies. By doing so, we are giving them more knowledge and background, so they can find their own USP with respect to that market. We're not just sharing, say, an understanding of the China market, but breaking down to markets such as Shanghai and Chengdu and what our focused studies show. This will help them be more strategic in using these market insights to develop programmes.

We also want to help them build their workforce capabilities by working with parties such as WDA (Singapore's Workforce Development Agency) and developing training programmes their staff can be put through to upgrade themselves. The NATAS Accreditation scheme (*TTG Asia e-Daily*, February 22, 2013), for example, had some involvement from STB and WDA.

**What happens if there isn't a focus on quality tourism?**

You may get more arrivals possibly but the per capita expenditure won't be as high and more arrivals would strain the infrastructure. The supply challenges we have – hotel rooms, airport capacity, manpower, etc – will be even greater.

Our demand drivers are strong. Singapore is still an aspirational destination while Asia, which is 75 per cent of our source, continues to rise. In the medium term, we project three to four per cent arrivals growth and four to seven per cent in receipts. That, to me, is good growth.

If not for supply issues, we can grow faster as the demand drivers are strong. This is why we have to make the most of what little we have. If there isn't a focus on high-yield tourism, you may have valuable hotel capacity being taken up by lower-yield tourists. We want every single room, three- or five-star, to go to somebody who will fully appreciate what Singapore has to offer and have a good time here, whether his thing is F&B or attraction.



**How do you measure that you've done well in the quality tourism drive?**

When we maintain or even grow tourism's contribution to the overall GDP of around four per cent in the next decade. But that alone is not enough, it must stem from having productive and innovative companies that create good jobs for Singaporeans. Thirdly, it must involve strong local participation.

**Did you know what you were in for when you came into STB about 10 months ago?**

(Laughs) I guess the short answer is no.

**What did you expect?**

I came in with an open mind. I knew there was a lot I had to learn, not just from STB colleagues but partners in the industry. And that's what I spent a lot of my time on in the first year: engaging the different stakeholders, sometimes in big settings, sometimes smaller. I tried to make myself as available as I could and I have to say they have been generous in tutoring me and they have given me a warm welcome.

I did not come from this sector, but they have the bigness of heart to say, okay, let's help this guy understand our business. A number of them, for example, Madam Kay Kuok (president, Singapore Hotel Association, and executive chairman, Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore) came up and say, let me organise a lunch for you, invite members of the exco and get to know them. There were many such examples in the many industry areas.

**We're in the hospitality business after all.**

(Laughs) And they were patient with me. As a beginner, you ask 101 questions and they indulge me.

**What surprised you the most about this industry?**

I didn't expect the tourism sector to have such a wide impact on the country. It impacts the Singapore national brand

– how the rest of the world perceives Singapore – and it impacts how Singaporeans feel about their own country. Tourism contributes a lot to the narrative about how we (Singapore) attract capital and are a hub for knowledge and talent. By making the place more attractive, we're also an attractive place for talent, which fuels other parts of the economy.

**Do Singapore ministers see it too? Well, I guess you have to say yes to that.**

(Laughs) By and large, yes, but it wouldn't hurt for us to make the case from time to time. I see it as part of my job to explain to my colleagues in other parts of government: don't just see tourism as just another industry sector, because if you take away tourism, you're not taking away just one sector, but a lot of other horizontal benefits. So I tell my STB colleagues: when we do our job well, we help our EDB (Economic Development Board) colleagues to do their job well as they are trying to attract people to base their HQs and top talent here.

**What motivates you in the STB role?**

I've been in public service for 17 years now, working in different parts of government. I feel lucky to be born in Singapore and, for me, being in public service means being able to help keep the Singapore story going. I've come to appreciate that tourism brings people together from different countries to learn from each other and I've come to realise that a lot of people, particular from Asia, see Singapore as not just aspirational but as a model of governance, to the extent that we are able to inspire them when they go home and do better in their own cities. We learn from them too.

That's extremely motivating. I really salute some of our industry leaders whom I met in the course of the year; a lot of them share the passion of wanting to do well for Singapore, to do good and to inspire others. It's not just a job for them.



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# DESIGN HOTELS



**Soo K Chan**, award-winning architect and principal, SCDA Architects, Singapore, and owner, Alila Villas Soori, Bali

**What made you want to own hotels?** I wanted to be able to design a hotel holistically and have a part in crafting the guest experience. I also enjoy hospitality, as it encompasses lifestyle aspects.

**In designing Alila Villas Soori, what were your main considerations?** The design had to have a strong sense of place, be sustainable environmentally and socially, and consistent in its language – from the architecture, landscape, interiors and down to the details.

**What are the pros and cons of designing a hotel you own than one that is commissioned?** With your own hotel, it is more intense as you are fully responsible for the product. The level of engagement is different as you are involved in the management and financial aspects of the project.

Pros: Quicker decision-making, more design control, more consistent design language.

Cons: You have to oversee the budget and financial aspects of the project.

**What's your view on hotel design and how should it evolve?** There needs to be a new typology for hotel design, as the large chains are creating too many sub-brands and it is becoming harder to create a differentiation.

The green agenda and the luxury idea also need to be repositioned.

**Is it hard to innovate the villa product?** It is getting to a point where the villa product has become archetypical. For example, one expects a private pool and an outdoor shower if it is in the tropics. But it has become formulaic as more and more large chain hotel brands and city hotel brands roll out villa products.

**What do hoteliers need to understand about architects, and vice versa?** Architects need to understand hotel operations, including back-of-the-house and sales and marketing of the product.

They also need to understand the brand ethos of different operators and to have stayed at many hotels to get a clearer understanding of hospitality.

Ideally, they need to be able to design the interiors as well.

Hoteliers need to give experienced architects some room to rethink the guest experience rather than merely coming up with

standard hotel operating manuals – they should have a strong design director that can articulate the brand design direction.

**How has owning Alila Villas Soori changed your perspectives of hotels?** I understand better how a brand can push its brand ethos even though the benefits are more for the brand than the owner. That there are features that are necessary while others that can be scaled back without compromising the experience.

That as brands proliferate, many of the brand's design managers are fairly junior architects with hotel experience.

**What's your pick of the dream places in Asia to build a hotel?**

Bali, Bhutan and the Maldives because of their strong and distinctive locale and culture.

**Will you own and build more hotels?** I would not discount that. I'm currently developing Soori High Line in New York, a serviced condominium with some F&B ([www.soorihighline.com](http://www.soorihighline.com)).

*(Alila Villas Soori is the first hotel which Chan owns. The hotel is managed by Alila and the name Soori combines his first name, Soo, and his wife's Javanese name, Sri. See Checking In, far right)*



**Melanie Hall**, designer and owner, Luna2 Private Hotel and Luna2 Studios, Bali

**What made you want to own hotels?** I have always had a passion for design, and was very much inspired by my father, Alan Chambers, who was an architect in the 50s and 60s. He instilled in me a love of modernist architecture and interiors. I am afflicted with his eye for design and love of high-end travel. Additionally, I worked in fashion for many years, lastly as head of creative for cK Calvin Klein for South-east Asia. To me, fashion, food, architecture, interiors are all co-dependent, so entering the hotel business is a natural progression.

**Tell me about your hotels.** Several years ago, while living in Jakarta, I identified a niche for jetsetters seeking more privacy and a higher level of personal service than perhaps a more regular five-star hotel. This led me to create Luna2 Private Hotel in Seminyak in 2007, which offers the super-star service of an exclusive hotel with the intimacy of a private home. This exclusive-use five-bedroom property comes with a complement of 25 staff.

Luna2 Studios is our second property, located directly adjacent to Luna2 Private Hotel. Launched in April, this intimate yet vibrant 'studiotel' has 14 open-plan studios.

From these starting points, Luna2 will expand first regionally, then globally. On the drawing board, with land purchased and concept design underway, are properties in Phuket, Niseko and

Lombok.

In addition, we are shortly launching the Luna2 Club, our invitation-only private members club (the first in Bali) for a niche group of like-minded lunatics!

**In designing Luna2, what were your main considerations?**

The Luna2 collection blends nostalgia, the great modernism of the past, with futurism (innovation, gadgets, high-tech stuff) and touches of fun that make you giggle. Life is not to be taken too seriously after all!

Bali is a true melting pot of creativity, with many of the villas and hotels incorporating the ubiquitous "modern-Bali" approach to design. My own passion and creative vision perhaps contrast the Bali norm. I refer to my design style as 'fucked-up modernism'.

**What are the pros and cons of designing a hotel you own than one that is commissioned?** I get to do it my way and my own vision. I make my own mistakes, and learn from them for the next project. The pride and gratification you get from building your very own hotel from scratch is incredible.

The downsides are: it's a massive uphill battle; it's hugely costly and you lose sleep in the process. But I wouldn't change a thing – it's onwards and upwards from here.

My husband is the financial wizard and believes he is backing a good horse!

**What's your view on hotel design and how should it evolve?**

Many design-savvy entrepreneurs are 'giving it a go', it seems. Larger chains are rolling out more properties, but can be quite conformist. I hope to start seeing more privately-owned hotel groups which remain true to their vision.

Hotels need to raise the bar in design, personal service and intimacy. Well-heeled world travellers expect more from their experience and, most of all, they need personal attention, in a more intimate environment, with like-minded clientele. Age is no longer as relevant. Attitude is the determining factor.

**What do hoteliers need to understand about architects, and vice versa?** Many architects want to produce a world-beating design to gain acclaim, but that may not be the most practical solution for the hotelier. The two of them must sing from the same hymn sheet throughout the design process.



**Joerg Drechsel**, designer and owner, The Malabar House, Fort Cochin, Kerala

**What made you want to own hotels?** I love the idea of creating a seamless product including architecture, interiors, design, graphics and the way a place functions. It is more than just business; it is a passion to create guest experiences, which inspire all senses.



# Build, design own

What happens when architects and design and construction, and become hotels themselves? **Raini Hamdi** talks



Alila Villas Soori, Bali



Luna2 Private Hotel, Bali



**In designing The Malabar House, what were your main considerations?** The Malabar House has to tell you where you are. The building, interiors and art tell the story of Fort Cochin with 500 years of culture and history. The food makes you taste where you are, the garden puts you in the tropics and the service reflects the hospitality of the host community.

**What are the pros and cons of designing a hotel you own than one that is commissioned?**

You realise your own vision when designing something you own. A commissioned work is based on a brief, and, if successful, is a re-interpretation of your vision. The pro is a consistent design language, from the layout to the smallest detail; the con is that you are on your own and might miss out on a productive and creative development dialogue.

**What's your view of boutique hotels and how should they evolve?**

The concept of the boutique hotel has developed global stereotypes; its design language becomes more and more identical and exchangeable. We do need a dialogue with the local culture, its art and craft traditions; and we must be climate sensitive. This process acts as a filter. The positive result reflects the rich fabric of cultural diversity in a contemporary setting.

**Is it hard to innovate heritage hotels?**

It is a balancing act. How to preserve, where to modernise? How to insert modern amenities and comforts without killing the ambience and feel of the place? How to communicate the layers of history? You have to tell a story as a tactile experience, yet avoid gimmicks, which are out of fashion in a few years down the line.

**What is your pick of the dream places in Asia to build a hotel?**

What intrigues me is to create hotel without walls and fences, an infrastructure which is interwoven in the life and living of the local community, where the guest experiences merge with the life of the host community. We worked on this concept in a mountain village in Oman; unfortunately it did not happen. Working in a regional context I would love to do the same in a beach-facing village in Kerala.

**What do hoteliers need to understand about architects, and vice versa?**

I think the root issue is not different from any other relationship between an architect and owner. The architect can depict his design and visualise the structure before it becomes a reality. The owner has a perception created with the help of 3D presentations or models. He wants changes once the building materialises and becomes real. The architect has to have the flexibility to enter into a dialogue and do modifications. It is a learning process: form follows function or function follows form? Ideally it becomes a perfect function in a perfect form.

**What do you like about building hotels?** A guest comes to a hotel with all he needs in his bag except his social network. We have to tell him our story about the place, create a platform of social interaction with staff and others; it is a wonderful challenge to create a setting for genuine hospitality.

**Will you own and build more hotels?**

Yes, we are planning a museum hotel on a peninsula in a lake in South Kerala. The Malabar House was our first hotel, also the first Relais & Chateaux in India. We also own Purity at Lake Vembanad, which is undergoing an extension and will re-open in August as an Ayurveda-focused resort.



**Eugene Yeh,** designer and owner, Cabochon Hotel, Bangkok

**What made you want to own hotels?** My interior design background and my passion for travel.

**In designing Cabochon Hotel, what were your main considerations?**

A building could be just a building, but a building with a story or theme is more interesting especially if it's a boutique hotel. Thus, when I was designing Cabochon, the story has been considered all the way from concept, architecture, interior and decor.

**What are the pros and cons of designing a hotel you own than one that is commissioned?**

When designing for clients, I actually care more about their requests, budgets, etc, but when it's for myself, you know, I'm freer about everything!

**What's your view of hotel design and how should it evolve?**

Creating some character for your hotel has become more important than ever.

**Is it hard to innovate the boutique hotel product?** Not really, but you must have the right idea of what a boutique hotel is.

**What's your pick of the dream places to build a hotel in Asia?**

Bangkok. **What do hoteliers need to understand about architects, and vice versa?** If I may say so, I don't think hoteliers need too much architectural knowledge – they need the right architect, right interior designer and right management team.

**Will you own and build more hotels?** Yes, if I have the chance. The first hotel I owned – and where I also did the concept, architecture, interior and decor – was The Eugenia, but as an interior designer, I've also designed many hotels such as the Taipei World Trade Center Members' Club and the standard rooms for Regent Taipei.

## Checking in

# Alila Villas Soori



**Raini Hamdi** feels well at this resort and marvels at the invisible hand of design that contributes to the feeling

**LOCATION** If your clients say 'Bali's getting too crowded for me', give them this option.

There's only this hotel on a beachfront along the south-west coast of Bali. The drive from Ngurah Rai is over an hour but, coming into the Tabanan regency, the sight of verdant rice terraces, volcanic mountains and Balinese traditional homes with their temples makes me feel I'm in non-commercialised Bali, which indeed is getting rare. The famed Tanah Lot Temple is just 20 minutes' drive from the resort.

**DESIGN** It's the first resort which award-winning architect Soo K Chan (see main article) owns. To me, he has built a beautiful all-villa property that feels more like a residence than a hotel, and one that is clearly eco-friendly, nestling so gracefully in the environment, for one. The contemporary Asian architecture may disappoint those who want a more Balinese touch, but I'm not one of those. In fact, to me, the architecture is as sensuous as Bali itself. I don't know what it is, but the open spaces, gardens, water courts and air wells – and of course the ocean view – make me feel wonderful.

**VILLA** My one-bedroom beachfront villa could not be bigger. What's lovely about it is a good part of the 275m<sup>2</sup> space is devoted to outdoor living. The pool is large and square-shaped; the daybed can easily fit 10 people! Being just a stone's throw from the beach/ocean, it's irresistible to slump, swim, sleep in the outdoors. And I could do that each day by stepping into the pool right from my villa, thanks to the smart design.

I love the large His and Hers vanity boxes, which compartmentalises Alila's own product line of suntan oil, sunscreen, facial mist, lip balm, etc. They are eco-friendly, yet attractively packaged and best of all I don't end up smelling like coconut, which some of these well-intentioned products do.

In-room amenities could not be more modern, including an Apple TV (although it fails to work sometimes) and a Nespresso coffee machine, which in Bali is not an easy find.

**F&B** The semi-covered Cotta, the main restaurant, and the fine-dining venue, Ombak, look like they have just stepped out of



**Name** Alila Villas Soori

**No. of units** 48

**Rate** From US\$510++

**Contact details**

Tel: (62-361) 894-6388

Email: soori@alilahotels.com

www.alilavillasoori.com

chic dining cities such as London, Hong Kong or Singapore. The former serves Western and Indonesian, while Ombak serves "ingredient-driven" cuisine.

As there are no other restaurants in the neighbourhood, I pray that the F&B is good. Thankfully, it does not leave me starving. If anything, I feel the chef tries too hard and is a tad too innovative.

**FACILITIES** Spa Alila is a must-see, must-do. The main 30m long pool is also a must, even if the large pool in my villa satisfies my needs. There is also a great gym and an ultra-comfortable reading room which has a great selection of books, not to mention a TWG tea service.

I could just stay in – if not for Journeys by Alila. Now I must commend the company for coming up with such creative and exclusive tours that show off the destination's hidden beauty. Of 12 options, I took the Journey of Arcadia, where I hiked breathtaking rice paddies and forest gardens with a guide from the village who astounded me with his knowledge of nature's glorious and surprising secrets. It was an unforgettable excursion.

**SERVICE** Yet another example of the resort's eco-friendliness, 60 per cent of its staff are from the neighbourhood and have never worked in a hotel before. It's incredible how the hotel has trained them to deliver a service standard one expects of a luxury resort. Even if there's one or two minor slip-ups, their earnestness to please and unspoilt nature more than makes up for it. Stars among them, like young Yuda, warm my heart in the way he cares for me and always wants to learn more about F&B.

**VERDICT** When design and hospitality are in harmony, the result is in three words – Alila Villas Soori.

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# FESTIVALS

## THAILAND

### Phuket Vegetarian Festival

**WHAT** Originating from China, this religious event during the ninth lunar month of the Chinese calendar sees the strongest following and most fervent rituals in Phuket. During the nine-day festival, followers will adopt a strict vegetarian diet, while *ma song* (spirit mediums) parade through Phuket town in trances with various objects, ranging from skewers to sunshades, piercing their cheeks and other body parts.

**WHEN** October 5-13, 2013

**CONTACT** Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket Office; (66-76) 211-036; tatphuket@tat.or.th

### Loi Krathong

**WHAT** On the first full-moon night of the 12<sup>th</sup> Thai month (usually in November), Thais across the country flock to rivers, canals and lakes to float a *krathong* – traditionally a small float made from banana trunk, decorated with banana leaves, flowers, candles and incense – to honour Phra Mae Khongkha (the goddess

of water) and cast away bad luck. Sukhothai Loi Krathong and Candle Festival will feature illuminated floats, fireworks and beauty contests. In Chiang Mai, the festival coincides with Yi Peng, where tradition dictates the launch of *khom fai* (floating lanterns) into the night sky.

**WHEN** November 17, 2013

**CONTACT** www.loikrathong.net

### Bun Bang Fai Festival

**WHAT** This merit-making festival centres around placating powerful spirits to ensure sufficient rain for the rice-growing season by firing homemade rockets – up to 10m long – into the sky. The rockets are paraded through town alongside colourful folk dances on the Saturday, followed by competitions to launch the highest-flying fireworks on the Sunday. Celebrated across North-eastern Thailand, this festival is at its most boisterous in Phya Thae Park, Yasothon province.

**WHEN** Tentatively May 10-11, 2014

**CONTACT** TAT Ubon Ratchathani Office; (66-45) 243-770



Thailand's Phuket Vegetarian Festival (left) and Bun Bang Fai Festival in Yasothon province

# Fiestas in the East

From masked dances to bamboo rockets, a multitude of festivals unfold across Asia year-round. By **Greg Lowe, Lee Pei Qi, S Puvanewary, Hannah Koh, Marianne Carandang, Rohit Kaul and Mimi Hudoyo**



Hungry Ghost's Festival in Singapore (left) and Saijo Festival in Japan's Ehime Prefecture



## SINGAPORE

### Hungry Ghost Festival

**WHAT** The Hungry Ghost Festival, which takes place during the seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar, pays homage to the Taoist Chinese belief that the 'Gates of Hell' are open and spirits are free to roam the earth during this period. Believers pay respects to the dead by burning incense sticks and paper money and presenting offerings. To see the city's living culture in action, visit local heartlands like Chinatown, Redhill and Geylang to watch *getai*, or live stage performances.

**WHEN** August 7-September 4, 2013

**CONTACT** www.chinatownfestivals.sg

### Mid-Autumn Festival

**WHAT** One of the many beliefs surrounding this festival commemorates the selfless act of Chang Er, who floated to the moon after drinking the elixir of life that her tyrannical husband stole from a goddess. Celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the Chinese eighth lunar month, this festival

is also known as Mooncake Festival as mooncakes are traditionally eaten. During this period, the streets of Chinatown come alive with colourful decorations, lit-up lanterns, nightly stage shows and bazaars.

**WHEN** September 19, 2013

**CONTACT** www.chinatownfestivals.sg

### Christmas in the Tropics

**WHAT** Singapore's famed Orchard Road takes on a magical aura each year-end when the annual Christmas light-up comes on. Giant ornaments and glittering lights are suspended from trees and street lamps along the 2.2km strip, while shopping centres go to great lengths to vie for the title of the best dressed building. Myriad activities take place too during the month-long programme, from street carols to drama performances to retail promotions, enabling visitors to bask in the yuletide spirit sans snow.

**WHEN** From mid-November 2013 to early-January 2014 (dates unannounced at press time)

**CONTACT** www.orchardroad.org

## MALAYSIA

### Chingay, Lion and Dragon Dance Parade

**WHAT** A festival that initially started as a commemoration of the birthday of Chinese deities has now evolved to become a landmark event of Penang each year-end. At this annual street parade, Chingay participants will display their skills at balancing long poles of over six metres on their palms, foreheads and shoulders, alongside lion and dragon dance performances, and giant flags and floats. The show will kick off from Padang Brown, passing through Georgetown

before ending at the Esplanade.

**WHEN** Tentatively December 22, 2013, starting from 19.30

**CONTACT** Penang State Tourism Development & Culture; (60-4) 650-5136; info@visitpenang.gov.my

### Thaipusam

**WHAT** Falling on the 10<sup>th</sup> month of the Hindu calendar, this festival celebrates Lord Murugan's defeat over the demonic Asura army, or the triumph of good over evil. Devotees carry huge *kavadis* (burdens), with hooks piercing their skin, cheeks or tongues. Batu Caves in Kuala Lumpur is the focal point of the celebrations and will attract the largest crowd and tourists. It is also observed at Waterfall Temple in Penang and Kallumalai Temple in Ipoh, Perak.

**WHEN** January 16, 2014

**CONTACT** enquiries@tourism.gov.my

### Pesta Kaamatan

**WHAT** Pesta Kaamatan, or Harvest Festival, is celebrated by the indigenous people in Sabah to thank the spirit of the rice. The festival begins on May 1 and culminates on May 30 and 31 at Hongkod Koisaa, the Kadazan Dusun Cultural Association hall in Penampang, where Sabah's different ethnic groups, dressed in their traditional costumes and colourful headgears, come together to perform traditional music and cultural dances. A carnival-like atmosphere can be expected, with an exhibition of ethnic houses, sale of handicrafts and traditional food, and a beauty pageant.

**WHEN** Throughout May 2014

**CONTACT** Sabah Tourism Board; (60-88) 212-121; info@sabahtourism.com



A show of Philippine ethnic diversity during Kadayawan

**THE PHILIPPINES**

**Kadayawan**

**WHAT** Originating from Davao's 10 ethnic tribes as a thanksgiving ritual to the gods in return for a bountiful harvest, the modern-day edition is highlighted by a procession of floats decorated with flowers and fruits as well as street dancers in traditional costumes that reflect Muslim influences.

**WHEN** August 17-18, 2013

**CONTACT** Department of Tourism – Davao Region; (63-82) 221-0070; dotr11@yahoo.com; www.discoverdavao.com

**MassKara Festival**

**WHAT** A fusion of the English word "mass" and the Spanish word "cara" (face), the MassKara Festival of Bacolod City in Western Visayas Region is akin to a tropical masked ball. Locals take to the streets wearing colourful masks in a variety of designs, from sea creatures to vegetables to those inspired by Italy's Carnevale di Venezia and Brazil's Rio Carnival, during the two-day fiesta.

**WHEN** October 19-20, 2013

**CONTACT** Bacolod City; (63-34) 434-6751; www.bacolodcity.gov.ph

**Ati-Atihan**

**WHAT** For a week in January each year, the people of Kalibo on the island of Aklan honour their devotion to Señor Sto. Niño de Kalibo, the town's Child Jesus. Participants smear their faces and bodies black, and don colourful costumes as they partake in street processions with tribal dance and music.

**WHEN** January 10-19, 2014

**CONTACT** www.kaliboatitihan.ph

**INDONESIA**

**Baliem Valley Festival**

**WHAT** This annual event highlights the mock warfare between the Dani, Lani and Yali tribes living in the Wamena highlands and the Baliem Valley in Papua province. Other attractions include earth cooking, pig racing, Puradan (rattan spear throwing), Sikoko (spear games) and traditional musical performances. Visitors can partake in spear-throwing and archery contests, or wear the traditional costumes of Koteka and have their skins blackened to be part of the festivities.

**WHEN** August 12-15, 2013

**CONTACT** www.indonesia.travel

**JAPAN**

**Awa Odori Festival**

**WHAT** Dating back almost 1,000 years, the Awa Odori – a folk dance characterised by irregular steps and energetic tempos – is staged to welcome the souls of ancestors returning to the world of the living during Bon. Each year, more than one million spectators descend on Tokushima City during the four-day dance festival to watch all-female and all-male troupes perform the folk dances on the streets.

**WHEN** August 12-15, 2013

**CONTACT** Tokushima Prefecture Tourist Association; info@tokushima-kankou.or.jp

**Saijo Festival**

**WHAT** A collective name for the festivals held at Kamo Shrine, Iwaoka Shrine, Isono Shrine and Izumi Shrine in Saijo City in Ehime Prefecture, the 300-year-old Saijo Festival consists of more than 80 portable shrines – some outfitted with large taiko drums – paraded through the city. Each shrine weighs about 700kg and measures five metres in height, requiring the support of 20 men. Gathering on the banks of the Kamogawa at dusk, the shrines' myriad lanterns present a fantas-

tic spectacle when night falls.

**WHEN** October 12-16, 2013

**CONTACT** Saijo City Hall; cir@saijo-city.jp

**INDIA**

**Goa Carnival**

**WHAT** First started by the Portuguese during their rule of the state, the four-day carnival features plenty of activities, from food festivals, vintage car rallies and fashion shows to live music performances. A particular highlight is a parade of floats in Panaji, Margao, Vasco and Mapusa.

**WHEN** February 9-12, 2014

**CONTACT** www.goatourism.gov.in

**Holi**

**WHAT** A festival of colours, Holi marks the beginning of spring. Bonfires are lit on the eve of the festival, while on Holi itself, revellers mark the occasion by throwing dyed water and colourful *gulal* (powder) on one another. Even though Holi takes place all over the country, celebrations are most exuberant in Uttar Pradesh.

**WHEN** March 17, 2014

**CONTACT** www.tourism.gov.in



A devotee during Thaipusam in Malaysia



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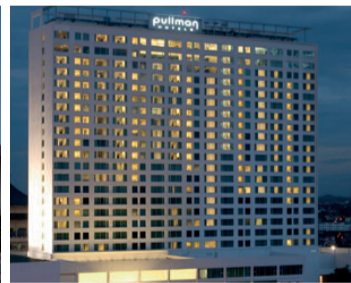
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Pullman Jakarta Central Park

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Entries must be fully completed in order for respondent to be considered. Entries received in June (ie, by June 30th) will be considered for both the June and July draw. Entries received in July (ie, after June 30th, but before July 31st) will be considered only for the July draw. Winners will be contacted, and results announced on the 2nd week of the following month. TTG Asia reserves the right to modify the terms of this competition without prior notification. All decisions are final, and no correspondence will be entertained.

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HOTELS AND RESORTS



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## Award Categories

### 1. Travel Agency Awards

Winners in this category are decided by votes from industry suppliers.

- Best Travel Agency – Australia
- Best Travel Agency – China
- Best Travel Agency – Chinese Taipei
- Best Travel Agency – Hong Kong
- Best Travel Agency – India
- Best Travel Agency – Indochina (Cambodia, Laos)
- Best Travel Agency – Indonesia
- Best Travel Agency – Japan
- Best Travel Agency – Malaysia
- Best Travel Agency – Singapore
- Best Travel Agency – South Korea
- Best Travel Agency – Thailand
- Best Travel Agency – The Philippines
- Best Travel Agency – Vietnam
- Best Corporate Travel Agency
- Best Online Travel Agency

### 2. Travel Supplier Awards

Winners in this category are decided by votes from travel consultants and experts.

#### Airline Awards

- Best North American Airline
- Best European Airline
- Best Middle Eastern Airline
- Best South-east Asian Airline
- Best North Asian Airline
- Best China Airline
- Best Pacific Airline
- Best Regional Airline
- Best Asian Low-Cost Carrier

#### Hotels, Resorts, Serviced Residences & Spa Awards

##### HOTEL Chains

- Best Global Hotel Chain
- Best Regional Hotel Chain
- Best Local Hotel Chain
- Best Hotel Representation Company
- Best Luxury Hotel Brand
- Best Mid-range Hotel Brand
- Best Budget Hotel Brand

##### HOTELS – Individual Property

- Best Luxury Hotel
- Best Mid-range Hotel
- Best Budget Hotel
- Best Independent Hotel
- Best Boutique Hotel
- Best City Hotel – Bangkok
- Best City Hotel – Delhi
- Best City Hotel – Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City
- Best City Hotel – Jakarta
- Best City Hotel – Hong Kong
- Best City Hotel – Kuala Lumpur
- Best City Hotel – Macau
- Best City Hotel – Manila
- Best City Hotel – Seoul
- Best City Hotel – Singapore
- Best City Hotel – Taipei
- Best City Hotel – Tokyo
- Best New City Hotel
- Best Airport Hotel

##### RESORTS – Individual Property

- Best Beach Resort
- Best Resort Hotel (Non-Beach)
- Best New Beach Resort
- Best Integrated Resort

##### SERVICED RESIDENCES

- Best Serviced Residence Operator

##### SPAS

- Best Spa Operator

##### BT-MICE Awards

- Best Airline – Business Class
- Best Business Hotel
- Best Meetings & Conventions Hotel
- Best BT-MICE City
- Best Convention & Exhibition Centre
- Best Convention & Exhibition Bureau

##### Travel Services Awards

- Best Airport
- Best GDS
- Best Cruise Operator
- Best NTO
- Best Theme Attraction

### 3. Outstanding Achievement Awards

The winners in this category are decided by the TTG Asia editorial team.

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

### 4. Travel Hall of Fame

The Travel Hall of Fame honours organisations that have won at least 10 consecutive times at previous editions of the TTG Travel Awards. These special award winners will be recognised at every TTG annual awards presentation ceremony. Votes for them will not be counted.

Inducted Travel Hall of Fame honourees are:

- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Singapore Airlines (2002)
- Hertz Asia-Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Abacus International (2009)
- Silkair (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)

# VOTING INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES

## For Travel Agency and Travel Supplier Awards

### 1. Please use the correct voting form.

#### Voting Form A: Travel Agency Awards

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

#### Voting Form B: Travel Supplier Awards

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

#### Online Voting Forms

You can opt to vote using our online form [www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards](http://www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards) instead.

### 2. Voting Criteria

Please refer to the voting criteria for **each category and title** to ensure that all judging is done on an equal basis.

### 3. Voting Rules

- Only one voting entry per person is allowed – using the voting form or online voting.
- All votes are confidential.
- Voting forms are published in TTG Travel Trade Publishing print titles and are available online at [www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards](http://www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards)

- No responsibility will be accepted by the organisers for voting forms lost, delayed or damaged in the post.
- There are no pre-nominated contenders for any voting awards.
- The results for TTG Travel Awards 2013 are final and no correspondence will be entertained.
- Voting forms will be tabulated and evaluated by an independent auditor in Singapore.
- The closing date is **2nd August 2013**.

### 4. Voting Form Submission

Completed voting forms are to be returned to:

#### SINGAPORE

Ms Lina Tan (TTG Travel Awards 2013)  
TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd  
1 Science Park Road #04-07 The Capricorn  
Singapore Science Park II  
Singapore 117528  
Tel: (65) 6395-7575 Fax: (65) 6536-0896

#### HONG KONG

Ms Carol Cheng (TTG Travel Awards 2013)  
TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd  
China.com Inc  
11/F ING Tower No. 308 Des Voeux Road  
Central Hong Kong  
Tel: (852) 2237-7272 Fax: (852) 2806-0646

## VOTING FORM A: TRAVEL AGENCY AWARDS

**For voting by • Hoteliers • Airlines • Car rental companies • Cruise operators • National Tourism Organisations • GDS companies • All other travel professionals (except travel consultants, tour operators and destination management companies)**

**VOTE ONLINE AT**  
[www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards](http://www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards)

#### Criteria

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

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

- Best Travel Agency – **Australia**
- Best Travel Agency – **China**
- Best Travel Agency – **Chinese Taipei**
- Best Travel Agency – **Hong Kong**
- Best Travel Agency – **India**
- Best Travel Agency – **Indochina (Cambodia, Laos)**
- Best Travel Agency – **Indonesia**
- Best Travel Agency – **Japan**
- Best Travel Agency – **Malaysia**
- Best Travel Agency – **Singapore**
- Best Travel Agency – **South Korea**
- Best Travel Agency – **Thailand**
- Best Travel Agency – **The Philippines**
- Best Travel Agency – **Vietnam**
- Best **Corporate** Travel Agency  
Best travel agency specialising in serving the needs of corporate travellers.
- Best **Online** Travel Agency  
Best online-based travel agency offering the most user-friendly and effective interface to meet client needs. This online travel agency must also boast the best sales and marketing network in terms of service innovation.

VOTER INFORMATION	Name:	<input type="text"/>	Passport no.:	<input type="text"/>
	Job title:	<input type="text"/>	Company:	<input type="text"/>
	Address:	<input type="text"/>		
	Country:	<input type="text"/>		
	Telephone no.:	<input type="text"/>	Fax no.:	<input type="text"/>
	Email:	<input type="text"/>	Signature:	<input type="text"/>

Please refer to the next page for  
**VOTING FORM B:**  
**TRAVEL SUPPLIER AWARDS**

**VOTING CLOSES**  
**2nd August 2013**

# VOTING FORM B: TRAVEL SUPPLIER AWARDS

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

For voting by • Travel Consultants • Tour Operators • Destination Management Companies

## Airline Awards

### Criteria

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

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

17. Best **North American** Airline  
Best airline based in North America operating Asia-Pacific routes.
18. Best **European** Airline  
Best airline based in Europe operating Asia-Pacific routes.
19. Best **Middle Eastern** Airline  
Best airline based in Middle East operating Asia-Pacific routes.
20. Best **South-east Asian** Airline  
Best airline based in Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand or Vietnam operating Asia-Pacific routes.
21. Best **North Asian** Airline  
Best airline based in South Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei, Macau or Hong Kong operating Asia-Pacific routes.
22. Best **China** Airline  
Best airline based in China operating Asia-Pacific routes.
23. Best **Pacific** Airline  
Best airline based in the Pacific operating Asia-Pacific routes.
24. Best **Regional** Airline  
Best airline based regionally operating Asia-Pacific routes.
25. Best **Asian Low-cost Carrier**  
Best airline based in Asia-Pacific that operates on a low-cost strategy.

## Hotels, Resorts, Serviced Residences & Spa Awards

### Criteria

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

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

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

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

### HOTEL CHAINS

26. Best **Global** Hotel Chain  
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties globally.
27. Best **Regional** Hotel Chain  
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties in the region.
28. Best **Local** Hotel Chain  
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
29. Best **Hotel Representation Company**  
Best company providing the most agent-friendly products and services and showing the best marketing effort in generating sales for member hotels via agents.
30. Best **Luxury** Hotel Brand  
Best hotel chain operating a network of luxurious properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
31. Best **Mid-range** Hotel Brand  
Best hotel chain operating a network of mid-range properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
32. Best **Budget** Hotel Brand  
Best hotel chain operating a network of economical properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.

### HOTELS – Individual Property

33. Best **Luxury** Hotel  
Best hotel catering to the upmarket traveller. This hotel must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting upmarket status.
34. Best **Mid-range** Hotel  
Best mid-range hotel catering to the traveller who seeks three- to four-star quality and comfort.
35. Best **Budget** Hotel  
Best hotel catering to the budget traveller.
36. Best **Independent** Hotel  
Best non-chain (ie not part of a network of properties) hotel.
37. Best **Boutique** Hotel  
Best small, fashionable and unique hotel.
38. Best **City** Hotel – **Bangkok**
39. Best **City** Hotel – **Delhi**
40. Best **City** Hotel – **Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City**
41. Best **City** Hotel – **Jakarta**
42. Best **City** Hotel – **Hong Kong**
43. Best **City** Hotel – **Kuala Lumpur**
44. Best **City** Hotel – **Macau**
45. Best **City** Hotel – **Manila**
46. Best **City** Hotel – **Seoul**
47. Best **City** Hotel – **Singapore**
48. Best **City** Hotel – **Taipei**
49. Best **City** Hotel – **Tokyo**
50. Best **New City** Hotel  
Best city hotel that opened in 2012/2013.
51. Best **Airport** Hotel  
Best hotel – located within the vicinity of an airport – that caters to travellers in transit.

### RESORTS – Individual Property

52. Best **Beach** Resort  
Best resort located by a beach. This resort must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting local flavour.
53. Best **Resort** Hotel (Non-Beach)  
Best resort not located by a beach. This resort must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting local flavour.
54. Best **New Beach** Resort  
Best beach resort that opened in 2012/2013.
55. Best **Integrated** Resort  
Best hotel offering comprehensive accommodation, shopping, dining, entertainment and sports.

### SERVICED RESIDENCES

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

### SPAS

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

## BT-MICE Awards

### Criteria

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

## Travel Services Awards

### Criteria

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

VOTER INFORMATION

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

VOTING CLOSES  
2nd August 2013

Hainan competes with regional rivals like Bali and Phuket to become an international resort destination



Hainan Provincial Tourism Development Commission

# A sea of opportunities

With strong state backing, Hainan steps up its resort destination ambitions. By **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

**Arrivals** In 2012, Hainan welcomed 815,600 foreign arrivals, posting a year-on-year increase of 0.1 per cent, according to figures from Hainan Provincial Tourism Development Commission (HTDC).

Among the Greater China source markets, Hong Kong accounted for 115,100 arrivals (-18.2 per cent), Macau with 7,800 arrivals (-31.3 per cent) and Taiwan with 177,700 arrivals (+68.6 per cent).

The average daily expenditure of foreign tourists reached US\$176.9 last year, an increase of US\$4.4 from 2009. At the same time, Sanya has recorded China's highest average length of stay for tourists at 7.2 days in 2012, a rise of 1.5 day from 2009.

For 2013, HTDC is targeting a growth of five per cent in international arrivals to reach 856,400, and to boost the number of overnight visitors in Hainan by 10 per cent to 36.5 million and tourism revenues by 13 per cent to RMB42.8 billion (US\$7 billion) respectively.

**NTO** Having identified key international source markets as Russia, South Korea, Australia

and Singapore, HTDC director, Lu Zhiyuan, revealed that establishing overseas offices in Moscow, Seoul, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan are in the pipeline to "strengthen the promotion of Hainan on the international tourism stage".

Besides attending trade shows in key source markets with China National Tourism Administration, HTDC will also organise media and trade fam trips, and promote foreign movie productions on the island. A bigger budget will be allocated to new media marketing in key source countries to promote Hainan's key tourist attractions, particularly in the wedding and beach tourism segments.

Lu added: "HTDC will continue to work with the provincial government and Civil Aviation Authority of China to actively push for more charter flight services from key source cities as well as to attract more airlines to operate international charter and regular flights to Hainan."

**Hotels** The average occupancy rate in Hainan last year was 58.4 per cent among the province's 3,200 properties, according to HTDC. Meanwhile,



"We will establish offices in Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Seoul and Moscow to pave for better promotion, market research and coordination strategies in these cities."

**Lu Zhiyuan**  
Director  
Hainan Provincial Tourism Development Commission

hotel development continues to be on a roll, with hotspots spreading beyond Sanya Bay, Yalong Bay and Dadonghai.

Haitang Bay, already home to recent debuts like the 449-room Haitang Bay Gloria Sanya and 160-room Royal Begonia, will see the launch of the 452-room Westin Sanya Haitang Bay Resort on July 1. This bay is set to be home to 25 five-star or higher properties in the next five years to become the country's highest concentration of luxury hotels in an area, HTDC revealed.

Another hotbed, Qingshui (Clearwater) Bay will first welcome the 341-key Raffles Hainan in September 2013, followed by five other hospitality brands – Jumeirah, JW Marriott, Hilton, Holiday Inn and Outrigger.

The 426-key Tangla Sanya is rolling out on October 1, while the 139-room Dusit Thani Hainan in Lingshui and the 300-room Dusit Devarana Hainan on Baoting's Seven Fairy Mountain are due to open by 2015.

**Access** Haikou Meilan International Airport (HAK) is now undergoing an expansion to include a new 290,000m<sup>2</sup> terminal, a 3.6km runway, two par-

allel taxiways and a new apron to accommodate 45 aircraft, which will boost its annual handling capacity to 30 million passengers when completed in 2017.

Boao Airport – Hainan's third airport after HAK and Sanya Phoenix International Airport – is due to finish by end-2015 to boast a 2.6km runway and a 9,000m<sup>2</sup> terminal.

Meanwhile, construction of the 345km Hainan Western Ring High-Speed Railway is now underway to link the existing eastern railway at the two end points of Haikou and Sanya by 2015.

**Products** When Haitang Bay International Shopping Complex soft-opens this year-end, it will include 70,000m<sup>2</sup> of duty-free shopping space – the world's largest – adding to Hainan's existing two duty-free shops at Sanya and Haikou airports.

The island is also seeing a theme-park building frenzy with Li'an Ocean Harbor Theme Park debuting this year-end in Lingshui, Hainan Space Theme Park in Wenchang in 2014, as well as Hainan R&F Ocean Paradise and Hainan Wet'n'Wild in 2015 – both modelled after Gold Coast's water theme parks.



# Surf's up for Hainan island

Resorts are jostling for a slice of the destination's attractive events business. By **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**



Haitang Bay Gloria Sanya opened in February, adding 449 five-star rooms to the destination's accommodation supply

Dubbed China's answer to Hawaii, Hainan is seeing a resort boom as international and domestic hotel brands alike flock to launch outposts on the tropical isle.

While competition is undoubtedly becoming stiffer in the hospitality sector, this development spells great news for event planners and incentive houses who are now spoilt for choice.

The traditional epicentre of Sanya's tourism development, the 25km Sanya Bay, continues to see a massive buildup of hotels. The 370-room Four Points by Sheraton entered the market in the second half of 2012, while upcoming properties include the 196-room Park Hyatt Sanya Sunny Bay and the adjacent 183-room Andaz Sanya Sunny Bay.

"The opening of more hotels and resorts in Sanya is helping to generate greater awareness of the area as a MICE destination and bringing more business to the city," said Jackson Wong, general manager of the 495-key Ramada Plaza Sanya, which launched on January 30 this year on Sanya Bay.

"We have been receiving many enquiries from small and mid-size corporate groups since our pre-opening last year. As a new hotel, we are very flexible with rates, so I am optimistic on the MICE business this year."

The 7.5km Yalong Bay has also upped its ante with the debut of the 401-room St. Regis Sanya Yalong Bay in late-2011.

According to senior sales manager, Danny Li, the resort's exclusive partnership with the on-site Sanya Yalong Bay Yacht Club – which offers fully staffed vessels for private charters – as well as two in-house movie theatres offer myriad opportunities for top-tier incentives and corporate events.

Further north, the 43km Haitang Bay

is the newest battlefield for high-end hotels, where brands such as Renaissance, Sheraton, Conrad, DoubleTree by Hilton, Kempinski and The Royal Begonia have emerged. In the pipeline are The Westin, opening this July, and Crowne Plaza and Hotel Indigo next year.

Downplaying concerns over the rapid rise in luxury inventory, Nicolas Solari, general manager of the 449-key Haitang Bay Gloria Sanya, which officially opened in February this year, believes the availability of more upper five-star rooms in Haitang Bay is an "advantage" as more resorts will "create further synergy".

He added: "The government has focused on improving the infrastructure – proof is the new highway placing Haitang Bay 35 minutes from the (Phoenix International Sanya) airport. The state-of-the-art Hainan 301 hospital is located on the same compound as our resort, and the largest duty-free shop in China is well underway in Haitang Bay."

Elsewhere in Sanya, the 122-key Anantara Sanya Resort and Spa, nestled between Xiaodonghai Bay and Luhuitou Bay, began operations in August 2012, while the 299-key Raffles Hainan opened in March in Clearwater Bay on the island's south-east coast.

And it is no longer just Sanya netting MICE business on Hainan island.

The Haikou government has set up the Haikou Convention and Exhibition Bureau – the nation's first – in June 2012 and has pledged RMB35 million (US\$5.6 million) to support the development of the MICE industry in the provincial capital.

Also banking on Haikou's growing reputation as a MICE destination is Shangri-La Hotel, Haikou, which debuted in November last year, sitting adjacent to the

136,200m<sup>2</sup> Hainan International Convention and Exhibition Center (HICEC).

"We work closely with HICEC in order to cater to MICE groups. The meetings segment has been the strongest for the hotel," said general manager, Jordon Xu.

The 337-room hotel hosted the Snooker World Open Haikou 2013 from February 25 to March 3, in addition to several meeting events.

In April, the property enjoyed full occupancy when it hosted a five-day, 200-

pax meeting which was held in conjunction with the Book Expo 2013 at HICEC.

Haikou's proximity to facilities also makes it popular with business event planners and business travellers.

Coming up next in the city is The Westin Haikou, due to open this September, as well as a Hard Rock Hotel in 2015. They will join existing resorts such as Crown Spa Resort Hainan, HNA Beach & Spa Resort Haikou and Sheraton Haikou Resort.



Shangri-La Hotel, Haikou sits close to the Hainan International Convention and Exhibition Center



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# On the frontline of development

Raffles Hainan marks the first of six international resorts to debut on Clearwater Bay. By **Lee Pei Qi**

Raffles Hotels & Resorts is eyeing a slice of the booming tourism market in China's Hainan province by leveraging on the serene location of Raffles Hainan, which is opening in September 2013.

The group's second property in China after Beijing, Raffles Hainan features 299 guestrooms and 32 villas, in addition to three restaurants, a 790m<sup>2</sup> ballroom, seven meeting rooms as well as a VIP meeting room and boardroom.

The resort also boasts a beachfront location on Clearwater Bay, a new 600km<sup>2</sup> development on the south-eastern coast of Hainan.

Touted as a new hotspot in Hainan, Clearwater Bay – also known as Qingshui Bay – is developed by Hong Kong's Agile Property Holdings, which will also roll out three 18-hole golf courses, a shopping mall, a 200-berth yachting marina and a water sports hub in the area.

Raffles will be among the first of six international hotels to debut on Clearwater Bay; other upcoming hospitality brands include Jumeirah, JW Marriott, Hilton, InterContinental and Outrigger.

**“We aim to use this novelty factor (of being located on Clearwater Bay) as our competitive advantage.”**

**Herbert Laubichler-Pichler**  
General manager,  
Raffles Hainan

Although Clearwater Bay is approximately a 40-minute drive away from Sanya Phoenix International Airport, Herbert Laubichler-Pichler, general manager of Raffles Hainan, said the resort's location would be a “winning factor” to set it apart from competitors.

Unlike Sanya, a popular seaside resort destination that has seen a massive build-up of luxury hotels since 2009, Laubichler-Pichler pointed out that the new Clearwater Bay location would offer some “peace and quiet” from the overcrowded beaches in the city. He added: “We aim to use this novelty factor as our competitive advantage.”

Raffles Hainan will initially focus on attracting mainland Chinese visitors, before moving on to target the rest of Asia, including Singapore and South Korea, Laubichler-Pichler revealed.

Besides Hainan, Raffles Hotels & Resorts is set to roll out properties in Jakarta and Istanbul within the next 15 months.

Hainan Island, often referred to as “China's Hawaii” for its pristine beaches and year-round sunshine, is set to become a top international tourism destination by 2020. The 33,000km<sup>2</sup> island is at the forefront of China's hotel boom, housing more than 209 starred hotels currently.

Over 30 million tourist arrivals were recorded for Hainan in 2011, with the bulk of visitors hailing from mainland China, according to statistics from Hainan Provincial Tourism Development Commission. Between 2010 and 2011, Hainan's tourism revenue surged 25 per cent to RMB32 billion (US\$5.2 billion).

The beachfront Raffles Hainan will open in September this year, heralding the slew of developments slated for Clearwater Bay, a rising tourism spot



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From left: Martin Craigs, PATA, Abid Butt, Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts, Pansy Ho, Shun Tak Holdings, Lothar R. Pehl, Starwood Hotels and Resorts Asia Pacific, Martin Verdon Roe, TripAdvisor and Monita Rajpal, CNN.



PATA Annual Summit Delegates.



From left: Suthikiati Chirathivat, Centara Hotels & Resorts; Taleb Rifai, UNWTO; Dr Sombat Kuruphan, Vice Minister of Tourism and Sports, Thailand; Martin J Craigs, PATA CEO; Thirayuth Chirathivat, Centara Hotels & Resorts; Gloria Guevara, Former Secretary of Tourism, Mexico; and Joao Manuel Costa Antunes, PATA Chairman.



From left: Joao Manuel Costa Antunes, PATA Chairman, Monita Rajpal, CNN Talent, Ralph "Skip" Boyce, President, Boeing Southeast Asia & Former US Ambassador to Thailand, Gloria Guevara, Former Secretary of Tourism, Mexico and Daw Kyi Kyi Aye, Senior Tourism Advisor at the Myanmar Tourism Federation.



A strategic partnership between UNWTO and PATA signed by UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai (right), and PATA CEO, Martin Craigs.



João Manuel Costa Antunes, PATA Chairman (left) speaks with Suraphon Svetasreni, TAT Governor.



Ross Jackson (left) and Jagruti Mistry, Visa Inc.



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This year, the PATA Annual Summit addressed the theme 'Embracing the Complete Visitor Economy'. Through its seminars and breakout sessions, attendees left the summit with a more holistic understanding of visitor economy.



Chadatip Chutrakul, CEO of Siam Piwat (left), shakes hands with Abid Butt, CEO - Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts (right) while Martin Craigs, PATA, looks on.



The industry's next generation of leaders at the PATA Youth Forum.



James Mabey (second from right) - PATA's 2013 Face of the Future.



From left: Martin Craigs, PATA, CEO, Sombat Kuruphan, Vice Minister of Tourism and Sports, Thailand and Taleb Rifai Secretary-General, UNWTO.



PATA Annual Summit 2013 delegates.



PATA CEO, Martin Craigs (left) and GSTC Board Member Guy Chester signed the MoU on April 26 during the PATA Annual Summit.



Pansy Ho, Managing Director, Shun Tak Holdings (left), Martin Craigs, CEO, PATA (centre) and Chadatip Chutrakul, CEO, Siam Piwat.



From left: Arrut Navaraj, Sampran Riverside, Dale Lawrence, Skai International Bangkok, Chittimas Ketvoravit, Universal Hospitality and Siradej Donavanik, Dusit International.



Check In - at the PATA Youth Forum.



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Efforts to attract more repeat business are being stepped up; Burj Khalifa pictured here

# Great expectations for Dubai

Infrastructure boom lined up if city bags 2020 World Expo bid. By Shekhar Niyogi

**Arrivals** Tourism in Dubai grew 9.3 per cent in 2012 resulting in 10.16 million arrivals, of which 200,000 came on cruises. Average length of stay was 3.76 nights.

Among key markets, Indian arrivals grew from 702,142 in 2011, to 763,986 in 2012. China sent 248,367 visitors in 2012 compared to 193,791 in 2011, while Japan sent 70,110 in 2012 compared to 52,372 in 2011.

Dubai's bid to host the World Expo 2020 has spurred the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) to set a lofty target of 20 million arrivals by 2020.

A new strategy, 'Dubai's Vision for Tourism' aims to treble tourism receipts to AED 300 billion per year (US\$82 billion) in seven years.

**Access** National carrier, Emirates which last year added 30 aircraft and 15 new destinations, wants to add 180 new destinations by 2020.

Dubai International Airport recorded 57 million passenger movements in 2012 compared to 50.5 million in 2011.

Helal Saeed Al Marri, direc-

tor general, DTCM, said Dubai was pressing ahead with a US\$7.8 billion airport expansion plan to cope with the expected boost in Asia-Pacific arrivals with the recent Emirates and Qantas tie-up.

DTCM is now busy attracting visitors ranging from Arab families to big-spending Chinese tourists with improvements such as a new tram service and an additional cruise terminal.

**Hotels** Dubai's 599 hotels now offer an inventory of 80,500 rooms.

The industry has seen average room rates (ARR) rise four per cent to US\$304 on an occupancy rate of 79.7 per cent. ARR for the first quarter of 2013 was US\$310.

About 62 per cent of room inventory is five-star and 26 per cent four-star.

The industry's top three source markets are Saudi Arabia, India and Russia.

By 2016, Dubai expects to add at least 35 new hotels and 10,000 additional rooms.

Under development are the 1,700-room Habtoor complex, comprising a W Hotel, a St Regis and a Westin. By 2020 Dubai expects to have 160,000 rooms.



"We are chalking out an aggressive marketing strategy that will ensure larger numbers of international inbound tourists choosing to stay longer in Dubai."

**Helal Saeed Al Marri**  
Director general  
Dubai's Department of Tourism and  
Commerce Marketing

Dubai's hotel market is divided into three distinct sub-markets: Deira Dubai, which saw the addition of the 600-room Arjaan and Rayhaan Al Ghurair, which opened in December 2012; Dubai Marina and Waterfront with several top-class hotels and close to Palm Jumeirah; and Bur Dubai, with the business section and Sheikh Zayed Road.

**MICE** New hotels like JW Marriott Marquis, which has opened one of two towers each containing 1,000 rooms, is giving the segment a boost.

Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world, offers spectacular event space on its 122<sup>nd</sup> floor at At.mosphere, and at the Armani Hotel on its premises.

Phase one of the Mohammed Bin Rashid City is expected to be ready by end-2014. It will feature world-class theme parks, golfing facilities, hotels, arts and cultural attractions, and the world's largest shopping mall with 80 million visitors expected annually.

If Dubai wins the 2020 expo bid, the government is expected to add infrastructure, which in turn will benefit corporate activity in the run-up.

**NTO** According to Al Marri, Dubai will be focusing on two growth strategies. It wants to become the ultimate family destination leading to longer stays, increasing demand for hotels, and where affordability will play a bigger role.

A lower ARR will be compensated by revenue earned through ancillary earnings from F&B and other services.

DTCM will encourage the building of theme parks, more events targeted at source markets like Bollywood shows timed to coincide with the Indian holiday travel season. About 20 per cent of India's outbound tourists travel to Dubai. Concerts, art and literary events as well as shopping festivals are some of the activities in the pipeline.

To accommodate more commuters, the Metro is being expanded across the city and a new tram line is being added to Jumeirah Beach Road, popular for shopping and dining in the fashionable Marina area.

Dubai as a business destination also wants to target and convert business visitors into leisure tourists on subsequent visits. The emphasis is to increase repeat visitors from this segment.

# Abu Dhabi reaches crossroads

Heavy investment in tourism must start to deliver returns and diversify its economy. By **Shekhar Niyogi**



Rooms oversupply in Abu Dhabi may lead to discounting; Emirates Palace Hotel pictured here

Abu Dhabi is at the crossroads of a quantum leap where it needs to balance the rapid growth in hotels and attractions with the pace of visitor arrivals.

Pushing ahead with multi-billion dollar development projects in all aspects of tourism, the emirate is looking at revenues from the industry that will be substantive in a primarily oil and gas driven revenue economy.

Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) revealed that visitor arrivals rose six per cent to 631,417 in the first quarter of 2013. Average length of stay rose 16 per cent in its 141 hotels to 3.4 nights.

One resort and two hotel apartments in Abu Dhabi, and one resort in Al Ain added 706 rooms to its bulging inventory in the same quarter, and in this incessant growth in room inventory lies the crunch.

Average occupancy rate (AOR) fell to 67 per cent, a three per cent drop compared to 2011. Average room rate (ARR) fell nine per cent to US\$161, compared to US\$176 the year before.

As several hotels will open in Abu Dhabi in the next few months, hoteliers face a quandary on how to keep AOR up without resorting to aggressive price cutting.

Shaun Parsons, general manager, Le Royal Meridien Abu Dhabi, said loyalty programmes could help build about 15 per cent AOR.

Alexander Schneider, manager, Emirates Palace Hotel, added the oversupply of hotels might trigger the bigger brands, nervous about occupancy, to start discounting.

“The lower your rates get, the more you are likely to move into a layer of your clientele that’s going to harm the destination,” he said.

In 2012, 54,025 Saudi Arabians stayed in Abu Dhabi’s hotels, an increase of 17 per cent year-

on-year.

China and Russia are key growth markets showing an increased presence. China produced 76 per cent more hotel guests in 2012 than in 2011, while Russia achieved 44 per cent hotel growth in the same period with average length of stay of 5.4 nights.

Although ARR fell in 2012, room nights sold increased from 1.9 million in 2011 to 2.3 million in 2012.

Mubarak Al Muhairi, director general, TCA Abu Dhabi, said: “We are starting to reap the benefits of our trade engagement programme. Four DMCs are opening offices here and we have undertaken 15 destination roadshows in India, Russia, the UK and Germany. We take our roadshows to five Chinese cities and Seoul and Tokyo this month.”

The largest international source markets in 1Q2013 was the UK with 39,841 arrivals, a seven per cent increase, and length of stay of 4.7 nights, a healthy nine per cent rise.

India ranked second with 36,157 guests, a rise of seven per cent and an incredible 33 per cent growth in average length of stay of 4.7 nights.

Abu Dhabi International Airport will receive 1,065 flights a week this summer, a 15 per cent increase compared to the 956 weekly flights the year before. The number of weekly seats available will also increase to 32,004, an 11 per cent rise compared to the 28,751 seats in the same period last year.

Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways has increased weekly flights from 590 to 653, Jet Airways from 14 to 18, Air Seychelles from four to 10, Egypt Air from nine to 11, Qatar Airways from 35 to 42, and

Turkish Airlines from four to six.

Etihad Airways taking a 24 per cent stake in Jet Airways recently, will link not only the major cities but secondary towns in India.

To increase visitor arrivals and keep them longer, TCA Abu Dhabi is promoting its new theme parks, integrated resorts, F1 and Moto GP races, Ferrari World, and the new entertainment hub Yas World.

Hosting international events like the Abu Dhabi International Triathlon, Abu Dhabi Festival, Abu Dhabi Air Expo and Qasr al Hosn Festival, Louvre and Guggenheim museum permanent collections, and concerts by Sting, Andrea Bocelli and Guns N’ Roses, seems to have paid off.

TCA Abu Dhabi director promotions & overseas offices, Mubarak Al Nuaimi said the GCC countries were a key focus to boost hotel occupancy and length of stay.

In 2012, Abu Dhabi hosted the 10,000-delegate World Ophthalmology Congress and 18<sup>th</sup> World Routes Development Congress, boosting its status and it is in ICCA’s top 100 list.

Jasem Al Darmaki, deputy director general TCA Abu Dhabi said: “We are targeting six major business wins this year, eight next year and 10 by 2015.”

Events in the pipeline are FTI Touristik’s 150-strong incentive programme, its first held outside Europe, in January 2014, the Middle East Luxury Travel Show, and in 2015, the 20<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Congress of Cardiology and the 16<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Tobacco or Health.

A new development is the state-of-the-art medical and wellness facility in Saadiyat Island primarily focussing on the Saudi Arabian market and the GCC countries.

## Qatar Airways spreads its wings

By **Shekhar Niyogi**

Overcoming a temporary setback due to the four-month grounding of Dreamliners that started in January this year, Qatar Airways is now back on track with its network expansion plans.

All five Dreamliners are back in service now, and the Doha headquartered airline is planning to bring five more Boeing 787s into its fleet by end of this year, according to CEO Akbar Al Baker.

Speaking to *TTG Asia* in an interview during the Arabian Travel Market in May, Akbar explained that the acquisition spree was needed to garner enough

seat capacity to match the company’s route expansion plans.

Besides the Dreamliner, Qatar Airways is also keen on the Airbus A330. It is in talks with the European manufacturer to purchase up to 15 of these passenger jets in a deal potentially worth US\$3.6 billion.

“The deal should be finalised at the time of the Paris Air Show this June,” said Akbar.

Besides being supported by a larger fleet in the near future, Akbar noted that Qatar Airways’ expansion would gain from its entry into the Oneworld alliance by October 2013.

Terming it “an open and un-



**Akbar: may tie up with IndiGo**

worldwide.

The airline is currently ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in the world and expects to be among the top 10 in three years’ time.

While fellow Middle Eastern carrier, Etihad, had recently made a stake purchase of Indian

obtrusive alliance”, he said the move would allow the airline to cover 860 destinations in 166 countries with 550 airport lounges

Jet Airways, Akbar told the reporter that he had no plans to do the same with any other airlines in India, a market he was keen on growing.

“We would love to serve more Indians in their travel needs,” he said, adding that Qatar Airways has initiated alliance discussions with IndiGo, a low-cost carrier headquartered in India’s Gurgaon.

“(IndiGo) is the most well-run airline in India and we will let the process proceed to its best conclusion. At Qatar Airways, we respect the need to look at our bottom line as well as that of our industry partners,” he said.

**Bigger fleet**

**3.6**

The amount, in billions of US dollars, that Qatar Airways is likely to splash on a new order of 15 Airbus A330 passenger jets



Best Western Premier Makkah

Best Western to manage, not franchise, properties in the Middle East

# Best Western eyes 75 hotels by 2016

**By Shekhar Niyogi**

Best Western has embarked on a rapid expansion strategy in the Middle East and is focusing on key growth destinations like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Jordan, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait.

Glenn de Souza, vice president international operations-Asia and the Middle East, Best West-

ern International, said: "From five hotels in the region and another 20 contracted and to be commissioned until the second quarter of 2015, we are targeting 50 more by the fourth quarter of 2016."

De Souza is confident of success with Best Western's access to 17 million loyalty customers, fre-

quent flier programme members of 19 airlines, and its association with Visa, MasterCard and American Express.

"The strategy is to manage properties and not franchise them. We have ready partners with synergetic properties who are offering us their hotels for re-branding and management.

"Our goal is to ensure longer stays in the Middle East of seven to 15 days and to look at revenue growth through higher occupancy instead of being obsessed with average room rate," he added.

The main source market is corporate business primarily from the GCC countries, but Best Western is expecting its expansion in the Middle East to spin off increase in travel to Asia from the region and vice versa.

De Souza said: "We have two hotels in Bangkok where 30 per cent of the clientele is from the Middle East. I see clubbing of Middle East and South-east Asian destinations in itineraries in the near future as we offer an array of choices in both the Asian and Middle East markets."

Among Best Western's new Middle East hotels are one in Kuwait scheduled to open on June 1, two in Iraq next year, one in Riyadh, several more in Saudi Arabia, a 1,200 room hotel in Makkah and one in Al Khobar.

The group will be introducing all three of its brands – Best Western, Best Western Plus and Best Western Premier – to the Middle East market.

Zaki A Al-Rehaimi, owner of Best Western Sand Rose Suite Hotel in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia, said: "We find the Best Western's model of revenue sharing and operations very easy to understand and transparent. We also have great faith in their sales and marketing prowess."

Khalid Ragab, director of operations, Best Western International, Asia and the Middle East, said: "The profile of the business traveller is changing and there is an overwhelmingly increase in the number of them from India, China and Indonesia. The other factor that is encouraging is the billions of dollars being invested by the three Middle East airlines – Emirates, Etihad Airways and Qatar Airways – in increasing size of fleet and number of destinations flown."

As to how much inventory will be enough, de Souza said: "No number, however large, is enough. Inbound travel and shorthaul intra-Middle East travel will grow at a pace that is inconceivable at this time."

Best Western is the largest independent hotel chain in the world with 189 hotels and resorts in 27 countries.



De Souza: focus on longer stays

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- High Quality Business Appointments**  
As rated by 80% of buyers
- Fresh Buying Power Each Year**  
With 63% new buyers in 2012
- Over 90% of Delegates\* Are Likely To Recommend This Event To Industry Peers And Return For Next Year's Event!**  
\*Across Buyer, Corporate Travel Manager and Media Categories

**"An excellent event! Appreciated the opportunity to meet with many new exhibitors and learn about new venues that we can consider for our future events."**  
Michal Barszap, President/CEO of ITS Tours, Meetings & Incentives, USA

**"It is definitely worth while being an exhibitor at IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific."**  
Tammy Piatti of OPTIMUM Thailand

**"Am very satisfied with the numerous new contacts I made at the event as well as new ideas and knowledge on destinations gained."**  
Agnieszka Kaminska, Project Manager of Impuls Travel, Poland

**"I've attended a lot of industry events and this is the best among them."**  
Gabe Dakwa, Travel Manager of Agilent Technologies, USA

**Learn How Destinations, Individuals and Organisations Have Benefited From Being A Part Of The Event**  
**Read Our Commemorative Book, 20... To Be Continued, Online**

**Register Online**

**Exhibitors (MICE, Corporate Travel & Luxury Travel) | Buyers (MICE & Luxury Travel) | Corporate Travel Managers | Media | Conference Delegates**

Hosting Programme for Buyers, Corporate Travel Managers and Media Available

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