



No. 1707/May 23, 2014

VIEW FROM THE TOP

It had to entertain but also benefit Singapore. Meet Tan Wee Kiat, the man who envisioned Gardens by the Bay and coined its 'city in the garden' catchphrase



THERE SHE GOES

With the female travel market on the rise, tour operators are sitting up and taking notice



SRI LANKA'S WELL-KEPT SECRETS

Where once tourism was restricted, the country's north and east are proving to be new playgrounds for visitors



MYANMAR: INVESTORS BEWARE

While businesses are eager for the first bite of South-east Asia's destination du jour, barriers to entry are high



CRUISING IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

With latest port developments, there are more reasons for cruise lines to include ASEAN destinations in their itineraries



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Report:
Business travel



Guide:
Ports of call

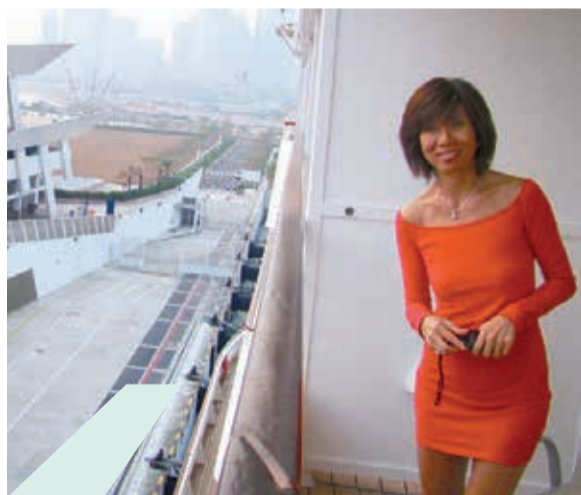


Destination:
China



Destination:
Sri Lanka

SHORING UP EXCURSIONS



There is no need to build swanky cruise terminals. What's more important is for destinations to manage the supply chain on which their chance of turning the transient cruise passenger into a returning tourist depends.

Ever since the world cruise industry started scanning the horizons for new markets, Asian destinations have been urged to build better ports. The more developed cities such as Singapore, Hong Kong and Shanghai rose to the occasion, building ports that could handle behemoths, like airports could handle Airbus A380s. But often, the lament is it is quite pointless for, say, Singapore, to build a fancy terminal if the neighbouring ports are in shambles, since cruising is regional.

From the perspective of a cruise passenger, as I was recently, ports – as in terminals and piers – are mere infrastructure. As with airports, speedy and hassle-free passenger-handling capability is what counts – if it happens to be a beautiful facility, that's great, but no one lands at a port or an airport because of it.

From the viewpoint of cruise lines angling for sales, ports of call are another word for destinations, and they are fond of describing every port as *exotic* and *romantic*. Alas, South-east Asia by cruise is not too exotic or romantic, as I found on my recent voyage.

For example, because their ports were located in the boondocks, it took more than an hour to get to Phuket town, and nearly two to Yangon city centre. At the former, the mafia seems to be controlling which taxis could enter the port, while at the latter, luxury passengers were cramped into a coach in a manner that was unsafe.

Hours were spent in a car or coach passing through the drabest areas of the destinations. In Yangon, the coach operator dropped off passengers at the marketplace, when the Shwedagon Pagoda would have been a better spot for these mostly Western visitors. The thought of taking a cab in a crazy traffic jam to get to

the pagoda, never mind the sweltering heat, made the passengers stay put at the market. Little, if any, was spent on F&B or shopping as they eagerly waited for the next coach to take them back to the ship.

To sum up, overall, the shore experience was a huge disconnect with the high standards on board the ship.

Much needs to be done to narrow this imbalance. As ships usually dock just for a day or two, a cruise affords only a window to a destination. If impressions are poor, a destination would likely lose customers who would write it off and tell friends it's not worth visiting. Chances are, ships that are making an effort to call on South-east Asia would avoid those ports that they realise do not pass muster.

Many ASEAN destinations are now eager to increase the cruise pie. To them, I'd say no need to build swanky cruise terminals, efficient ones will do and site them in the best locations as, say, Penang has done with the Swettenham Pier being steps away from the town's heritage streets. What's more important is for destinations to manage the supply chain on which their chance of turning the transient cruise visitor into a returning tourist depends. In this, the travel agencies which handle shore excursions are key. For instance, couldn't NTOs and cruise lines encourage them to create tours that are tailored to give cruise passengers the best possible impressions in the short time they are in port?

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COMING UP



THAILAND Bangkok's few-and-far-between green areas

BRUNEI An Islamic experience even for non-Muslims

DESIGN HOTELS Luxury trends and innovative ideas that don't bust the budget are discussed in our Roundtable

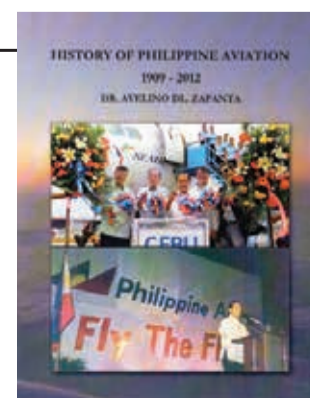
AIRLINES Asian airlines invest in high-tech cabins that deliver greater comfort

VIEW FROM THE TOP Starchitect Bill Bensley, known for his stunning resort designs

WE LIKE



Avelino Zapanta, president of SEAair, has recently published the first volume of comprehensive history on Philippine aviation spanning the years 1909-2012. Zapanta, an airline pilot who served 38 years at Philippine Airlines, including as president from 1999-2004, now also teaches air transport management at the Asian Institute of Tourism (AIT), University of the Philippines. In the book's introduction he notes how the different eras of Philippine aviation history "provide a palpable evidence of how this industry could contribute to the soaring economy of the country."



Analysis

While businesses are eager for the first bite of South-east Asia's destination du jour, barriers to entry are high, says **Greg Lowe**



MYANMAR: INVESTORS BEWARE

Myanmar has become one of the region's most coveted destinations over the past few years since international sanctions against the country were lifted in response to political reforms.

International air arrivals through Yangon International Airport reached a historic high of 550,654 in 2012, only for the figure to be topped within the first five months of last year, according to research by C9 Hotelworks, which has also seen rocketing hotel occupancy.

The number of airlines serving the country is also steadily increasing, while the destination has made it back onto the itineraries of several cruise lines. Furthermore, four border crossings with Thailand were opened for overland travel last August.

These positive trends have been a boon for inbound operators such as Exotissimo Travel and Phoenix Voyages who now report Myanmar as their second market after Vietnam, where they both started from.

Nevertheless, the trade still faces a number of key challenges: international standard hotel rooms are in short supply, infrastructure is shoddy and human capital is lacking. Perhaps more significantly, political and regulatory risks weigh heavily on the decisions made by investors, said Jean Michel Romon, managing director of Phoenix Voyages, which has been operating in the country for 17 years.

"People need to have a clear legal framework to invest," he said. "They need to be sure that Myanmar is on the way to a becoming a real democracy."

"Another major problem is everyone focuses on the main destinations such as Yangon, Bagan, Inle, Mandalay and Ngapali, but to develop and bring more guests into the country we need to open up new destinations. And we need infrastructure – roads, airports, telecommunications – to reach these destinations."

Businesses wanting to enter the market need a clear strategy given there are already more than 1,300 DMCs operating in the country.

"We see a lot of foreigners coming here dreaming to make business, in reality it is not that easy," said Romon. "Don't forget that the (rents in Yangon) are more expensive than Singapore."

For Edwin Briels, general manager of Khiri Travel Myanmar, the massive swings between high and low season arrivals pose a much greater problem than infrastructure.

"The biggest problem travel (agencies) are facing is the low number of tourists visiting between April and September," he said. "Bagan, for example, gets about 200,000 tourists per year. The majority visit between mid-October and mid-March, leaving a lot of young professionals in the industry – guides, restaurant staff, hotel staff – without a job for the rest of the year."

"I strongly believe that we need more tourists visiting in the green season in order to grow tourism in a sustainable way."

The many obstacles are currently deterring some foreign firms, as Arjen de Haan, CEO of Asialink Holidays Thailand, explained.

"We have no interest in open-

ing up in Myanmar now," he said. "As everyone knows by now, the destination needs more capacity in terms of rooms and finding well-educated manpower is a challenge."

Dillip Rajakarier, CEO of Minor Hotel Group Thailand, too, felt it wasn't the right time to enter.

"The country is seeing such swift development the infrastructure is not yet in place to be able to properly support it, and with that comes challenges including the supply chain, staffing and ultimately meeting guests' expectations."

However, Patrick Basset, COO for Accor Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and the Philippines, said the group felt that "if we don't start now, it will probably be too late."

"We have to anticipate the market and plan ahead five to 10 years into the future," he added. Accor now leads the internationally branded sector with six properties in development.

Progress on room supply is failing to live up to the previously heady expectations, said Bill Barnett, managing director of C9 Hotelworks. "The reality is things are going to take a lot longer than first envisaged... The pipeline is growing but the timeline is stretching out."

"The Hilton project is a year behind schedule, Peninsula is even further behind. Smaller midscale hotels from local developers will likely come into the market faster, with international projects taking longer," he said, though remaining upbeat about opportunities.

All eyes are now on the political situation, most notably the general election tabled for the end of next year. Passing this key milestone could remove one of the greatest entry barriers and spur more travel companies to make their foray into Myanmar.

"If the election takes place without trouble, trust builds within the international market and infrastructure is developed, then Myanmar (as a market) will be close to Thailand within 10 years," said Romon.

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Analysis

With more women travelling independently than ever before, tour operators and hotels are sitting up and taking notice of their requirements. By **David Andrews**

IN HER OWN WAY

A new generation of women is increasingly calling the shots in the travel industry, which is starting to recognise the potential of an emerging market segment that is travelling more frequently for both business and leisure.

Statistics from PATA show that between 2011 and 2012 there was a two per cent rise in female travellers to Cambodia, 4.9 per cent increase to Thailand and 6.9 per cent to Laos. Among the Asia-Pacific countries where statistics are available, Mongolia is the only country to see a decline in female travellers – and just a mere 0.6 per cent drop.

Industry players attribute the exponential growth of female travellers to rising affluence and maturing travel preferences in the region's advanced economies. Lindy Andrews, CEO of Luxperience, commented in a media release: "The majority of these affluent Asian women travelling are from the wealthier areas of Asia, such as Tokyo, Singapore, Taiwan, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong or Seoul. (For) example, in Singapore 32 per cent of all business travellers are female and Hong Kong has the largest percentage of female business travellers at 36 per cent."

In particular, a growing number of ladies are embracing independent travel, based on TripAdvisor's inaugural *Women and the World Travel Survey* of over 600 female respondents from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia; two in five women (41 per cent) go on leisure trips with other women, while one in three women (36 per cent) travel alone for leisure, with 43 per cent planning at least two solo trips this year.

And despite the recent spate of incidents pinpointing safety concerns for women in India, solo travel is picking up among the country's female travellers. An online survey conducted by Indian OTA MakeMyTrip revealed that 44 per cent of Indian female travellers have travelled alone for leisure; 70 per cent of solo women travellers have so far travelled only within the country, while 10 per cent had only travelled overseas and 20 per cent had covered both.

The growth of independent female travellers has led to many tour operators specialising or rolling out exclusive programmes targeting this niche segment.

Girls on the Go, an India-based exclusive travel club for women, recorded 110 bookings in 2013, a 20 per cent increase from 2012, said founder Piya Bose. Some 90 per cent of the firm's business derived from India and the remainder predominantly from Singapore and Malaysia.

While G Adventures does not offer female-only programmes, the Canada-



based company will provide private group service as an alternative if a group of females request to travel together, according to spokesperson Casey Mead, who added that around 30 per cent of the firm's travellers are solo females.

Adele Mitchell, director of Australia-based Inspired Travel, originally started her agency to cater to both male and female travellers, but eight years later some 95 per cent of her clients are female. "We deal with the 35-plus market as females of this age tend to be more curious, and enjoy learning and discovering. Our female clients enjoy travelling alone from their country of origin but joining small groups as part of the tour. This provides security and allows them to meet new people."

"The security of small group travel with like-minded people" is especially appealing to solo female travellers, pointed out Suzanne Hart, director of She Travels, which offers specially tailored programmes targeted at financially independent women aged between 30 and 60. "We offer female-friendly accommodation options in locations that are deemed

safe," she added.

Sharing similar observations, Bose added: "Women are more likely to explore off-the-beaten-path locations including the Antarctica and Sahara when accompanied by other females. Many of our clients have limited (social) circles or find themselves constrained whether at work or home. Providing the platform to make new friends and share a common travel interest has been key to our success."

Lyn Taylor's Adventure Travel goes a step further by having female guides. Founder Lyn Taylor said: "If women are looking for an all-women holiday, then they want a woman to expertly guide them through their holiday, not just organise the trip and send them off on their own. Our business relating to women-only tours has increased by 10 per cent in the past two years and we expect a further two per cent rise in 2014."

At the same time, the steady increase of women travelling alone has also led to a corresponding hike in demand for single-occupancy rooms.

Between 2011 and 2012, Small Luxury

Hotels of the World (SLH) saw growth in single-occupancy travel across the board in terms of both revenue and number of room nights, with the number of sole occupancy room nights jumping from 4,115 to 5,841 while revenue from global solo bookings increased by nearly US\$400,000 year on year.

In its core markets of Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Russia, the UK and the US, the surge of female bookings was particularly notable, with a 53 per cent increase in room nights booked by single-occupancy females between 2011 and 2012 (from 973 room nights in 2011 to 1,489 room nights in 2012).

Around Asia, hotels have also jumped on the bandwagon by rolling out services with feminine touches.

Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok has since mid-2013 introduced a Women's Experience programme, which entails assigning rooms along the corridor for female guests for safety and security reasons and placing a card in their rooms to inform of amenities such as curling iron, yoga mat, makeup remover wipes and razor, shared Patty Lerdtwitayaskul, the hotel's director of marketing communications.

"We experienced an increase of seven per cent in female travellers in 2013 compared with 2012 after introducing the Women's Experience programme," she said. "However, in 2014 due to the current political issue we have seen a downturn as the female market has been more sensitive than male market over safety fears."

Within the region, Singapore's Naumi Hotel has gone one step further to dedicate an entire floor to female travellers for complete privacy; this floor is accessed via a glass door that can only be opened with a keycard.

Donny Yip, director of sales at Naumi Hotel, said: "We became aware of an increasing trend for women to travel alone and wanted to ensure female travellers a comfortable environment. In the past 12 months alone, our female only floor has experienced an increase in bookings of 20 per cent. The majority of bookings come from Australia, Hong Kong, Europe and South Korea."

To cater to the female travel market in Asia-Pacific even more effectively, Luxperience's Andrews urged travel suppliers to consider strategies such as introducing a no-single supplement during shoulder months, including an experiential aspect to products and stepping up engagement on social media channels for a market segment that strongly relies on peer-to-peer recommendation for travel decisions. – *Additional reporting by Xinyi Liang-Pholsena*

We offer female-friendly accommodation options, along with the security of small group travel with like-minded people, which appeals to the solo female traveller.

Suzanne Hart
Director, She Travels



36% The percentage of women in South-east Asia travelling alone for leisure, based on TripAdvisor's *Women and the World Travel Survey* of over 600 female respondents in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia

400% The expected increase in business trips undertaken by women in Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea and Singapore by 2030, according to estimates from Amadeus

1,489 The number of room nights booked by single-occupancy females in 2012 among Small Luxury Hotels of the World's core markets, marking a 53 per cent surge from 2011

44% The percentage of Indian female travellers who have travelled alone for leisure, based on the findings of an online survey conducted among women travellers by Indian OTA MakeMyTrip



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BALI



TANGERANG

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View from the top

It's about nation-building, country branding and an entertaining tourism attraction. **Raini Hamdi** talks to Tan Wee Kiat, the man who envisioned Singapore's Gardens by the Bay and coined its 'city in the garden' catchphrase

TALL AS SUPER TREE

What does the job of CEO of Gardens by the Bay entail?

Well, Gardens by the Bay is a child of my vision, so it is to see through its development, operation and realise its potential.

Let's go back to the roots: what did you envision for this garden and why?

I envisioned a horticulture display garden,

much like Wisley (south of Surrey, London). We already have a botanical garden, so why not create a counterpoint in product distinction.

Botanical gardens are a living museum of plant family for education and research. Here, we cater primarily to the entertainment aspects – the visual, the aesthetic senses. We are the first tropical nation that has developed a garden of this scale, uniquely designed for Singapore and to showcase the plants of the tropics.

So it's a horticulture theme park but underlying it is some ambitious proposition. It has to do with the branding of Singapore and giving Singaporeans an ownership of Singapore. It's our park, here in a prime downtown spot, open everyday from 05.00 to 02.00. Only about four per cent is charged (the Flower Dome).

Why would I want to sacrifice for my nation if I don't own a part of it? Every Singaporean should be able to say 'the best part of Singapore also belongs to me'.

How does it help with the branding of Singapore?

The concept was mooted to the government in 2004. At the time, Singapore was positioning itself as a global city, competing with other cities for investment and talent. We needed to make sure the Singapore brand was strong.

Was it easy to get the buy-in?

The timing was perfect. URA (Urban Redevelopment Authority) was developing the downtown to be a mini Manhattan; in future people would need breathing space from the tall buildings that cluster around it. What does Manhattan have that makes it a wonderful? A central park. Gardens by the Bay is one-fifth the size of Central Park.

But Singapore government as you know is a tough nut to crack.

It is very pragmatic

and, unless you can convince it of the financial and economic harvest from such a project, it would not have taken off.

Gardens are also a borrowed concept for our region. It's not in our culture, in fact, we clear forests in order to survive.

How did you convince the government?

We engaged Edmund Tie (real estate consultant) and PricewaterhouseCoopers to do a study on what value would you increase to a piece of real estate if you were to plant a garden right in the heart of it? We already have a precedent with the Singapore Botanical Gardens where the value of the land around it increased (with the gardens) but I needed professionals to crunch the concept.

Although we don't have to make a profit, we must not be a white elephant and we must impart value far beyond what is invested. As you can see, we're not a white elephant. We passed the eight millionth visitor mark in one year and eight months.

Are they all elderly, and British?

(Laughs) Ten per cent of school children in Singapore come here as part of their curriculum. It pleases me too that our locals are coming in with their family after work and during the weekends.

In general, 60 per cent of visitors to the external areas are locals, 40 per cent are tourists from many countries. For the Flower Dome, the ratio is the reverse. We did one promotion to travel agencies in India and suddenly, we had an influx of India visitors to this garden. China too.

How compelling are gardens as a tourist attraction?

From our surveys and how we see visitors do the publicity job for us on social media, gardens are a compelling attraction.

Suddenly photographers are also here as the bird population has increased with the flourishing plants.

We haven't finished the work here. We're still trying to train and get the right people to keep the attraction alive and competitive. Our competition is not local but global and we don't compete with gardens but theme parks and other attractions. People asked, but wouldn't you be taking away numbers from the zoo or the botanical gardens? No, in fact, there's one more attraction for visitors to visit and it helps increase the length of stay by half a day.

That's why part of my role as CEO is to ensure the product, the programming, the service we offer keeps us ahead of the competition globally.

Do you still have naysayers?

10 NEED TO KNOWS ABOUT TAN WEE KIAT

- **Who is in your family?** One mother; three sisters; four brothers; 10 nephews and nieces; four dogs; countless fishes
- **What do you do for fun?** Work
- **Your ideal vacation?** Sleeping in
- **How do you book your own leisure trips?** Leisure trips?
- **What are you reading right now?** iPad for iDiots
- **How do you stay healthy?** By being happy
- **Favourite food?** Whatever is bad
- **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Favourite food
- **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** In the words of the late David Marshall, "sanctimonious posturers"
- **Most people don't know that you can...** And they will continue in their ignorance

You still have people who have never stepped foot into the gardens and say, oh, what a waste of money, it's all architecture. Why do you need to make fake super trees? Hey, they are also super chimneys! And architecture is the form and shape that attract you, but once you come in, it's the content. Being on the equator, we have access to the broadest range of plants in the world and we are able to grow them outdoors as we have perpetual summer. The icing is the cool dome, where we can bring in the elements of spring and fall.

This garden, more than any other, combines architecture engineering and nature in its creation. Take the super trees, for instance. We are on reclaimed land where it is almost impossible to achieve the kind of trees you would find in a natural forest, where forest giants after a century obtain 60m, 70m height. In creating the super trees, we impart the same functions to these man-made trees – they trap energy, for example. They are a necessary component of our chilling system.

What man destroys, man can take remedial action. We've proven you can recreate nature on reclaimed land.

Can you recreate even in cities such as, say, Bangkok or Beijing?

Why not? Look at Seoul. It developed a central park next to a river which was buried under a highway. It completely eradicated all the structures on top, unearthed the river through the central part of Seoul and brought nature to the heart of the city. Expensive, but it created value. Part of a slum became an elegant centre. It can be done as long as you have young people who work in a dense environment and hunger for a bit of nature. It is in us to want to be back in the forest because we are animals.

What man destroys, man can take remedial action. We've proven you can recreate nature on reclaimed land...It is in us to want to be back in the forest because we are animals.



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ASK THE EXPERT

GET SOCIAL TO UNLEASH EMPLOYEES' POTENTIAL

Social media platforms have become such a pervasive part of our lives that the lines are blurring between work and play. EMarketer estimates that one in four people worldwide use social media tools today, with Asia-Pacific contributing to nearly half of total social media users by end-2013. In Singapore and Hong Kong, more than half of their population are on Facebook. This presents a major opportunity for businesses to connect with its customers and employees.

However, based on the American Society of Travel Agents' 2013 Technology and Web Usage Report, while 80 per cent of travel agencies have social media presence, only 17 per cent describe it as 'essential'. This disconnect has become a major business hurdle in the new world of work and travel.

Enhancing productivity

While it is easier to figure out how to use social media as a sales and marketing channel – for example, set up a Facebook page to provide the latest updates to customers and prospects – many businesses have not considered using social media to enhance staff productivity and collaboration. Imagine a scenario where your employees from any of your offices can discuss new product offerings, what customers like, what pricing is making sense and share ideas or customer feedback to those who need to know.

Wouldn't that help make decision making much faster, or enable your organisation to respond quicker to constantly changing customer demands?

Unlike Facebook, social technologies like Microsoft's Yammer, which are designed for businesses, are now breaking through traditional organisational structures, unlocking knowledge and uniting people across the company, from the most senior to the most junior in the safety of an internal environment. Just as email transformed business in the 90s, enterprise social tools are now driving valuable market intelligence and best practices more quickly within and across organisations and geographies.

Syncing with Gen Ys

While businesses often worry that social tools will drain productivity, it is exactly these types of technologies which younger employees are demanding in order to work productively, and more importantly, which embrace what Gen Ys share and most desire to do.

In May 2013, Microsoft commissioned an Ipsos study in which 58 per cent of 1,825 employees in Asia-Pacific reported that enterprise social tools at work helped increase their productivity. About 86 per cent felt that enterprise social tools resulted in better information sharing, while 76 per cent felt the tools helped in connecting a disparate workforce. In fact, employees

wanted to use social tools so badly that 41 per cent shared that they would even be willing to spend their own money on social tools to drive company efficiencies.

Case study

While British Airways' (BA) approximately 41,000 staff in more than 75 countries connects through email and collaborates on the intranet, the vast majority who aren't always behind PCs don't necessarily have this option. To help employees work better together to serve customers, BA invested in Yammer, a private social network that helps employees collaborate across departments, locations and business apps. Crew members can use Yammer on their mobile devices to connect with pilots, engineers, executives – anyone in the business – and get instant feedback. This enabled spontaneous engagement among colleagues, sparking innovative new ideas for BA to improve customer service.

Social media has driven drastic changes in how we communicate personally and in the workplace. By harnessing social media for business, the travel industry can respond more quickly to ideas, customer feedback, market changes and day-to-day problems in a way that younger staff are familiar with and that more experienced staff can easily learn from. Done right, enterprise social tools will unleash employee potential to a whole new business level.

Many businesses have not considered using social media to enhance staff productivity and collaboration (other than using it for sales and marketing).



David Boden
Industry lead, hospitality & airlines
Microsoft Asia

WHO GETS THE BOOKING?

Shekhar Niyogi makes enquiries on a 4D3N tour for two in Greece, with the option for a cruise to Turkey for a three-night stay. This would also include a one-day guided tour in each destination inclusive of lunch and entrance fees, plus flight tickets and visas. He picks the marginally more expensive one over the other for its all-round experience.



Carnation Travel Services (New Delhi)

APPEARANCE Two floors of travel desks with executives focussed on specific destinations, flight booking, cruises, holiday packages and a library with catalogues and information brochures. Clearly defined space.

PRODUCT Core expertise is limited to a few destinations, like Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Macau, South Africa, Dubai and a couple of cruise options.

EASE OF BOOKING Very user-friendly. Responded to queries promptly and adequately, but did not go beyond defined responses to specific queries. Was ready to confirm booking instantly and issue invoice for payment. Exhibited good network of suppliers in offered destinations.

PRICE Competitive with the market, as its retail sales are high and based upon a large number of walk-in responses to daily newspaper advertising. Was able to fit in price estimate comfortably within the budget of US\$4,000. Not much attempt at add-ons or upselling.

VERDICT I would go with Gainwell as I felt that it had more all-round experience of the itinerary I wanted. Moreover, more than a few frontline staff had travelled on similar itineraries themselves and were able to offer insights. Although marginally more expensive, I would go with it for its confidence in its offering. As for Carnation, I would be keen to buy from them if I were doing a common itinerary like South-east Asia or Dubai. However, since my chosen destination was Greece with a cruise option to Turkey, I did not feel that they were totally comfortable in making their offer, although all confirmations were offered readily.

Gainwell Travel & Leisure (Kolkata)

APPEARANCE Three levels of customer service desks, domestic travel, international travel, holidays and packages, flight booking and cruises. Very attractive office appearance. Posters of various destinations, catalogues and other promotional materials are available.

PRODUCT Wide variety of destinations offered, like the US, Canada, West Europe, South Europe, the Mediterranean, East Africa, South Africa, Mauritius, Far East, South-east Asia, Australia and New Zealand, as well as a large range of worldwide cruises.

EASE OF BOOKING Very user-friendly. All responses were relevant and informative. Suggestions were added that went beyond the brief. Provided a warm ambience, comfortable seating and alcoves for one-on-one interface.

PRICE Competitive but able to add true value additions for a marginally extra cost. The difference is negligible as the suggested add-ons enhance the itinerary in a very definitive way. Upselling is apparent, but not to an objectionable extent.



Intelligence

Trailing travel stocks

If confidence is returning to the region's travel business, it has not yet to be reflected in the prices of travel stocks, which are down about 6% so far this year on their end-2013 prices, down 7%

over the past 12 months and down 16% over this decade!

Biggest gain this year is seen at Air New Zealand, which is 55% higher than at the decade's start, but that result is spoiled by its longer-term result – down 99% on its price in the TBA-100 Index, based on the last trading day of 2000.



HOTEL BAROMETER

The year did not start off well for key cities in Asia-Pacific. Occupancy rates in Bangkok hotels in January were hit hard, presumably due to the end-2013 negative publicity on the political unrest.

To run occupancies in the 60s in January – one of Bangkok's peak months – is therefore a shock, although hoteliers may have become impervious to the shocks that have affected business in the capital over the past five years. Rates held up well – falling only 2% – but that still meant the resulting RevPAR* was down 22%.

The changing value of the US dollar was seen particularly in Bali, where US\$1 bought Rp9,600 in 2013, but this January it bought Rp11,595. With many rates quoted in US dollars, the change is alleviated, but there is nonetheless distortion in the short term. In rupiah terms there was actually an increase in ARR* in January.

January and February, typically the weakest months for Beijing, are when the percentage of business and official travel takes a higher share of occupancy, so a fall in the capital's rates may indicate how much the official crackdown on luxury spend is hitting hotels. Also, China's economic growth is slowing.

Hong Kong continues its seemingly re-

lentless upward march. Singapore, while steady in occupancy, was down in rate and thus in RevPAR – an exchange rate factor due to growth in the Singapore dollar. Likewise for Sydney's rate – there was growth in the Australian dollar.

The overall hotel TBA-100 Index** in the latest available month in 2014 (January) stood at 94 – a worrying 6% fall compared with the same month in 2013. Of the three parts making up the Index, occupancy and ARR fell 5%, primarily caused by exchange rate changes; there were increases in most local currency returns, and the resulting RevPAR fell 8%.

**Although rates are quoted in US dollars, the data is supplied by hotels to TBA in local currencies, and thus changes in exchange rates can affect figures. Different categorisation of hotels across countries may also distort the rate comparison. For this reason, percentage changes of ARR within a city may be a surer comparison of market progress.*

***The TBA-100 Index is a measure to standardise hotel results over numerous cities. The comparison is with results for the same month a year earlier.*

Hotel operating results in selected cities, January 2014

Location	Occupancy, %	Growth, %	Average Room Rate, US\$*	Growth, %	RevPAR, US\$*	Growth, %
Bali	67.6	6.0	182	-11.8	123	-6.5
Bangkok	62.4	-19.7	125	-2.4	78	-21.7
Beijing	54.8	-17.3	93	-1.8	51	-18.8
Hong Kong	84.7	3.8	232	2.5	197	6.4
Singapore	85.3	0.0	189	-2.5	161	-2.4
Sydney	89.1	4.4	209	-9.8	186	-5.8

Notes: Compared with same month a year earlier. *Calculated at contemporary exchange rates. Source: Hotels to TBA

In this tie-up with Travel Business Analyst (TBA), we crunch numbers that matter and make them meaningful. Plus, look out for our new Hotel Barometer every month

The biggest loser is Malaysia Airlines (MAS), whose March incident caused a further downward lurch to its already-dipping stock price – its end-2013 price had fallen 80% since end-2010 and 95% since its mid-2007 peak.

An important factor is the difference between stock growth and market growth; a 10% growth in stock price is less impressive if the stock market grew 15%. Doing best by that measure are AirAsia, Air New Zealand and All Nippon Airways (ANA).

Another viewpoint is growth this decade (since March 2010), again in comparison with the stock's local equity market. Nearly all are losers, except one

'big winner' with at least a 20-point difference – that is AirAsia (+37), although Mandarin Oriental (+16) and Regal Hotels (+18) were close.

But there are a few big-time losers exceeding 100 points – MAS and Thai Airways International. A 20-point difference would include most stocks shown, but even around 50 points there are Air China, ANA, Jet Airways, Qantas and even Singapore Airlines.

The other crucial market factor is that hotel groups performed much better than airline groups, which begets the questions: Why do airlines sell their hotel interests when times are tough? Shouldn't they be buying them?

Growth in travel company stock prices, %

	Mar 2014 over Dec 2013		Mar 2014 over Mar 2010	
	Stock	Market	Stock	Market
Airlines				
AirAsia	13.6	-1.1	76.1	38.8
Air China	-20.9	-3.7	-43.1	4.2
Air New Zealand	24.1	8.1	55.3	56.4
All Nippon Airways	7.6	-9.2	-16.0	31.1
Cathay Pacific Airways	-11.8	-3.7	-12.2	4.2
China Airlines	-8.2	3.0	-15.0	10.7
China Eastern Airlines Corp	-11.6	-3.7	-35.8	4.2
China Southern Airlines	-16.6	-3.7	-27.6	4.2
Japan Airlines	-0.6	-9.2	N.A.	31.1
Jet Airways India	-16.2	6.2	-48.3	26.9
Malaysia Airline System	-32.3	-1.1	-90.4	38.8
Qantas Airways	0.9	0.7	-61.1	9.8
Singapore Airlines	0.4	0.9	-32.7	8.6
Thai Airways International	2.2	6.8	-48.3	73.1
Hotels				
Banyan Tree Holdings	-1.5	0.9	-13.3	8.6
The Hongkong & Shanghai Hotels	-1.9	-3.7	-14.4	4.2
Shanghai Jinjiang International Hotels Development	-25.4	-3.7	N.A.	4.2
Mandarin Oriental International	4.8	0.9	25.0	8.6
Regal Hotels International Holdings	-20.8	-3.7	22.7	4.2
Shangri-La Asia	-16.0	-3.7	-17.9	4.2

Notes: Prices at end of last trading day of month shown. Market is location of company's operating base except Hong Kong for Air China, China Eastern, China Southern and Shanghai Jinjiang, and Singapore for Mandarin Oriental. Source: TBA

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Report Business travel

Flat or just modest growth is expected this year of the corporate meetings and events market in Asia-Pacific, and senior management is more eagle-eyed than ever in watching compliance, cost and reduced time from the office. But this is good news for firms that provide solutions to help companies manage their meetings spend, which in the region, is still a fairly new idea. *TTG Asia's Roundtable* asks: Is the industry maturing in Asia?

What are you seeing in the meetings & events (M&E) industry in Asia this year?

PUCETA Overall, we are seeing a greater focus from senior management with regards to policies, and management of finances and suppliers. They are also seeking greater transparency into company-wide meeting activity.

KUHN Overall the APAC economy is still growing at an impressive rate, and we expect overall growth in meeting volumes of two to five per cent, mostly driven by increased spending in China, India and Indonesia, but with other markets showing strong buying patterns, including Singapore. The nature of events is evolving, as are the objectives and measurement of corporate meeting programmes, but there is a lot of pent-up demand for meetings in the region.

HANLIN Meeting bookings in Asia has increased by about four per cent from this time last year with China gaining real momentum. Having seen hotel rates drop by 30 per cent in 2011, Tokyo rose by 11 per cent in 2012 with a continual rise in 2013 as meeting activity increases following new reconstruction after the natural disasters. Singapore is also seeing rising venue rates due to the mega conferences and exhibitions taking place in the city.

The need to have visibility of meetings around the what, why, who and how was heightened recently, and has been a contributing factor to companies turning their attention to meeting consolidation.

So there's still some growth but senior management wants more accountability and transparency from meetings. Why?

PUCETA This is partly due to overall business sentiment in this region which has been a little more cautious in the past six months than it had been in the previous few years, leading to a greater focus on spending control. It is also partly due to the current environment of increasing regulatory scrutiny and heightened awareness around security and safety issues. Senior managers recognise that complacency in the meetings and events planning process can have serious financial, legal and reputational consequences.

Any examples of how control and transparency were lacking before and what senior management is insisting now?

HANLIN Yes, for starters we are moving from operating without contracts, which has been typical in the area of meetings, groups and events, to working within a contractual agreement just as we would on the transient (corporate travel) side.

We now have clients signed up to work with us for three to five years on a contractual basis. This has resulted in stricter and clearer SLAs (Service Level Agreements),

Senior managers recognise that complacency in the M&E (meetings and events) planning process can have serious financial, legal and reputational consequences.

Customers are demanding better value for their meetings...It will force all providers to improve their offering and it will force the inefficient companies out of the market entirely.

The meeting planner will still have a role. The majority of the time they own the relationship between the venue and their company.



Danielle Puceta
Director
AMEX Meetings & Events, Asia-Pacific



Kelly Kuhn
President, Asia-Pacific
Carlson Wagonlit Travel



Amanda Hanlin
Director of global sales
HRG Meetings, Groups and Events

THE MATURING OF MEETINGS

KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and a more focused approach on process for areas such as risk management, escalation and 24-hour support. A consistent pricing model across multi markets, where feasible, is also a growing requirement.

The scope is increasing and we are seeing bids include requests for venue sourcing, meeting registration, small events and payment solutions. In some cases we're seeing RFPs for both transient and M&E, as companies look to get full leverage from their supplier programmes.

PUCETA In this region we are seeing a greater focus on formalised M&E policies and adherence to policy in order to achieve greater visibility into where spending and activity is actually occurring.

A comprehensive and explicit meetings policy is at the core of the most successful and strategically focused M&E pro-

grammes. What is particularly important is to have a policy that includes explicit language regarding meetings-related payment methods and processes. Similarly, language pertaining to the procurement of meetings-related goods and services is absent in most of the existing policies.

KUHN With the increasing role of corporate procurement departments in the decision-making process, the onus is being placed more firmly than before on agencies that can offer a higher standard of accountability, responsibility and transparency over meeting programmes.

With the rapid emergence of strategic meetings management (SMM) programmes in the region, we can see a real desire on the part of our clients for a new degree of rigour around meetings. If you ask a travel manager about their company's annual travel spend, they will know

it to the nearest dollar, but ask them the same question about their meetings spend and they may not have the full picture.

When we implement SMM solutions for our clients, we start off by giving them clarity and visibility over their overall spend, and then build a programme from there. Without that level of visibility and understanding, it is impossible for companies to make smart decisions about the future of their meetings programmes.

Would you say this is part and parcel of the maturing of the meetings and events industry in Asia?

KUHN The bottomline is that companies are now paying serious attention to their meeting programmes. As M&E remains the biggest area of unmanaged spend for most companies, that can only be a good thing. Customers are demanding better value for their meetings – which means

The meetings market in Asia is maturing. Raini Hamdi finds out in this Roundtable why companies want more accountability and transparency from their meetings & events, and what it means for industry players

better outcomes as well as a lower price – and this is a good sign for the industry. It will force all providers to improve their offering and it will force the inefficient companies out of the market entirely.

This is a normal and positive feature of any maturing industry, and we welcome it. As has happened elsewhere in the world, we would expect the consolidation of agencies to continue in the coming years and for large agencies such as CWT to come to the fore. These bigger agencies will need to retain their creativity and nimbleness to compete with niche players, but the greater buying power and wider networks will be a boon for clients.

What's the role of meeting planners then if companies such as yours are managing the spend?

KUHN Meeting planners remain, and will always be, the key people in the meeting industry. The role of a good agency should be to support and enhance the work of the meeting planner and to enable him to deliver outstanding events. The end client still wants that personal touch and to see a familiar face throughout the meeting process, and the meeting planner is the person in that space.

HANLIN The meeting planner will still have a role. The majority of the time they own the relationship between the venue and their company. Where we can help is by taking away the admin function of the venue sourcing – the T&Cs (Terms and Conditions), the negotiation of the venue. This means that the client/company is better protected as the risk of an employee agreeing to T&Cs that maybe they don't understand is minimised and the planner still keeps the relationship with the venue.

PUCETA Meeting planners need to be focused on collecting information for reporting purposes at an enterprise level. They need to get a holistic view of where meetings and events activity is occurring for internal and external reporting purposes, and in order to ensure the safety of their meeting attendees in times of disruption or crisis, for example.

In order to get a sufficient view of where meetings and activity is occurring, there will also be a greater focus on more sophisticated data collection.

Do you think in this climate of greater control on spending, companies will resort to other ways to meet, such as video-conferencing?

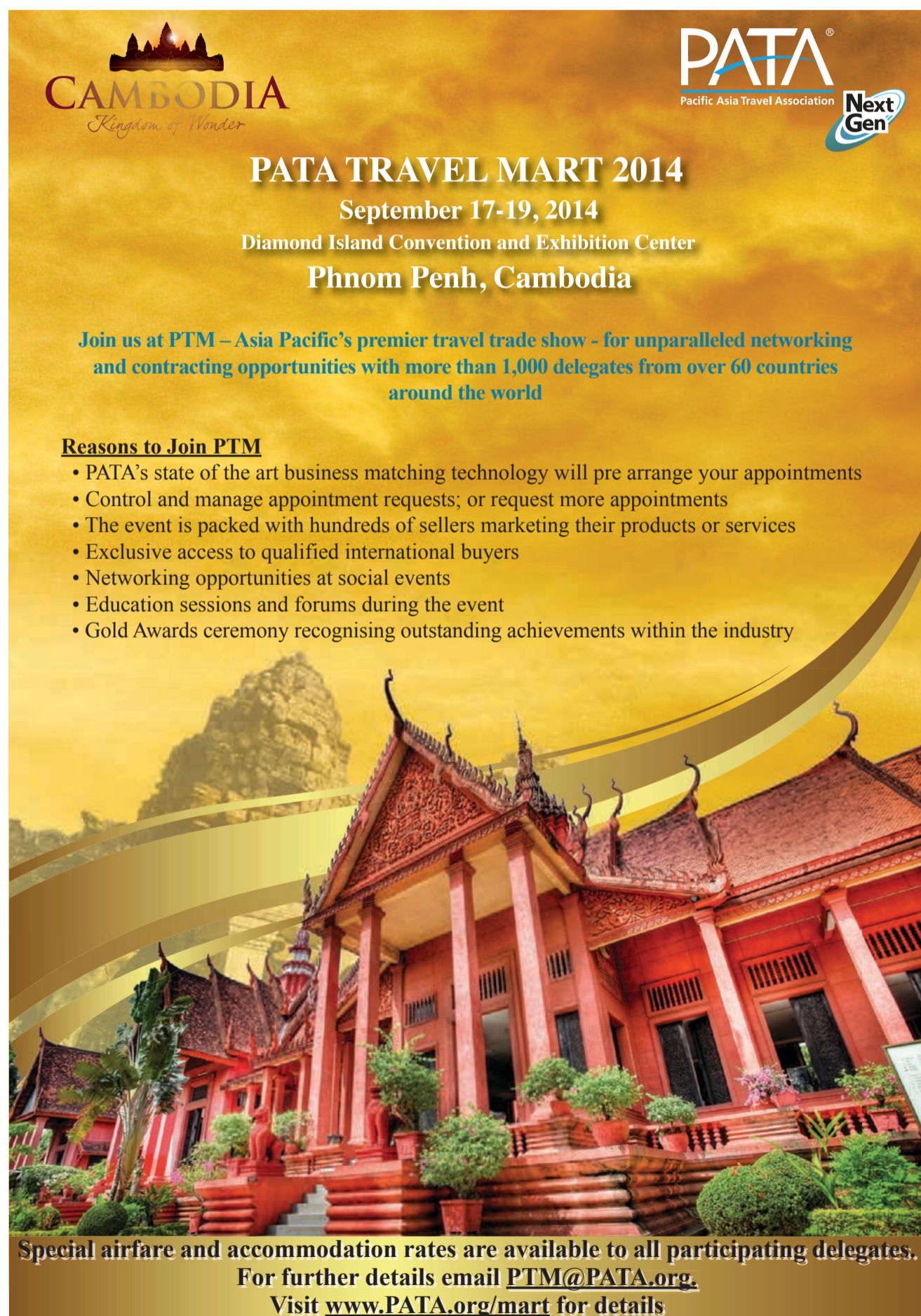
KUHN With the increasing sophistication and ease of video-conference and telepresence solutions, our global clients are already substituting video conference for face-to-face meetings. It tends to apply to small meetings or those occasions where it just doesn't make sense to jump on a plane due to time, cost and discussion content. It remains a small portion of a client's overall meeting portfolio but we are suspecting to see small and consistent growth in this area.

In the more mature Asian locations, we are also seeing clients use laptop technology more, such as the document-sharing facility through Microsoft Outlook. For example, contract discussions or presentations which would typically have been held face-to-face are now performed through document-sharing technology, Webinars and conference calls.

PUCETA In Asia, according to our 2014 *Meetings and Events Forecast*, meeting planners cite 'cost savings' and 'reducing time out of the office' as the most compelling reasons when it comes to using virtual meetings. However, what we have seen over the past year is that the actual

adoption rates of virtual meetings remain quite low. In fact, the results in our 2014 *Forecast* point to only a modest increase in adoption of these solutions, perhaps due to the fact that the virtual/digital toolkit has gotten more sophisticated and associated costs are moderating. In our

2013 *Forecast*, 56 per cent of the audience projected that virtual or hybrid meetings would represent more than 10 per cent of their meetings activity, however, this year only 26 per cent of the planners surveyed reported more than 10 per cent of their meetings were virtual or hybrid meetings.



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Guide Ports of call



Marina Bay Cruise Centre Singapore with the *Mariner of the Seas* calling

CAMBODIA

◆ **The Port of Phnom Penh** Authorities are clearing an area to the northern end of the port to accommodate more boats. An extension of the quayside area will also attract more restaurants and bars along the riverfront. Shinta Mani will clear a site on the quayside in 2015 for a new hotel.

INDONESIA

◆ **Benoa, Bali** The opening of the 12.7km Bali Mandara Toll Road connecting Benoa-Ngurah Rai Airport and Nusa Dua has not only reduced traffic from Benoa Harbour to Denpasar, South Kuta and the airport significantly, but also offers a panoramic view of Benoa Bay and the mangrove forest.

The port is also being developed as a turnaround port.

◆ **Jakarta** The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has suggested that cruise ships call on Jakarta during weekends in order to avoid the city's main problem: snarling traffic.

Among ships calling on Jakarta this year are *Sea Dream II*, *Rotterdam* and *Crystal Serenity*.

◆ **Lembar, Lombok** The West Nusa Tenggara provincial government is promoting Lombok's sister island, Sumbawa, for tourism and is creating a *Tambora Greets the World 2015* campaign, marking 200 years of Mt Tambora's eruption. It eyes two million domestic and international tourists to the province by 2015.

◆ **Belawan, Medan** A toll road is under

construction from Medan to Parapat, the town by Lake Toba, the major attraction for cruises to Belawan. When completed, in 2019, travel between Medan and Parapat will be reduced to 2.5 hours, from four hours now. The Medan-Tebing Tinggi leg is expected to be ready this year.

MALAYSIA

◆ **Swettenham Pier, Penang** The opening of the Swettenham Pier international cruise terminal in Pengkalan Weld in 2009 has helped attract more cruise ships to Penang. Its strength is it is close to city attractions. Passengers disembark right at the old historic quarters of the city and can meander about the tiny lanes on foot to discover the Little India enclave, quirky cafes and temples.

Saini Vermeulen, head of international

CRUISES

sales, Panorama Tours Malaysia, said upcoming meeting venues in Penang such as the Subterranean Penang International Convention and Exhibition scheduled for completion in late 2015 and the Penang Waterfront Convention Centre in 2017 would allow for more opportunities to combine onshore and off-shore activities for MICE delegates.

◆ **Melaka Gateway** The much-awaited Melaka Gateway is expected to drive home Malacca's maritime importance when it is completed in 2025. It will comprise a new International Cruise Terminal and Ferry Terminal which can accommodate up to three cruise ships, a world-class maintenance and repair facility for mega-yachts and the region's largest marina with up to 1,000 berths.

Malacca does not have a dedicated cruise terminal at present. Cruise ships anchor offshore and tender boats are used to shuttle passengers to Malacca Marina.

◆ **Kota Kinabalu Port** Plans are afoot for a dedicated international cruise terminal at Jesselton Point, north of Kota Kinabalu city, scheduled for completion in 2017.

The current Kota Kinabalu Port is a two-hour drive from Mt Kinabalu World Heritage site and while basic port infrastructure is in place, it is essentially a cargo port and does not have specialised passenger-handling facilities.

The new dedicated terminal is part of a mixed development undertaken by a joint venture between Suria Capital Holdings and SBC Corporation.

When operational it will become the second entry point for tourists visiting Sabah. It will have marina facilities, a duty-free complex and an entertainment centre.

MYANMAR

◆ **Yangon Port** Yangon Port is being upgraded and redeveloped into a modern harbour to be completed in 2015. Feasi-

RCI MARKS YEAR-ROUND HUBBING IN S'PORE

Royal Caribbean International (RCI) will mark a year-round deployment in Singapore for the first time from 2015, basing the *Legend of the Seas* in the summer season, followed by the *Mariner of the Seas* in the winter season of 2015/16.

"This year-round deployment is a milestone for RCI which underscores our stronger presence and commitment in Singapore and South-east Asia," said Jennifer Yap, managing director, Singapore and South-east Asia of Royal Caribbean Cruises. "We are especially pleased to have *Legend of the Seas*, one of Asia's most favourite ships back in this region next year, and I am sure that all Royal Caribbean fans will want to take the opportunity to rediscover what they love so much about this ship, with all her signature and re-

talised features."

The ship homeported in Singapore from 2008 to 2013. It underwent a US\$50 million revitalisation last year, a highlight of which is the addition of the Centrum aerial-acrobatic extravaganza, making the ship's central five-deck atrium a spectacular entertainment venue.

Every stateroom has been renewed, and new technology enhancements shipwide include an oversized LED poolside movie screen, digital signages, flat-panel TV in staterooms and Wi-Fi service.

The ship will return to Singapore next year via the north coast of Australia and will sail a variety of three- to 10-night roundtrip itineraries to destinations throughout Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam through mid-November.

Vacationers also can choose between two consecutive 14-night itineraries in September, a southbound sailing from Singapore to Perth (Fremantle), Australia, followed by a northbound return, both to Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Western Australia.

Legend of the Seas will then transition

to its new homeport of Brisbane on an 18-night itinerary, departing in late November 2015. This will be the cruise line's first season sailing from the Australian city and a highlight includes a range of eight- to 11-night roundtrip itineraries to Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Loyalty Islands and Fiji in the South Pacific.



Legend of the Seas

More reasons for ships to call on South-east Asia. Raini Hamdi, Xinyi Liang-Pholsena, Mimi Hudoyo, S Puvaneswary, Paige Lee Pei Qi, Greg Lowe, Rosa Ocampo, David Andrews and Sid Dhartha report on the latest developments at ASEAN ports

SE SOUTH-EAST ASIA

bility studies are also underway to assess how to further improve the Yangon river channel to improve accessibility and reduce logistics costs.

The port has been handling Myanmar's shipping cargo since colonial times.

Most cruise ships dock at Yangon's second port, Myanmar International Terminal Thilawa Port, located 16km south of Yangon Port and about an hour's drive from Yangon city centre.

According to Myanmar Port Authority, 2014 will be the best year for cruise arrivals in Myanmar as about 22 international cruiseships have been confirmed calling on Yangon. Last year, eight international cruise ships made calls.

Thet Lwin Toe, managing director of Myanmar Voyages Travels and Tours, a cruise groundhandler, said there is significant potential for further growth in Myanmar's cruise industry.

THE PHILIPPINES

📍 **Leyte, Kalanggaman Island** This virgin island in Palompon, Leyte is the newest cruise destination in the Philippines, discovered in April 2012 by Hapag Lloyd's *MV Europa*. The postcard perfect isle with beautiful white beach, clear waters and long sandbars stretching on both sides of the island was a big hit that *MS Bremen* visited a month later in May 2012, followed by *MS Europa II* last January.

📍 **Bohol, Tagbilaran Port** Bohol's tourism is back on track although at least 10 of its antique churches lay in ruins, no thanks to the 7.2 magnitude earthquake that rocked this charming bucolic retreat late last year. Roads and other public infrastructure have been repaired, and hotels and resorts have opened for business.

There are many reasons to visit Bohol: the perfect mounds of Chocolate Hills; tarsier, a primate so small it fits in the palm of one's hand; sun, sea, pristine beaches; unspoiled countryside; friendly and peace loving locals; unhurried lifestyle; sadly, even the ruins of the heritage churches.

📍 **Cebu International Port** Cebu City is lucky to have been minimally affected by the earthquake and super typhoon Haiyan that hit Visayas in succession late last year.

A mix of urban vibe and provincial air, the city offers a tour of the first Spanish settlement in the Philippines, island-hopping escapades and a preview of arts and crafts including world-famous furniture and artisan wares.

📍 **Zambales, Subic Bay Freeport** The former United States Navy Facility vacated in 1992 is now a rich offering for cruisers. Attractions include Subic's many beaches; wrecks of pre- and post-war sunken ships; and watersports like parasailing, jetskiing, canoeing and snorkeling. Cruise passengers can trek tropical rainforest with native guides; go to Zoobic Safari, the sole tiger safari in the Philippines, or the



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- ✚ Ports-of-call: Langkawi, Port Klang (Kuala Lumpur)

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- ✚ Hong Kong Departure: 2014 Sep 17
- ✚ Ports-of-call: Okinawa, Taipei (Keelung), Hong Kong

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- ✚ Shanghai Departure: 2014 Nov 4
- ✚ Ports-of-call: Xiamen, Hong Kong, Ho Chi Minh City (Phu My), Singapore

9-NIGHT HONGKONG-SINGAPORE CRUISE

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- ✚ Hong Kong Departure: 2014 Oct 8
- ✚ Ports-of-call: Kaohsiung, Phu My (Ho Chi Minh City), Laem Chabang (Pattaya/ Bangkok), Singapore

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- ✚ Venice Departures:
Every Saturday (2014 Jun 7 to Nov 8)
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- ✚ Barcelona Departures:
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- ✚ Ports-of-call: Provence (Marseille), Nice (Villefranche), Le Spezia, Rome (Civitavecchia), Naples/Capri

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- ✚ Harwich Departures: 2014 Jun 7, 19, Jul 1, 13, Aug 7, 19
- ✚ Ports-of-call: Copenhagen, Stockholm, Helsinki, St. Petersburg (overnight), Tallin, Visby

12-NIGHT VENICE & ADRIATIC CRUISE

Serenade of the Seas®

- ✚ Rome (Civitavecchia) Departures: 2014 Sep 5, 17, 29
- ✚ Ports-of-call: Amalfi Coast (Salerno), Sicily (Messina), Valletta, Kotor, Montenegro, St. Petersburg (overnight), Helsinki, Corfu

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Guide Ports of call



Port Klang, with the *Voyager of the Seas* dropping anchor. Right, Swettenham Pier, Penang

Jungle and Environmental Survival Training Camp where indigenous Aetas demonstrate wilderness survival and warfare tactics.

SINGAPORE

◉ **Marina Bay Cruise Centre Singapore** The new Marina South Pier MRT Station is slated to open later this year.

“Cruise passengers will be able to take a scenic and convenient stroll to the new train station under a sheltered walkway,” said a spokesman for SATS-Creuers Cruise Services, which operates the cruise centre. “The new MRT station will enhance the overall accessibility to the Marina Bay Cruise Centre and provide an alternative mode of transport for our cruise passengers to get into the city centre for sightseeing and shopping.”

THAILAND

◉ **Klong Toey Port** Despite its location in Bangkok, groundhandlers managed to avoid cancelling too many excursions during the recent political crisis.

Addie Pornthip Hirunkate, managing director, Thailand Destination Asia, said: “As a cruise ground operator, we managed to operate the majority of the tours offered within Bangkok, as there were no

closures to the major tourism sights.

“Bangkok is a huge metropolis. None of our shore excursions were cancelled during this period. In case there were, our operations team had a back-up plan to offer alternative shore excursions to Pattaya and Chonburi.”

◉ **Laem Chabang Deep Sea Port** Laem Chabang Deep Sea Port in Chonburi province, just outside Pattaya, is the country’s major commercial port and cruise destination.

Groundhandlers faced similar problems as those dealing with vessels docking at Klong Toey Port during the recent political impasse.

“Out of Laem Chabang, we send people to Pattaya and Bangkok hotels for day use, beach or city,” said Tobias Fisher, business development manager at Go Vacation Thailand. “We offer all excursions in and around Pattaya and Bangkok and even send buses all the way up to Ayutthaya.”

The main problem with the port is its lack of surrounding infrastructure. “While you only have to drive a few kilometres to reach the next town, you are still nowhere,” said Fisher. “As for the excursion programmes there are no limits.”

◉ **Nathon, Koh Samui** Koh Samui has been seemingly impervious to Thailand’s political crisis if not directly benefiting from tourists switching their holiday

destination from Bangkok or Pattaya.

The opening of CentralFestival Samui in March created a new market for high-end retail and dining options.

But while there is much positive talk about the destination, its cruise facilities leave a lot to be desired, according to Fisher. “At Nathon, cruise ships can only stop offshore and bring their passengers in with tender boats. If there is a second cruise ship arriving at the same time and considering the many taxi drivers waiting for passengers without arrangements it gets busy, if not messy, at times,” he said.

VIETNAM

◉ **Hai Phong/Halong Bay** A new 105km highway is being built between Hanoi and Hai Phong, located along the Gulf of Tonkin in northern Vietnam. Set to be completed in June 2015, the six-lane expressway will reduce the time taken for cruise passengers to travel from the port city of Hai Phong to Halong Bay or Hanoi for day trips. The current four-lane Hai Phong-Hanoi highway is reaching its capacity and suffers from frequent congestion. However, Hai Phong is increasingly

less favoured by cruise lines due to the lack of tourist attractions in the area and the silting of the harbour. More ships are docking at Halong Bay, where tenders will take passengers to shore.

◉ **Danang** Having seen an influx of high-end resorts in recent years, Central Vietnam’s attraction is set to grow further when Asia Park Danang opens by year-end. Designed by Bill Bensley, the

88ha theme park will feature replicas of iconic landmarks and landscapes of nine Asian countries – Cambodia, China, Indonesia, India, Japan, Nepal, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam – in addition to an amusement park with a 125m-high roller-coaster and a multi-functional centre. Estimated to cost around VND4 trillion (US\$190 million), the park is located at Hoa Cuong Bac Ward in Danang’s Hai Chau District and is expected to attract around 2.5 million visitors per year.

◉ **Nha Trang** The Vietnamese government has approved a VND95 billion plan to develop Hon Ba nature reserve, a 19,000ha area rich in biodiversity and located 30km from Nha Trang. Last year, Khanh Hoa province welcomed 711,000 foreign visitors, a rise of 34 per cent from 2012. The province aims to attract 840,000 international tourists this year.

◉ **Ho Chi Minh City/Vung Tau** The July 2013 opening of The Grand Ho Tram Strip, Vietnam’s first luxury integrated resort home to a 541-room hotel, a casino, a spa, 13 F&B outlets and a variety of retail stores, has made the laid-back beach destination of Ho Tram – located just an hour away from Vung Tau, the port town where most cruise ships of bigger sizes to Southern Vietnam anchor – a day trip alternative to Ho Chi Minh City, which is a further 2.5-hour drive away.

TRIED & TESTED CRYSTAL SYMPHONY

Raini Hamdi boards the *Crystal Symphony* in Singapore for a South-east Asian cruise

ROOM I stayed in a room category called Penthouse with Verandah, a 34m area fitted with a queen-size bed, sofa, writing table, TV cabinet, walk-in wardrobe, bathroom with shower, bathtub and double sink, balcony with loungers and dining furniture too – just amazing how much could go into a room in a ship! In hotels, I don’t even think about it.

My room, with its clean lines and cream hues, felt sleek, luminous and luxurious. The furniture, furnishings and amenities (Aveda) were screaming ‘top quality’.

SERVICE Knock knock, in came our but-

ler Greg, bearing chocolates, mixed berries and cheers – “Let the party begin!”, said the Polish man with flourish. Many of the staff on board were from Europe and whether they were headwaiters, sommeliers or servers, they worked like they were hungry for their jobs. A string of them quickly became my favourites because of their friendly and caring ways. I had thought a 922-guest ship would be anything but personal and intimate. I was wrong. The ship was 75-80 per cent full, yet service was still highly individual while everywhere I went, there was not a crowd. A 50,000-tonne ship, *Crystal Symphony* is one of the most spacious at sea.

F&B Warning: This cruise is not recommended for dieters and alcoholics. The

F&B was so excellent throughout it would be hard to resist, particularly when everything is all-inclusive, even at the two signature restaurants Prego and Nobu-inspired Silk Road. Dining at those two designer-looking restaurants, in particular, was like going out to a Michelin-star in town.

FACILITIES This was so comprehensive that I would need more than a page to list it all. Suffice to say, your clients could stay onboard for weeks and not be bored as there was just plenty to do. I saw more movies than I did in a whole year and they were the latest blockbusters screened in a plush theatre. I worked out in a super gym, attended lectures, watched the ship’s in-house show productions – there was no time even for the spa, pool or casino!

PORTS OF CALL The weakest aspect of this cruise were the ports and shore excursions. For example, it took nearly two hours just to get to Yangon city centre from the port because of distance and traffic, and a fast-progressing Yangon wasn’t a pretty sight. An ‘Ancient Bago’ tour conducted by a local DMC had a guide who



spoke non-stop, offering inappropriate opinions on politics, NGOs, etc, while the content of the tour did not match its title.

VERDICT Outstanding hardware and software – a ship that runs circles around many luxury hotels in service, F&B and operational excellence

Name Crystal Symphony

No. of rooms 459

Rates Depends on cruise and season

Contact details Email: internationalsales@crystalcruises.com Website: www.crystalcruises.com

Destination China

Guangzhou's financial district

Destination in numbers

152 million

The total number of visitors to Guangzhou in 2013, a year-on-year increase of 6.8%

65.4%

The average occupancy rate in Guangzhou in 2013, a year-on-year drop of 1.2%

411.6

The amount in RMB (or US\$66) for the average room rate in Guangzhou in 2013, a year-on-year increase of 1%

GUANGZHOU GUNS FOR LEISURE

Already well established as a key business city, Guangzhou is enhancing its appeal among well-heeled visitors travelling to the Pearl River Delta who are looking to enjoy culture, entertainment and shopping.

To woo more visitors, Guangzhou introduced last August a 72-hour visa-free facility at Baiyun International Airport, while the Tourism Administration of Guangzhou Municipality (TAGM) is stepping up its publicity drive.

TAGM's executive director, Li Zhi Xin, said the number of countries under the visa-free scheme has increased from 45 to 51 countries since its implementation. The new countries are Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania.

TAGM hopes this would encourage international travellers visiting Hong Kong and Macau in the Pearl River Delta to include Guangzhou in their itineraries.

"The availability of this 72-hour visa-free facility is still not well known, so we need to promote it more strongly," Li added.

Brochures in several languages have been made available containing detailed information on the scheme, flights, tours, attractions, hotels, dining, golf, shopping and transportation.

Apart from relaxed visa requirements, Guangdong's

capital will also have better direct access from Hong Kong when the express railway, which connects Guangzhou and Kowloon in Hong Kong in just under two hours, is fully opened. (Editor's note: A delay was recently announced, with train services expected to launch in 2017.)

Meanwhile, Li revealed that high-end and theme park tours of between one and three days are being developed to cater to transit visitors.

More than 10 rural tourism tours and cruises are also being developed. "Leisure tourism is improving. Many visitors come to enjoy the good weather in Guangzhou with its four seasons, and the Guangzhou Flower Fair, which takes place during the Spring Festival for example, is becoming increasingly popular," he noted.

Additionally, travellers looking for golfing action are spoilt for choice. According to Li, Guangzhou has 18 golf courses.

Less than an hour away from Guangzhou are Mission Hills Dongguan and Mission Hills Shenzhen, which together have 24, 18-hole championship golf courses.

A 500,000m² leisure and commercial development will open later this year at the entrance of Mission Hills Shenzhen, adding a new dimension to the appeal of both complexes, said Brian Cheng, hotel manager, Mission Hills Golf Club and Mission Hills Resort.

Attractions in Mission Hills Centreville include a Hard Rock Hotel and a second yet-to-be named prop-

erty providing an additional 700 rooms, a luxury spa, an auto exhibition centre, a 1,000-seat Orange Sky Golden Harvest cinema, a Brunswick bowling centre, an ice-skating rink, a simulation racing centre.

Back in the city, Guangzhou's accommodation landscape is becoming more varied, with top international hotels such as Ritz-Carlton, W, Grand Hyatt, Four Seasons, Mandarin Oriental, Sheraton and Marriott planting flags in Tian He, the commercial and shopping hub. The hotel buildings dotting the CBD are impressive, as are the Guangzhou Opera House and Guangzhou Library, two must-visit places as part of a city tour.

Also in Tian He is Taikoo Hui, which features more than 180 international retail and restaurant brands from around the world, while the nearby Onelink Plaza is a popular wholesale and retail centre selling toys, gifts, beauty products and just about everything else.

The level of sophistication in Tian He and areas such as the Zhujiang Party Pier Beer Culture & Art Zone is as buzzing as Singapore's Boat Quay and Clarke Quay.

However, general manager, Ronnie Cheng, of the newly opened Langham Place, Guangzhou, said the city's year-round average length of stay is less than two nights, and that it is "still 90 per cent business driven".

He suggested: "To tap more leisure and VFR traffic in the Pearl River Delta, Guangzhou can position itself to provide the heritage (elements in an itinerary), while Hong Kong has shopping, and Macau, entertainment."

China's third-largest city is making waves with its growing sophistication alongside Beijing and Shanghai, as it sheds its business-only image. [Caroline Boey](#) reports

How to sell

DO Enjoy a leisurely **Pearl River Night Cruise** and admire the beautiful scenery on both banks. Guangzhou Star Cruises Company offers luxury cruises from Tianzi Wharf, while Blue Dolphin's fleet of Chinese-decorated ships at Dashatou Wharf is popular among foreign visitors wishing to enjoy a night out.

SEE The 600m **Canton Tower** is an impressive icon, and even more stunning when night falls as its rainbow-coloured lights illuminate the Haizhu district. Get the best day and night view of the surroundings from the Cloud and Star Observation Decks. Adrenaline junkies can get their kicks on the Sky Drop or ride the Bubble Tram at 455m, while the less active can check out the outdoor adventure zone on the 112nd floor. F&B outlets are also aplenty.

STAY In under an hour, get away to **Mission Hills Dongguan** or **Mission Hills Shenzhen** for a game of golf or to enjoy a tranquil evening in a nature resort, accompanied by some spa pampering. Regular shuttles operate between the two resorts, which are 20 minutes away from each other.

EAT A Cantonese feast awaits at **Ming Court at Langham Place, Guangzhou**, which seats 186 people. Award-winning dishes created by the chefs at its Michelin-starred namesake at Langham Place, Hong Kong, can be found on the menu. For seafood lovers, there is lobster and garoupa served with



Canton Tower

creamy mashed potatoes, while meat lovers can have the wok-fried beef with mushrooms and black garlic. Even a simple dish like braised *choy sum* (cabbage) in superior broth is superbly executed. For a sweet ending, try the double-layer milk custard and egg tart with bird's nest.

Viewpoint

What will make Guangzhou a more attractive destination?



Richard Willis, vice chairman, Hong Kong Association of Travel Agents

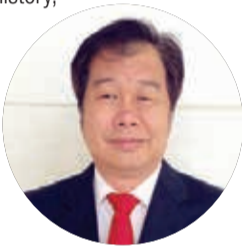
"To further enhance Guangzhou as a tourist and business destination, it will be essential to work on further easing entry/exit formalities with neighbouring Hong Kong and Macau to facilitate travel within the Pearl River Delta."

Seow Kok Boon, business development – China division, Holiday Villa Hotels & Resorts

"Guangzhou has to identify its target market segments, their needs and develop an appropriate promotional strategy for each segment."

It has destination attributes such as history, physical attractions, different dialect groups (each with its own colourful traditions and cuisines), accessibility via Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, China's southern hub, and business facilities.

These attributes need to be organised to match the researched segment needs."



A LAZY GETAWAY IN AN URBAN OASIS

Langham Place, Guangzhou offers an ideal retreat for a lazy getaway. This dynamic yet relaxing destination is nestled on the tranquil Pazhou Island and is surrounded by famous tourist spots and the historic Pearl River.

ROOMS WITH A PANORAMIC VIEW

Drawing the curtains off the floor-to-ceiling windows in a number of guestrooms reveals a picturesque view of the Pearl River and the vibrant city. The hotel's 500 guestrooms are all tastefully furnished in a contemporary style featuring clean lines and serene hues. The spacious bathrooms are each fitted with an overhead shower, handheld massage shower head and a bathtub. Wi-Fi connection and an executive desk make catching up and checking emails a breeze, while a good night's sleep is ensured with the signature Dream Bed.

BE FIT. BE WELL

The hotel is a perfect venue for staying healthy while on vacation. An elegant marble staircase connects the lobby to Peak Park on Level 5, which offers a friendly spot where guests can practise their approach shots and putts with its two open-air mini golf courses. Those who prefer staying indoors can work out at Pulse, a well-equipped, 24-hour gym, or enjoy a splash at Plunge, which features an elegant, heated

swimming pool. In addition, Chuan Spa offers pure indulgence with treatments developed upon the philosophy of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the five elemental forces.

GOURMET EXPERIENCES

Designed to indulge all senses, Ming Court presents authentic Cantonese cuisine with a contemporary twist. The Open Kitchen offers delights from around the world served in both buffet and à la carte styles. Barbecue lovers can heartily satisfy their appetite at Alfresco, a semi-outdoor restaurant where delectable seafood and meat are grilled à la minute. The open-air Sky Bar serves a variety of beverages from vintage wines to modern cocktails and features live entertainment, while Portal is the place to be for guests who need a refreshment while staying connected.



CLUB AND SUITE RETREAT

Sample the finer things in life at Langham Place, Guangzhou with the Club and Suite Retreat package. Stay in a Club Place for two consecutive nights or more and enjoy exclusive benefits, including:

- Complimentary access to Club L with privileges such as daily breakfast buffet and snacks throughout the day
- Wired and wireless Internet access
- Early check-in at 12:00noon and late check-out till 2:00pm (subject to availability)
- RMB100 dining credit per stay
- Complimentary upgrade to the next room category (subject to availability)



LANGHAM PLACE, GUANGZHOU
638 Xingang East Road, Haizhu District Guangzhou, 510335, China
T (86) 020 8916 3388 GUANGZHOU.LANGHAMPLACEHOTELS.COM

Destination China

Poll on ttgasia.com

 Which has been most helpful
in selling Guangzhou?

 New 72-hour visa-free facility **97%**

 Choice of international upscale hotels **0%**

 Mix of cultural, modern and natural attractions **3%**

 Total number of responses: **321**

TRIED & TESTED

Langham Place, Guangzhou

LOCATION The hotel soft-opened in mid-October 2013 in the new CBD on Pazhou Island and is near China Import and Export Fair Complex and next to Xingangdong Metro Station. By car, the shopping and commercial hub of Tian He, Guangzhou South High Speed Railway Station and Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport are 10, 30 and 40 minutes away respectively. It is part of Nan Fung International Convention & Exhibition Center.

ROOMS The lobby of the 22-storey hotel is on the fourth floor and my earth-toned Superior Place room on the 15th floor provided a sweeping view of the fair grounds. I appreciated the complimentary Wi-Fi in the room and around the hotel, ample lighting, comfortable chair and smart desk with multiple multi-adaptor power points. There was also a large, waist-level safe in the wardrobe.

The soft Dream Bed mattress and pillow provided enough support. I would

have preferred a cooler room, but the temperature on the thermostat refused to budge even after housekeeping sent staff to try to sort it out.

The glass partition between the bedroom and bathroom made the room seem bigger, but I preferred to keep the two areas separate and rolled the blind down. I did not have time to soak in the deep bathtub, but thoroughly enjoyed the shower. The gently raised built-in strips on the shower floor made me feel safe. The water pressure from the overhead and wall showers was just right; the water temperature, once adjusted, remained constant throughout. A few hooks in the bathroom would score brownie points though.

F&B It is worth checking out Ming Court, the hotel's fine-dining Cantonese restaurant, which features the Michelin-starred creations of its sister restaurant in Langham Place, Hong Kong.

The all-day dining Open Kitchen is a

great place to start the day with its many Asian and Western breakfast choices. Its double-shot espresso cappuccino was just how I like it, while the classic caesar salad with grilled chicken was a satisfying lunch.

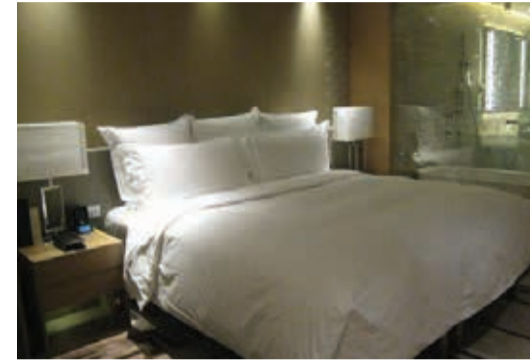
I enjoyed the in-room dining club sandwich better than the wiener schnitzel, and the rocket and pear salad with pine nuts and vinaigrette dressing was a great side order. F&B calling to check on each meal ordered was also a nice touch.

Other F&B outlets include the open-air Sky Bar offering views of the Huangpu Stream and the Pearl River; Alfresco, which opens at night and serves flamed grilled seafood and steaks; and Portal, a cross between a lounge and a business centre, which is good for a quick bite.

FACILITIES When I stayed there end-February, the gym was open, while the signature Chuan Spa was just about to open, as was the indoor swimming pool and two mini golf courses.

Fans of OPI nail lacquer can also pick up a bottle of the specially created Langham Pink at The Shop in the lobby.

SERVICE Each staff member I encountered was attentive, warm and friendly,



and genuinely happy to serve. It made me feel welcome and at home throughout.

VERDICT An excellent product in a great location for work and play, complemented by tip-top service. I look forward to my next stay.

Name Langham Place, Guangzhou

No. of rooms 500

Rates From RMB1,220 (US\$199) per room night

Contact details Tel: (86-20) 8916-3388

Toll-free reservations: 400-1338-338

Email: lpcan.info@langhamhotels.com

Website: guangzhou.langhamplacehotels.com

MY WAY

What do you do on your day off to relax?

I love to spend quality time with my family. I take my daughter for outdoor activities such as kite flying on Ersha Island or cycling on Binjiang Dong Lu. Both areas are easy to get to by bus or taxi from The Garden Hotel.

On a rainy day, we watch movies at home. We also enjoy visiting the Guangdong Museum of Art and Xinghai Concert Hall. It's a very family-oriented area.

Where do you go to pursue your hobbies?

I recently started watching Guangzhou Evergrande Football Club matches as the 2014 AFC Champions League just started. They played brilliantly last year and I hope they will keep the champion's spirit up this year as well.

I usually watch the live games in the Tavern Bar in the hotel, but visitors can watch them in any bar in the city as it's a city-wide event every time. The home game is normally played in the Tianhe Stadium, and we would love to arrange a live football event for our guests in the hotel's bar.

What is your favourite food and where do you go for an authentic meal?

I love my wife's Malaysian cooking. Other than that, I go to Bing Sheng Restaurant or The Garden Hotel's Chinese restaurants – Lai Wan Market and The Peach Blossom – for authentic Cantonese cuisine. Lai Wan Market, which serves street food, is popular among the locals. Make sure you have a reservation in case there is a long queue.

Where do you go for nightlife?

Guangzhou is one of the most exciting cities in China with choices from local bars to foreign clubs. The Zhujiang Party Pier is a fabulous area full of restaurants, lounges and clubs. It's definitely one attraction every visitor should not miss.

If you would like to see the night view of the city, join a Pearl River Night Cruise in Binjiang Dong Lu, which is a lot of fun as well.

Where can you find the best tailor?

Hai Yin Fabric Market. There are more than 100 tailor shops and fabric stores. For the convenience of our guests, there is a high-end tailor shop in The Garden Hotel, De Bon Tailor, which does a fine job too!



Zhujiang Party Pier

Franco Lo
General manager
The Garden Hotel, Guangzhou

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2014年6月30日

Shell Scheme (Minimum 9sqm)
标准展台 (最小9平方米):

USD590 per sqm
(2015 Rates: USD608 per sqm)

Raw Space (Minimum 18sqm)
空地展台 (最小18平方米):

USD554 per sqm
(2015 Rates: USD570 per sqm)

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Destination Sri Lanka

VIRGIN DESTINATIONS AWAIT

Destination in numbers

1.3 million

Sri Lanka attracted 1.3 million tourists last year, up 26.7 per cent from one million in 2012

279

There were 279 registered hotels with 16,223 rooms at end-December 2013, up 3.7 per cent (269 hotels) and 4.6 per cent (15,510 rooms) year-on-year respectively

71.7%

The average hotel occupancy in registered Sri Lankan hotels last year, just marginally higher from 71.2 per cent in 2012

View of the hill country from Ella Rock

Fabio Lananna

With peace returning in recent years and investments being made in infrastructure, Sri Lanka is speedily unveiling unexplored areas in the north and east.

“The difference I see between a few years ago and now in marketing strategy is not an external one; rather, we are finally backing up that approach in terms of infrastructure and development,” observed Hiran Cooray, chairman of Jetwing, one of the country’s largest hotel and travel operators.

“A flight from Katunayake (in Colombo) to Hambantota in the south takes just 45 minutes compared to four to five hours by road a few years ago,” he said, adding that arrival numbers have been growing because of these improvements and the opening up of previous conflict zones.

With military airfields in Trincomalee, Ampara, Batticaloa in the east now available for commercial traffic, both the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) and private airline Cinammon Air are launching flights to the region using small planes. SLAF, too, is operating flights to Jaffna in the north.

The eastern port city of Trincomalee, in particular, has been grabbing attention for its ability to offer visitors the chance to capture a rare sight in a single location – the elephant and blue whale. Another out-of-this-world experience is Marble

Beach Air Force Resort, a stunning location where the jungle virtually touches the shore and waters are shallow. With links to SLAF, the property channels proceeds to the rehabilitation of personnel.

For water sports enthusiasts, the sea around Trincomalee is littered with shipwrecks and remains of Japanese Zero fighters from World War II, while nearby Pigeon Island National Park off Nilaveli has beautiful snorkelling spots.

While many new upscale hotel developments in the east are local projects, international chains like Centara Hotels & Resorts are also looking to capture a slice of the action. Opened last year, Centara Passikudah Resort & Spa Sri Lanka sits by the beach and offers 125 rooms and suites.

Meanwhile, Jaffna in the north, which had just two ramshackle hotels during the war years, has also seen several leisure properties launched, such as Taprospa Palm Leaves, which are offering modern amenities such as flatscreen TVs and Wi-Fi.

Formerly the stronghold of the Tamil Tigers, visitors are now starting to explore Jaffna’s pristine beaches, spicy cuisine as well as ancient Hindu temples and Catholic churches.

“Travellers are more adventurous. They are knowledgeable, well read, and want new experiences and to explore. We have to be adaptable to meet these demands,” said Vasantha Leelananda, DMC head at John Keells Holdings, pointing out that Ella, a charming mountain getaway in the south, is also gaining popularity with its

waterfalls, caves and Adam’s Peak, a sacred mountain said to have Buddha’s footprint.

Even in the well-trodden west and south, many other new spots have come onto the radar, offering even the experienced traveller a never-before experience. These include dolphin watching off Mirissa and Kalpitiya.

Across the island, inventory is being ramped up as the country prepares to welcome 2.5 million tourists in 2016 from less than 500,000 in 2008. Compared to having only two international companies before – Taj and Hilton – big brands such

as Sheraton, Shangri-La, Anantara, Hyatt Regency and Marriott are planting flags, although many are concentrating efforts in the capital or in the south.

Meanwhile, source markets are also changing. While India is Sri Lanka’s largest source market followed by the UK, the new kid on the block is China.

“The single largest market will be China,” said Shafraz Fazley, managing director of Viluxur Holidays, which serves the market in the Maldives but has since opened an office in Sri Lanka to meet the growing demand for holidays here.

Viewpoint

Is adventure tourism becoming a big seller in Sri Lanka?



Hariith Perera, managing director, Diethelm Travel Sri Lanka/Maldives

“The adventure tourism segment in Sri Lanka has been improving over the last few years and perhaps may not have reached its full potential. However, I do not see Sri Lanka to be positioned with Nepal or any other country for that matter as we are more of a moderate multi-activity, highly diversified destination that can offer an assortment of experiences in a shorter period of time than any of our competitors.”

Shiromal Cooray, managing director, Jetwing Travels

“Yes, there is huge potential for this segment among a range of options that we offer to travellers. These options were not available earlier due to the conflict. Whale and dolphin watching from boat or air, and riding in a hot air balloon are some of the newest attractions.”



Where once tourism was restricted, the country's north and east are proving to be new playgrounds for visitors. Feizal Samath points them out

How to sell

DO Will your clients fancy riding in a hot air balloon? **Sun Rise Ballooning** has two balloons that cater between four and 12 people. Flying up to 750m above the ground, sights include roaming elephants, water buffaloes and monkeys on trees. The ride covers Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle, including the towns of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Dambulla. The ride is also being offered at Aitken Spence's Heritance Kandalama hotel in Dambulla.

SEE Gather round me beauties! Described as one of the greatest wildlife spectacles, **'The Gathering'** at **Minneriya National Park** in the east is a must-see. During the dry July to August season, some 300 elephants assemble near a water tank.

The six-hour **Kandy to Ella train ride** is also considered one of the most scenic train journeys in the world, taking passengers through misty mountains, tunnels, lakes, tea estates and pine forests. If your guests are in Kandy around July/August, they can also experience Esala Perahera, a grand Buddhist festival that will see colourfully decorated elephants, fire



From left: Elephants at Pinnawala, a village often included in Cultural Triangle tours; Sigiriya's Lion's Rock

dancers and many other performers taking to the streets.

STAY Sri Lanka offers a wide range of options like the **Cinnamon Lodge at Habarana**, close to the Minneriya National Park, and Jetwing's **Vil Uyana** eco lodge, which offers easy access to the famous Sigiriya rock fortress.

Or stay in luxurious colonial-era tea planters' bungalows and learn about tea making at **Ceylon Tea Trails**, which come with a typical British breakfast and private butler.

EAT Experience a village-like setting at the Nuga Gama restaurant in the heart of the capital at **Cinnamon Grand Colombo**,

which has authentic Sri Lankan rice and curries prepared by village cooks. The restaurant has a giant nuga (banyan) tree and a small artificial paddy field, while the friendly manager dressed in traditional white sarong and black coat entertains guests with poems and songs on village life. Less than a kilometre away is **Ministry of Crab**, offering some of the most delectable crab dishes in town.



Cinnamon
HOTELS & RESORTS

SRI LANKA
Cinnamon Grand Colombo | Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo
Cinnamon Red Colombo | Cinnamon Lodge Habarana
Cinnamon Bey Beruwala | Cinnamon Citadel Kandy
Cinnamon Wild Yala | Chaaya Blu Trincomalee
Chaaya Tranz Hikkaduwa | Chaaya Village Habarana
Bentota Beach Hotel

MALDIVES
Chaaya Island Dhonveli | Chaaya Lagoon Hakuraa Huraa
Chaaya Reef Ellaidhoo

www.cinnamonhotels.com



Destination Sri Lanka

Poll on ttgasia.com

Is Sri Lanka a value-for-money destination?

No 2%

Yes 98%

Total number of responses: 283

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 Houseboats make their debut

Jetwing Hotels launched last month the country's first river houseboat for travellers, which takes inspiration from the houseboats of Kerala, India.

Located in the south on the Ded-duwa River of Bentota, the houseboat is crafted from bamboo, thatch and metal, and comes with two deluxe rooms, attached bathrooms, balconies and private dining areas.

Jetwing, which has 21 leisure properties in Sri Lanka, plans to add four more houseboats in the future. The company also opened last year the first budget, no-frills hotel in Negombo, near Colombo on the north-west coast.



1

2 Cinnamon Air takes off

Launched last year, Sri Lanka's first private domestic airline operation is a joint venture between MMBL Leisure Holdings, John Keells Holdings and Phoenix Ventures.

The airline operates daily flights from Bandaranaike International Airport in Katunayake to Koggala in the south, servicing towns like Galle, Koggala, Weligama, Mirissa, Dickwella and Tangalle.

Scheduled services (Monday,



2

Thursday, Friday and Saturday) have also begun to Sigiriya, Batticaloa and Trincomalee, while charters run (on request) to Jaffna and Vavuniya.

3 Two Anantara resorts on the horizon

Thai-based Minor Hotel Group

(MHG) is building two resorts under the Anantara brand. Both properties will have luxury rooms and private villas with their own plunge pools, two swimming pools, three restaurants and a purpose-built spa.

The first is a 154-room resort in Tangalle in the south. The US\$40 million project is due to be completed in February 2015.

The second – 141 rooms in the southern coastal town of Kalutara – is a US\$35 million facility scheduled to open in mid-2015.

Local partner Hemas Holdings also runs two other resorts under MHG's Avani brand, namely Avani Bentota Resort & Spa and Avani Kalutara Resort, both on the southern coast.

4 SriLankan Airlines extends presence to south-west China

From July, SriLankan Airlines will operate a weekly charter flight to Chongqing in Sichuan province in collaboration with Beijing-based travel operator Chongqing Huapont International Travel Service Co.

The national carrier currently has a total of 15 weekly flights to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong

Kong as well.

Arrivals from China totalled 54,288 in 2013 and that number is expected to double this year, with figures in the first four months at 36,803, a 136 per cent increase from the same period last year.

5 Locals open their homes

Sri Lanka is encouraging more families to open their homes to tourists, aiming to increase room stock in the homestay category to 10,000 by 2016.

There are currently some 300 homes of below five rooms each listed in the Sri Lanka Tourism website as homestays, providing less than 1,000 rooms.

Authorities are offering financial grants to entrepreneurs to set up such products, hoping that this would also encourage community tourism and channel benefits to villages.

Targeting students, backpackers, seniors and families seeking a different experience, homestay prices are around US\$20 per night inclusive of breakfast compared to upwards of US\$40 for other types of accommodation in Sri Lanka.

MY WAY

What do you do on your days off?

When I do get free time, I enjoy walking through the woods or parks, and a bit of gardening.

Name three places in Sri Lanka you would take a first-time visitor to.

My hometown Trincomalee never stops fascinating me. Calm crystal clear waters and unspoiled beaches coupled with fresh seafood are a treat during summer (June/September). During a summer's full moon night, listening to the gentle waves by the beach is incomparable.

Sitting in the Heritance Kandalama hotel (Dambulla in central Sri Lanka) overlooking the lake is another peaceful and enchanting experience. Add a little bit of adventure to the visit by taking a safari in a four-wheel drive to the Minneriya tank to see a herd of 30-40 elephants. The area surrounding Sigiriya rock and the ancient ruins would also make the trip much more valuable to a history lover. Driving during twilight and witnessing wild elephants on the roadside is an experience you would never come across anywhere else.

The lush green vegetation and the landscape of the hill country is another must-see location. Visiting the tea estates

and staying in a colonial estate bungalow where the world-famous Ceylon tea is grown is the best place to rest.

What is your favourite mode of transport when getting around Sri Lanka?

Road transport has improved a lot since the dawn of peace in Sri Lanka. Driving a four-wheel continues to be my favourite mode of transport. If a tourist really wants to enjoy the countryside, taking a four-wheel is recommended.

What is your favourite local food and where do you go to get it?

I enjoy a very simple string hopper meal (steamed rice flour noodles) at home with fish *kiri hodhi* (coconut milk gravy) and *pol sambol* (spicy coconut chutney).

Most of the Colombo hotels serve string hoppers for breakfast but my favourite choice (other than my wife's cooking) would be Upali's by Nawaloka at Alexandra Place and Greenlands Hotel's vegetarian restaurant at Shrubbery Gardens.

GT Jeyaseelan
Chief marketing officer
SriLankan Airlines



Nilaveli beach,
Trincomalee



Social

From the newest executive movements to recent trade celebrations and major upcoming events, we round up the latest happenings to keep you plugged in

APPOINTMENTS



Paul Pei



Reto K Klausner

Kuala Lumpur Bangsar before this appointment.

MATTHEW TRIPOLONE

NOW Head of development, Australasia, effective early June
THEN He joins from Accor where he had been general manager, development Pacific, since 2008.

MAXIMILIAN VON REDEN

NOW General manager of Mandarin Oriental, Jakarta
THEN Hotel manager at Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo

RETO K KLAUSER

NOW Vice president and general manager of Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore, also overseeing Shangri-La Apartments and Shangri-La Residences.
THEN He held a similar position at Shangri-La Hotel, Kuala Lumpur.

LEE LIK HSIN

NOW CEO, Tiger Airways Holdings
THEN Representative of major shareholder Singapore Airlines on the board

PAUL PEI

NOW Executive director, hotel & hospitality, Ocean Park Hong Kong
THEN He was the park's executive director, marketing & sales, for 14 years.

VIVIAN LEE

NOW Executive director, marketing & sales, Ocean Park Hong Kong
THEN Since joining Ocean Park in 1999, Lee had served as marketing manager and more recently as director of marketing.

KLAUS GOTTSCHALK

NOW General manager, Grand Mercure Singapore Roxy
THEN Having joined Accor in 1994, he was in charge of the pre-opening and opening of Pullman

TRADE CALENDAR *SEE YOU AT...*



70th IATA AGM June 1-3, Doha

Besides marking the 100th year of commercial aviation, this year's forum will gather leading figures of the global aviation industry, with an aim to establish priorities and work programmes to drive higher levels of safety, security, environmental awareness and, particularly, financial viability.



ILTM Asia June 2-5, Shanghai

This invitation-only event is a platform for travel consultants and advisors from across Asia to meet the world's top luxury travel experiences. Attendees are invited to choose up to 69 one-to-one appointments from a select community of 1,100 buyers and suppliers.



28th ITE June 12-15, Hong Kong

The travel expo involving over 600 exhibitors from more than 40 countries and regions will cater exclusively to the trade for the first two days, with the second day dedicated for MICE through a series of related seminars.



Run in Wonderland July 25, Singapore

Put on your running shoes and come network with travel industry professionals at this fun run jointly organised by TTG Asia Media and Gardens By The Bay in celebration of TTG's 40th anniversary. Highlights include a 2.4km run, exciting fringe activities and a lucky draw. Register at www.ttgasiamedia.com/runinwonderland.



ASEAN Tourism Forum 2015

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ATF 2015 Secretariat c/o MP Singapore Pte Ltd, Tel: +65 6393 0225, Email: secretariat@atf-2015.com

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HEADLINES



VIETNAM BRACES FOR IMPACT AS CHINA STRIKES BACK

China has suspended bilateral exchanges with Vietnam and urged its citizens not to travel to Vietnam after violent protests against China's shifting of an oil rig into sensitive territory killed two Chinese nationals. Major travel agencies in China are also suspending tours to Vietnam.

PATA POSTS PROFIT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 3 YEARS

PATA posts profit for the first time in three years ahead of annual general meeting in Zhuhai. At US\$33,000 for 2013, the amount is small but "significant" in light of the US\$1 million loss it made in the previous three years, said CEO Martin Craig (left).

SIA INVESTS IN CABIN UPGRADES FOR 19 PLANES

Singapore Airlines will invest US\$325 million to upgrade the cabins of 19 of its Boeing 777-300ERs by September 2016, even as it noted in its financial report yesterday that the aviation market will remain challenging.



PHILIPPINES CAUTIONS INDIAN TRAVELLERS AGAINST FAKE VISAS

The Philippines has cautioned Indian travellers about acquiring fake visas from unofficial sources after a recent spate of visitors being apprehended, deported and barred from future travel to the country for holding such visas.

SHBA'S EASTER EVENT SEES EGG-CITING VISITOR GROWTH TO SENTOSA AREA

The first Great Egg-Venture by the Sentosa HarbourFront Business Association attracted 1,600 egg hunters, bringing a six per cent increase in visitorship for Sentosa Island, Resorts World Sentosa attractions, Mount Faber, VivoCity Shopping Mall and HarbourFront Centre from April 18 to May 11.



JUMEIRAH ANNOUNCES EXPANSION PLANS FOR ASIA

Jumeirah Group to build 4,300 hotel rooms spread over 11 countries globally by 2017, with a dedicated warchest of eight billion Emirati dirhams (US\$2.2 billion).

WHO'S SAYING WHAT

Tweets

ATTENDEES AT #TRENZ2014 IN AUCKLAND THIS YEAR SEEMED LIKE THEY WERE HAVING FUN:

@TRENZ2014
Tell us what your favourite #TRENZ2014 bag is...delegates are swapping & trading them. There are 7 different types.

@grahamhills
Another amazing view in New Zealand: Mission Bay, Auckland. Just a short drive from my presentation at #TRENZ2014 pic.twitter.com/bpws12GKpS



@hotelashburton
Awesome morning of appointments at #TRENZ2014 we've met some lovely overseas buyers - can't wait to show them mid Canterbury in person!

@wherestrentnow
The #Hobbit just behind 'visiting friends and relatives' as driver for NZ travel. Popular right now! Make sure you visit mum too #TRENZ2014

Instagram



New York, New York! Opened April 24, @regentsingapore's new destination bar @manhattan_sg features a plush interior with art deco touches that recall America's Prohibition era. Couple that with a funky concept menu, charming bartenders and exquisite drinks for an excellent evening out on town.



TTG editors sent reporter Paige Lee Pei Qi to swim with the fishes at this year's Australian Tourism Exchange in #Cairns and she's having a blast! Are you at #ATE14 too?

Most commented

MYANMAR, INDONESIA HAMMER OUT VISA-FREE AGREEMENT

Congratulations to both governments. The policy will help the two countries know each other more through tourism. – Nugroho Setiatmadji, Jakarta

TO CHARGE OR NOT TO CHARGE

We've all been victims, but we're all reluctant to bell this cat. But trade associations could possibly play a role here and encourage their

members to adopt a more professional approach. I've adopted a "Three for Free" model. Everything happens via email – so the first three interactions are free, after that I politely request the client to put down a small deposit. It works at least half the time. – Ajay Prakash, India

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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)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)

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.



TTG TRAVEL AWARDS 2014



Cast Your Vote Now!

The Power of Your Choice Decides The Industry's Best!

The Asia-Pacific travel trade's most anticipated awards, TTG Travel Awards is back for its 25th installment to celebrate the amazing feats of organisations and individuals who have rocketed the industry to greater heights!

Help your favourite travel suppliers and travel agencies bring home one of these 68 acclaimed titles and the coveted 24K gold plated Hermes Trophy!

www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards

Closing Date: 7 July 2014



An event by:



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Business Travel - meetings, incentives, conferences & exhibitions
企业旅游报 CHINA



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 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)

• Hong Kong International Airport (2013)

• Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)

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.ttgasia.com/ttg-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

- i.

Only one voting entry per person is allowed – using the voting form or online voting.
- ii.

All votes are confidential.
- iii.

Voting forms are published in TTG Travel Trade Publishing print titles and are available online at www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards

- iv.

No responsibility will be accepted by the organisers for voting forms lost, delayed or damaged in the post.
- v.

There are no pre-nominated contenders for any voting awards.
- vi.

The results for TTG Travel Awards 2014 are final and no correspondence will be entertained.
- vii.

Voting forms will be tabulated and evaluated by an independent auditor in Singapore.
- viii.

The closing date is 7 July 2014.

4. Voting Form Submission

Completed voting forms are to be returned to:

SINGAPORE

Ms Lina Tan (TTG Travel Awards 2014)
TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd
1 Science Park Road #04-07 The Capricorn
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Singapore 117528
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Ms Carol Cheng (TTG Travel Awards 2014)
TTG Asia Media
Unit 2011, 20/F Harbour Centre
25 Harbour Road, Wanchai
Tel: (852) 2237-7272 Fax: (852) 2237 7227

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.ttgasia.com/ttg-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.

1.

Best Travel Agency

– Australia
2.

Best Travel Agency

– China
3.

Best Travel Agency

– Chinese Taipei
4.

Best Travel Agency

– Hong Kong
5.

Best Travel Agency

– India
6.

Best Travel Agency

– Indochina (Cambodia, Laos)
7.

Best Travel Agency

– Indonesia
8.

Best Travel Agency

– Japan
9.

Best Travel Agency

– Malaysia
10.

Best Travel Agency

– Singapore
11.

Best Travel Agency

– South Korea
12.

Best Travel Agency

– Thailand
13.

Best Travel Agency

– The Philippines
14.

Best Travel Agency

– Vietnam

15.

Best Corporate Travel Agency

Best travel agency specialising in serving the needs of corporate travellers.

16.

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:

Passport no.:

Job title:

Company:

Address:

Country:

Telephone no.:

Fax no.:

Email:

Signature:

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

VOTING CLOSES
7 JULY 2014

VOTING FORM B: TRAVEL SUPPLIER 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 2013/2014.
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 2013/2014.
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.

VOTE ONLINE AT
www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards

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
7 JULY 2014



Being a travel agent

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