

VIEW FROM THE TOP

AirAsia CEO, Aileen Omar, on how the region's lack of infrastructure and antiquated aviation policies are holding LCCs back in a fast-changing industry



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PLANNING A COMEBACK

Malaysia is on a recovery mission to regain lost ground in the Chinese market



WINNING OVER MILLENNIALS

As the competition for next-gen talent heats up, travel and tourism companies must have a game plan



SAILING INTO NEW HORIZONS

How can travel experts sell longhaul cruises more effectively to cater to a bigger appetite for far-flung destinations?



RAISING THE STAKES

Besides its natural draws, Queensland is placing bets on gaming resorts to entice Asia's growing pool of high rollers

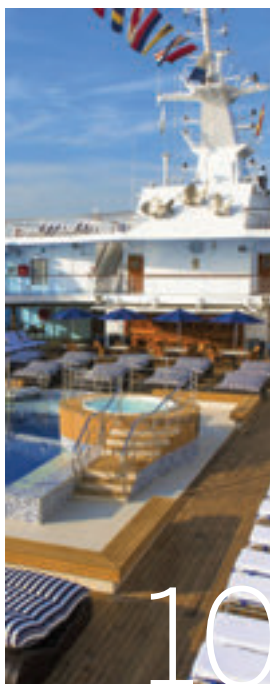


GOING BACK TO THE BASICS

Bali is witnessing a growing demand for experiential tours, and so are sister destinations like Komodo and Flores

Contents & editorial

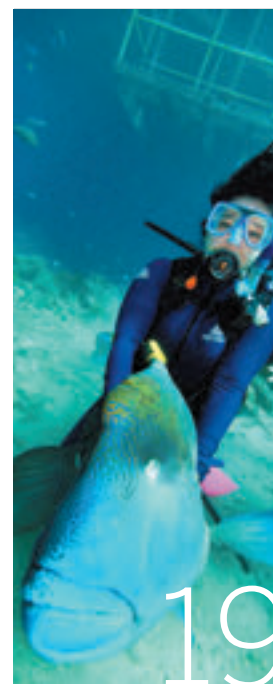
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Cruising as a product suffers from an image problem among Gen Y, and cruise lines and travel agencies should aim to change that.

CONFESSIONS OF A FIRST-TIME CRUISER

Ihalf expected my recent Mediterranean voyage to be a scene out of a geriatric ward – elderly guests whiling away their days on shuffleboard, with some maybe even needing their own oxygen supply (it was in the FAQs).

You see, prior to this fam trip, I had asked the premium cruise line hosting me about how it is trying to attract a younger set of customers. The reply? It wasn't.

With its guests being typically above 55 years old, the rationale offered by Oceania Cruises is that its sailings are not only more expensive but longer (mostly 10 days or more), while money and time are the very commodities that elude younger cruisers.

Onboard, the mid-sized *Riviera* was buzzing with over 1,000 able-bodied passengers – retirees yes, but also families with toddlers, college students and honeymooners. I never once felt bored although I was on a seven-day cruise, considered long by Asian standards. In fact, with the ship calling at a new port every day, I almost felt like I didn't have enough time to explore its myriad amenities. Plus I got to set foot where many of my peers aspire to visit – Santorini, Mykonos and Istanbul being just a few.

My husband and I enjoyed our trip so much it made me wonder if other Millennials (born between 1981 and 1995) would too. If the number of likes and comments my pictures garnered on social media are any indication, cruise lines may just be missing out on cultivating loyalty in a demographic whose disposable incomes are rising across Asia, and who today might only be able to afford an inside stateroom but tomorrow could splurge on a concierge class veranda.

Even before entering their peak earning years, Asian Millennial travellers already account for nearly 35 per

cent of the US\$600 billion spent by Asians on international travel, according to a joint study by Singapore Tourism Board, Visa and McKinsey & Company. And there's more: their travel spending is forecast to rise by 1.6 times to US\$340 billion by 2020.

As we look at longhaul cruising in this issue's special report (pages 10-13), allow me to offer some suggestions on how the industry can better capture Millennials.

This generation of travellers is known to prefer more free-and-easy holidays as they don't like to be herded around or rushed into viewing sights. Cruise lines could skip less-popular ports and instead increase overnights in marquee destinations. For travel consultants, pick out mid- to large-sized ships that offer more activities to cater to adventure-seeking Millennials. The availability of stable and affordable Wi-Fi is important too.

Millennials are also value-conscious, and this is precisely where cruise lines are at an advantage because of their all-inclusive nature. Interestingly, not many young people are aware that they could get more bang out of their buck on a cruise than if they were to book individual components by themselves. This is especially true in destinations where hotel prices are high.

Cruising as a product suffers from an image problem among Gen Y, and cruise lines and travel agencies should aim to change that instead of writing them off and waiting for them to grow up.

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COMING UP

NEXT ISSUE:
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VIEW FROM THE TOP Richard Helfer, chairman of One Farrer Hotel & Spa Singapore, talks about his new baby

LONGHAUL TRAVEL The Grand Tour of Switzerland positions the country as a single destination; the UK's *Countryside is Great* campaign; and Germany guns for Chinese

GDS Making money from ancillaries

WE LIKE



In celebration of Singapore's seventh Formula 1 season, the culinary team at Royal Plaza on Scotts has created a life-sized race car comprising shells from seafood consumed at Carousel. The masterpiece will be on display until September 21 at the hotel's newly renovated façade. A Community Chest donation box will also be placed beside the car to encourage the public to chip in. Now this is what it really means to shell out for charity!



Analysis

S Puvaneswary looks at how Malaysia is mulling ways to regain the trust of Chinese travellers and lure back its third-largest market

RECHASING THE DRAGON

Malaysia is on an aggressive mission to recover Chinese arrivals, having suffered a massive loss of traffic from the market following the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines' (MAS) MH370 Beijing-bound flight in March.

Some 30,000 Chinese tourists have cancelled or suspended their holidays up to early 2015 after the incident, causing a 19.5 per cent year-on-year drop in April.

Scheduled airlines flying between China and Malaysia, such as AirAsia, MAS and China Southern Airlines, also reduced their frequencies due to decreased demand. According to Tourism Malaysia, there were 42 flights or 7,532 seats weekly from China to Malaysia prior to the MH370 incident. Now, there are only 17 flights or 3,307 seats weekly.

MYS Travel managing director, Suki Chong, said business from China is now negligible. "Almost all group bookings were cancelled after the MH370 incident."

Sunflower Holidays managing director, Mint Leong, too, has seen a drastic 90 per cent dip in Chinese leisure group tours since April.

Tourism Malaysia and the travel trade are understandably concerned as China had hitherto been the third-largest inbound market for Malaysia after Singapore and Indonesia. Average spend per Chinese tourist in 2013 was RM3,092 (US\$973), higher than Singapore (RM2,330), Brunei (RM2,291) and the rest of South-east Asia. It also topped other North Asian markets, followed closely by Japan (RM2,895).

Hectic with tactics

As such, Malaysia is striking up marketing partnerships with airlines and working with Chinese outbound operators for charter arrangements.

Tourism Malaysia's deputy director-general (promotion), Azizan Noordin, said the NTO is still discussing the mechanics of a six-month advertising campaign to promote holiday packages with AirAsia and longhaul affiliate AirAsia X. The two airlines collectively fly to 12 destinations in China.

The NTO is also working hard to encourage more charters, and this has started to bear fruit, with three weekly charter services from Wuhan to Kuala Lumpur having commenced on June 30 and set to run up to June 29, 2015. The projected number of 158 flights are expected to contribute 26,386 Chinese arrivals and RM76.2 million in tourist receipts, said Tourism Malaysia chairman, Ng Yen Yen.

According to Azizan, Tourism Malaysia is in further discussions with airlines and Chinese travel agencies to offer charter services to Kuala Lumpur and secondary destinations such as Penang, Langkawi and Kota Kinabalu. He said: "We want to work with the market to reassure Chinese tourists that Malaysia is safe, and to make it a top-of-mind destination for China."

Visit Malaysia Year advertising and marketing efforts directed at the travelling public in China were suspended in March, April and most of May out of respect for the families of the Chinese nationals on

board MH370. But Azizan said: "During that period we continued to support agencies with product updates and helped them with the challenges they faced."

Meanwhile, efforts are also stepped up to woo more tourists from South-east Asia, South Asia, West Asia, Australia, Japan, South Korea and Europe, in a bid to offset the shortfall in Chinese tourists.

Azizan is hopeful of a full recovery next year. "The recovery plan, rolled out from end-May, also involves intensifying promotions in China's second-

tourist visa fee for Chinese nationals. Currently, Chinese nationals pay RMB200 for a three-month, single-entry tourist visa.

PTS Travel & Tours general manager, Saw Beng Teik, pointed out: "Thailand was quick to act to recover the market by waiving the tourist visa fee (for Chinese nationals) for three months from August. Their action will definitely affect our arrivals further."

Additionally, the Malaysian government should make it easier for Chinese tourists who wish to combine Singapore with Malaysia by introducing visa-on-arrival, suggests Merry World Holidays managing director, Ellen Lee. "It will encourage cross-border traffic to Johor or flights from Singapore to Langkawi, Kuala Lumpur and other parts of Malaysia. Even a one-day visit will benefit the industry."

Some positive signs

While recovery for the market is slow, Malaysian Association of Tour

& Travel Agents vice-president inbound, Tan Kok Liang, said: "The Chinese FIT segment is showing signs of recovery, especially for the Golden Week in October."

MICE business is also looking up. Perfect China sent 4,000 delegates to Malaysia for an incentive cum conference from August 2 to 10, the largest Chinese group recorded for this year. Leong, whose company is the local DMC for Perfect China, commented: "This shows the Chinese corporate sector is supporting Malaysia. More than half of the delegates booked seats on MAS. We hope this will give confidence to other Chinese travellers."

Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau sales and marketing general manager, Ho Yoke Ping, believes the major undertaking is a good opportunity to win back business events. The bureau will also organise a roadshow to China in November covering Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chengdu, and introduce a new campaign targeted at meeting planners.

Feeling upbeat, Pearl Holiday business development director, Winnie Ng, said: "The roadshow will help us capture more incentive business for 2015."



and third-tier cities, where the population is more open to holidaying in Malaysia."

Trade suggestions

However, MYS Travel's Chong said promoting Malaysia to second- and third-tier cities may not necessarily yield results. Many departures for group tours in these cities had to be cancelled as agencies could not achieve the minimum booking of 16 clients. He explained: "Many retail travel agencies in these smaller cities are either branch offices of bigger ones in first-tier cities or they buy their outbound packages from wholesalers in the first-tier cities. It is difficult to promote the destination if big agencies in Beijing and Shanghai don't support Malaysia, which is still the case because of the negative sentiments."

GIT Tours & Travels has received few forward bookings from China, despite participating in roadshows to Chengdu, Chongqing, Wuhan and Xi'an in June.

Faced with sluggish demand, the agency is courting other markets such as Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia and Laos. Managing director, Cindy Seow, said: "The challenge now is to study the needs of tourists from these markets, whose cultures are very different from the Chinese. Their yield is also 20-25 per cent lower, as Chinese tourists have bigger spending power."

Sunflower Holidays' Leong questioned: "Is it solely because of MH370, or could it be that they don't feel safe in Malaysia after the many cases of kidnapping in the east coast of Sabah?"

"Some Chinese agencies are selling 4D3N tours to Sabah, with a buy one, free one full-board promotion at RMB1,999 (US\$325), but people are still not buying. As a tour operator, we cannot do much. Tourism Malaysia should take the lead to study the market and address the concerns of Chinese travellers."

She suggested that Malaysia waive the

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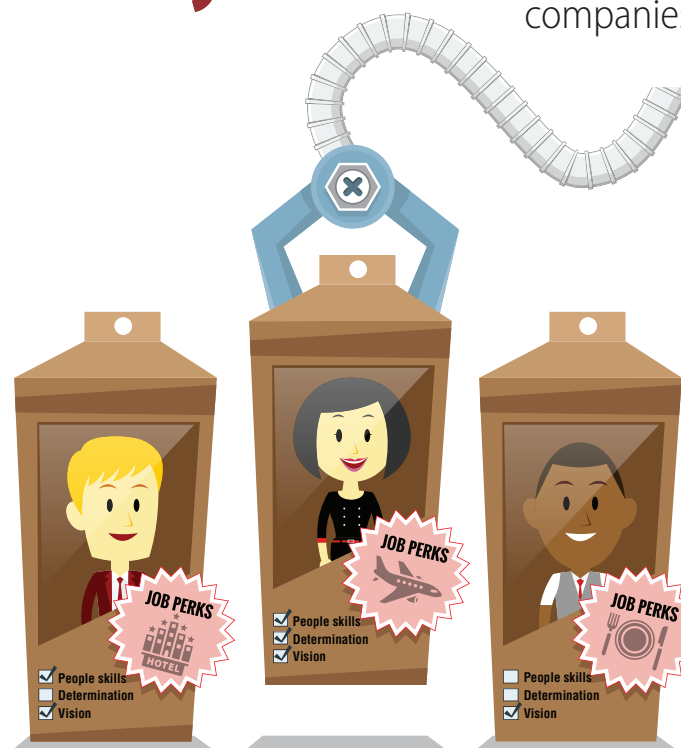
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Analysis

As the competition for next-gen talent heats up, travel and tourism companies must have a game plan.

By Paige Lee Pei Qi



to be promoted to the next level within the next 24 months.

Similarly, the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre in Malaysia introduced the Talent Acceleration Programme (TAP) in November 2013.

Director of human resource, Rohizat Baharum, said: "The programme entails field trips, experiential learning sessions, and internal and external leadership sharing, among others. Participants are exposed to competencies such as commercial awareness, customer focus, decision making, change management and teamwork. Upon completion, TAP graduates will be eligible for higher positions within the organisation."

Another activity popular with Gen Y staffers is the Chat with Alan sessions – monthly informal chats for up to nine team members with general manager, Alan Pryor.

In terms of leveraging technology to attract and retain this demographic, Dylan Choong, HR director, Asia-Pacific, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, shared that the hotel group reaches out on social media platforms to share industry success stories.

He said: "Millennials have a stronger need to be recognised as individuals partly because of a longer educational undertaking and tougher economy today."

"With exposure to social media, Millennials tend to demand connectivity, instant responses and gratification."

Chan Brothers Travel Singapore marketing communications manager, Jeremiah Wong, added: "This group of workers has grown up with access to cutting-edge technology and have integrated them seamlessly into their daily lives...any lack of reliable and up-to-date technology is probably going to cripple their work productivity."

However, Tour East Singapore group vice president of sales and marketing, Judy Lum, warned against going too far.

She said: "Many of the Millennials are tech-savvy and they assume this is the all-important factor...they may lack the skill and understanding to deal with people face-to-face to foster respectful relationships."

"We have to be careful and manage their ideals as this industry needs more EQ than IQ."

Regent Hotel Singapore, director of administration, Wong Kwee Lian, opined that although change has to come from within the industry, she pointed out that Millennials also had to have appropriate expectations.

"While corporations adapt to the Millennial mindsets with a more collaborative culture, Millennials need to understand that change takes time," said Wong. – Additional reporting by S Puvaneswary

ARE YOU MILLENNIAL-READY?

As Asia's travel and tourism industry primes itself for an unprecedented growth, it is also heading for a labour crunch of unseen proportions.

The World Travel & Tourism Council has hailed this as the fastest expansion rate of any region in the world – by more than six per cent each year over the next decade. By 2020, Asian travellers will account for nearly one-half of all global tourism expenditures.

However, according to a TravelRave 2013 report produced by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), the industry in Asia is projected to face a labour shortage of about eight million jobs in the next 10 years.

During a roundtable in Singapore on developing human capital and talent management co-organised by TTTG Asia Media and STB in July, the spotlight was on how to attract Millennials (born between 1981 and 1995) to the industry.

STB assistant chief executive, Neeta Lachmandas, said: "As we look at consumption patterns, the reality is that Millennials are going to consume differently. If we want to be relevant to them, I hope we are bringing in young talent into the industry and using the talent to design experiences for the future."

Among the solutions raised included raising awareness of the range of opportunities in tourism and the international exposure the industry offers.

Patina Hotels & Resorts CEO, Marc Dardenne, explained: "Today we have to take a different approach and re-invent the way

we approach the Millennials."

Emphasising the need to professionalise the industry, East West Planners Singapore CEO, Janet Tan-Collis, who is also president of the Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers, said the association has been tailoring its programmes to a younger crowd by developing internationally recognised courses.

Other trade professionals approached separately by TTTG Asia agreed that more had to be done.

Andreas Sungaimin, senior vice president, human capital & development, Pan Pacific Hotels Group, said: "Millennials are positive, confident and goal-oriented – all of which are excellent traits for success."

"However there is a tendency for them to move quickly between jobs to explore different options. Thus, the challenge would be to create an attractive and rewarding work environment."

To lure such job seekers, Sungaimin said the Leadership Apprentice Programme, which targets young adults in their early 20s, aims to groom and fast-track identified individuals for management positions through work rotations across the different operational functions.

When it comes to existing staff, Starwood Hotels & Resorts has a one-year talent development system exclusively designed for its Asia-Pacific division. It comprises three distinct clusters – executive, mid-management and entry level – in order to prepare promising talents for the next stage of their careers. The associate should have the ability

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View from the top

Having proven her mettle in corporate finance, AirAsia CEO, Aileen Omar, tells S Puvaneswary how staying composed helps her to navigate workforce dynamics as well as headwinds in a fast-changing aviation industry

KEEPING A COOL HEAD

You've been at the helm of AirAsia Malaysia since June 2012. How has it been as the CEO?

It has generally been very challenging and exciting and also overwhelming at times. You can't really prepare for everything as there is always the unexpected that comes each day and you just have to learn fast and decide quickly on how best to address it. I find this industry more or less the same as when I started my career on the trading floor where you have all sorts of challenges that you need to assess and make decisions quickly.

Was the transition from regional head of corporate finance and treasury to CEO an easy one?

Both present very different challenges. It is not an apple to apple comparison. Before, I dealt with the dynamics of the financial markets, on how the company should strategise itself in order to grow well.

In this new role, I have to see a far bigger picture than just the dynamics of the financial markets. I have to see how we can strategise and protect market share. I have to ensure that our staff are always happy at work, their morale is high and they are eager to do new things, and that the company keeps growing. It is important to me to ensure that the adrenaline and passion are there so we can stay ahead of the game. Now it is about managing people and that's actually harder than managing the financial markets.

How does it work between you and Tony Fernandes (group CEO of AirAsia)? How much autonomy do you have?

He is a great mentor. When I have issues, I seek his advice and I have learnt a lot from him as well. We work well together. He gives me space to make decisions. He will listen and guide if I need help.

What's with female leaders – Marianne Hontiveros (CEO of AirAsia Philippines) and Kathleen Tan (CEO of AirAsia Expedia) – and AirAsia? Where are the boys?

We are not focused on gender. If you can deliver, regardless of your gender, background, culture or race, you deserve the promotion and we will make sure you will continue to grow in the company. We promote based on meritocracy.

What are your strengths and weaknesses? How are you playing to them in your current role?

It is most important for a leader to stay

calm. In situations when everybody gets all excited or panicky, it is really important for me to stay calm so that the team also stays calm and we find a solution to the problems facing us. You can't really show your emotions too much. You have to show stability, so that they can rely on you for a decision to be made. My weakness is that I don't know how to balance my time very well.

Who inspires you?

Both AirAsia founders, Tony Fernandes and Kamarudin Meranun. I have learnt a lot from them. They never give up. They always find ways to make sure things are well, and turn negativities and challenges



into opportunities to ensure the company keeps growing.

What do you hope to change?

This industry has a lot of growth opportunities but this growth does not come that easily because of external factors at play. You need to create that awareness to get better infrastructure and facilitate the pent-up demand we see in this region.

One of the industry challenges in this region is that aviation policies were designed way back, 30-40 years ago, where the main operator at the time was the national airline. The dynamics have changed since. LCCs have come into the scene and air travel is no longer seen as a luxury but affordable and for the masses. While the whole concept and demand for travel have changed, the infrastructure to facilitate it has not been able to change in tandem with the kind of traffic volume we have seen.

The relevant authorities should look at how they can facilitate more growth and connectivity into Malaysia and this region, and minimise air traffic congestion. We need to relook areas such as airport charges because these days people also shop and spend at the airport. Everyone is taking advantage of the traffic volume that an airline brings because the airport will be dead without the airlines, right? We are bringing in passengers, taking risks, doing all the necessary marketing, making aircraft investments and negotiating for more connectivity, so it is only fair that the airports work closely with the airlines and come up with more strategic partnerships to ensure that the traffic keeps coming and everyone benefits.

LCCs are fast expanding in the region, but competition is rising too and many airports seem to be lagging behind in supporting this growth. Are LCCs at risk of expanding too fast, too quickly?

As mentioned earlier, we have to continue creating awareness, lobbying and making sure that the relevant authorities are aware that they need to (improve) infrastructure to facilitate the growth and benefits that LCCs have brought into their local economies. Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore are already finding ways to facilitate this growth because everybody wants a piece of the LCC success story.

We are not worried about the competition out there. South-east Asia itself has a 600 million population and its geographical landscape is so conducive for air travel. South-east Asia has one of the world's fastest-growing GDPs – there is high growth of middle-income earners and

10 NEED TO KNOWS ABOUT AIREEN OMAR

- **Who is in your family?** I have three brothers, two older and one younger. We have also adopted two stray cats.
- **What do you do for fun?** I love to travel, listen to music, watch movies and go shopping.
- **Your ideal vacation?** To be with friends and family somewhere, enjoying the local culture, ambience and discovering a new country. It is a holiday where I can be totally relaxed.
- **How do you book your own leisure trips?** Through AirAsia.com
- **What are you reading right now?** I haven't read a book in ages.
- **How do you stay healthy?** I try my best to exercise every weekend.
- **Favourite food?** I love cupcakes and chocolates.
- **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Eating cupcakes and chocolates
- **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Arrogance
- **Most people don't know that you can...** do aikido and love it.

that supports LCC travel. We also have the first mover advantage, having established ourselves in the region by flying to all the capital and secondary cities. We have that advantage to continue to grow further.

Do you foresee tough competition with the ASEAN Open Skies Policy?

Not really, we have the first mover advantage. We embrace and look forward to the Open Skies Policy. There will be no or less restrictions for us to fly anywhere we want to. It will benefit all countries because of the enhanced connectivity into the region.

Any hints on what new destinations we are likely to see soon?

There will definitely be new destinations. AirAsia Malaysia and our affiliates have created a network together, so now it is just a matter of connecting all those points established by all the entities within the group. I cannot hint on new destinations as they have not opened up for sale yet, but they will be unique destinations.

How beneficial is the AirAsia Group to AirAsia Malaysia's performance? Is there a lot of feeder?

We feed each other and grow the network together. When it comes to international connectivity, the whole group will sit down and work together to see how best to build the AirAsia network, so that it will be the most efficient and optimised in terms of aircraft usage, revenues, etc.

How do you foresee LCCs evolving in the next decade?

LCCs will become more efficient, resulting in the unit cost getting lower and lower. There will be improved customer experience with technology playing a big part.

While the whole concept and demand for travel have changed, the infrastructure to facilitate it has not been able to change in tandem with the kind of traffic volume we have seen.

APAC overall travel traffic grows

Over the latest month for which data is available, travel traffic (various measures) in Asia-Pacific grew 7% in April, following a 6% growth in both March and February (see table below), based on the TBA Travel Industry Index, which includes a standard series of traffic counts each month.

As usual though, there were many measures that were well above that average, and many below.

Most striking is the growth in hotel rooms planned, up 32% in the latest month available.

Also showing strong growth are visitor arrivals into Japan (+33%) and South Korea (+29%), and TBA's estimate of outbound travel from China (+25%).

There are also a few surprises – although single-month figures can be misleading. On the positive side, Australia is recording growth in visitors (+15%) after losing visitors from longhaul markets.

And more on the negative side: Asia-Pacific travel stocks are still below their 2006 prices; foreign visitor numbers into China continue to fall (-10%); Japan outbound is still declining (-4%); and visitor arrivals into Singapore have dipped (-7%).

While the performance of individual Asia-Pacific airlines and airports is not shown below, equally striking is Thai Airways International, whose seat sales fell 43% in its latest month. This fall is higher than for two other Thailand measures – arrivals at Bangkok airport (-20%) and overall arrivals into Thailand (-11%). International routes of Australia-based Jetstar also tumbled badly (-16%).

Monthly travel traffic in Asia-Pacific, 2014

Item	Months/Growth,%			Source
Regional				
Airline seat sales	Mar/1.0	Feb/3.7	Jan/9.9	AAPA
Airport passengers	Feb/4.7	Jan/10.3	Dec/6.9	ACI
Air traffic, RPKs	Apr/7.0	Mar/2.6	Feb/6.3	IATA
Hotel occupancy, pts	Mar/-1.4	Feb/4.1	Jan/-1.1	TBA
Hotel rooms planned	May/32.0	Apr/33.3	Mar/33.3	STR
Travel stocks index**	May/83.0	Apr/82.0	Mar/83.0	TBA
Visitor arrivals	Feb/5.7	Jan/8.7	Dec/4.0	WTO
Inbound, visitor arrivals				
Australia	Apr/14.7	Mar/2.6	Feb/9.6	DMO
Bali	Apr/16.1	Mar/8.7	Feb/13.7	gov
Bangkok, airport	May/-19.9	Apr/-14.1	Mar/-22.8	DMO
China, foreign	Mar/-10.4E	Feb/-1.6	Jan/-3.9	DMO
Hong Kong	Apr/10.9	Mar/18.1	Feb/9.8	DMO
India	May/9.6	Apr/11.5	Mar/4.5	DMO
Indonesia	Apr/6.7	Mar/5.6	Feb/3.6	gov
Japan	Apr/33.4	Mar/22.6	Feb/20.6	DMO
Macau	Apr/9.9	Mar/10.0	Feb/7.7	DMO
Malaysia	Mar/6.3	Feb/5.8	Jan/18.2	DMO
Maldives	Apr/16.2	Mar/6.1	Feb/5.7	DMO
New Zealand	Apr/11.8	Mar/-6.3	Feb/7.1	DMO
Singapore	Mar/-7.2	Feb/1.5	Jan/4.5	DMO
South Korea	Apr/28.7	Mar/12.0	Feb/8.7	DMO
Taiwan	Mar/16.0	Feb/31.5	Jan/26.6	DMO
Thailand	May/-10.7	Apr/1.8	Mar/-9.4	DMO
Vietnam	May/20.7	Apr/21.5	Mar/20.8	DMO
Outbound, resident departures				
Australia	Apr/12.6	Mar/-6.8	Feb/6.9	DMO
China*†	Mar/25.4	Feb/11.2	Jan/21.4	TBA
Japan*	Apr/-4.4	Mar/-3.5	Feb/-1.8	DMO
South Korea	Apr/7.5	Mar/3.3	Feb/10.8	DMO
Taiwan	Mar/7.3	Feb/-0.7	Jan/13.6	DMO
Others				
Japan agencies' outbound	Feb/1.1	Jan/-0.2	Dec/7.2	Mile Post Japan

Notes: Latest months listed first; over same month a year earlier. **On 100. DMO = destination marketing organisation, E = estimate. *Citizens. †Estimates by TBA. Source: As shown. Some computations by TBA, not necessarily by, or same as, company/organisation.

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LCCs soar on share in Asia

According to calculations on data from OAG, the seat capacity share of LCCs* in Asia-Pacific has grown from 1% of total seat capacity in 2001 – when OAG started this measure – to 15% in 2010 and to 24% this year (see table below).

That share is still below the worldwide level of 27%, mainly because of high LCC shares in Europe, but not by much – eight points separated the two regions in 2010, but only three points this year.

Wide differences exist in Asia-Pacific though. Intra-South Asia routes have the highest share (62%) – i.e. more LCC seats than on other airline types – followed by intra-South-east Asia routes (59%).

Not unexpectedly, the lowest share is to-and-from Asia-Pacific (6%), because the LCC business model does not work well on medium and longhaul flights. (AirAsia X stopped its longhaul flights to Europe in 2012; Oasis, which operated Hong Kong-London, shut down in 2008; and Scoot adjusted its pre-launch plans and started medium- rather than longhaul.)

North-east Asia has the lowest share for intra-regional seats at 9%. As this region includes China – still relatively undeveloped in terms of LCCs – the potential is staggering. When the authorities in China fully accept the LCC business model, air traffic in China is likely to grow much faster than today's already-fast rates.

**TBA's specific descriptions for LCCs may not tally with OAG's, which are not defined.*

LCC seat capacity in Asia-Pacific, % Share*

Region	2014	2010	2001
To/from region	5.6	4.0	NA
Intra region	26.5	17.3	1.0
To/from North-east Asia	9.4	5.8	NA
Intra North-east Asia	11.0	5.1	0.4
To/from South-east Asia	17.1	10.9	NA
Intra South-east Asia	58.8	31.1	3.4
To/from South Asia	15.7	10.9	NA
Intra South Asia	62.3	50.5	NA
To/from South-west Pacific	15.1	10.2	NA
Intra South-west Pacific	20.2	39.0	2.7
Asia-Pacific total	23.7	15.4	1.1
World total	27.1	23.1	7.7

Notes: Jan-Jun of years shown. *Of total seat capacity. Source: OAG Facts; facts@oag.com.



HOTEL BAROMETER

The overall hotel TBA-100 Index in the latest available month of 2014 (April) stood at 101, representing a nominal 1% growth in comparison with the same month in 2013. Of the three parts that make up the Index, occupancy was flat, average room rate (ARR) rose 2% and the resulting RevPAR grew 3%.

Bangkok saw another big fall in April, although rates were down less than the previous month. Given the current relative stability in Thailand's political arena, hotel results for the coming months should improve.

Jakarta springs a surprise to match Bangkok with a sizeable fall in occupancy (-12%). Visitor arrivals into the whole country grew that month (+7%), as did arrivals at Jakarta airport (+11%). The substantial fall in Jakarta's ARR (-11%) was due to the exchange rate; ARR in rupiah grew.

Another surprise is perhaps the low growth for Hong Kong in the three measures. That said, its results are already so high that continued fast – rather than steady – growth is hard.

Hanoi shows good results, driven by strong growth in arrivals (+22% that month for all-Vietnam). In regional terms, its rates are low though but that could be one of the factors attracting visitors.

Hotel operating results in selected cities, April 2014

Location	Occupancy, %	Growth, %	ARR, US\$*	Growth, %	RevPAR, US\$*	Growth, %
Bangkok	51.2	-22.3	99	-13.3	51	-32.6
Delhi	54.2	-4.7	119	-2.1	64	-6.7
Hanoi	79.9	9.9	93	2.7	75	12.8
Hong Kong	85.3	2.7	238	0.1	203	2.8
Jakarta	60.1	-12.0	97	-10.7	58	-21.4
Singapore	83.4	-2.3	195	3.8	162	1.5

Notes: Compared with same month a year earlier. *Calculated at exchange rate to US dollars for specific month. Source: Hotels to TBA.

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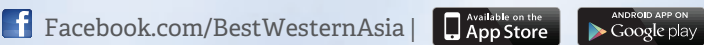
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Agency

Take heed of tech-savvy agencies that have transformed their businesses and pick up new ideas on how to do better

INNOVATORS PERSONALISED FAVOURS

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

WHO Hailed as the first of its kind in Singapore, Asqe was launched in May 2014 to provide high standards of lifestyle support service to visitors in Singapore. A play on the word ‘Ask’, Asqe represents the company’s aim to offer simple, fuss-free and affordable assistance to those who may not have the resources.

WHY Anastasia Ling, managing director at Asqe, said: “With Singapore becoming a destination for large-scale conferences, events and a hub for tourism or transit, we noticed a lot of visitors looking for a one-stop solution for lifestyle assistance while in Singapore.”

The Asqe team is trained to offer top-notch customer service, and will “act as (clients’) extra hands and feet by providing a range of services”, said Ling.

WHAT Asqe assists short- or long-term visitors in Singapore with insider recommendations, visa arrangements, remittances to families back home, short-term

accommodation rentals and family-friendly transport, amongst other possibilities.

Asqe has also partnered premium lifestyle and hospitality brands including The Ascott Group, St Gregory Spa, Pacific Healthcare Group, Mandarin Orchard Singapore, Supernature organic supermarket, as well as Club 21 and Kids21 designer fashion stores.

According to Ling, popular requests the team has fulfilled range from purchasing a week’s worth of organic groceries for a client recovering from surgery and sourcing a Russian-speaking nanny with more than 10 years of childcare experience to securing sold-out tickets for a popular concert.

TARGET Ling said: “Asqe aims to fulfill the gap in the market for short-term concierge assistance for travellers visiting Singapore. As the service follows a pay-per-use system, it is most popular among those who have a busy schedule in Singapore or require lifestyle support.”

To keep the service simple and affordable, Ling said clients can sign up via phone, email or the website. Depending on their duration of stay in Singapore as well as level of assistance they require, there are four packages to choose from. Packages start from S\$300 (US\$240) for three days and are limited to 10 requests. The highest package tier is priced at S\$1,200 for unlimited requests in a month. Upon signing up, Asqe clients can put in their requests via phone, SMS, email or by logging onto the website.



Anastasia Ling, managing director, Asqe

WHO GETS THE BOOKING?

Wanting to arrange a customised tour of the Golden Triangle area in northern Thailand, I googled “custom tours northern Thailand” and selected the top two search results, Oriental Escape and Travel Hub, respectively. The request was for a six-day, five-night tour of the Chiang Rai province for two couples over 70 with a budget of £1,500 (US\$2,530) per couple. By **Greg Lowe**



Oriental Escape

APPEARANCE The site has a clean, contemporary design that is easy to navigate and not overly cluttered. There is sufficient information on various tours and other issues such as payment processes. It also features an easy-to-use online form for submitting custom tour requests. On the downside, there’s quite a lot of “Thinglish” (Thai-influenced English) in the text and the overall service would look more professional if the content was better edited.

PRODUCT The initial itinerary offered a lot of time in Chiang Mai when I had specified the Chiang Rai/Golden Triangle area. It also included many typical off-the-peg tour elements while I had requested something more personalised. Specific elements on my request were missed out. A revised itinerary went farther south but included more culture and art history as requested. The hotel choice was disappointing and included a convention resort when I had asked for small, intimate properties.

EASE OF BOOKING A confirmation email came through instantly, though the message did not include my original request. There was no specified time frame for dealing with the response, though the service was pretty good in terms of response times. Communications were courteous and in good written English.

PRICE Ranging from 17,400 baht (US\$541) and 18,800 baht per pax depending on the hotel choice. With no upselling, the cost was about half the proposed budget of about 38,000 baht per person.

VERDICT Given that I had proposed a much higher budget and asked for a more customised experience with some very specific elements, I was not overly impressed by the proposals from either agency. Neither ticked all the boxes and both glossed over some of the really important parts of the request. I would probably try to find another company that suggested something closer to my request, but if I had to choose either one, Oriental Escape would get the booking, somewhat begrudgingly.



Travel Hub

APPEARANCE A reasonable site design, though it is more cluttered and the grey text on a black background is not very readable. The site offers a lot of tour itineraries to look at, but the contact form is less sophisticated. I was surprised the contact emails are Gmail and Hotmail and not branded emails – this did not present an overly professional service.

PRODUCT Again, it was very Chiang Mai-focused. The Chiang Rai elements were similar to Oriental Escape’s. Some activities were not appropriate for the suggested age group (70-plus). It also had the cookie-cutter feel of the other itinerary. Most elements were standard fare; it did not feel customised enough.

EASE OF BOOKING I eventually completed the online contact form after several attempts but there was no confirmation message or email, so I ended up sending an email request. I was contacted the next morning in response to the email, but was asked for information already in my query, which was not very impressive. The following day, I received an email from the online request, which was confusing. However, the company was friendly and had good English.

PRICE This tour was cheaper at 14,100 baht per pax with no upselling, but there was less travel involved so the costs balanced out.

Guide Cruise lines



Royal Caribbean Cruises

SAILING INTO NEW HORIZONS

Norwegian Cruise Line

Michael Goh, senior vice president – sales

How has the Asian demand for long-haul cruises grown? What's driving it?

Sales for Norwegian Cruise Line's (NCL) cruises by mid-2014 had exceeded the whole of 2013, which was more than double that of 2011. This demand is driven by growing affluence in Asia-Pacific.

Our main target is the rising mass middle class with high disposable income from Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, Japan, India and China.

Which destinations are hot?

Asian holidaymakers are becoming sophisticated travellers eager to experience destination-centric longhaul cruises. Popular destinations include the ice glaciers and wildlife of Alaska, new cities in Europe, and UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Mediterranean and Caribbean.

Any new longhaul product offerings?

NCL guests can indulge in three new dedicated seafood venues by celebrity chef Geoffrey Zakarian on *Norwegian Breakaway*, and Carlo's Bake Shop by TLC's *Cake Boss* star and master baker Buddy Valastro on both *Norwegian Getaway* and *Norwegian Breakaway*.

Activities include the Aqua Park waterslides (featured on this issue's cover), elevated rope course, Wii Wall, and interaction with Nickelodeon characters like SpongeBob SquarePants.

Entertainment offerings include Blue Man Group performances, Broadway hit musical *Rock of Ages* and *Illusionarium's Cirque Dreams & Jungle Fantasy* dinner show on *Norwegian Breakaway*, and fireworks display on *Norwegian Getaway*.

How are cruise prices like?

NCL's fly-cruise packages have become value-for-money due to excellent flight

connectivity and dynamic rates. For example, a seven-day Western Mediterranean Cruise from Barcelona on *Norwegian Epic* starts from US\$649, a seven-day Alaska Cruise from Seattle/Whittier/Vancouver on *Norwegian Jewel/Pearl/Sun* starts from US\$499 and a seven-day Hawaii Inter-Island Cruise from Honolulu on *Pride of America* starts from US\$899.

What do travel agencies need to know to sell longhaul cruises better?

A consortium of travel specialists has been formed to offer a one-stop service to procure comprehensive NCL fly-cruise packages at preferential rates for their clients. Consortium members are provided regular training and the latest NCL information such as seasonal ship deployments, new entertainment and culinary options, and recreational facilities.

Princess Cruises

Farriek Tawfik, director of South-east Asia

How has the Asian demand for long-haul cruises grown? What's driving it?

We are seeing significant growth in long-haul cruise bookings especially for our Alaska, Mediterranean and Scandinavia itineraries among South-east Asian cruise customers. Our guests are usually middle-class, middle-aged experienced cruisers who prefer longhaul trips.

The increase in enquiries and bookings could be attributed to the booming consumer market and increase in purchasing power of the Asian middle class. Travel consultants are also becoming better educated in marketing cruise products, e.g. our consultants are trained to sell itineraries to different target segments through Princess Academy.

Other factors are the region's increased capacity to handle larger and more ships, plus greater awareness of cruising due to

trade shows, media coverage and the government's publicity efforts.

Which destinations are hot?

High in demand are our Alaska itineraries, which include a season of seven-day voyages on *Grand Princess* and *Crown Princess*. Also popular is our Scandinavia and Russia itinerary featuring 11-day sailings on *Royal Princess*, and our Grand Mediterranean itinerary featuring seven-day voyages to Barcelona, Venice and other European destinations on our newest ship, *Regal Princess*.

How are cruise prices like?

Due to economies of scale, as cruise ships boast larger capacity, cruise holidays are becoming more affordable. A seven-day cruise of Alaska is priced from S\$1,060 (US\$850) per pax; a 12-day Grand Mediterranean cruise is S\$2,749; and an 11-day Scandinavia sailing costs S\$2,874.

What do travel agencies need to know to sell longhaul cruises better?

Certain nationalities require visas to enter European or North American destinations so travel agencies need to be able to facilitate visa applications and advise guests on getting visa approval for all ports of calls.

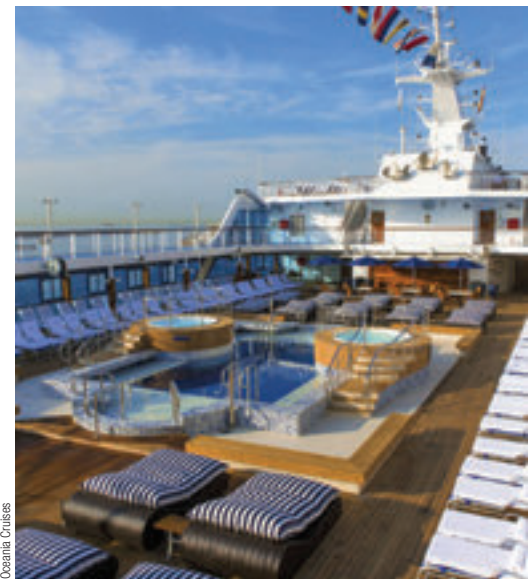
Guests should arrive at the starting city four to eight hours ahead of the cruise departure time, and book flights home that are four to six hours after the arrival of the cruise ship at the end destination.

They should also prepare sufficient amounts of currency for respective ports of calls. The US dollar is the official currency accepted on the ships but money exchange services are available on board too.

Costa Cruises

Buhdy Bok, senior vice president
Pacific Asia & China

How has Asian demand for longhaul cruises grown? What's driving it?



Oceania Cruises

From left: *Celebrity Solstice* sails week-long cruises to Alaska; the pool deck on Oceania Cruises' *Insignia*, which recently underwent a multimillion bow-to-stern refurbishment

Longhaul cruise demand has increased greatly, and we envision the rising demand will continue and has the most potential among Asia's middle-class segment. Asian guests started from shorthaul cruises and have gradually broadened their experience to longhaul cruises.

Our biggest Asian markets are from China and Japan. Our customer profile are families, couples and individuals aged 35 and above.

Which destinations are hot?

Barcelona, for its extraordinary architecture such as La Sagrada Familia, Parc Guell, Casa Batllo and Casa Mila; Marseille, for its historical sights; and San-torini, popular with honeymooners.

Any new longhaul product offerings?

Around-the-World cruise on *Costa Atlantica* will visit 28 popular destinations in 18 countries in 86 days. This new product offering is specially created for Greater China and Asian guests, with Chinese-speaking crew members on board, and Asian cuisines and entertainment activities.

How are cruise prices like?

Costa Cruises' fares have always been great value for money. For example, fares for *Costa Atlantica's* first Around-the-World cruise starts from US\$17,742 per pax.

What do Asian travel agencies need to know to sell longhaul cruises better?

Costa Cruises works closely with our preferred travel consultants around the world and provides continuous training and familiarisation trips for them to fully understand and experience Costa Cruises' products.

Crystal Cruises

Marnie Whipple, director of
international sales

How has the Asian demand for long-haul cruises grown? What's driving it?

Our growth is strongest from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines while remaining solid from other countries in South-east Asia, with family groups leading the growth. Notably, 41 per cent of our guests are moving up from premium brand to luxury experiences.

For increasingly sophisticated Asian travellers, the lure of far-flung destinations has never been greater. We look at what's hot and how travel experts can sell longhaul cruises more effectively. Paige Lee Pei Qi, Mimi Hudoyo, S Puvaneswary, Gracia Chiang, Caroline Boey and Kathy Neo report

Which destinations are hot?

The Mediterranean is the most requested destination for our Asian guests, with voyages offering overnights in marquee ports such as Barcelona and Rome.

Any new longhaul product offerings?

This year, we welcomed six new themes on board 23 *Crystal Symphony* and *Crystal Serenity* voyages. They are Extreme Thrill Seekers, featuring shark divers, underwater photographers and deep-sea treasure hunters; Explorations Elegance, where auction house experts share insights on jewels, wines and real estate; Gladiators & Empires, exploring the Roman Empire civilisation through Italy's ruins and museums; Up Close & Magical, with shows and classes by maestros from Hollywood's members-only club, The Magic Castle; Maritime: Past, Present & Future, a trans-Pacific sailing with maritime experts and historians; and Wine & Food: Microbrews, where guests enjoy tastings and cuisine pairings with experts.

How are cruise prices like?

All-inclusive fares for 2014 theme cruises start at US\$1,995 per pax, with additional savings available for groups of six or more. Generally our ships are selling out months earlier in recent years.

What do Asian travel agencies need to know to sell longhaul cruises better?

We encourage consultants to be active in the selling process by listening to their clients' wishes and presenting products clients may not have tried. Remember to sell to the guests' dreams and match products to their lifestyle and aspirations – not what you find interesting. Keep track of where your clients have been and help them plan what's next on their wish list.

Royal Caribbean Cruises

Jennifer Yap, managing director, Singapore and South-east Asia

How has Asian demand for longhaul cruises grown? What's driving it?

We are seeing a gradual growth in demand across our markets in Asia for our longhaul cruises outside of Asia.

Which destinations are hot?

Most popular are Alaska and Europe – demand for these two destinations has been greater especially with the arrival of Celebrity Cruises' Solstice-class ships in the region in recent years. With Royal Caribbean International's *Allure of the Seas* and *Anthem of the Seas* sailing in Europe next year, we expect these new ships to significantly drive Asia's demand for our Europe cruises as well.

Any new longhaul product offerings?

For 2015 and 2016, Celebrity Cruises has created special cruises around world cultural events such as the Cannes Film Festival, Rio Carnival and British Open.

How are cruise prices like?

Our cruise fares have been similar these last few years, although the early-bird prices (nine months to one year ahead) are always the most attractive as they are about 20 per cent cheaper.

Our Europe itineraries are most popular with Asians and have a minimum of

seven nights, with fares starting around S\$900+ per pax (US\$723). For Alaska, most of our itineraries are seven nights long and fares start from S\$1,100 per pax.

What do Asian travel agencies need to know to sell longhaul cruises better?

We encourage our consultants to personally experience such cruises and the whole journey to know the product well. A good knowledge of flight availability and timing to coordinate with the sailings, plus seasons and weather conditions, is also vital.

Holland America Line

Jerrold Golden, international public relations manager

How has Asian demand for longhaul cruises grown? What's driving it?



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2015 Jan 16, Mar 4

Ports-of-call: Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang)/
Penang/Kuantan

4-NIGHT BEST OF MALAYSIA CRUISE

Singapore Departures:
2014 Nov 17, Dec 15
2015 Jan 8, Feb 2

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

4-NIGHT ISLES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA CRUISE

Singapore Departures:
2014 Nov 24, Dec 11, 22
2015 Jan 12, Feb 18*

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

5-NIGHT SPICE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA CRUISE

Singapore Departures:
2014 Nov 12, Dec 1, 6, 29*
2015 Jan 3, Feb 6, 22*, 27

Ports-of-call: Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang)/Penang/
Langkawi, Phuket

7-NIGHT MALAYSIA AND THAILAND CRUISE

Singapore Departures:
2015 Jan 19, 26, Feb 11*

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

*Similar 7-N itinerary to Thailand and Vietnam is available.

8-NIGHT EXOTIC ASIA CRUISE

Shanghai/Singapore Departures:
2014 Nov 4, 2015 Mar 7

Ports-of-call: Xiamen, Hong Kong,
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*Festive sailing Ports-of-call differ by sailing dates. Kung Fu Panda and all related characters properties TM and ©2014. Dreamworks Animation L.L.C.



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Guide Cruise lines

As Holland America Line is not in the short-cruise market within Asia, all of our sales from Asia would be considered longhaul. Our guests tend to be experienced cruisers who have been on local Asian cruises before and/or cruised longhaul with other cruise companies. A number of our guests travel in escorted groups, particularly from China, Taiwan and Japan.

Which destinations are hot?

Europe cruises are by far the most popular among Asians, with the Mediterranean most often booked. Alaska is our second most popular destination.

Any new longhaul product offerings?

We are the leader in longer, more exotic voyages. For example, this fall, *Rotterdam* is offering an 84-day circum-navigation voyage around Africa.

How are cruise prices like?

Our cruises range from US\$59 per pax for a 1N Pacific Coast on *Westerdam* to US\$3,499 for 19N South America/Antarctica on *Zaandam*.

What do Asian travel agencies need to know to sell longhaul cruises better?

Asian markets tend to book much closer to the departure date than other markets. Longhaul cruises have guests sourced from worldwide, thus travel agencies used to finding space a few months or even weeks before departure might be surprised that the requested stateroom category or even the sailing is unavailable for a last-minute client. This is particularly true for groups as group space is recalled about three months before departure.

We are happy to work with travel agencies to produce custom shore excursions for their groups too.

Oceania Cruises & Regent Seven Seas Cruises

Constance Seck, director of international sales, Asia, Prestige Cruise Holdings

How has Asian demand for longhaul cruises grown? What's driving it?

With the arrival of *Marina* in 2011 and *Riviera* in 2012, Oceania's profile has been raised considerably. Regent Seven Seas is seeing significant buzz for the investments made to the ships and on-board products.

Our Asian guests fit into the same profile as their global counterparts. They are mature, affluent, well-travelled, and enjoy fine food and wine, history and unique cultural experiences. They gravitate to upscale lines like Oceania and luxury products like Regent Seven Seas because they want an exceptional culinary offering, warm and personalised service, and best-in-class destination experiences.

Which destinations are hot?

Europe is our most popular destination for both brands. Northern Europe, including the Baltics, and the French and Italian Riviervas are perennial favourites.

Any new longhaul product offerings?

Almost all our 2015 European itineraries are new. Oceania has voyages to the British Isles, Iceland and Greenland, plus our first-ever Around The World cruises.

Regent Seven Seas journeys into the Norwegian fjords, Arctic Circle and Solovetsky Islands, with longer Grand Voyages of up to 85 days.

How are cruise prices like?

For a seven-day 2015 Europe sailing cov-

ering Barcelona and Rome, Oceania fares start from US\$1,049 per pax. For Regent Seven Seas, all-inclusive fares start from US\$4,259 per pax for a similar itinerary.

What do Asian travel agencies need to know to sell longhaul cruises better?

It's best to book as early as possible to secure clients' preferred suite or state-room, and their preferred air routes and carriers. We release itineraries approximately 12-14 months in advance, which sync up with the release of air schedules and fares.



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Report **Luxury hotels**

FIRST PERSON

And then came The Chedi Andermatt



Raini Hamdi visits The Chedi Andermatt and discovers a thrilling story of a real purpose behind an unreal world of jaw-dropping luxury

Every once in a while, an astonishing development comes along and makes a statement for a destination. The Guggenheim Museum did it for Bilbao in Spain, Marina Bay Sands for Singapore, The Burj Al Arab for Dubai. And now I dare say The Chedi Andermatt can be counted in this elite group, its opening last December not only reviving a forgotten valley but changing the style of resort vacationing in the Swiss Alps.

I did not expect it to be this significant. After all, how much would it take for an international, modern Chedi to create a difference in a conservative Swiss mountain village where flowers-laden, sun-blackened wooden hotels or others covered with shingles are the norm? So as my partner drove me to Andermatt, I was not filled with anticipation – the Chedi had done its job for Andermatt long before I arrived – but I was eager to see Andermatt itself while Kurt was already sentimental about revisiting the valley which helped form him as a man. Andermatt was the centre of the Swiss Army in the Alps and in his military days my Kurt was there as a chef in charge of cooking for a company of 150 men. Andermatt instilled in him a love for the mountains and taught him how to walk up and down them like a Gemse, come rain or snow.

An-der-matt. It is not Zermatt, St Moritz, Arosa or Gstaad, mountain resort destinations which need no introduction as playgrounds for the rich to hobnob with one another. Andermatt, on the other hand, requires quite some explanation and, even though it has riveting rags to riches stories to tell, no one had bothered to listen. Until now.

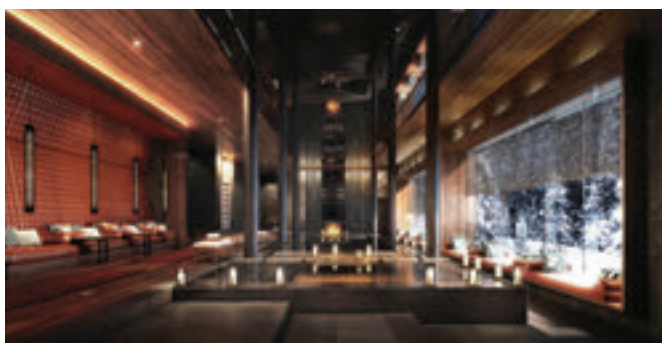
The largest settlement in the long and lusciously green Urseren Valley, Andermatt actually has a long history of hospitality. The opening of the Gotthard Road in 1830 brought a wave of travellers passing through the valley in summer and winter, and with it, the opening of the first hotel in Andermatt, Hotel St Gotthard, in 1854, and its first luxury property, Hotel Bellevue, in 1872. The health of the hotel industry became rosy; alas this lasted only a decade because the village was bypassed when the railway tunnel through the Gotthard opened in 1882. In the early 1900s, Andermatt took off again as a ski resort destination, catering to lots of British guests who pioneered winter holidays in the Alps. But the second World War decimated the image of Andermatt as a luxury destination and in the years that followed, it became synonymous as a military base, with the valley and its mountains being the grounds for army training until 1998.

Andermatt was in an economic black hole when the army moved out, as the military provided lots of jobs to the village. The knight in shining armour came in the form of an Egyptian entrepreneur, Samih Sawiris of the Orascom empire, whose main businesses are telecommunications and construction. He was welcomed with open arms by the local population who voted to let him build, over time, six hotels with some 3,000 beds, 42 apartment blocks, 20-30 villas, an indoor swimming pool, an 18-hole golf course and a new ski resort – the largest in central Switzerland – linking the Andermatt and Sedrun ski areas. The total investment is reportedly more than 1.8 billion Swiss francs (US\$2 billion) if these projects all materialise.

The Chedi Andermatt, with 105 rooms and suites, along with the golf course, is the first of these to open, and if Sawiris had intended the hotel's opening to strike awe among those who behold it, that aim is a bullseye. There is nothing like it in Swiss Alps and it is nothing like



Clockwise from top: Andermatt, the largest village in the Urseren Valley; Chedi's Gemsstock Suite and spa & fitness-hydrothermal area



any Chedi I know, not even the grander ones in Oman or Vietnam. It is by no means a Frank Gehry or a Moshi Safdie eye-popping starscraper; in fact, the building is rather nondescript. Like a Steinbock perched on a mountain, it stealthily blends into the village, its exterior reminding me of a church organ made of wood.

But what's inside is magnificent – the lobby scales a height, width and length that feel monumental and every facility be it the pool or the suite looks larger than life, everything glitters although nothing is gold. It employs the best technology and the best quality at every turn. The design has Jean-Michel Gathy's Chedi hallmarks of contemporary elegance and minimalist style but without doubt this is the ultimate Chedi.

This must be how it was when the Badrut Palace in Moritz, or the Tschuggen Grand Hotel in Arosa, opened years before, jaw-dropping pieces of their time that draw the rich and famous till today. Dining in the main restaurant of the Chedi, which twinkles with no fewer than 480 lightbulbs from a dozen modern chandeliers hanging on the ceiling, the young and old wealthy are here to see and to be seen.

Discombobulated by the scale of luxury, my mind went into defence mode with a barrage of questions: Does this thing fit in a small and modest community like Andermatt? Shouldn't it have more Swiss 'sense of place'? Is it a good idea to have a largely young, international crew

who further perpetuates the absence of a homely, 'Swissly' hospitality one would normally experience in the Alps?

But like all icons, I realised the Chedi sets its own rules. It tells you what luxury is and, before long, you will surrender, just as those before us had to at each of the grand hotels that had opened in the Alps throughout its long history of tourism.

Befittingly, the Chedi Andermatt sits on the site of the former Hotel Bellevue, setting the new foundation for the an old valley. I'm thrilled for the region. The Urseren Valley has lots to offer to international tourists. James Bond movie buffs could relive a scene from *Goldfinger* by driving through the bends on Furka Pass, while those who love to walk or hike will be spoiled by both gentle and more strenuous trails amid some of the most breathtaking mountain sceneries in Switzerland. And the Swiss Army left one gem of an attraction within reach of Andermatt, Sasso da Pigna, a mountain that hid men and artillery during World War II, which was kept a secret until 2001. Today, the public could walk its 2.5km tunnels, see the dormitories, the cannons and combat positions – now I not only have hiked up, down and on a mountain, but inside it. In just the few days I was in Andermatt, I left richer from the experience.

Andermatt is the new holiday address in Switzerland. For me it is everything Switzerland is: small – yet resilient, lucky and hard to be sidelined or forgotten.

Chinese luxury travellers continue to consume the imagination of hotel groups, reports [Raini Hamdi](#). Meanwhile, the new Chedi Andermatt in Switzerland captures her imagination as she tells you the story of a little village that just refuses to go into obscurity

NEW BRANDS ENTER

Hong Kong-based Marco Polo Hotels and Langham Hospitality Group are launching new brands that have the Chinese luxury customer in mind, joining earlier entrants InterContinental Hotels Group and General Hotel Management (GHM) which have fielded Hualuxe Hotels & Resorts and Ahn Luh Resorts and Residences respectively.

Niccolo, Marco Polo Hotels' first new brand since the group's inception in 1986, will be a collection of "contemporary urban chic hotels" closely aligned to "a lifestyle fashion experience". Marco Polo Hotels' president, Eric Waldburger, explained this synergises with parent Wharf Holdings' multiple International Financial Square (IFS) developments – high-end retail, residential and office precincts which it is building in China.

The first Niccolo hotel will open in early 2015 within the newly opened IFS Chengdu, China's next mega city in the Sichuan province. "We will be building the brand in China with our IFS developments and partnering with high-end fashion, before shifting our focus to other regions to accommodate the ever-increasing Chinese outbound market," said Waldburger.

The new brand aims to live up to the pioneering spirit of Niccolo Polo, father of the group's namesake, Marco Polo, by offering new ideas such as "a new breed of concierge service", retail partnerships exclusively available to hotel guests and a Niccolo Lecture Series. The first Niccolo in Chengdu, with 228 rooms and suites, aims to benchmark the brand's "passion for high-end fashion, eclectic cuisine and genuine hospitality". Another three Niccolo hotels are to open in Chongqing,



Redefining luxury with Chinese upmarket guests in mind are, from left, Marco Polo Hotels' Eric Waldburger, General Hotel Management's Akira Moreno and Langham Hospitality Group's Robert Warman



Changsha and Suzhou by the end of 2017.

Asked what the difference is between Niccolo and Marco Polo, Waldburger said: "The brands are more complementary than distinct. As a brand extension Niccolo builds on the Marco Polo legacy but is redefining the guest experience to focus on unique signature discoveries of style, cuisine and culture. Technology, design and service will set new benchmarks that appeal to captains of industry, entrepre-

neurial leaders and icons of style."

Langham will launch a China hotel brand in September, pitched at the five-star level but just below the Langham brand, said CEO Robert Warman.

"We could become the reliable place for the new Chinese travellers," he said, adding that the brand would also be expanded to Asia and worldwide, although there are enough opportunities in China for Langham to tap without going beyond

the country.

Warman said the Chinese travellers' tastes and wants are not that different from international guests, however, what Langham's China brand hopes to fulfil is to "provide well" for Chinese guests in areas such as food, language, etc.

More details of the brand will be unveiled soon.

Meanwhile, GHM's first Ahn Luh has opened in Shaoxing, Zhejiang, while its second is opening in early 2015 in Zhuji, Shanghai. Another two are under development in Dujiangyan, Sichuan and Xunliao Bay, Guangdong. GHM is in advanced talks with developers in China in Beijing, Dalian, Fuzhou, Liyang (Jiangsu province), Sanya, Xi'an and Yichun (Heilongjiang province) and internationally in Taipei and Bali, according to Ahn Luh's CEO and GHM's vice president-development & pre-opening services, Akira Moreno.

He pointed out that while China has benefited from the expertise in key hospitality competencies that global hospitality brands have brought, this expertise still generally caters to international travellers. On the other hand, local Chinese hotel brands have continued to grow a fair share of the domestic market but none have truly established themselves as peers with their Western counterparts.

"Naturally, with more international leisure and business travellers wanting to experience more of the local culture, we anticipate growth in the demand for a brand that will effectively weave and encapsulate the best of both worlds. This is where we see Ahn Luh filling the gap as it balances the two scenarios mentioned above," said Moreno in an article in the latest issue of sister publication, *TTG Asia Luxury*.

While China has benefited from the expertise global hospitality brands have brought, this expertise still generally caters to international travellers...

Akira Moreno,
CEO, Ahn Luh Resorts & Residences, and vice president development & pre-opening services, General Hotel Management

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

GALLERY

TRAVELRAVE ROUNDTABLES

As a prelude to TravelRave 2014 that will be held from October 27 to 31 in Singapore, the Singapore Tourism Board last month organised a series of roundtable sessions in Singapore, Bengaluru, Beijing and Shanghai. The final roundtable session is scheduled to take place in Jakarta on August 26.



Clockwise from left: The Singapore roundtable focused on winning the war for talent, with Marc Dardenne, CEO, Patina Hotels and Resorts (above) as one of the panellists; participants of the Beijing session; and STB-WIT India forum in Bengaluru



PARK HOTEL GROUP

Park Hotel Group held a five-city Greater China roadshow from June 30 to July 8, kicking off in Beijing before proceeding to Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong.



From top: Staff from Wuxi and Xi'an properties and the Beijing global sales office with PCOs; group sales director Pauline Cheung speaking at a dinner at the Beijing show

APPOINTMENTS



Alain Bachmann



Jeff Ross

ALAIN BACHMANN
NOW The Chedi Club Tanah Gajah, Ubud general manager
THEN Bachmann was last general manager of Chedi Andermatt, Switzerland.

GIULIO D'ALBERTO
NOW The Chedi Sakala general manager
THEN D'Alberto's was most recently on the pre-opening task force for GHM development projects.

JEFF ROSS
NOW Swissôtel Resort Phuket general manager
THEN Ross was last hotel manager



Michael Murphy



Russell Durnell

at Swissôtel The Stamford, Singapore.

CALVIN HO
NOW Sunway Theme Parks senior general manager
THEN Ho remains overall in-charge of general management until Lost World of Tambun appoints a new theme park manager.

DAVID HILL
NOW Bintan Lagoon Resort general manager
THEN Hill was most recently general manager for WMC Property Management Group.

MICHAEL MURPHY
NOW Six Senses Qing Cheng Mountain general manager

THEN Murphy's most recent roles included pre-opening general manager of Howard Johnson Hi-Tech Plaza Chengdu and COO of Landison Tourism Group.

SHARMINI MOGANASUNDARAM
NOW Parkroyal on Kitchener Road general manager
THEN Moganasundaram was last general manager for Parkroyal Serviced Suites Kuala Lumpur.

RUSSELL DURNELL
NOW Next Hotel Brisbane general manager
THEN Durnell has extensive expertise in the pre-opening, opening and managing of hotels and resorts, and was last general manager of Palazzo Versace on the Gold Coast.





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Destination Australia

To entice Asia's growing pool of high rollers, Queensland is placing bets on gaming resorts as well as its established bounty of natural attractions, discovers Paige Lee Pei Qi

RAISING THE STAKES

In a bid to attract high-rolling tourists from Asia, the Queensland government unveiled plans last October to build up to three mega casinos in the state.

According to a report in national broadsheet *The Australian*, Queensland premier, Campbell Newman, said mega-casino resorts are the state's answer to rake in tourist dollars in the global competition for tourists.

Following his tour of Asia late last year, including Macau and the Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, Newman invited expressions of interest (EOIs) for Brisbane's second casino licence, which will be granted with the redevelopment plans of the government precinct.

Targeting to develop it into a "world-class iconic precinct", Newman said the casino could include a new six-star hotel, retail, restaurant and entertainment zones, theatre and convention facilities and open spaces.

The race to secure the three new casino licences in Queensland is heating up, with at least 12 companies having lodged formal EOIs. Six domestic and internationally based groups, including Crown and Echo Entertainment – the latter runs the Treasury, Brisbane's only casino – have expressed interest in developing the Queen's

Wharf site in Brisbane, with another six concentrating their efforts on regional Queensland.

A final decision on successful bidders will be made early next year. If all three new licences are awarded it will bring the state's total casino number to seven.

Tourism Australia managing director, John O'Sullivan, feels that gaming resorts will play a critical role in enhancing the destination's tourism appeal. "People come to Australia for a multitude of reasons and one of the core drivers they want is good accommodation, retail, and good food and wine," he said. "And these aspects can be found in these resorts."

Leanne Coddington, CEO, Tourism and Events Queensland, agreed: "What people love about Queensland is the nature, from our blue skies to the wildlife, and integrated resorts will help to add on to the depth of tourism experience."

Pointing to Singapore's integrated resorts as stellar examples, Coddington added: "Singapore has done an amazing job with its integrated resorts and what we need to do in Queensland is to focus on how to integrate gaming into the whole tourism experience."

There are currently 18 casinos across Australia; the largest gambling city is Sydney with two casinos, and the biggest ca-

sino in the country is Crown Casino and Entertainment Complex in Melbourne.

According to Mei Teh, senior sales manager, Tour East Australia, these casinos are set to lure the Chinese market especially. She said: "The travellers that will specifically request for casinos in their programmes are mostly from China... the big-time gamblers may even want to spend all of their days just there too."

Melbourne and Sydney are now the favourite "casino cities" among Teh's Chinese customers. She said: "The casinos there are among the bigger ones in the country and the city itself is very vibrant in the day and night, which is quite an attractive factor."

There is "significantly less interest" in Brisbane though, pointed out Teh, as most of her travellers use Brisbane more as a stopover destination.

Bernard Chan, product manager at Singapore-based Misa Travel, agreed: "Brisbane is more of a corporate destination because not many will go there specifically for a holiday."

"But with new casinos coming in, we can surely expect to see more life there now, and it will be a good boost for tourism," he added.

Carter Lam, business development manager at Australia-based ADU holi-

days, said: "It will be interesting to see new casinos opening up in Queensland because Queensland has always been positioned as a more nature and wildlife type of destination."

"If the casinos are built like Singapore's integrated resorts, it will help to add to the appeal of Queensland, not just for the gaming fanatics but also the regular tourists," he said.

On the hotel forefront, Brisbane is also seeing a buzz on as the city readies to welcome five new hotels and some 600 new rooms prior to the G20 Leaders Summit 2014 in November, easing a room shortage that has hampered the city's tourism development in recent years.

According to Brisbane Marketing's latest guide on hotel investment, the city's room shortage is causing the market to defer an estimated 278,000 room nights every year – about 14 per cent of current demand – and an annual loss of about 121,000 visitors and A\$140 million (US\$131 million) in visitor expenditure.

However, a fresh injection of new hotels currently unfolding across Brisbane's hospitality scene will "help the city become a world-class destination with accommodation that will appeal to both business and leisure travellers", said John Aitken, CEO of Brisbane Marketing.

A view of the scenic Gold Coast flanked by high-rise buildings and the ocean at dusk

Destination in numbers

A\$28.9 billion

The record amount, equivalent to US\$26.8 billion, spent by international visitors last year, marking a six per cent rise from 2012.

6.6 million

The number of visitor arrivals for the year ending April 2014, an increase of 7.6 per cent from the previous year.

709,000

The number of visitors from China in 2013, a year-on-year increase of 14.5 per cent. China is now hailed as Australia's most valuable inbound tourism market.



Destination Australia

TRIED & TESTED

Great Barrier Reef



Paige Lee Pei Qi literally goes Down Under for a breathtaking view of the world's largest coral reef.

WHY Widely acclaimed as one of the world's natural seven wonders, this spot scores high on many bucket lists including mine. Promising a close encounter with the Great Barrier Reef's impressive coral gardens, I was ready to get in touch with the astounding underwater attraction.



WHAT Stretching over 2,300km and covering an area of approximately 344,400km², the Great Barrier Reef contains the world's largest collection of corals (in fact, more than 400 different kinds), coral sponges, molluscs, rays, dolphins, over 1,500 species of tropical fish, more than 200 types of birds, around 20 types of reptiles including sea turtles, and giant clams over 120 years old.

HOW Embarking on a day trip with Reef Magic Cruises, we kicked off our adventure in style by taking to the air in a helicopter for a bird's eye view of the sheer magnitude of the Great Barrier Reef. I simply couldn't take my eyes off the sparkling sapphire waters. It was surreal.

After the 10-minute ride, it was time to go under and despite having zero experience at diving, I was inspired to take up the introductory dive when they said: "If you can kick and have a heart beat, chances are you can dive, so give it a go because

it's an experience you will never forget!" I am glad I did. The dive, which lasted for about 30 minutes, included picking up some basic scuba skills and brought me into a grandiose escapade 5m deep.

Nevertheless, to ensure an underwater experience for those still gripped with fear, there was an option of a helmet dive which even keeps your hair dry as you walk through a guided trail and continue breathing normally in the water.

VERDICT To testify to the closeness of my encounters, my finger was bitten by one of the fishes as I tried my hand at feeding them – pun unintended. But that small scab was forgotten quickly as the majestic beauty under water engulfed all my senses.

My dream of escaping to a tropical island was transformed into reality. I remained dazzled by the rich abundance of marine life and colours in this unforgettable world even long after I surfaced from the water.

Name Great Barrier Reef
Rate A\$3.50 (US\$3.30) per person per day, or A\$1.75 for visitors spending less than three hours in the park; charges will be collected by the tourism operator who then transfers the collected funds to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Contact details
Website: www.gbrmpa.gov.au



Viewpoint

Is the hotel room supply in Brisbane deterring your travellers?



Bernard Chan, product manager, Misa Travel Singapore
"Brisbane is not exactly a top-of-mind destination in Australia for my travellers because they usually rather head to the Gold Coast and only use Brisbane as a stopover. But I am sure the new hotels and attractions coming up will help to boost the city's appeal."

Carter Lam, business development manager, ADU holidays Australia
"Definitely. Brisbane is particularly appealing to corporate clients, and they book in bulk. The same goes for the FITs too. We are now facing room shortages especially during peak seasons."



How to sell



SEE Experience extreme jet boating – 360-degree spins, high-speed drifting, power slides and exciting manoeuvres – through the glistening waterways of the Gold Coast with **Paradise Jetboating**. Power-packed with adrenaline, this 55-minute tour promises to take your breath away with its thrilling 35km ride along stunning coastal scenery.

EAT An early-morning wander around the **Capital Region Farmer's Market** is the perfect way for food enthusiasts to indulge in a discovery journey of the variety of regional produce available in Canberra. Held every Saturday morning, this local institution is the destination for foodies, offering fresh produce direct from local and regional growers and farmers. Visitors will find everything from seasonal fruits and vegetables to meat, seafood, cheeses, nuts, baked goods, biodynamic wine and pre-made food.

DO Take in the vibrant music, dance, legends and food of Australia's indigenous people at the **Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park**, a short drive away from Cairns. Learn to play the didgeridoo, discover the medicinal values of bush tucker, learn how to throw a spear and enjoy professional theatre incorporating traditional Aboriginal culture with dancing, fire making and storytelling.

STAY Have a go at glamping – or luxurious camping – in Australia's great outback. Situated at Yulara, close to the border of World Heritage-listed Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, **Longitude 131** is touted as one of the best luxury wilderness camps in the world. Let your guests enjoy five-star comfort and private views of Uluru (Ayers Rock) for an exclusive unique outback experience.

Poll on ttgasia.com

Queensland has plans for up to three mega casino resorts. Would these interest your clients?



NEWS IN A MINUTE



1 Élan Soho Suites
The 301-key Élan Soho Suites opened its doors in Darwin’s CBD in July, marking the launch of the Northern Territory’s newest home-grown hotel chain.
Offering one- and two-bedroom apartments, this modern 4.5-star property is Darwin’s first hotel to offer remote check-in facilities, allowing guests to check in via smartphones and using their devices as room keys throughout the duration of their stay.
The mezzanine level boasts a dedicated conference floor comprising

six event spaces that can accommodate up to 400 delegates. The hotel will also introduce Darwin’s inaugural Korean barbecue restaurant called Seoul Food.

2 New packages at Melbourne Star Observation Wheel
In collaboration with exclusive partner Peter Rowland Catering, Melbourne Star Observation Wheel has launched an innovative array of Star Experience Packages. Taking ‘dining with a view’ to a new dimension, all Star Experience Packages include exclusive use of a private cabin for up to a maximum of 14 guests, a selection of gourmet food and wine options, a personalised photo folder and a Peter Rowland host.

3 Taronga Western Plains Zoo
Taronga Western Plains Zoo, near Dubbo in New South Wales, has launched 10 luxurious African-style lodges at Zoofari Lodge. The new safari lodges feature African-inspired décor, king-size beds, double bath and private decks right on the edge of the zoo’s African Savannah, enabling guests to see roaming giraffes, elephants and zebras from the comfort of their accommodation.

4 Tigerair launches Brisbane-Cairns flights
Tigerair Australia has launched new daily return services between Bris-

bane and Cairns, reflecting growing confidence in the Far North Queensland tourism industry. The introduction of the service will provide a 30 per cent growth in Tigerair’s existing services to Cairns. Also launched in April were daily return services between Brisbane and Darwin.

5 Rue & Co pops up in Melbourne
Three culinary maestros have combined forces to create a new pop-up dining spot in Melbourne’s CBD. Opened in May on 80 Collins Street, Rue & Co allows diners to sample food from Jimmy Grants by *MasterChef Australia* host George Calombaris, Kong BBQ by Chris Lucas and St Ali by Salvatore Malatesta in a container-style venue.



MY WAY

John O’Sullivan
Managing director, Tourism Australia

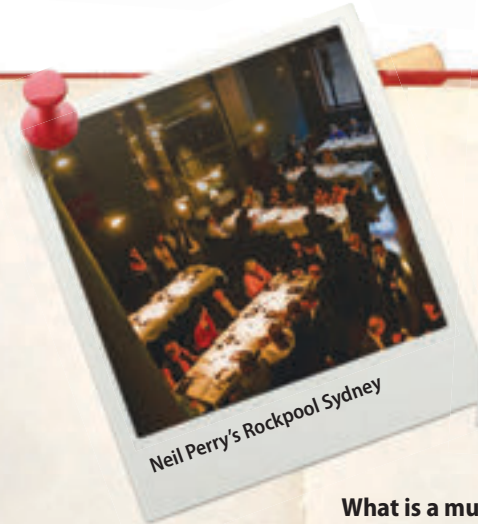
What do you do during your free time?
My free time is primarily consumed by my two daughters – Kate (8) and Sarah (5). This can range from standing on the sidelines of a club soccer game on Saturday and Sunday mornings to dropping off and picking them up at play dates, or my favourite pastime – taking them both to the movies and then to McDonald’s as a treat! Children are a great leveller, they care nothing for status or position and have the best timing in asking the most inappropriate questions at the most inappropriate times!

Can you share one particular favourite hobby?
Golf. Some of my fondest memories of my late father were of our lazy Sunday morning golf games together. Additionally, each year, three of my closest friends and I will head down to Barnbogle Dunes and Lost Farm in Tasmania for a three-day golfing extravaganza. The golf is rubbish, but the banter and catch-up is legendary. It is one of those hobbies with which I associate great memories and times over such an extended period of my life.

What is a must-eat in Australia?
A must-eat would be our incredible seafood. Barramundi is a particular favourite of mine, but it is all so fresh, accessible and magnificently prepared.

Which dining spots would you recommend?
For upmarket, you can’t go past any Neil Perry-owned establishment – he is a magician with fusions and always has a great wine list. His restaurants are in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. For a more low-key outing, nothing beats fish and chips on one of our great beaches. Sunshine Beach in Queensland is a particular favourite of mine.

Which one attraction in Australia is often missed?
Australian Football League (AFL). If you like sport and want to be part of a quintessential Australian experience, a game of AFL in Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane or the Gold Coast is my recommendation. Much like the English Premier League, this is the sport’s best talent playing at some of the world’s most iconic sporting stadiums in front of the most passionate of fans. It should be a must-do for any international visitor during the Australian winter.



Destination **Indonesia**

Agencies are seeing more demand for Bali's natural and cultural attractions, such as the Jatiluwih rice terraces

Destination in numbers

1,380,360

The number of international arrivals to Bali from January-May, representing a 15.2 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2013, according to Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy.

7,825

The total number of hotel rooms in Bali expected to enter the market in 2015 and 2016, according to Horwath HTL.

66%

The average occupancy of star-rated hotels in Bali in 1H2014, representing a 6.5 per cent increase over the same period in 2013, according to STR Global.

GOING BACK TO THE BASICS

Tour operators and hoteliers in Bali and the neighbouring destinations are trying to bring traditional elements back into tours and stays to meet travellers' growing demand for authentic experiences.

Ni Ketut Ariati, assistant executive manager, Golden Kris Tours, said: "Many travellers, especially the Europeans, are looking for an authentic Balinese experience and there is a growing interest not only in village visits but also in village stays."

The company offers a one- or two-night homestay as part of an itinerary for first-hand experience of the locals' daily life and culture.

Paul Edmundus Talo, managing director, Floressa Bali Tours, said: "There are many activities in Bali we can offer travellers to enhance their travel experience, such as through participation in the locals' daily activities."

"There is minimal disruption to the life of the locals as these are activities they en-

gage in day to day anyway."

Floressa early this year introduced a tour to Tigawasa village in North Bali. A chartered *bemo* (mini public bus) takes tourists around the village to meet the farmers at work and participate in traditional palm tapping, coffee growing, and palm sugar making. The villagers also cook and serve local dishes to the tourists for lunch.

"The response for the tour has been good, especially from our US market. We conduct it every week," said Talo.

The company last year also launched a bird-watching tour in West Bali.

"This is a niche product catering for small groups, and we have had two groups so far. It takes time to develop, but if there are more travel companies doing what we are doing, the market can grow faster," added Talo.

While this tour showcases that Bali still has natural habitats for birds despite massive modern developments, at the same time it is expected to encourage the locals to practise sustainable tourism.

Efforts to keep Bali's authenticity alive

and felt by travellers are to some extent made by hoteliers on the island as well.

Conrad Bali, for example, is working with farmers and artists to bring Bali produce and artistic products to the property.

General manager, Jean-Sebastien Kling, said: "A lot of travellers value the local culture. Apart from the cultural activities and performances in the resort, we have introduced a calendar of artistic events, inviting Balinese artists to exhibit their creations here to show that the Balinese culture and art are still very much alive despite the developments on the island."

The hotel has also been working with farmers in Bedugul and other areas where traditional Balinese produce are cultivated and brought to the plates for guests.

For example, it offers Bali-made chocolate as well as a tour to the chocolate farm and factory.

The hotel's chef also visits the farms, meet the farmers and talk to the villagers. As such, there are stories behind and around the local produce, which the chef recounts to the staff.

"There is an educational process in-

involved. Many of the staff have also been to the farms, tasted the produce, become passionate about it and passed on their passion to the guests.

"The staff can tell stories, such as where the tomatoes and herbs come from, to guests," he said, adding that the hotel will continue to explore new supply channels and reflect them in the menus.

Meanwhile, other hotels, such as Ayana Resort and Spa and Nusa Dua Beach Hotel, have their own traditional herb gardens, as well as rare and common Indonesian fruit trees which staff can showcase and talk to guests about.

Such information and experiential visits do not only attract longhaul travellers, but also Asian and even Indonesian domestic travellers, according to tour operators and hoteliers.

In fact, such product requests are growing not only for Bali but its neighbouring destinations like Labuan Bajo, Ende and Maumere as well, brought about by improved accessibility between Bali and these destinations.

Incito Tour, for example, has seen a growing demand for special interest tours to Komodo and Flores.

Managing director Sebastian Ng said: "We have been combining volcano climbing, village stays and a Komodo trip for some time, but it is only recently that we see more demand for such tours."

Another operator, Plataran Komodo Cruise, has created a package for incentive groups, combining a trip to Komodo Island with, a visit to a traditional kampung in Labuan Bajo, as well as participation in local activities such as claypot and herbal drink making, among others.

Better access is enabling Bali to share tourist numbers with its neighbours like Komodo and Flores, catering to guests who are eager for experiential tours, writes **Mimi Hudoyo**

Viewpoint

Bali wants to diversify its offerings beyond nature and culture to include sporting events and creative industries. What do you think of that?



Umberto Cadamuro, COO, inbound, Pacto

"We need to look at market sources. For the Europeans and US travellers, Bali will always be a cultural destination. Sporting events and creative industries might well appeal to the Asian and Australian travellers.

However, we must remember that for sporting events you need the necessary infrastructure to be in place first. Bali has the potential for any type of sports, therefore the infrastructure should be multifunctional, suitable for tennis, football, basketball, and so on. The island actually has the infrastructure for top golf events – what it needs to do is generate top events."

Renato Domini, managing director, Asia World Indonesia

"Bali already has a great variety of products, from nature, culture and adventure to historic sites, nice restaurants, as well as the hip lifestyle in Seminyak. What it needs to do is improve existing products, such as the museums.

We need to enhance travellers' experiences. Today, Bali is struggling with the lack of infrastructure. Travellers spend so much time on the road getting from one place to another.

Instead of spending millions of dollars building a stadium, I would suggest building infrastructure that will support the island not only for five years but for 25 years to come."



How to sell

DO Drive to Gianyar and visit **Bali Safari & Marine Park**, home to more than 60 different species of animals.

Take a close look at the nocturnal animals in the wild at Walking Safari; watch the tigers hunt for their meal at Night Safari; get up close and personal with the animals at Animal Encounters; watch a fire dance, drumming performance and puppet show *Afrika! Rhythm of Fire*; and enjoy a barbeque dinner at Nkuchiro Bar.

The climax of the new Night Safari is a ride on a specially designed caged tram with a capacity for 12 guests, who will journey through the African Savannah, close to wild animals, and learn some facts from the expert keepers. Activities include hand-feeding zebras, elephants and giraffes, and watching the lions and tigers hunt.



Bali Safari & Marine Park

Enjoy Indonesian dishes, superb seafood and international cuisines at the open-air Xanadu Restaurant & Bar. Poolside dining is available on request. Stroll through the resort's garden, engage in water sports or simply relax at the outdoor pool which overlooks Wae Cicu Beach. Complimentary speedboat shuttle service to Labuan Bajo Harbor is available.

with wild mushrooms, roast suckling pig and dim sum.

The restaurant opens for lunch and dinner, and seats 100 pax. Its private dining room Ci Xi Suite seats 48.

SEE Watch **Devdan – Treasure of the Archipelago**

which runs on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Bali Nusa Dua Theatre.

It is a contemporary acrobatic and dance performance inspired by the culture of Indonesia.

The 90-minute show takes the audience on a journey from Bali to Sumatra, Java, Borneo and Papua. The show is performed on a purpose-built stage with special effects of lighting, sound, fire, fog, and even rain.

STAY **Plataran Komodo Resort**

is located on a secluded part of Wae Cicu Beach in Flores Island. It can be reached in 15 minutes by boat from the main town of Labuan Bajo, a small fishing community that offers a variety of trekking and underwater activities to tourists. It offers eight villas.

EAT The Mulia, in Nusa Dua, Bali, has launched its signature restaurant, **Table8** – a Chinese restaurant serving authentic Cantonese and Szechuan delicacies, home-inspired cuisines and imported varieties of premium tea from China.

Highlights include Australian five-head whole abalone braised

MY WAY

Jean-Charles Le Coz

General manager, Grand Nikko Bali

How do you spend your day off in Bali?

I spend time with family by watching movies together, going to restaurants or to the beach...or just doing nothing together at home.

What is your favourite local food and where do you go for the most authentic version?

Ayam betutu (Balinese steamed or roast chicken). There are not many places left serving this dish in Nusa Dua. It can be found in Warung Karyadi. Denpasar has more options.

Where would you suggest your guests go for a Balinese village experience?

I would suggest Bedulu in Gianyar, an old village where the Bedulu Kingdom was. Travellers can do a day visit to learn about the traditional culture and way of life. Bedulu is also known for its archaeological remains. Travellers can also enjoy a homestay there.

What are things travellers must not forget to bring when travelling in Bali?

Drinking water, sunscreen, a camera, patience and a sense of humour.

Where would you suggest guests go if they want to spend a night outside Bali?

I would suggest Malang, East Java. It is close to Bali, and there is a daily flight taking only about 45 minutes. Malang and its neighbouring town Batu are still not too industrialised and touristy. There are a number of agro-tourism sites, and activities such as apple and strawberry picking.

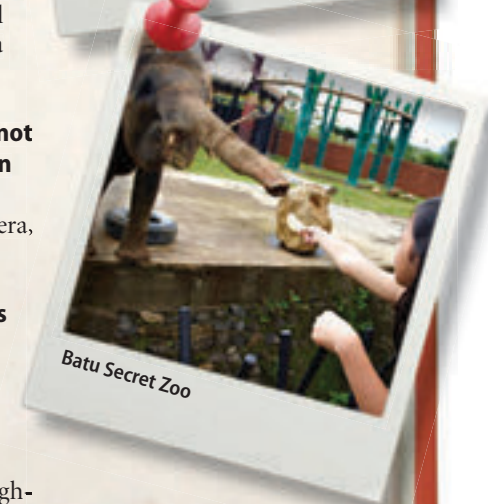
Jatim Park 2, a 15ha theme park with the Batu Secret Zoo and Animal Museum, is also quite interesting.



Bedulu's elephant cave temple



Sanur Beach



Batu Secret Zoo

Destination Indonesia

TRIED & TESTED

The Westin Resort Nusa Dua

Mimi Hudoyo checks out the resort, which has undergone a multi-million-dollar transformation end-2013 with the addition of a new wing, restaurant and spa.

LOCATION The 433-key resort is within the Nusa Dua enclave of upmarket accommodation, on the white sandy beach of the island's southern coast.

ROOMS I stayed in a Premium room in the new wing. Among the 99 Premium rooms and suites, there are 41 rooms with two double beds. Apart from a king-sized Westin Heavenly Bed, the room has a walk-in wardrobe and a spacious bathroom with a separate shower, a bathtub and a dressing table. I enjoyed my late-night soak in the deep bathtub. The rain shower worked well but the floor was a little slippery.

I liked the large, built-in workspace with easy access to the multimedia hub offering an iPod/iPhone/iPad connectiv-

ity port and high-speed Internet access, which unfortunately, is chargeable. I also liked the balcony with an ergonomic chair, a footrest and a side table, where I enjoyed my early morning coffee.

F&B Prego is the latest addition to the resort's F&B outlets, having opened end-2013. Serving Italian cuisine, Prego Family Brunch is available every Sunday from 11.30 to 15.00. Young guests are pampered with a dedicated area including a private buffet, outdoor playground and activities like cupcake decorating, a photo session with Pipo The Squirrel and PlayStation games. For adults, Prego is also a place to enjoy coffee, desserts and a glass of wine.

I also sampled Indian, Japanese and Balinese cuisines from the resort's other F&B outlets at a banquet – they were delicious.

FACILITIES The hotel has a new, sprawling spa facility, the first Heavenly Spa by



Westin in Indonesia. I had a superb one-hour massage, enjoying the steam room, Himalayan salt-sauna and a warm shower before my treatment.

The new wing has its own swimming pool and a living room for early-arrival and late-departure guests.

SERVICE I have visited and stayed in this hotel several times, and its service has never failed me. The staff are friendly and helpful. The room service, pressing and buggy order came quickly although the resort was running a very high occupancy,

and the staff never forgot to smile.

VERDICT A great choice for leisure and MICE, the resort has managed to retain its personalised service post-refurbishment.

Name The Westin Resort Nusa Dua, Bali
No. of rooms 433
Rate From US\$460
Contact details
Tel: (62) 361-771-906
Email: meetings.bicc@westin.com
Website: www.westinresortnusaadubali.com



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Poll on ttgasia.com

Indonesia wants to promote destinations beyond Bali such as Flores and Komodo. What in your opinion do these islands need most?

Better access **41%**Improved accommodation **35%**More promotions internationally **24%****NEWS IN A MINUTE****1 Second Courtyard by Marriott for Bali launched**

Courtyard by Marriott Bali Seminyak has opened this month with 290 rooms and suites, marking the second property of this brand in Bali after Courtyard Bali Nusa Dua.

Located in the famous dining, shopping and entertainment area of Seminyak, the five-star property offers a 308m² meeting space with three function rooms and breakout space near the pool.

Wi-Fi facilities are available

throughout the hotel and inside the rooms for free.

2 Touring Bali with a remodelled VW Kombi limousine

A vintage 1980 Brazilian VW Kombi has been remodelled to become a limousine that can accommodate up to five people comfortably.

The engine, suspension, and steering and braking systems have been rebuilt for comfort and safety.

The interior is an L-shaped space fitted with Isuzu twin compressor

air-conditioning, Wi-Fi, a motorised mini bar, a 1,000-watt speaker sound system, hundreds of music albums, and adaptors for charging various types of mobile phones and tablets.

The limousine is available for day or night hire complete with a driver and concierge. Together with the guests, the concierge can help to create itineraries, book restaurants etc. The charge is US\$150 for eight hours.

The first of five, VW Limo Bali owner, Brett Morgan, said by early next year he would have a fleet to cater for small MICE groups.

There is a ballroom which can seat 700 theatre style or 350 banquet style. The ballroom can be divided into three smaller rooms with capacity from 120 seats to 400 theatre style. There are also six other breakout rooms that can accommodate 50 to 120 people.

4 Garuda Indonesia links up more domestic destinations

In a bid to link the main cities with tier 2 and 3 destinations, Garuda Indonesia recently launched daily services from its Makassar hub to Luwuk (Central Sulawesi), Bima (Sumbawa) and Mamuju (South Sulawesi) with its turboprop ATR 72-600.

The airline had earlier also opened its hub-bypass routes of Medan-Surabaya, Palembang-Denpasar, Makassar-Jogjakarta, Surabaya-Ambon, Denpasar-Banyuwangi (East Java)-Surabaya with Bombardier CRJ-1000 NextGen aircraft.

It has also identified Jakarta, Denpasar, Surabaya, Balikpapan, Medan and Makassar as its hubs from which to develop its network.

3 DoubleTree by Hilton arrives in Jakarta

Hilton Worldwide launched its first DoubleTree brand in Indonesia with the recent opening of DoubleTree by Hilton Jakarta – Diponegoro in Cikini, central Jakarta.

The new hotel has 253 rooms including executive rooms and 11 suites, three dining outlets, an outdoor swimming pool with a kid's pool, and 24-hour business and fitness centres.



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ICYMI: Tune in to what's been going on at ttgasia.com and the social media space. Plus, we end off on a light-hearted note

WHO'S SAYING WHAT

Instagram



Who's 40, fun and fabulous? Yes, TTG Asia hits the big four-oh! Our readers are a great part of the #TTGAsia story – thank you for joining us on our journey, and here's to many more years of delivering you incisive travel trade news! #TGIF #TTGAsia #TTG #TTG40tude



#PATA Singapore Chapter hosted an inaugural #dragonboat race together with Contiki for the #PATAYippies to come together for a splashing good time yesterday! #KallangRiver #PaddleHard #FriendlyCompetition



Sailing away on Oceania Cruises' Riviera ship as part of a 7D Athens-Istanbul fam trip! From her balcony, Gracia is enjoying the view of Kusadasi, from where one can visit the ancient ruins of Ephesus. Oceania is a US-based upscale cruise line.



If you're not here yet at #TTG-FunRun, you're late you're late you're late! All your favourite characters from Alice in Wonderland are here and guess who's playing the Mad Hatter tonight? #TTG40tude

Tweets

TTG ASIA CELEBRATED ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY WITH THE LAUNCH OF A COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE TWO WEEKS AGO. MUCH LOVE TO ALL OUR FRIENDS WHO SENT THEIR GREETINGS!

@KhiriTravel
@TTG_Asia Congratulations on your 40th #anniversary guys! Cheers to another 40!

@paulinesuharno
@TTG_Asia turns 40 today! Thanks 4 all the knowledge. Glad to be part of the special edition!

@TTG_Asia
Photos from last week's #TTGFunRun are now up at facebook.com/ttgasia! Come tag yourself and your friends! #TTG40tude

Most commented

ICAO TACKLES LACK OF COMPREHENSIVE THREAT INFORMATION IN AVIATION

"(I am) pretty sure Malaysian Airlines (received) relevant information from codeshare partner KLM. KLM collects info from informants, the Royal Dutch Embassies, etc, to decide whether flying over a particular warzone is safe. After the crash, KLM quickly announced relatives should only contact Malaysian Airlines to obtain info about passengers. In a country where surface-to-air missiles are present, not one civilian airline should take the risk flying over. That intelligence was known. British Airways avoided Ukrainian airspace, why not KLM and Malaysian Airlines?" – Hans Holmren, Bangkok

INDIA PROMISES E-VISAS FOR 40 COUNTRIES BY DECEMBER

"Will these countries give Indians visa on arrival or e-visa? Visa arrangements are always reciprocal." – Shaikh Rahmatullah, Mumbai



TRAVEL CONSORTIUM IN THE PHILIPPINES TARGETS PINK MARKET

"LGBT here in Las Vegas is very active. No discrimination whatsoever!" – Belen Escoto, Henderson, Nevada

TRAVEL PURSUITS

QUIZ

1. What are Alpen, Noevir, Octave, Rakuten establishing in Japan?
2. Which country has just had sites entered on UNESCO's World Heritage list?
3. Which is the odd one out – Brunei, Kalimantan, Sabah, Sarawak?
4. Outside Asia: Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways has agreed to buy part of which airline in Europe?
5. History: Who were the original travel agency companies that made up CWT?

(1) The four are investor partners in AirAsia Japan, planned to start domestic and international flights from summer 2015. (2) Myanmar. The so-called Pw Ancient Cities – Hali, Bakhano, S'ksetra – in the north. (3) All four are on the island of Borneo, but only Brunei is an independent country. Kalimantan is part of Indonesia. Sabah and Sarawak are part of Malaysia. (4) All-Asia CWT is Carlson Wagonlit Travel. The original name of the Carlson part was Ask Mr Foster Travel. The Wagonlit name came from Wagons-Lits, a mainly rail operator that was bought by the Accor hotel group. Accor's 50 per cent share was sold to Carlson in 2006.

LETALITE

A light-hearted section where we take a word, alter it by adding, cutting, or changing just one letter – and giving it a new definition:

Chilippine. Cool out on this Manila-based airline.

Chilippine. Hot food served on Manila-based airline.

Dubair. New airline based in Gulf emirate.

Stile. New upmarket subsidiary of Thai Airways International.

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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.



25th July 2014, Friday Gardens By The Bay

TTG Asia Media celebrated its 40th anniversary with close to 400 travel trade professionals coming together for an eventful fun run. From the get-go, the Gardens By The Bay came alive with the zealous energy of runners. The excitement was infectious, with every moment a highlight, from the fancy dressed, the fringe activities and groovy warm-up workout, to the all-out flag off, generous networking fare, and attractive lucky draw prizes & goodie bags. Everyone had a memorable evening steeped in camaraderie, that is extremely fitting of a well-loved brand that has stood at the heart of the industry for the last 40 years, and will continue to do so for many more years to come.



▲ In support of Gift of Gardens, a CSR initiative of Gardens By The Bay, TTG Asia Media delivers a cheque with proceeds collected from the fun run!

Run in Wonderland

Co-organised by



▲ Darren Ng (left) and Michael Chow (right) of TTG Asia Media with co-organisr Alloysius Teng of Gardens By the Bay



▲ All smiles from team Hertz Asia-Pacific.



▲ One of our generous sponsors, dynamic team Brand USA.



▲ Team Oakwood Asia all decked in unity.



▲ Team TTG all dressed up, transforming into characters from Tim Burton's Alice In Wonderland film, to welcome all our fun run participants!



▲ The Gardens By The Bay Team, our co-organisr and venue host, joined by TTG Asia Media's Darren Ng as the Mad Hatter and Michael Chow as the Noble Knight.



▲ Hands up in the air! All excited about the flag-off led by Ms Peggy Chong of Gardens By The Bay together with Mr Darren Ng and Mr Michael Chow of TTG Asia Media.



▲ Spotted running pillows! Team Ibis Singapore, with their adorable and bubbly mascots!



▲ Jumping for joy as Team Mandarin Orchard lit up the event with their energy and pretty balloons.



▲ Royal Plaza on Scotts gets our vote as best dressed team of this event!



▲ Hong Thai Travel and other trade partners with TTG Asia Media's Darren Ng.

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SCAN HERE
for more pictures from
Run in Wonderland

or see more at #TTGFunRun and #TTG40tude at these platforms:



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