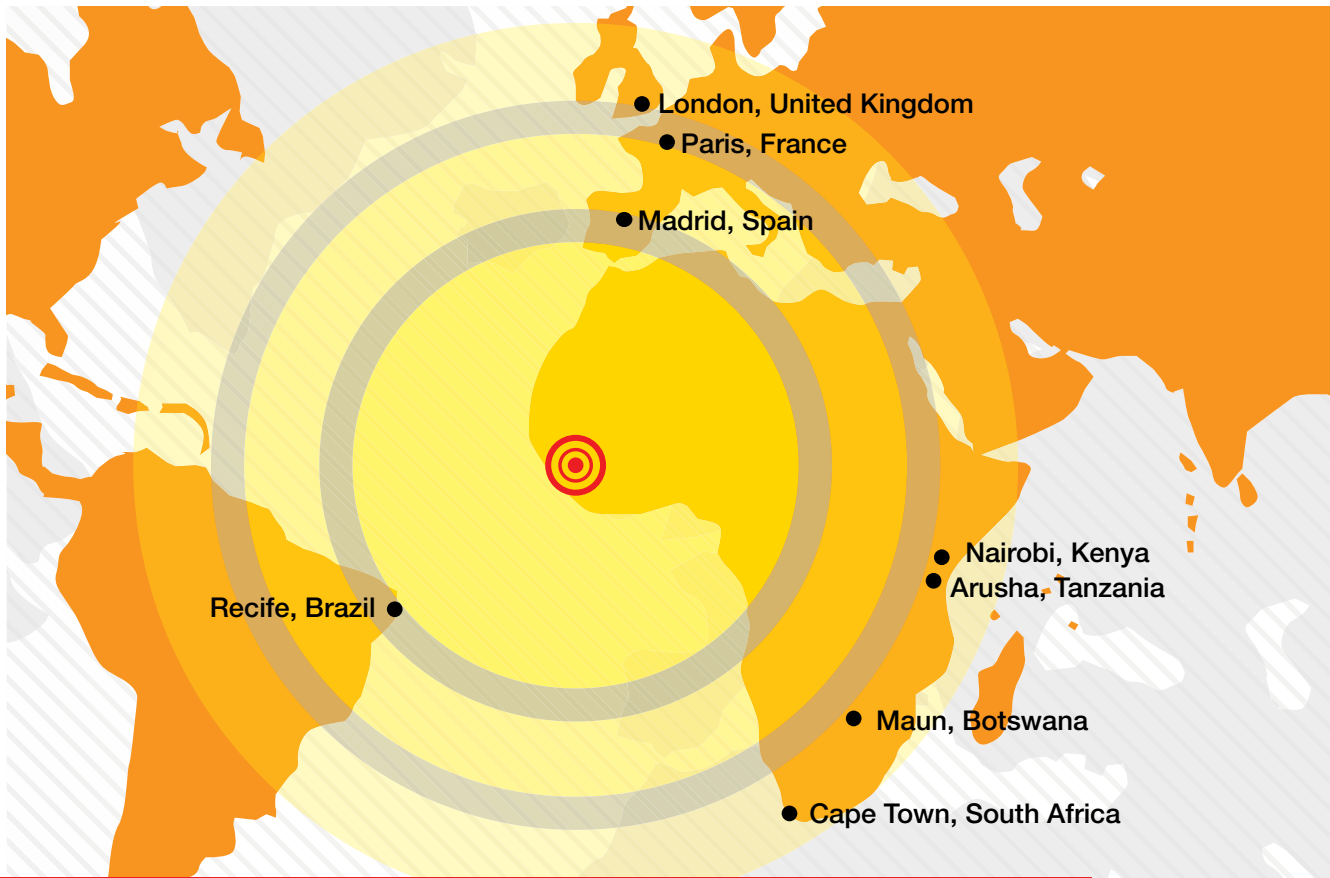




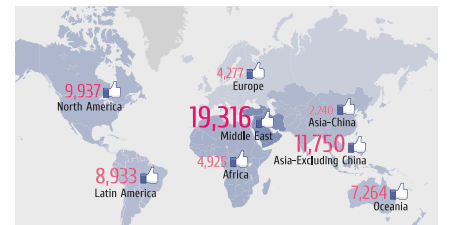
40tude
Forty Years, As Strong As Ever

Hotels are disrupting HR practices in a bid to attract Millennials, which are not a homogenous group



DO YOU KNOW EBOLA WELL?

Europe is closer to the outbreak than other parts of Africa, but many tourists are still unaware



LUXURY TRAVELLERS & SOCIAL MEDIA

Asians are leaders in writing luxury hotel reviews, but how do the markets compare? We pick the salient points of an ILTM Asia/Brand Karma survey



VALUE FOR MONEY

P2P accommodation booking sites are gaining traction in the region – and it's not just with budget travellers



BEYOND THE CAPITAL

A jumping-off point for exploring places like Ninh Binh (above), Hanoi has to first sort out its accessibility issues



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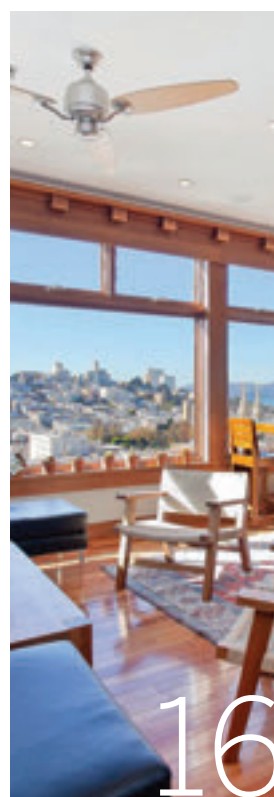
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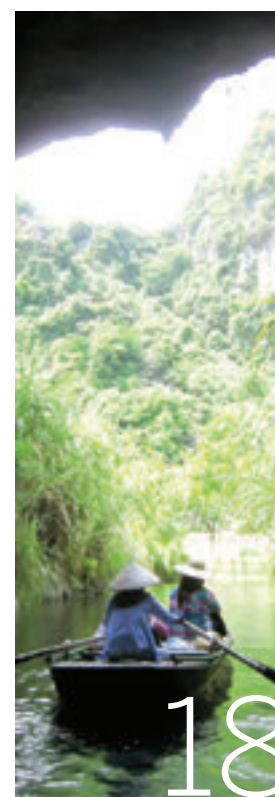
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Travel distribution businesses compete on either intimacy or efficiency, says Qunar's CC Zhuang. Which would you pick?

ARE YOU EFFICIENT OR INTIMATE?

There were a few things that stood out for me at the recently concluded ITB Asia.

Disruption is a tidal wave sweeping across the industry, and Amadeus' Asia-Pacific president Angel Gallego hit the nail on the head at the *TTG Asia* Conference when he surmised that there is still "a lot of disbelief" among the trade over this.

Case in point: there were gasps in the room at the Web in Travel conference as Qunar's CEO and co-founder CC Zhuang painted a picture of how the once metasearch company is expanding aggressively into new areas such as revenue management. Emphasising how there were too many layers in the current travel distribution landscape (e.g. GDS, OTAs, search engines, etc), he went on to declare that he was asking suppliers to cut commissions in order to put inefficient players out of business.

Models, it seems, don't matter that much these days. As we reported in *TTG-ITB Asia Daily*, October 30, 2014, metasearch engines are encroaching on OTA territory, evidenced in their pursuit of direct relationships with suppliers and what is now called facilitated or assisted bookings, where consumers can complete bookings on their sites. Zhuang himself rubbished the pigeonholing of Qunar as a metasearch or an OTA.

And then you have the sharing economy, with peer-to-peer accommodation providers such as Airbnb fighting for consumers too (see pages 16-17).

Another change that the trade has to confront is the period of consolidation that's taking place within Asia's fragmented travel industry, mirroring what occurred in the West years ago. So on one hand you have disintermediation, and on the other, consolidation. What's a travel agency or tour operator to do?

Commenting on JTB Group's purchase of six Tour East offices in the region, Diethelm Travel incoming CEO, Maarten Groeneveld, said: "In our view consolidation is good – it gives room for more specialised agencies to grow in niche markets where large corporations cannot deliver."

I firmly believe that a plethora of opportunities still exists for the travel trade, but they must be recognised fast, and now's the time to take the bull by the horns.

I liked that Zhuang was honest enough to admit that not every company needs to emulate his own. Travel distribution businesses, he said, compete on either intimacy or efficiency. As an "engineering company", Qunar chose the latter. What about you?

Gracia Chiang

Deputy Group Editor

gracia.chiang@ttgasia.com

twitter.com/graciachiang

COMING UP

WE'RE SORRY

In last issue's *Putting the house in order* analysis, we wrongly attributed the following quote to Tour East group vice president of sales and marketing, Judy Lum: "Demand for luxury boutique hotels is limited to the West European market, and mainly FIT traffic. Due to the small size of this market and their low inventory, the quantitative impact is negligible." This was actually by Jaclyn Yeoh, managing director, Siam Express.

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DECEMBER 12,
2014

PEOPLE TO WATCH Movers and shakers who have caught our attention

PLACES TO WATCH Top five destinations that will be hot for Asian travellers

DESTINATION HIGHLIGHTS What did countries find most challenging in 2014 and what are they looking forward to in 2015?

HOW WE CAN DO BETTER Travel agency bosses around the region share their business and personal resolutions

Analysis

FIGHTING EBOLA'S FALLOUT

Despite their locations thousands of kilometres away from the Ebola epicentre, tourism in other parts of Africa are reporting fallouts from the outbreak.

Interviewed at ITB Asia, Damian Sadie, general manager, Rovos Rail South Africa, said the train is losing about US\$100,000 a week in the last two months as a result of cancellations, which are mostly coming from the US, China and Japan. His company has been trying to educate the markets about the disease and the geography of Africa.

Sadie said: "We have also issued a new cancellation policy where we waive any cancellation fees for travellers from these three countries should they cancel their booking because of a World Health Organization-confirmed Ebola case found in the area."

Expressing his bewilderment over the cancellations, he added: "It is very strange because travellers taking our (luxury rail) tours are global, well-informed travellers who have been to so many countries."

"It is also strange that we received cancellations from Texas when there are cases in their backyard in Dallas and Houston."

Likewise, Constance Hotels and Resorts marketing coordinator, Emily Li, shared that the group lost significant business and postponement requests from China at its Mauritius properties since the Ebola outbreak.

"I think it is the lack of awareness of Mauritius' position in Africa that travellers are afraid to go," said Li, adding that the hotel group is working with tour operators to educate clients on the real situation.

Meanwhile, Patrick Debus, permanent secretary at World Federation of Consuls, said the association has shifted one of its annual conferences, originally planned for Nigeria next year, to South Africa.

World Travel & Tourism Council president & CEO, David Scowsill, said: "The right reaction is the US, the UK and Scandinavian countries sending in medical personnel into the affected countries; the consumer reaction is what we need to (tackle). There is already a shortfall of people going to Africa from the US and Europe."

"They don't understand the geography of the continent – the affected parts of Africa are closer to London than Kenya, for example. They are cancelling holidays very unnecessarily."

Some destinations in Africa, however, claimed they are not feeling the impact of Ebola. Twiga Tours in Kenya managed to contain the damage through preventive actions, said sales and marketing director, Rahim Manji.

"We realise many travellers are lacking in geographical knowledge so as soon as there was the outbreak, (the government and trade associations) in Kenya sent out

Geographical misunderstanding is scarier than Ebola, opines trade. **Mimi Hudoyo** looks at its impact on travel to Africa

Do you know
the true size of

AFRICA?

Clue: it's much bigger than you think!

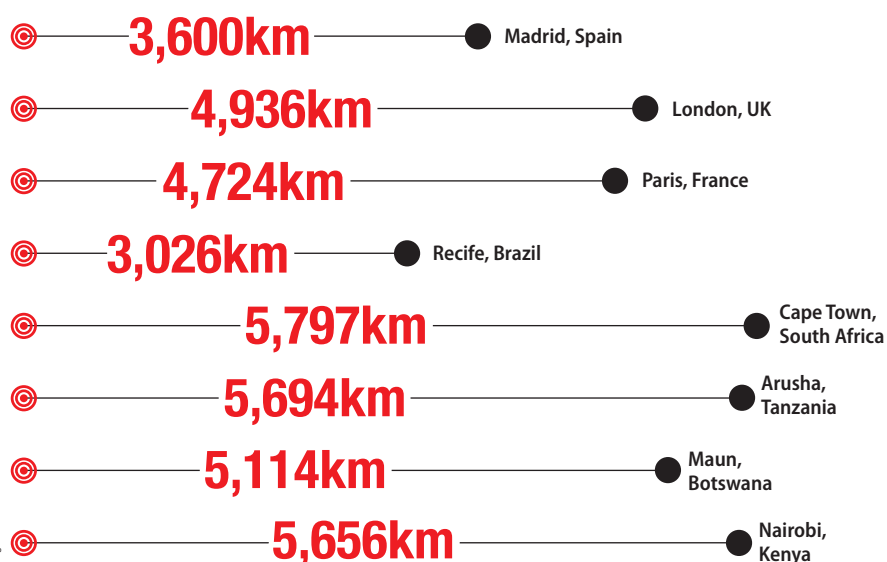
1. **Africa is larger** than the US, China, India, Europe and Japan combined.
2. Africa is not one country but consists of **54 independent nations**.
3. All African nations have **strict customs controls**. Most have restricted entry to travellers that have visited affected West African countries.
4. The main **safari destinations** are in **South and East Africa**, farther away from West Africa than Europe and South America
5. There have been **no cases of Ebola in South and East Africa**. This includes South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya.

information on the disease, the affected areas, number of cases and where we are," he said.

For another player, Le Voyageur, its location on Madagascar, an island on its own, has cushioned it from cancellations, according to managing director, Michael Horn.

Even though Japan is one of the countries that has issued a travel advisory to the affected areas in West Africa, Koichi Anju, sales strategy adviser, H.I.S Japan, also said he did not see any cancellations. His company continues to sell destinations in Africa untouched by the epidemic. – **Additional reporting by Paige Lee Pei Qi**

WHO is really closer to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa? The actual distances...



EUROPE is **much closer** to West Africa than South and East Africa!

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Analysis

Raini Hamdi looks at how hotel companies are disrupting the HR system in a bid to attract Millennials

GM EXPRESS LANE

Legacy human resource practices of hotel companies are starting to unravel in the hot competition for manpower, 75 per cent of whom globally will be Millennials by 2025.

The two factors that pull Asian Millennials to work in industry sectors including hotels, travel agencies and airlines are career progression (49 per cent) and strong company reputation (26 per cent), according to a Singapore Tourism Board (STB)-commissioned released at the Asia Travel Leaders Summit (ATLS), an anchor event of TravelRave recently.

Alas, the survey reflects the industry is unable to retain Millennials: Only 39 per cent said they are likely to stay put for the next three years. Only 54 per cent are satisfied with career progression prospects. Not even half (45 per cent) believe they are paid a competitive wage.

Asked if the industry must be disruptive about their HR practices to attract and retain talent, Neeta Lachmandas, STB's assistant chief executive, said: "I don't think we have a choice but to be disruptive."

She said this won't happen overnight as "we have a complex industry that is very structured and it's hard to move away from the structure", but "at least the conversations have started on the ATLS platform and we're learning".

In the hotel sector where talent shortage is particularly dire as a result of a boom in construction in AMEA, disruption is happening. Previously, for example, it would take on average 17 years – a lifetime to Millennials – to rise to the position of a hotel general manager, but this is being rapidly flattened.

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Asia-Pacific president, Stephen Ho, said: "We had a Millennial saying (during ATLS this year) that she wants to be a GM in five years. I say, that's not impossible."

He added: "We are competing with various industries for talent. Starwood is seeing people move to, say, an OTA or a digital company, whereas previously they would stay within hospitality."

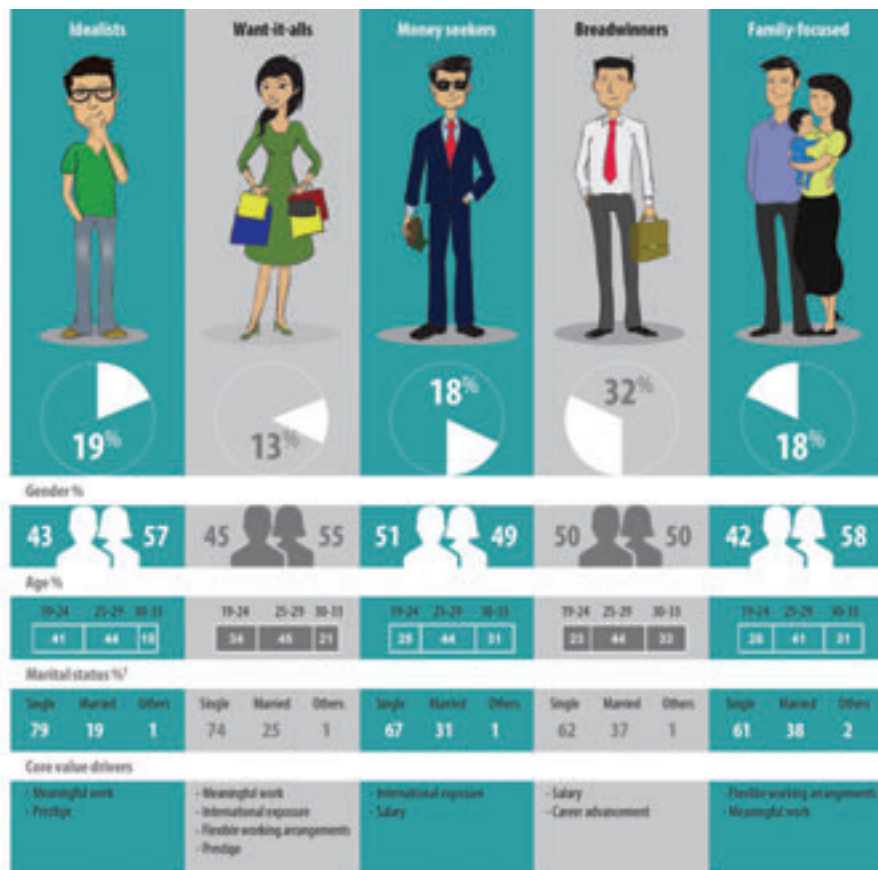
Starwood has China to thank for in helping it shape new thinking on hiring and retaining. Ho recalled the early 80s when the chain had a huge pipeline in China and started grooming local talent.

Today it has many GMs in their early 30s, particularly in China and India.

Said Ho: "When we recruit, we give people a career plan. That has helped us keep attrition to under 25-30 per cent. We create role models for Millennials out of successful people. We were the first hotel company to export a mainland Chinese GM back in the early 80s to Malaysia and Fiji – in those days it was not easy; an owner would query why he hired, say, Starwood's Sheraton, only to get a GM from mainland China. It's because we want to expose him to a global platform and bring him back to China and that person now is our head of China."

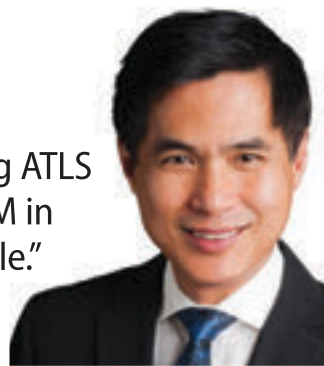
Ho's next aim is to increase the number of female leaders, thereby expanding the pool of talent. Globally, 18 per cent of Starwood leaders are female. "We can raise

NOT A HOMOGENEOUS GROUP Five distinct Millennial segments



"We had a Millennial saying (during ATLS this year) that she wants to be a GM in five years. I say, that's not impossible."

Stephen Ho
President Asia-Pacific, Starwood Hotels & Resorts



the bar to 30 per cent. Females tend to have more responsibility to look after the kids and family; we are prepared to give them a sabbatical if they need it; we have different programmes," said Ho.

Starwood's competitor, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), has started a programme to groom young Asians to become GMs of Holiday Inn Express within maximum three years, and five years for its full service brand Holiday Inn.

IHG's senior vice development-AMEA, Clarence Tan, also noted that Asian owners have had a change of heart. Whereas previously they bank on an international chain to bring in an experienced Western GM to run their hotel, owners today are no longer averse to hiring local GMs without 20 years' experience and in fact want to see chains promote local talent, said Tan. "We're proud to say all our GMs of Holiday Inn Express in Thailand and Indonesia are locals," he added.

Marc Steinmeyer, president director/founder, Tauzia Hotel Management,

however, cautioned it isn't just about a straightline career progression anymore but giving Millennials who want to "learn faster" the chance to do so.

"But we as an industry are still conservative," said Steinmeyer. "We are vertical rather than horizontal about career progression. We must disrupt the system; if we don't, it will disrupt us."

"Once a year, for example, I give people the opportunity to change their job within the organisation, even if this means I have to take some risk. This way, we also help people to recognise there are many ways to develop a career in hospitality and the GM post is not the be all and end all."

Jumeirah Group president and CEO, Gerald Lawless, in an email interview, agreed, saying: "There are many disciplines to pursue within our business, such as human resources, sales and marketing, information technology, development or indeed hospitality operations." Jumeirah has introduced programmes for school-leavers to come into the business and join

a six-month foundation course which enables them to decide which part of hospitality they might be attracted to. "This programme has been particularly successful in attracting young Emiratis to join us directly from school," said Lawless.

"We also have a graduate management scheme in place whereby we have normal and fast-track programmes to take people to the level of GM in less than 10 years from having graduated from university," he added.

More chains are also launching 'life-style' brands aimed at Millennials who will be their biggest customers in 10 years, but also to attract Millennials to work in them. Said Thorsten Kirschke, president Asia-Pacific, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group: "The recent launch of our newest brand Radisson Red in Asia-Pacific has also opened up an opportunity to attract the Millennial-minded talent (the first Radisson Red will open in Shenyang, China in early 2016). Radisson Red is targeted at the Millennial-minded who seeks out a non-traditional guest experience which is focused on design, technology, personal choice and interaction. To deliver this experience, we will need a different team profile who understands the guests' mindset and needs. This potentially translates into career opportunities for not only Millennials but those with the same mindset."

Kirschke looks at Millennials as a mindset, stressing that in the end, it's still about ability and performance – not age.

"In hiring, we try to match not only skills but the natural vocational inclination of candidates to job positions. For example, we have hired several Millennials who are savvy in digital and social marketing to roll out global social media campaigns, an area that they have shown great affinity with and which allows them to excel naturally," he said.

With the right match, Carlson then unfurls other strategies to retain talent, including helping people to enhance their capabilities and leadership skills. A Carlson Rezidor Business School provides training in areas such as revenue optimisation, social media marketing, finance and human resource management. Talent Conversations teaches team leaders how to mentor their team members. A High Potential Development Journey trains star employees to be future GMs/senior executives.

Besides, not all Millennials are equal and seek only career progression. The STB survey identifies no fewer than five types and companies are urged to employ different carrots to motivate each Millennial depending on what life stage he is at and priorities he has. The Idealists, for example, are driven by meaningful work and being part of a prestigious company, whereas for Money-seekers, salary and international exposure are the most critical factors (see Infographics, top).

So companies that are quick to understand the new workforce, and quicker still to adapt to changes, will have less to worry about a lack of manpower – or these days, shall we say, Millennial power.

Analysis

Independent properties such as boutique hotels are gaining favour with travellers, and GDSs are leveraging on this trend. Paige Lee Pei Qi gives the lowdown

SECURING THE UNCHAINED



10 hotels in our system are hotel chain or chain-affiliated; the rest are independent. It is quite a switch from just a few years ago."

Last month, Abacus went a step further to unveil Abacus ContentPlus at its conference in Abu Dhabi, allowing travel consultants to sell accommodation separately or as part of a package including LCCs, tours, activities, and car rentals.

Symes explained: "We anticipate the cross-selling and packaging capabilities of Abacus ContentPlus will help independent properties to be included more easily in corporate or leisure itineraries."

Amadeus, meanwhile, has also jumped on the bandwagon. In April, it announced a new-generation distribution marketplace, Amadeus Hotels, which now offers 235,000 hotels through seamlessly integrated content from all hotel sources in one format, allowing access through a single interface.

Christian Lukey, head of hotel distribution, Amadeus Asia-Pacific, said: "Travellers now expect a highly personalised service, increasingly seeking unique and authentic experiences. The facilities offered by boutique hotels and independent lodging can quickly fulfil these needs."

He cited: "In 2010, about 52 per cent of hotel rooms globally and 40 per cent in Asia-Pacific were part of a chain. That is ex-

pected to grow to 62 per cent by 2020, both globally and in Asia-Pacific.

"In Asia-Pacific, the number of chain hotel rooms will grow from 1.5 million in 2010 to 3.5 in 2020, while rooms at independent properties will rise from about two to 2.2 million."

To introduce more non-chain hotels into the system, Lukey said: "We also distribute inventory from web intermediaries including HRS, GTA, Bedsonline and Destinations of the World."

"We have a number of additional providers in the pipeline to integrate into the extended marketplace in the next 12 months."

He added: "The rising popularity of independent and boutique hotels means we can start looking more broadly at accommodation types. New players now include serviced apartments on daily or short-term lease that might include ancillary services like meals, tours, transfers and Wi-Fi."

Travelport too, has been expanding the content and functionality of its Rooms & More, launched in 2012, to be on top of the game. The platform now offers 600,000 properties, which include B&Bs and independent hotels.

Its vice president of product development, hospitality, David Zimmer, said: "Rooms & More is now also available through our Universal API solution, which

gives OTAs and agencies a flexible option to access the content."

To further pump in hotel inventory, Zimmer added: "In June this year, we announced our acquisition of Hotelzon, a B2B hotel distribution technology provider."

"Specifically, this acquisition supports our drive to make booking independent hotels easier for business travellers. We are also exploring other accommodation types, such as owner-occupied accommodation."

Meanwhile, travel consultants support the inclusion of non-chain hotels into the GDSs. Barry Higgott, operations manager, Horncastle Executive Travel UK, which has been piloting the Amadeus Hotels platform for two months, said: "Being able to search, compare and book hotel offers via a single interface drastically cuts the time needed for our consultants to find the right hotel deal."

"It also means we can manage our customers' trips end-to-end more efficiently, and deliver even better service and customer care."

Likewise, Sang Bunthy, CEO of Cambodia-based Srey Rath International Travel & Tours which uses both Travelport and Abacus, said: "Clients are no longer bound to the traditional hotel. They are looking for more unique experiences in places like boutique hotels."

GDSs are fine-tuning their hotel content towards a one-stop solution for travel consultants, expanding their content to include boutique hotels and other non-chain options in response to consumer demand.

Martin Symes, chief marketing officer, Abacus International, said: "Boutique hotels are aligned with the move towards more experiential travel, with their design closely reflecting the character of the destination."

"Images online really favour these properties in being able

to convey their brand promise direct to consumers ahead of booking, and many are punching well above their weight."

"We are seeing a climb in bookings with the independent boutique hotels, especially in the established and trending short-haul resort destinations."

Since 2013, the company has been enhancing Abacus Room-Deal – previously only offering chain hotels – providing access to over 350,000 non-duplicated hotels globally, of which almost two-thirds are independent.

Symes added: "Around four in

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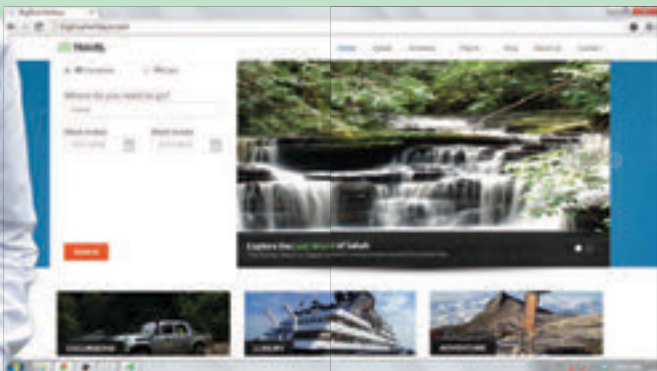
Take heed of tech-savvy agencies that have transformed their businesses and pick up new ideas on how to do better



INNOVATORS

SOFT ADVENTURE AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

By S Puvaneswary



BigBlueHolidays.com is a new adventure-focused portal developed by Nigel Wong (left) of Urban Rhythms Tours, Adventures & Travel Malaysia

WHO Nigel Wong, founder of Kuala Lumpur-based Urban Rhythms Tours, Adventures & Travel, is a lover of adventure sports such as mountain climbing, scuba diving and white water rafting. As proof of his enthusiasm for high intensity sports, he has scaled Mount Kinabalu in

Sabah thrice. A graduate from Monash University, Wong trained as a software engineer and spent the first 15 years of his career working in Australia, developing websites for travel agencies in Darwin. Upon his return to Malaysia, he set up Urban Rhythms in 2006 offering both inbound travel services

and customised software for the trade.

WHAT BigBlueHolidays.com is a travel portal being developed in-house by Urban Rhythms. Scheduled to be launched soon, it contains the offerings of more than 50 niche suppliers in Malaysia such as boutique hotels and scuba diving resorts as well as specialist tour operators providing soft adventure such as four-wheel drives, white water rafting and quad bikes. The portal will allow visitors to customise their itinerary from the comfort of their home or office without visiting a travel agency.

Said Wong: “For overseas FIT travellers planning a holiday to Malaysia, this portal will shorten the time needed to research the destination, and give them full control to customise their itinerary to the extent of choosing products and tour operators as well as ac-

commodation.

“When they are satisfied with the choices they have made, they can make bookings online and receive instant confirmation.”

WHY BigBlueHolidays.com is the result of Wong wanting to share his passion for soft adventure in Malaysia with the world at large while at the same time, providing a platform for niche operators to market their products via e-commerce.

He said: “These operators have very good offerings but may not have the resources and the know-how to market in a big way. We developed this portal to help them as well as to grow the inbound adventure industry.”

TARGET The portal will initially connect visitors with local operators, but the second phase will see it expanding to include offerings in South-east Asia, said Wong.

WHO GETS THE BOOKING?

Searching online for travel companies with the intent of a getaway to South-east Asia (preferably Malaysia) for 4D3N in December/January, only two travel consultants answered all my questions fully.
By **Feizal Samath**



Gabo Travels (www.gabos.com)



APPEARANCE Comprehensive website with easy navigation and user friendly. No clutter with home page icons easily accessible. There was an icon for both inbound and outbound tours. What was missing however was the ‘human’ touch, there were no names of key personnel to call for information.

PRODUCT I wanted a 4D3N tour with shopping, excursion and entertainment options. Tentative flight dates were either December or January. The agency’s offered package included a city tour of Kuala Lumpur, visit to the Petronas Tower, the KLCC Aquarium and the Batu caves, which I thought was a good itinerary, though it appeared to have missed out on the request for shopping options.

EASE OF BOOKING Soon after I sent an email requesting information, there was an immediate response from the webmaster. I called their office the next day and the polite telephone operator promised to ask the handling officer, unavailable then, to call me. Within 30 minutes, someone called and made some suggestions on the package, one was that a triple room would be cheaper than two rooms and the other was about Christmas being the peak season for airlines. I then opted to fly in January. Staff was friendly and warm in their responses; they also identified themselves so that I knew whom I was talking to.

PRICE I had indicated a total budget of Rs300,000 (US\$2,300) to Rs350,000 for my family of three. They came back with a package that cost Rs216,000 inclusive of airfares, visa fees, airport transfers and a triple hotel room with breakfast, which looked reasonable. It also covered most of the areas we wanted during our stay.

VERDICT Both prices were attractive but Gabo Travels had the edge. The service was far superior and met our requirements. Gabo Travels will be my pick.

Acme Travels (www.acme.travel)

APPEARANCE Website was cluttered with too much information and navigation took a few minutes. A positive feature on the home page is a box where a quick message could be sent with the customer’s requirements. Being a journalist and a stickler for correct spelling and grammar, I found many errors in the website. Some places had been spelled wrong. The home page also gave the impression that this was only an inbound agency and did not handle outbound tours.

PRODUCT Based on our requirements, the agency offered the package for dates in December (including super peak periods), despite this month being the peak season. We were offered one double and one single (as requested) with airport transfers, and the rate included visa fees. Missing in their package was any kind of sightseeing or shopping as requested except a half-day Kuala Lumpur city tour.

EASE OF BOOKING Got an immediate response from a named officer to my mail saying he would look into the request. The next day, since there was no reply after several hours, I called the person mentioned in the response who said the enquiry had been sent to their Malaysian office and they expected a response in a day or two. The next day, we received the package details.

PRICE Package for three was priced at Rs234,000 (US\$3,820). It was below our preferred budget but the range of activities was not attractive. We were getting return air tickets, two hotel rooms with breakfast daily and a half-day tour. But this left us three full days and not much to do.

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Asia-Pacific underperforms for US outbound, inbound

Asia-Pacific growth is less than the total based on 1H2014 figures covering outbound from the US, inbound for the US, as well as air passenger traffic.

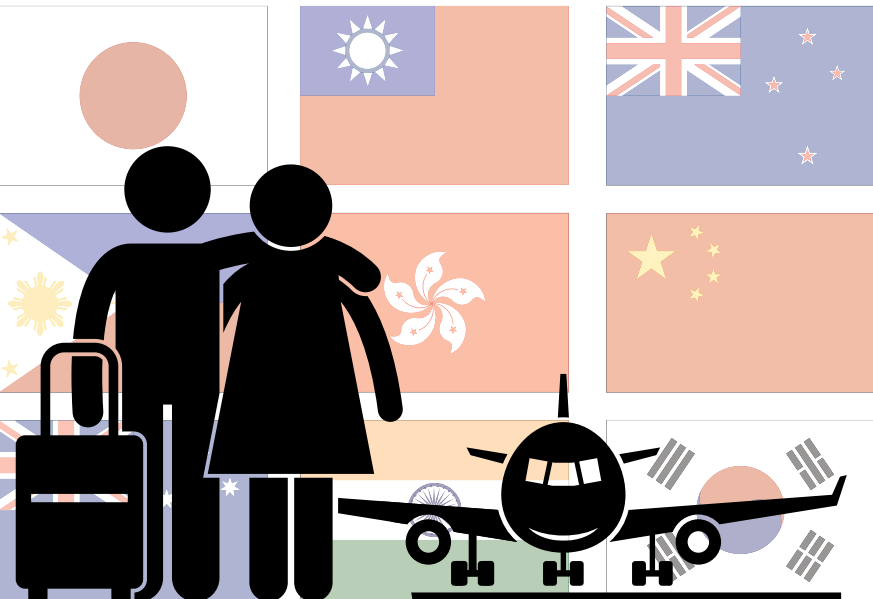
For international outbound travel, just 4% growth for Asia-Pacific against 10% for all-outbound from the US; in air passenger traffic, about 5% against the 7% total; and in visitor arrivals in the US from Asia-Pacific, 6% growth against 9%.

This is despite fast growth in some markets – such as +23% in visitor arrivals from China, and a related +17% in air traffic to and from China.

One reason is Japan. In many, if not most measures, Japan is still the largest contributor in Asia Pacific. But its growth is now the weakest among the larger markets, such as -4% in visitor arrivals in the US, and flat in air passengers.

Markets have also been greatly affected by growth to and from Mexico. Easily the largest outbound destination by US nationals grew 21%, and travel from Mexico to the US (23% share) grew 26%.

Another factor is statistical. For instance, there is a disconnect between the +9% in visitor arrivals from India and flat (+0.3%) air passenger total. An important factor is the growth of travel from India on the three main transit airlines in the Gulf. Travellers to and from the US on these carriers would show in US visitor arrivals, but not on India/US air statistics. We estimate air passenger growth on India/US would actually be around 5%.



International travel by US nationals, 1H2014

Regions	No, mn	Growth, %	Share, %
Asia-Pacific	2.6	4.2	7.9
Overseas*	15.4	6.4	47.3
Total	32.6	10.3	100

Air passengers to and from the US, 1H2014

Market	No x 1,000	Growth, %	Share, %
Japan	6,062	0.5	6.3
South Korea	2,523	3.6	2.6
China	2,426	16.5	2.5
Australia	1,353	-1.2	1.4
Hong Kong	1,342	10.3	1.4
Taiwan	1,074	20.3	1.1
India	456	0.3	0.5
Philippines	430	0.5	0.4
New Zealand	391	11.8	0.4
†Asia-Pacific	16,056	5.2	16.7
Total	96,088	7.2	100

Notes: Figures as available; some not shown if below minimum set by source. *Excluding Canada, Mexico. †Markets shown here. Source: various US government departments

Priceline overtakes Expedia

In terms of gross bookings, Priceline overtook Expedia as the world’s largest OTA. The difference (US\$25.8 billion, \$25.7 billion) seems small, but it represents US\$100 million!

After that, the two companies are quite different. Expedia is more a ‘pure’ OTA, whereas Priceline’s subsidiaries include Kayak, which is a travel-search company.

They are different in terms of structure as well. Expedia is growing more slowly, 29% against 34%, and 19% average against 43% over the past five years. And Expedia is still much more of a US company – with 60% of its gross bookings in the US, against Priceline’s 14%.

Because those measures are so different, there seem to be good potential for both companies to expand in the other’s strongest region. That said, Expedia’s potential would seem better – on the assumption that the world market is less developed than the US market.

However, both are growing fast in their strongest regions. Expedia grew a strong 35% in the US and only 21% outside, whereas Priceline grew only 20% in the US compared with a strong 36% outside.

Expedia and Priceline results

Item	1H2014						2009-14	
	US\$, bn		Growth, %		Share, %		AAGR, %	
	Ex	Pr	Ex	Pr	Ex	Pr	Ex	Pr
Gross bookings	25.7	25.8	29.0	34.0	100.0	100.0	18.8	43.0
US	15.3	3.5	35.2	20.1	59.7	14.0	15.5	14.0
Outside US	10.4	22.3	20.8	36.4	40.3	86.0	25.1	54.9
Agency	14.9	22.1	38.3	37.5	57.9	86.0	19.3	46.3
Merchant	10.8	3.7	18.0	16.4	42.1	14.0	18.2	29.3

Notes: Some Priceline figures are TBA calculations from company’s data. AAGR = annual average growth rate, Ex = Expedia, Pr = Priceline. Source: companies, TBA

Bangkok bad, but better

Hotel occupancies in Bangkok are likely to have stabilised in October. Rates might have done the same a month earlier, which then means that RevPAR might also have stabilised last month.

Nevertheless, that will mean that business in Thailand’s capital would have been falling for almost one year.

Bangkok’s July results, shown here, are still bad – occupancy down 10%, ARR down 6%, RevPAR down 15%.

Results are also weak in Maldives. Although July is an off-season month, the comparison is obviously with the same one year earlier. Occupancy is still a reasonable (for off-season) 72% and growth is 4%. But ARR fell 6%, pushing RevPAR down, albeit only 2%.

In another resort destination, Bali, occupancy grew 2%, but ARR fell almost 3%, pushing RevPAR down slightly.

Singapore’s hotel results, given weak macro figures, are not too bad. In that month, visitor arrivals into Singapore fell 1%, and air passenger throughput at the airport (which includes outbound travellers) grew 1%.

The overall hotel TBA-100 Index in the latest available month in 2014 (July) stood at 96 – representing a 4% fall in comparison with the same month in 2013. This is unchanged from June, although the occupancy element grew and the two rate measures fell. This might presage rate improvement later in the year.

In Asia-Pacific overall, occupancy was unchanged at US\$137, pushing RevPAR down fractionally to 71%, ARR almost down just US\$1 to US\$98.



HOTEL BAROMETER

Hotel operating results in selected centres, July 2014

Location	Occupancy, %	Growth, %	ARR, US\$*	Growth, %	RevPAR, US\$*	Growth, %
Bali	73.9	2.4	164	-2.6	121	-0.2
Bangkok	62.0	-9.9	103	-5.7	64	-15.1
Hong Kong	86.4	1.6	205	5.8	177	7.5
Maldives	72.1	4.0	436	-5.5	314	-1.8
Melbourne	86.9	-0.3	186	-4.7	162	-5.0
Singapore	87.7	-0.1	181	-0.6	159	-0.6

Notes: Compared with same month a year earlier. ARR = average room rate, RevPAR = revenue per available room *Calculated at exchange rate. Source: hotels to TBA



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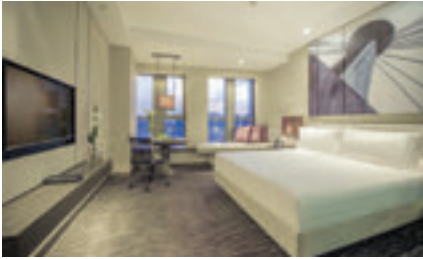
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HOTELS



PAN PACIFIC TIANJIN, CHINA

Pan Pacific's fifth hotel in China is a 319-unit property along the Haihe River and 40-minute drive from the international airport. Opened last month, guests can enjoy up to four F&B options within the hotel as well as facilities such as a heated swimming pool and spa.



IBIS STYLES KRABI AO NANG, THAILAND

Taking its economy brand to Krabi, Accor's 206-key hotel has family rooms that come with games and bunk beds for children. Facilities include a swimming pool, the Kid's Club and bicycle rental services.



NOVOTEL TANGERANG, INDONESIA

Located within the Tangcity Superblock, the first Novotel in the Banten region has 266 rooms that cater to both business and leisure travellers. On site are a restaurant, lounge bar, swimming pool, fitness centre and spa.



VILLA SAMADHI, SINGAPORE

Malaysian hospitality group Samadhi will enter Singapore with a 20-key boutique resort by year-end. Located at Labrador Natural Reserve, the restored colonial residence offers private plunge pools, a library, a bar and the signature Tamarind Hill Restaurant.

TECHNOLOGY

TRAVELPORT RELEASES ENHANCED SMARTPOINT

Through the integration of Travelport's Rich Content and Branding merchandising solution for airlines, the new version of the desktop gives travel consultants access to images and detailed product information from participating airlines, which makes it easier to compare airline products and services. This is also meant to increase upselling and cross-selling opportunities. Other benefits include improved navigation as well as enhanced features such as interactive graphical airline seat maps and ancillary services such as bags and lounge access.

ITINERARY BUILDING, EDITING OFFERED ON NEW GTA TOOL

Emutrip, unveiled by GTA at WTM London, is a free mobile tool that streamlines itinerary processes while allowing for more revenue opportunities. The white-label tool gives travel consultants the ability to dynamically package content from GTA's database and elsewhere to create itineraries under the agency's own brand. Travel consultants can edit the itineraries and provide travellers with recommendations on attractions and excursions. Customers can view their itineraries on the Emutrip app or through the itineraries emailed to them by agencies.

FITUR 2015:

The 35th staging of FITUR, organised by IFEMA from 28 January to 1 February 2015 at FERIA DE MADRID, will be presenting the latest trends and technologies in tourism as well as the growing role of Spain as a source of outbound visitors to other countries.



Playing host once again to the global tourism industry with the most comprehensive presentation of proposals and destinations by companies, organisations and institutions from all round the world, FITUR is reasserting its position as the one of the largest and leading business platforms for the tourism sector. As the leading event for Latin American outbound and inbound markets, FITUR will provide an effective stage for global tourism industry business, allowing professionals to discover the keys to successfully meeting the challenge of innovation in tourism management.

FITUR 2015 will also be featuring such new additions as the FITUR HEALTH and FITUR SHOPPING sections, presenting tourism segments with huge growth and development capacity in response to the demand for specialisation and diversification driven by the tourist sector. With Spain being a privileged destination in this field, offering a high quality and highly competitive health service, the health tourism is growing on average by 20% per year, and the global forecast for turnover in 2015 is 128 billion euros. FITUR HEALTH, jointly promoted with the Spaincares cluster, will have its own clearly marked area and exhibition space for the offerings of participating companies, with an extensive selection of national and international buyers invited by the event.

Meanwhile, FITUR SHOPPING, organised in collaboration with Madrid Shopping Tour, will be helping those companies signing up for this section to achieve the maximum return on their investment. There will be an exhibition area, a

programme of themed seminars and a space for individual B2B meetings with national and international buyers.

Meanwhile, among the regular sections at FITUR, the Trade Show will be also presenting FITURTECH and FITURGREEN, with the former on the impact of technology on tourism with a special showroom dedicated to the tourism of the future and the latter will be addressing innovation and sustainability in the tourism sector to promote the competitiveness both of companies and of destinations.

INCREASE IN TOURISM SPEND BY THE SPANIARDS ABROAD

The role of Spain as a source of outbound tourism to other countries is increasing substantially, and the tourism spent by the Spaniards abroad has risen notably. According to the most

recent figures from the Spanish Tourism Institute, an agency of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism, the total Spanish outbound tourism spend amounted to 2.172 billion euros in the first four months of 2014, an increase of 15.4% compared with the same period in 2013. Between January and April this year the average spend per traveller outside the country was 598 euros, with an average daily outlay of 76 euros.

Overall, the aggregate figure for domestic and outbound tourism expenditure by the Spanish population amounted in the first four months of 2014 to a total of 7.051 billion euros, representing an increase of 7.6% compared with the same period the previous year.

Tourism between Spain and Asia has become well established over recent years. During 2013 a total of 339,043 Spanish tourists headed to Asia, 130,713 of them in the summer holidays and the remainder during the rest of the year. This deseasonalisation is also reflected in travel from Asia to Spain, with most of these tourists travelling to Spain for the shopping, food and drink, and tourism or urban travel.



For more information:
Jesús González
Press Officer
Tel: (0034) 917 225 095 | Email: jesusg@ifema.es

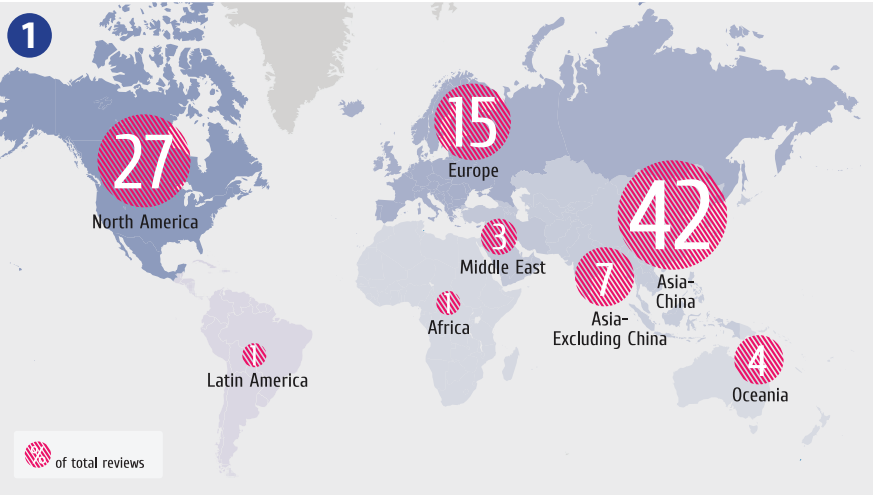
Helena Valera
International Press
Tel: (0034) 917 225 174 | Email: evalera@ifema.es

Javier Labiano
Contributing Journalist
Mobile: (0034) 677 841 133 | Email: javi.lab65@gmail.com

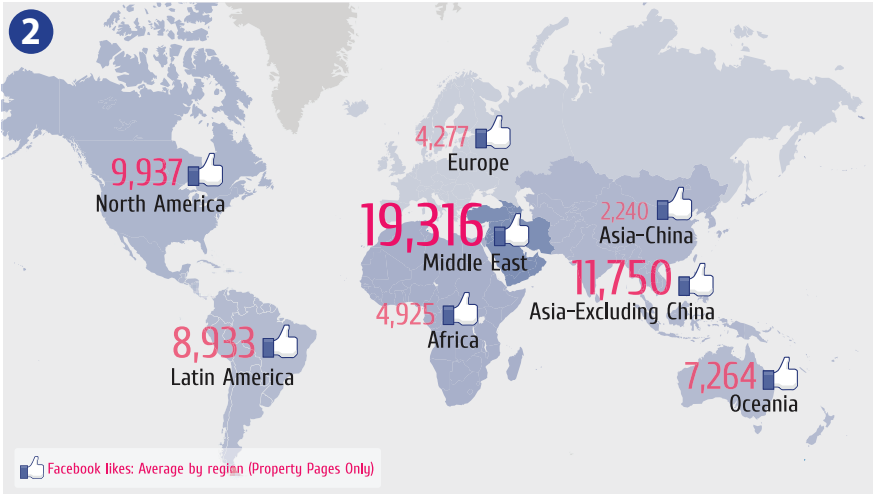
(Fitur) 2015

Report **Luxury travel**

LUXURY TRAVELLER



Asians have become much more active in writing luxury hotel reviews and are now the stand-out leaders, representing 49% of all luxury hotel reviews globally, based on luxury hotel reviews from January 2012 to March 2014 by author's country of origin. North Americans and Europeans have remained very active in posting reviews, accounting for 27% and 15%, respectively, of all the reviews in the sample. By comparison, travellers from Oceania (4%), the Middle East (3%), Latin America (1%) and Africa (1%) do not write nearly as many luxury hotel reviews.



For social networking sites, the landscape looks different. Although Middle East travellers are not very active on review sites, their luxury hotels receive the most Facebook Likes, with an average of 19,316 Likes and a 4.3 average rating (ratings not depicted) based on April 2014. Luxury hotels in Asia outside of China also see high Facebook participation, averaging 11,750 Likes and a 4.2 rating. North America, South America and Oceania have relatively similar numbers of Likes but achieve the highest average ratings at 4.5, 4.4, and 4.5 respectively. Facebook is officially blocked in China.

Meetings & Events

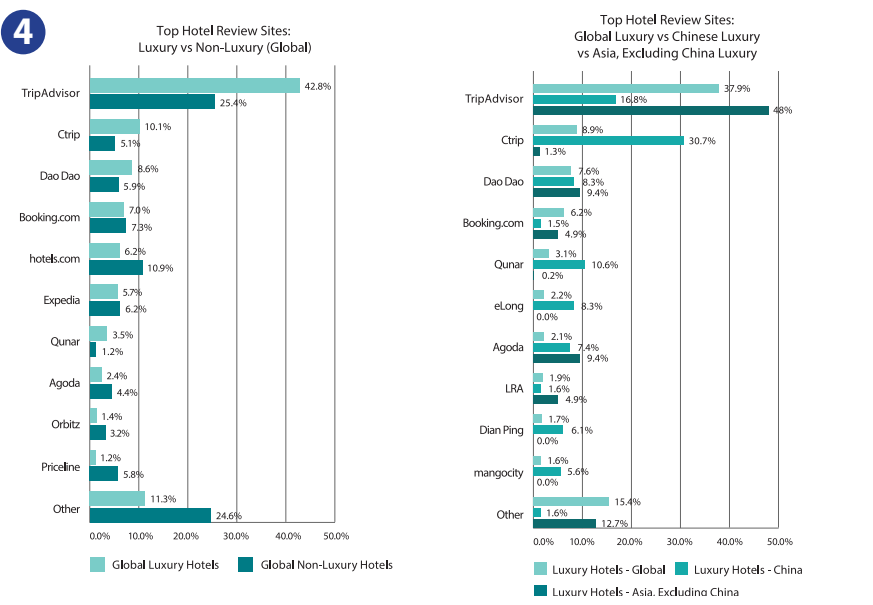
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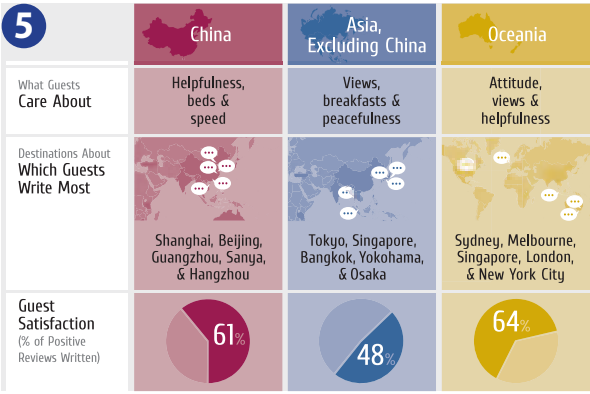
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TripAdvisor holds a greater share of reviews for luxury hotels (42.8%) than for non-luxury hotels (25.4%). Within Asia-Pacific, there are distinct differences between China and the rest of Asia and Oceania. For Asia-Pacific, excluding China, 48% of all luxury hotel reviews are posted on TripAdvisor, but China sees only 16.8% of luxury reviews posted on TripAdvisor.

Chinese booking and review sites Ctrip, Qunar, Dao Dao and Dian Ping continue to gain shares of luxury hotel reviews globally.



While there are some interesting differences between luxury travellers in Asia-Pacific highlighted, they do have a few things in common as well. For example, all sub-regions write more reviews on Monday than any other day of the week.

In terms of what guests in Asia-Pacific compliment most, aesthetics receive the most praise especially in reference to the guestrooms, suites and views of the hotel. On the other hand, guests in Asia-Pacific complain more about price than anything else. Though luxury travellers expect to pay for a premium experience, in many instances, guests feel the upcharge does not justify their perceived value of their experience.

Asian travellers are leaders in writing luxury hotel reviews. Gracia Chiang picks the salient points of an ILTM Asia/Brand Karma survey

RS & SOCIAL MEDIA

3	COUNTRY	POPULATION	MOST REVIEWED DESTINATION ON TRIPADVISOR	SOCIAL MEDIA PENETRATION	SOCIAL MEDIA MATURITY (EARLY, HIGH GROWTH, MATURE)	MOST POPULAR SOCIAL NETWORKS	TOP MOBILE MESSAGING PLATFORM
	China	1,357,379,000	Beijing	44%	High Growth	WeChat, Sina Weibo, YouKu	WeChat
	India	1,257,476,000	New Delhi	7%	Early	Facebook, Google+, Twitter	Nimbuzz
	Indonesia	251,160,124	Bali	25%	High Growth	Facebook, Twitter, Google+	WhatsApp
	Pakistan	193,238,868	Lahore	6%	Early	Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn	WhatsApp
	Bangladesh	163,651,860	Dhaka City	4%	Early	Facebook	WhatsApp
	Japan	127,223,000	Tokyo	17%	Early	Twitter, Facebook, Line	Line
	Philippines	105,720,644	Luzon	32%	High Growth	Facebook, Twitter, Google+	KakaoTalk
	Vietnam	92,477,857	Ho Chi Minh City	22%	High Growth	Facebook, Google+, Twitter	Zalo
	Thailand	64,448,120	Bangkok	36%	High Growth	Facebook, Google+, Twitter	Line
	Burma (Myanmar)	55,167,330	Yangon (Rangoon)	2%	Early	Facebook	Line
	South Korea	48,955,203	Seoul	27%	High Growth	Facebook, Twitter, Kakao Talk	KakaoTalk
	Nepal	30,430,267	Kathmandu	11%	Early	Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter	WhatsApp
	Malaysia	29,628,392	Kuala Lumpur	51%	Mature	Facebook, Google+, Twitter	WeChat
	North Korea	24,720,407	Pyongyang	0%	Early	n/a	n/a
	Australia	23,475,122	Sydney	57%	Mature	Facebook, Twitter, Google+	WhatsApp
	Taiwan	23,299,716	Taipei	64%	Mature	Facebook, Google+, Twitter	Line
	Sri Lanka	21,675,648	Kandy	9%	Early	Facebook, Twitter	WhatsApp
	Cambodia	15,205,539	Siem Reap	8%	Early	Facebook	Line
	Hong Kong	7,182,724	Hong Kong	61%	Mature	Facebook, Google+, Instagram	WeChat
	Laos	6,695,166	Luang Prabang	6%	Early	Facebook	Line
	Singapore	5,460,302	Singapore	59%	Mature	Facebook, Twitter, Google+	WhatsApp

Among the over 20 markets in Asia-Pacific studied, there were slight differences in each country’s top three most popular social networks. However, Facebook consistently emerged as a front-runner, with the exception of China. Responses were more varied for top mobile messaging platform, with Line and WhatsApp being equally popular. Social media penetration was the highest in Taiwan (64%), followed by Hong Kong (61%), Singapore (59%), Australia (57%) and Malaysia (51%).

Sources: World Population Statistics 2013, We are Social, Social, Digital & Mobile in APAC in 2014, TripAdvisor

6

Key Trends: Globally & Within Asia-Pacific

	MOBILE	REVIEWS	PHOTOS & VIDEOS
Global Luxury Travellers	More than 40% of online traffic related to travel queries now comes from mobile devices, including tablets	Travel review websites have the most influence (69%), followed by online travel agencies (57%), travel provider sites (56%) and friends & relatives (43%)	70% of travellers update their Facebook page while on vacation
Chinese Luxury Travellers	73% of Sina Weibo users access Weibo from mobile	At 49% they comprise nearly half of luxury hotel reviews worldwide	YouKu and Tudou, the top Chinese online video sites, attract 400,000,000 unique viewers every month (40% of YouTube's global unique users)
Asia-Pacific Excluding China Luxury Travellers	Mobile messaging apps like WeChat, Line, and WhatsApp are changing the way brands interact with luxury consumers	66% of luxury hotel reviews written on TripAdvisor (the most popular review website by far) are positive	Luxury brands in Asia Pacific have the highest growth rates for Instagram engagement
Alternative Global Trends	59% of luxury travellers use smart phone internet browsers to book over-night accommodations	Globally, there were 41% more luxury review posted in 2013 than in 2012	Millennials define luxury travel experiences by how "instagrammable" they are

KEY

Very strong trend

Strong trend

Weak trend

Sources: 10 Social Media, Mobile and Online Travel Stats, Social Media Today; China Digital Landscape 2014, We Are Social; Instagram 2014 Intelligence Report, L2 Think Tank, Daily Travel Stats, Skift

Produced by ILTM Asia and Brand Karma, *The Luxury Traveller & Social Media 2014: Asia* was based on social media and travel review site postings by luxury travellers both in the Asia-Pacific and globally between January 2011 and March 2014. Some 1.5 million reviews were analysed.

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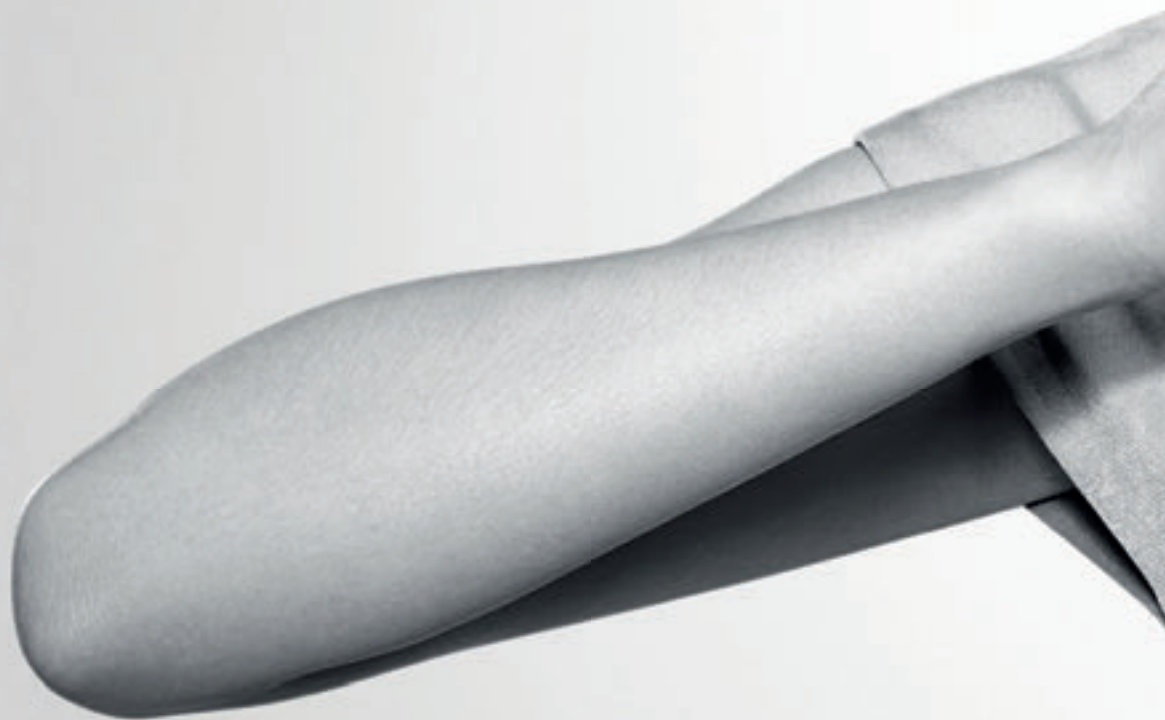
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VALUE FOR MONEY

PandaBed
Lester Kang, co-founder & marketing head



Background
On one of our trips in Europe, co-founder James and I discovered B&B accommodation and were able to stretch our budget compared to friends staying in hotels. We also met a friendly local who was able to show us a different side of Europe. Having returned to Asia, James and I saw im-

mense potential to promote such accommodation experiences here. We quit our cushy corporate careers in 2012 to launch PandaBed.

Content
Single rooms, entire homes, villas, serviced apartments and guest houses in popular Asian destinations including Bali, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Koh Samui, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Phuket, Seoul and Singapore. Over 5,000 homes in the inventory, with this number set to double by end-2014 through the addition of more homes in China, Japan, India and Taiwan.

Pricing
Varies vastly in different cities. However, guests can expect savings of up to 50 per cent compared to a standard hotel and a space that is twice as big.

Demand
Most of our enquiries and bookings are

for major capital cities like Hong Kong, Singapore and Bangkok. Increasingly, we are also seeing more enquiries for beach holiday homes in Koh Samui, Phuket and Boracay. Fifty per cent of our guests are from Asia, and the rest come from Australia, the US and Europe. Our average length of stay is 10 nights.

How it works
Guests send a booking request to the host who has 24 hours to confirm the booking. To protect our guests, we will only transfer the funds 24 hours after check-in to ensure there is no issue with the property. Hosts, on the other hand, can request for a security deposit in cash in the unlikely event of damages.

What sets us apart is our PeerMatch option, allowing homeowners to indicate their guest preferences using four major religions in Asia, nationality and age group. Likewise, guests can book a home that is hosted by an owner of similar cul-

tural background. For example, Muslim travellers can stay in a Muslim-friendly home that has a halal kitchen. In addition, while most of our peers levy a 10 per cent booking fee on guests, we do not. Only homeowners are charged 10 per cent for bookings received.

Trade partnerships
We have established partnerships with agencies who do not have access to holiday homes, and we have seen success in this as they are typically managed by direct owners and are not listed on any major OTAs.

Growth plans
As Asia is a highly fragmented region, we plan on localising our website, marketing and payment. This means that apart from cross-border travel (like Hong Kong to Tokyo), we are looking at local domestic travel (like Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City), and how PandaBed can enable local homeowners and travellers to participate.

Travelmob
Turochas Fuad, CEO and co-founder



Background
The company was officially launched in 2012 by me, formerly the managing director of Skype Asia Pacific, and my co-founder, Prashant Kirtane, ex-senior director of engineering at Yahoo!. The idea is for property owners to rent out their available spaces to travellers looking for a

richer local experience. We were acquired by NASDAQ-listed HomeAway in 2013.

Content
Focused on Asia-Pacific destinations, our inventory includes rooms, apartments/houses, villas, houseboats and even private islands. The majority of our properties are considered as secondary or investment homes. Our hosts (suppliers) are mostly property investors, managers or micro-entrepreneurs. Our properties differ from hotel rooms as most come with a fully equipped kitchen, washer/dryer and Wi-Fi.

Pricing
Listings range from US\$15 per night for a budget room, to a private villa (with a full staff and private helipad) that cost more than US\$15,000 per night. In other words, we cater to travellers of all budgets. We recently initiated a concierge service to help travellers find their ideal villas in Bali (at any price range). This service will soon be

offered to other destinations. Many travellers find our prices value for money – a group of travellers or family can stay together under one roof and pay less than booking multiple hotel rooms.

Demand
Close to 70 per cent of our travellers are from Asia-Pacific. However, as our properties are also available to HomeAway's core markets, a growing number of travellers from the Americas and Europe are discovering Travelmob. Popular destinations include urban cities like Hong Kong, Tokyo, Sydney, Kuala Lumpur, Seoul and Singapore. Traditional vacation rental destinations like Bali, Phuket, Goa and Pattaya are also very popular.

How it works
Travellers can quickly locate ideal accommodations and communicate directly with hosts through a private messaging system. For hosts, we provide them with a calendar system, cancellation policies,

seasonal pricing tools and an integrated messaging system to offer private discounts (and even last-minute deals). We also facilitate a secure payment/booking platform that caters to their currency of choice. We support 14 local languages.

Trade partnerships
We have integrated our inventory on Tigerair.com and a few global meta-search companies that specialise in P2P rentals. We are also partnering with Dwidaya Tour, allowing travellers to book our properties at the agency's branches across Indonesia. Our parent company also recently started distributing its vacation rental properties on Expedia's network.

Growth plans
We are targeted to wrap 2014 with year-on-year bookings growth of more than 300 per cent. With HomeAway as our parent company, we are also looking at offering Europe and Americas properties to our travellers in the very near future.

Roomorama
Jia En Teo, co-founder



Background
Roomorama was launched in 2009 by Federico Folcia and myself. Caught between professional obligations and perpetual wanderlust, we would rent out our New York apartment to friendly folks with a similar desire to live like locals whenever we travelled. At the same time, as avid

travellers, we were always on the lookout for unique yet affordable places to stay, but the process was cumbersome and not always safe. We founded Roomorama to make it easy for people to find and book hotel alternatives around the world.

Content
Over 120,000 unique vacation rentals across 6,000 destinations worldwide from waterfront condominiums in Miami to houseboats in Amsterdam and beach villas in Thailand. Popular destinations are North American cities like New York, San Francisco, Toronto as well as European cities like Paris and London. These are mid-range to high-end properties, most of which are professionally managed.

Pricing
Prices differ based on property location and size, but the average price on Roomorama is US\$120 per night. Typically, our

properties offer a 30-40 per cent discount as compared to hotels of an equivalent standard.

Demand
Most popular destinations are large cities in North America, Europe, and Asia. Our users come from all over the world and are mostly aged between 29 and 35. Most bookings are for nine to 10 nights.

How it works
Once travellers have browsed through available properties and found the one they like, they need to submit an enquiry for the desired dates of travel and card details to pre-authorise payment. Once the host confirms availability, the enquiry becomes a booking. For the safety of users (hosts and guests), this communication happens entirely on the Roomorama platform.

However, Roomorama is one of the

very few short-term rental platforms that has also been able to 'hotelify' the vacation rental booking process and offer an instant booking service, allowing guests to make a booking and receive their confirmation immediately. This is currently available for a large selection of European properties.

Trade partnerships
Roomorama is open for partnering with OTAs and travel agencies, if they are looking for more properties to offer to their customers. We are working with a selection of OTAs worldwide and offer an attractive CPA model.

Growth plans
By the end of the year, the company plans to roll out more instant bookings for properties in the US and Asia. Within Asia-Pacific, instant bookings are possible in Bali, Phuket and Melbourne for now.

While considered to be a more economical option for budget-conscious travellers, P2P accommodation booking sites, in actual fact, are also capturing the higher-end of the market. But are they catching the interest of travel agencies? By [Paige Lee Pei Qi](#), [Hannah Koh](#), [Xinyi Liang-Pholsena](#), [Prudence Lui](#) and [S Puvaneswary](#)



We recognise the popularity of P2P sites among young travellers. However, it might not be mainstream for Hong Kong outbound travellers who prefer four-star hotels rather than hostels or guesthouses.

Jason Wong
Director and general manager
Hong Thai Travel Services Hong Kong

P2P sites provide an interesting choice of accommodation for consumers, but I don't think it is viable for travel agencies. For one, quality is not assured. It is also difficult to get accommodation in good locations during peak periods.

Desmond Lee
Group managing director
Apple Vacations & Conventions Malaysia



TripAdvisor Vacation Rentals

Laurel Greatrix, spokesperson



Background

TripAdvisor Vacation Rentals began in 2008 with the acquisition of US-based FlipKey. FlipKey powered the initial experience, which has grown since its inception with the acquisitions of Holiday Lettings, Niumba and Vacation Home Rentals.

Content

More than 630,000 vacation rentals in around 190 countries,

from city-centre studio apartments to 15-bedroom rural homes. Though we have a large collection of unique properties like boathouses, treehouses, windmills and even castles, the majority of the properties we list are more traditional holiday homes – houses, villas, condos, apartments, cabins, etc.

Pricing

Extremely varied. In Bali, for example, it's possible to rent a studio for around S\$200 (US\$154) a week, while the large, luxury properties at the higher end – often with private pools, large gardens, dedicated staff, beach access and more – can cost thousands per night.

Demand

Properties in European capital cities, like Paris and London, see some of the highest demand globally, as do homes in beach destinations like Florida, Bali

and Hawaii. Within Asia, beach destinations tend to be the most popular, with Bali and Phuket seeing the greatest interest.

How it works

Travellers enter their destination, dates and property size. They can then further filter results by more specific wants and needs, for instance, price range, and if the property has a private pool, is pet-friendly or has outside space. They can either reserve and pay through TripAdvisor, or contact the home owner or manager. Any property that has a Book Property button can be booked through TripAdvisor and automatically receives our Peace of Mind protection to safeguard the booking. Otherwise, travellers can contact the homeowner or manager via Make Enquiry for more details.

Trade partnerships

Property managers who manage

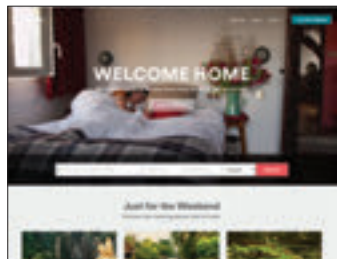
five or more listings can connect their database to TripAdvisor (via FlipKey) through more than a dozen of the most popular reservation management systems. A custom solution can also be developed. Property managers also get insights into modifications that can be made to their listings to maximise exposure, increase enquiries and conversion to bookings with the assistance of a dedicated account manager.

We do not currently work with OTAs or travel agencies.

Growth plans

We're constantly advancing our business by adding more properties, growing our user base and providing new functionality, such as the relatively recent additions of protected online bookings and payments for travellers, and an option for homeowners to list with us for free and pay only when their property receives a booking.

Airbnb



Background

Founders Brian Chesky, Joe Gebbia and Nate Blecharczyk were the first hosts on Airbnb. When rent in San Francisco went up and they couldn't afford it, they blew up air mattresses and hosted guests in their apartment. Not only did they make enough money to pay the rent and made

three new friends, they soon realised that travel will be more about the experiences rather than the places visited. This gave birth to Airbnb in 2008.

Content

More than 800,000 listings in over 34,000 cities in 190 countries. Accommodation offerings range from rooms and whole apartments to villas, castles, treehouses and islands.

Pricing

Airbnb has something to offer at any price point and for any taste and occasion.

Demand

Having achieved strong success in the US and Europe, Airbnb is

experiencing dynamic growth in Asia. Over 20 million guests have booked on Airbnb so far.

How it works

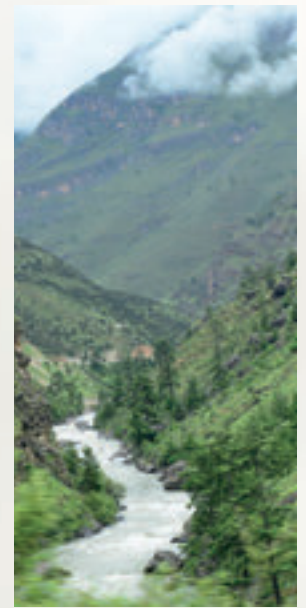
Travellers enter a destination and travel dates into the search bar. Results can be narrowed using filters such as type of accommodation, price, location, etc. Once a place is decided, travellers have to complete their profile and book the space by either using the Instant Book function to confirm their stay without having to wait for a host's approval or click the Contact Host or Request to Book buttons.

Users have to provide payment details to make reservations, although users booking through the Request to Book

button won't be charged until the host accepts the reservation – a host has 24 hours to respond.

Trade partnerships

In July, a Business Travel on Airbnb portal was rolled out to help business travellers search and book accommodation, and manage their expenses. The site has also entered into a partnership with Concur to enable business travellers to book Airbnb listings directly and have their expense reports automatically linked to Concur's TripLink service. Airbnb is also working closely with Salesforce and Facebook to reinvent business travel, and more than 30 companies including Evernote, Eventbrite and Lyft have already signed up.



Best Western to Debut in Breathtaking Bhutan

By Glenn de Souza
Best Western International's
Vice President International
Operations - Asia & the Middle East

Best Western International is expanding its iconic brand even further across Asia, with the launch of our first ever hotel in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan.

Having recently signed an agreement for a brand new 41-room upscale hotel in the country's capital, Thimphu, we look forward to welcoming our first guests in early 2015.

Joining our growing collection of upscale BEST WESTERN PLUS hotels, the new hotel will feature a series of high-end guest facilities, including restaurants, a fitness centre, spa, bar and a terrace lounge with views across Thimphu's low-rise skyline.

We are very excited to become one of the first major international hotel brands to arrive in this incredible country. Bhutan really is a paradise on Earth and we are delighted to be able to cater to the growing number of visitors wanting to explore this fascinating country.



Destination Vietnam



Traffic congestion in and around Hanoi is leaving a bad taste in the mouth of tourists

Destination in numbers

2.8 million

The number of foreign tourists targeted by the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism to visit Hanoi in 2014

64.6%

The occupancy recorded by Hanoi hotels for the first nine months of 2014, representing a two per cent dip year-on-year, according to STR Global

2.3 million

The average daily rate recorded by Hanoi hotels, in Vietnamese dong (equivalent to US\$108), in the first nine months of 2014, a 1.5 per cent decline

CURBING TRAFFIC WOES

Talk to travel specialists about Hanoi's strengths as a tourism destination and they will typically wax lyrical about its many plus points, such as unique colonial architecture, great local cuisine and its location as a jumping-off point for exploring other places like Ninh Binh and Halong Bay, but the capital's traffic congestion and long commuting time outside of the city remain key challenges that continue to frustrate industry players.

Navigating the bustling streets of downtown Hanoi, a place with some 6.5 million inhabitants and almost half as many motorcycles, can add an authentic if not slightly hairy element to any visit to the destination, especially of the Old Quarter.

However, when it comes to travelling outside of the capital, which is well positioned for excursions to a wide range of cultural and natural destinations, getting

from point A to B can be a real drag. Edouard George, president of Phoenix Voyages Group, says traffic problems are particularly bad around Hanoi, but they are not the exclusive preserve of the city.

"Traffic is becoming a serious threat to the development of tourism in Vietnam," he said. "The feedback we get from the clients is 90 per cent negative. Brand-new highways can see vehicles travel at just 40km/h because of ridiculous police controls, while drivers race through overcrowded villages at 80km/h. It is total chaos in the main cities due to lack of respect of the basic traffic rules. This is causing real problems."

Trade players pointed out that recent infrastructure developments are helping to mitigate these problems though, especially the Noi Bai-Lao Cai expressway, the longest in the country at 245km, which opened in September.

"The new highway has opened up the whole northern part of Vietnam, giving new life to Sapa as transportation time has

been cut from eight hours (from Hanoi) on an overnight train to just four-and-a-half hours by coach," said Torsten Edens, managing director of Diethelm Travel Vietnam. "It also gives us many more opportunities to explore that region further, going as far as Ha Giang, which will also get a lift from the freeway."

More roads are needed, however, and the trade is eagerly awaiting the opening of a new road to Hai Phong which will reduce travel times to Cat Ba Island and Halong Bay by half.

"Currently, it takes four and a half hours to drive the 155km from Hanoi to Halong Bay, which steals a lot of time from our customers," he explained. "Once the road is completed, we expect to see a sharp rise in numbers of clients visiting that area and even further up the coast."

There's good news for travellers with bigger budgets. Hai Au Aviation recently started its seaplane tours from Hanoi to Halong Bay, a trip which takes just 20 minutes and costs US\$235 a head. "This

will offer a brand-new experience in the area," said Torsten.

Travel specialists say there will soon be improvements in air access to Hanoi, the aviation gateway to North Vietnam, with the opening of Terminal 2 at Hanoi Noi Bai International Airport, which currently services some 20 airlines. In 2013, the heavily congested airport was running more than 50 per cent over its annual capacity of nine million passengers. The new terminal, tabled to open before the year-end, will increase the airport's handling capacity to 19 million passengers.

Regardless of its logistical challenges, however, Hanoi continues to be a popular destination and will remain so, opined Jack Bartholomew, Indochina director at Khiri Travel. "Hanoi is a cultural goldmine founded in the 10th century; the city boasts a wealth of temples, monuments and culture that display all the different influences that shaped Vietnam over the past thousand plus years into the country it is today."

New infrastructure and transport developments will help to alleviate some of the accessibility issues that the Vietnamese capital has to address. **Greg Lowe** reports

Viewpoint

What are Hanoi's greatest strengths as a tourist destination?

Jack Bartholomew,
Indochina director,
Khiri Travel

"Hanoi is really 'authentic' Vietnam. It boasts old windy streets, colonial-era buildings mixed with stunning pagodas, lakes, grand Communist structures and a good selection of high-end hotels. Some people say the people are a bit headstrong and pushy in Hanoi, but when you get to meet (the locals) in the right circumstances they are really fantastic."



Torsten Edens,
managing director,
Diethelm
Travel Vietnam

"Hanoi is definitely a charming destination with a preserved heritage and attractive local traditions. It has a unique cuisine and a diversifying culinary scene which supports a wide range of activities and culinary programmes."

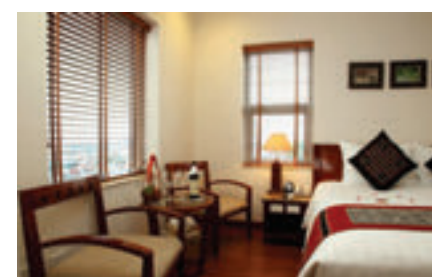


tanjapic/image123RF.com

How to sell

SEE Hanoi's **Old Quarter** is the highlight of any trip to the capital. Start with a visit to Hoan Kiem Lake and the pagoda, then tour the Old Quarter by rickshaw, which provides a relaxing way to take in the city which dates back to the 14th century, as well as the French-era colonial architecture.

EAT **Quan An Ngon** is popular with locals and tourists, and now has three outlets across the city, though the original branch on Phan Boi Chau street is the most iconic. The restaurant serves a wide range of traditional Vietnamese food and Hanoi specialities, and is one of the few venues large enough to accommodate groups.



Clockwise from left: Turtle tower on Hoan Kiem Lake, Quan An Ngon, Hanoi Elegance Emerald

DO Visit **Van Phuc village** where local artisans have been producing exquisite silks for the past thousand years. All parts of the process, from extracting silk from cocoons to dyeing and weaving, are on display. It is estimated that three-quarters of the local population is involved in the industry.

STAY Located in the Old Quarter, the **Hanoi Elegance Emerald** hotel is a 21-room boutique property located within easy walking distance to key sites in Hanoi's historic downtown area.

MY WAY

Pieter De Weerd

General manager, Pullman Hanoi and area general manager Northern Vietnam, Accor

How do you like to spend your days off in Hanoi?

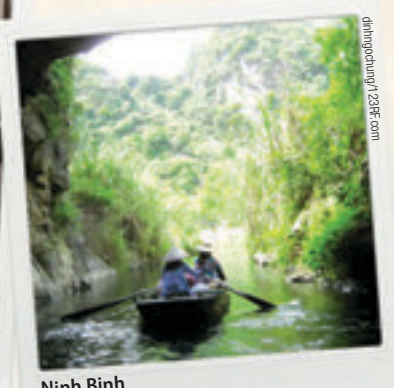
I like to take my scooter – yes, despite the hectic traffic conditions – and go for a slow drive around the Hanoi West Lake and enjoy a nice drink somewhere with a good magazine, then take a local lunch at a street-food stall nearby. On Sundays, I would take my scooter out to ride on the nice dikes around the city near the riverside, trying out local food, crossing the rice fields, and just enjoy some sightseeing with buffalos and ducks wandering in the background.

Which off-the-beaten-track restaurant in Hanoi would you recommend visitors to check out?

It is a place called Puku, a 10-minute drive from the Pullman Hanoi in a small side road at the beginning of what the locals call the 'Silk Street'. No cars are allowed in there so it is quite peaceful; it is open 24/7 and serves a variety of international and local dishes. Nothing posh and expensive, just delicious food and a nice, calm ambience.

Which three places would you recommend first-time visitors visit in Hanoi and the surrounding area?

The Old Quarter with the Hoan Kiem Lake, the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum surrounded by old colonial buildings, and just a walking distance from the hotel the old Long Bien Bridge designed by Gustave Eiffel before



Ninh Binh

it is replaced – observe the traffic and local vendors while taking a break in the middle of the bridge high above the Red River to enjoy the surrounding scenery.

What would you recommend as a day trip for someone who has visited the city before?

Outside Hanoi, there is a very nice district called Hoa Lu in the province of Ninh Binh which offers relaxing boat trips with views of spectacular rock formations amid small villages along the river. This is only one-and-a-half hours away by car from Hanoi.

What local food and handicrafts make ideal gifts from Hanoi?

Silk and lacquerware with nice paintings are ideal souvenir gifts from Hanoi. As for my favourite Vietnamese dish, I would recommend visitors to try the local *bun cha* – rice noodles served with fish fillet, fresh herbs and vegetables.

Destination Vietnam

NEWS IN A MINUTE

- 1 Hai Au Aviation introduces seaplane service**
Vietnam's first seaplane operator has launched services from Hanoi

to Halong Bay in September. Flights vary from 25 to 40 minutes, with the planes flying at an altitude between 150m and 3,000m. Charter services

are also available. Hai Au Aviation uses 12-passenger Cessna Grand Caravans for the service. Visit www.seaplanes.vn for more details.

- 2 Lotte Hotel Hanoi debuts**
Hanoi welcomed a new five-star property with the opening of the 318-room Lotte Hanoi Hotel in September. Located in the city's Old Quarter, it's one of only a couple of international luxury hotels to have opened in Hanoi over the last five years. Its F&B outlets include Vietnam's first Michelin-starred dim sum restaurant, Tim Ho Wan, and Pharaoh's Bar. It also features the Evian Spa and three events spaces, including the 1,200 pax Crystal Ballroom.

- 3 New lease of life for Phu Quoc**
The southern island of Phu Quoc welcomed a new direct two-times-weekly service from Singapore on November 2 using Vietnam Airlines' Airbus 321 aircraft. The national carrier is also starting a Phu Quoc-Siem Reap service on December 18 with three flights a week using ATR-72 aircraft.

This month, luxury hotel operator Vinpearl also opened a 750-key resort, an amusement park and 18-hole golf course on the island, with another 750-key resort planned for 2015. Since March this year, the government has implemented a 30-day visa-free entry for international visitors to Phu Quoc.

- 4 VietJet Air launches Siem Reap, Taipei routes**

Vietnamese LCC, VietJet Air, is on an expansion drive, having launched several international routes this year.

On November 3 it launched a daily Hanoi-Siem Reap service, connecting the Vietnamese capital and home of Angkor Wat in one hour and fifty minutes.

Come December 12, it will also begin five-times-weekly services between Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) and Taipei.

In addition to these latest flights, the airline also offers direct flights from Hanoi and Danang to Seoul, and from HCMC to Bangkok and Singapore.





PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart 2015

"Explore Beyond Tourism - Celebrate Happiness"
February 4-6
Royal Banquet Hall, Thimphu, Bhutan

PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart is a three-day niche event that brings together tourism professionals involved in adventure travel and responsible tourism to discuss creating new opportunities for promoting environmental protection and social sustainability within the industry. The event will bring together the public and private sectors to address issues facing the adventure travel, responsible and sustainable tourism industries.



The conference and travel mart will take place in the Kingdom's capital city of Thimphu, located in the western Bhutan region. The capital is the main centre of commerce, religion and government in the kingdom. The city is home to spectacular landscapes, monasteries and sacred sites, including the famous Tashichho Dzong, National Memorial Chorten, Folk Heritage Museum, Textile Museum, a variety of markets and the Buddha Dordenma Statue. Bhutan has declared the Visit Bhutan 2015 to celebrate the 60th birth anniversary of the 4th King His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk.

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A unique opportunity to network, celebrate happiness, and discover the magical wonders of Bhutan.

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Destination Philippines

Rosa Ocampo looks at how the country is powering up its marketing campaign, while Marianne Carandang spotlights Palawan's potential

The Chocolate Hills in Bohol

Destination in numbers

3,124,878

Number of international arrivals to the Philippines from January to August 2014, a year-on-year increase of 2.9 per cent

4.6%

The year-on-year percentage drop in arrivals from top source market South Korea during the same period

BACK ON BOTH FEET

The Philippines has experienced a string of natural catastrophes and testy diplomatic relations in recent years, but the country has also shown immense resilience to bounce back from the misfortunes that have wrecked havoc on its tourism industry.

Tourists are returning to Bohol, a year after the earthquake clobbered its heritage and natural attractions. Parts of Palawan, Boracay and Cebu damaged in varying degrees by super typhoon Haiyan last November have since recovered.

The inbound market is poised for some growth, with international arrivals rising 2.9 per cent year-on-year to 3,124,878 from January to August 2014. Among its traditional source markets, China and Japan both recorded single-digit growth of about six per cent.

A closer look at inbound numbers, however, also reveals pressing concerns about major source markets in Asia. South Korea – the Philippines' top source market with around 25 per cent market share – has slowed for the first time in years. South Korean arrivals dropped 4.6 per cent year-on-year to 783,852 in the

first seven months of this year.

The 6.8 per cent increase in arrivals from the fourth biggest market, China, is expected to be wiped out in September when Beijing advised its citizens not to travel to the Philippines due to safety and security concerns.

The lifting of travel bans by Taiwan and Hong Kong in the last year or so did not help to improve visitor arrivals. Taiwanese arrivals dipped 6.1 per cent to 97,004 while Hong Kong footfalls fell 12.3 per cent to 75,777.

The Russian market slid 6.8 per cent to 20,254 arrivals during the same period, owing to the Ukraine crisis, the bankruptcy of several big tour operators and Western sanctions against Russia. The slowdown is expected for the rest of the year, said Ala Enache, Russian market sales executive, Blue Horizons Travel and Tours.

In response to the challenge of growing these declining Asian markets while tapping others, particularly the mid- and longhaul markets, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) has tweaked the *It's More Fun in the Philippines* campaign earlier this year to give a stronger focus on specific destinations instead of the entire country.

The new approach seeks to step up the "power branding" and overcome the lack of awareness of these tourist destinations, explained Domingo Ramon Enerio III, COO of TPB. He added that although only Tacloban and few other provinces felt Haiyan's fury, tourists thought the whole Philippines was devastated.

The campaign will also ramp up its focus on Europe, a small but steadily growing market after Philippine Airlines began direct services from Manila to London last year, Enerio informed. Other markets targeted are the Muslim, Middle Eastern, Indian and other new Asian markets, as well as Russia and Eastern Europe.

New destinations being promoted include Aurora in Quezon, Cagayan and the Ilocos region in the north, which pack heritage and adventure attractions apart from sun, sea and sand, informed John Paul Cabalza, president, Philippine Travel Agencies Association.

Meanwhile, thanks to a robust economy and investment surge, Manila's room supply is expected to increase by 30 per cent over the next three years. City of Dreams Manila, the second integrated resort at the Manila Bay Entertainment City, will open this month with 981 keys.

According to STR Global, the Philippines is one of Asia's strongest performers which, for the period January to August 2014, posted a 3.6 per cent increase in hotel occupancy to 69.4 per cent from a year ago; a 4.1 per cent in ADR to 5,651.5 pesos (US\$127.60) and a 7.9 per cent rise in RevPAR to 3,809.05 pesos.

On the other hand, the country still faces longstanding issues in its tourist infrastructure. Accessibility has improved after the addition of air service agreements and new routes launched by LCCs. However, the recent transfer of five foreign carriers from Terminal 1 to Terminal 3 at Manila's congested Ninoy Aquino International Airport is just a mere palliative; a new, modern and bigger airport is still needed.

On a brighter note, airports in secondary gateways such as Bohol, Boracay, Palawan and Cagayan de Oro are currently being built or upgraded.

Urging more relaxed visa policies, Angel Ramos Bognot, president and managing director, Afro Asian Travel and Tours, said: "Japan has eased visa policies for many Asian travellers. Thailand has waived visa fees for Chinese and Taiwanese tourists... We should ease visa restrictions to lure more tourists into the country."

Destination Philippines

Viewpoint

What should the Philippines do to develop its potential in high-end tourism?

Guy Louis Roger, president, Asiana Pearl Vision

“The Philippines should be promoted not only for mass tourism but also for the high-end clientele, especially in Europe. Amid the international competition, the Philippine hospitality industry and all tourism stakeholders must improve their quality of service and offer real value for money.

The Philippines should look at Thailand and Bali, which are performing very well in many aspects of tourism.

Hotel developers should consider building holiday villas. With good management and service quality, they can bring more high-end clientele. The Philippines is 20 years late; Bali and Thailand have invested in villas many years ago.”



How to sell Calamian Islands



DO First-time island-hoppers must ride out in native outrigger boats and swim at the **Twin Lagoons** and **Kayangan Lake**; and stop by **Banol Beach**, **Banana Island**, or **Malcapuya**. Mid- to advanced-level divers have 12 Japanese WWII shipwreck sites to choose from, with customised dive trips that can be arranged between Coron and El Nido, as well as four- to seven-day liveaboard expeditions connecting Palawan to Mindoro, including **Apo Reef**, 20km off Mindoro’s western coast.

SEE Brave the still partly rough roads from **Busuanga** town, or arrive by boat through thick mangrove forests to **Calauit Safari Park** to see African zebras and giraffes, ostrich and local deer.

EAT Vegetarians and meat eaters alike will take to the lip-smacking Lebanese cuisine, as well as live shawarma grill selections and shisha at **Huma Island Resort and Spa’s** hilltop restaurant **Al Fairuz**. The chic outdoor lounge, with its majestic view of the nearby islands, is a perfect spot for watching the sunset.

STAY Tropical desert island getaway **Sangat Island Dive Resort**, on the northernmost side of Coron Bay, offers beachside or hillside cottages as well as slightly larger chalets built with bamboo and nipa palm. Its Lambingan Villa has a private beachfront and its own ‘shower cave’.



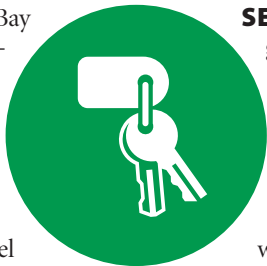
TRIED & TESTED Busuanga Bay Lodge



Marianne Carandang tries out this remotely located resort and finds it great for short staycations.

open-air sports bar and a large widescreen TV. A wine cellar area also serves a private dining area for 16-18 pax.

LOCATION Busuanga Bay Lodge is a striking cliffside resort nestled in the quiet pristine cove that is Busuanga Bay. The lobby leads out to a stunning infinity pool with imposing views for miles. Neighbouring resorts in the cove include Puerto del Sol and Al Faro.



SERVICE Friendly staff will greet you and check that you’re okay. It is easy to get lost, and they are quick to help you get back to where you want to go.

VERDICT Some uphill walking is needed to get around the resort’s various facilities, and part of the main road leading to the resort is still not paved, which slows down travel. Because of its remote location, be ready to get out by boat, dive and take advantage of its watersports facilities. It will do wonderfully for staycations.

ROOMS There are 14 oversized club rooms and picturesque casitas in Bermuda-style architecture that stud the hillscape. Twenty-four new apartment-style rooms in the lower area of the complex are under construction. My Palawan furniture-accented room comes with a very comfortable bed and a large bathroom. On the night of my stay, I sat out in the balcony, watching the moon’s reflection over the bay and contemplating in magical silence.

FACILITIES The resort has its own dock facility, with boats, jet skis, and fishing boats for rent and various water gear. A yacht club that can sell materials and provide refuelling is in the works, as the resort welcomes ultra-select guests coming in their own boats. Unfortunately, all phone carrier signals except Smart were non-existent; the resort’s own Wi-Fi was also weak.

F&B The lobby restaurant bar serves all-day Filipino and Continental, also by the poolside deck. Down in the marina is an



Name Busuanga Bay Lodge, Coron, Palawan
No. of rooms 14 (with 24 more coming)
Rate High season rates start at 6,400++ pesos (US\$142++) for superior club rooms, 9,000++ pesos at peak season
Contact details
Tel (63-2) 625-8627
Email: reservations@busuangabaylodge.com
Website: www.busuangabaylodge.com

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 New resorts across Philippines

Infinity Resort in Puerto Galera, Mindoro, opened last year with 20 well-appointed rooms, a 400m² infinity pool and a Jacuzzi. It offers watersports facilities, and is near Puerto Galera's numerous diving and snorkelling locations.

Earlier this year, Ayala Land and subsidiary Ten Knots Group also broke ground on their **Lio resort** development in El Nido, which is being positioned as an ecologically sustainable tourism destination. The 100ha project is located in Barangay Villa Libertad within Bacuit Bay on northern Palawan's west coast, facing the beach on one side and mountains on the other. In the first phase, a township consisting of bed and breakfasts, resorts, shops and dining establishments will come up.

Also in Palawan, new from November is the 32-room **Funny Lion Inn**, Amorita's fourth property in the Philippines. Designed in the brand's signature youthful vibe, it has rooms in three categories: King (double room), Cub (twin room) and four Pride rooms, which have a view of Coron Bay.

Meanwhile, at the southwest tip of Bohol in Danao, Panglao Island, Bohol Be Resorts is opening its second resort, **Be Bohol**, in January 2015 with 208 rooms, which includes couples- and family-sized villas, as well as a 290m² ballroom for 200-300 pax. The Group is planning two more resorts in Cebu – one in Olanigo Island, near Mactan, and another in Malapascua island.

2 Dive cruises in southern and northern Palawan

Discovery Fleet offers seasonal



Infinity Resort

inter-island cruising to two main destinations in Palawan with its flagship vessel *M/V Discovery Palawan*, which was renovated in 2013.

The first route is Puerto Princesa-Tubbataha in southern Palawan, operating from March to June annually. The ship takes in 32 divers (three day dives, one night dive), and provides full rental equipment, cleaning and storage. The 8D/7N Northern Route operating from October to March after the typhoon season welcomes 16 divers and/or 24-26 pax (non-divers). The Northern Route begins with Pandan Island, Batangas, passes by Apo Reef in Mindoro, then sails for five days around the Calamian Islands (Coron, Culion, Dibotonai, Sangat, North Cay and Dimakya Island). A shorter, five-day Northern Route itinerary will be introduced this month.

The ship has 14 fully air conditioned cabins, nitrox and medical oxygen, a divers' wet area and an indoor salon/camera area.

3 Boutique charter services

Three boutique carriers have arisen in the last year to fill the gap in demand for flights connecting different parts of Palawan.

Interisland Airlines, operated by Elite Aviation, focuses primarily on the Romblon-Kalibo-Caticlan triangle, but can fly customised routes for small groups, and is promoting a Coron-Boracay route.

Skyjet, which is also a domestic commercial carrier to Baler, Boracay, and Batanes, also plans to connect Coron to Boracay.

Air Juan, which is based in Puerto Princesa, flies to any part of Palawan, including Coron and Cuyo.

Interisland and Air Juan can be booked for multi-destination private plane services, while Skyjet will seek to fill its 50-seater planes for unscheduled flights.

4 Unique tours for the adventurous

The Bohol earthquake has resulted



© Yvette C. Lee. All rights reserved. Discovery Fleet

in new geologic transformations in the province – some lands disappeared while new ones rose from the sea, and portions of Chocolate Hills were sliced. The **Bohol GeoScience tour** is thus ideal for geologists, students and the curious, who can take a peek at the landscape changes.

Over in Manila, **Jeepney Tours** has customised colourful jeepneys into air-conditioned, wireless video machines on wheels, featuring comfortable seats and higher ceiling so passengers can tour the city standing up while belting out their favourite tunes. There's also a built-in cooler with beer, soda and water on board.

Environment-conscious visitors can also traverse Manila's Walled City, Intramuros, on a **bambike**, a bicycle made of bamboo and abaca fiber. Lightweight yet safe and sturdy, bambikes are handcrafted in adherence to fair trade and sustainable building principles by members of Gawad Kalinga, a local NGO.

DISCOVERY LEISURE COMPANY BOOSTS DISTRIBUTION TO TAP INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

ITB ASIA, SINGAPORE Having already cultivated a strong base of local guests, Filipino hotel group The Discovery Leisure Company is ready to make waves in international markets as part of its next phase of growth, with plans to adopt a suite of GDS, booking engine and RFP solutions by 1Q2015.

By then, it would have also signed a hotel representation company to help drum up awareness abroad, shared group director of sales & marketing, Odette Huang.

Formerly from Royal Plaza on Scotts Singapore for nine years, Huang joined Discovery five months ago and has since built up a small digital team, which will support her in the area of e-commerce and marketing, as well as data analytics.

With five hotels and resorts spanning mid- to upscale, Discovery caters for both regular and extended stays. In Manila, it has the 220-room Discovery Suites in Ortigas and will open the 140-key Discovery Primea in Makati early next year.

Discovery's three other properties are also new or undergoing renovation – the B&B-style, seven-key Discovery Country Suites Tagaytay near Manila will reopen

next month, the 88-key Discovery Shores Boracay is adding 12 villas, and the 55-key Club Paradise in Coron, Palawan was acquired last September, with the island destination undergoing refurbishment.

"Without proper distribution we would be dependent on wholesale travel. But now we know that places like Boracay and Palawan are becoming repeat destinations. Many have booked their initial trips through wholesalers but afterwards, they are more than happy to book on their own," said Huang, adding that almost a quarter of Discovery's guests are repeats.

About 30-40 per cent of Discovery's resort bookings come from wholesale, although she sees this share shifting in future. A loyalty programme for consumers was also launched in June.

"(With all these new initiatives), we're looking at 20 per cent growth in revenue for 2015, and that's modest. This year, we grew 12 per cent," she said.

While nearly half of resort business is local, overseas markets that are coming include Russia, China, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Australia, the US, and Europe. – **Gracia Chiang**

NEW CAMPAIGN MUSIC TO YOUNG ONES, 'YOUNG ONCE'

ITB ASIA, SINGAPORE The Philippine Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) officially launched Visit the Philippines Year 2015 in Singapore in October, marking the first unveiling of the campaign outside the Philippines. Key to the campaign is the first-ever MTV Music Evolution event, brainchild of Viacom International Media Networks Asia's MTV and TPB.

Scheduled to take place in Manila in 2Q15, the concert will explore the evolution of a music genre by bringing together regional or local artistes in that field.

Tourism secretary Ramon R Jimenez said: "Through our partnership with MTV, young people from around the world will now have the opportunity to share in this passion and experience why and how the music culture is even more fun in the Philippines."

Paras Sharma, vice president-MTV, Comedy Central & Digital Media (Asia), Viacom International Media Networks Asia said the event reinforces the Philippines' image as a choice destination for youth travellers by using music as a

key platform, "something which we've done with Malta, Scotland, Malaysia and Northern Ireland", adding that the audience is expected to be in the "tens of thousands". Details on the venue and artist line-up will be announced later.

Asked if this event indicates the NTO's focus on the youth market, Domingo Ramon C Enerio III, COO, TPB, replied: "We would like a lot more youth travellers coming in – not just the young ones but also the 'young once'."

Besides partnering major tour operators specialising in youth travel and offering incentives for the trade to experience the event, TPB is already working on a "big partnership with STA Travel" for a separate project, Enerio shared.

"There are so many music and art festivals lined up that we can now use to sharpen the focus on the youth market," he added.

The Philippines is aiming for 8.6 million arrivals in 2015 and, besides the youth market, will also focus on South Korea and the US. – **Hannah Koh**



Jimenez: experience our music culture

Social

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

GALLERY

GWYNETH TAKES A SINGAPORE SWIM

Gwyneth Paltrow was in Singapore to celebrate the launch of British Airways new Airbus A380, which began flying three times a week between London and Singapore from October 29.

Clockwise from top right: Forward-facing and back-facing seats in the Club World business class cabins; regional general manager, South-east Asia, Robert Williams, getting ready for longhaul in the First Class seat; Gwyneth Paltrow suspended on the Club World seat in the middle of Marina Bay Sands Singapore's infinity pool; area general manager, Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa, David Cassidy, in the Club World seat



All photos except Gwyneth Paltrow by Sim Kok Chiew



APPOINTMENTS



Katrina Leung



Jon Bourbaud

KATRINA LEUNG
NOW Executive director, ITB Asia
THEN Country managing director of conference organiser, Terrapinn Asia

CHRISTIAN LUKEY
NOW Regional director of hotel distribution, Amadeus Asia-Pacific
THEN Commercial director of HRS



Jack Bartholomew



Anne Johnston

KARIN SHEPPARD
NOW InterContinental Hotels Group COO for Australasia, Japan, Korea & Asia, Middle East and Africa franchising
THEN Chief commercial officer for the same region

MAEL VASTINE
NOW General manager, OZO Wesley Hong Kong
THEN Resident manager, Ibis Hong Kong Central and Sheung Wan Hotel

TONY LI
NOW General manager, Shama Heda Hangzhou
THEN General manager, Shangri-La Hangzhou

JACK BARTHOLOMEW
NOW Regional director for Indochina, Khiri Travel
THEN General manager, Khiri Travel Cambodia

RUBEN DERKSEN
NOW General manager, Khiri Travel Sri Lanka
THEN General manager, Khiri Travel Laos

JON BOURBAUD
NOW General manager, Apple Tree Group Laos
THEN General manager, Apple Tree Group Bayan Lodge

ANNE JOHNSTON
NOW General manager, Holiday Inn Singapore Atrium
THEN General manager, Crowne Plaza Bratislava

TRADE CALENDAR SEE YOU AT...



Hospitality Investment World Thailand
19-20 November, Bangkok

Over 200 hotel owners, operators, investors and experts will come together to access the opportunities in one of Asia's most popular hospitality investment destinations.



China International Travel Mart
14-16 November, Shanghai

Jointly organised by China National Tourism Administration and other tourism stakeholders, the annual event will have two days of B2B talks before it opens to the public.



Cruise-Shipping Asia Pacific 2014
20-21 November, Hong Kong

Said to be the only annual event focused on the entire Asia-Pacific cruise market, it will include a tradeshow, conference programme and travel agency training.



International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM)
1-4 December, Cannes

ILTM's flagship event introduces global travel buyers to luxury travel experiences. Some 3,000 buyers and suppliers will be invited to make up to 52 one-to-one appointments.

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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

Most commented

RED APPLE BITES INTO THE INDIAN MARKET
It's a new learning curve in handling Indian travellers, which can be so different from the regular Asian traveller or European traveller. The pricing should be right from the beginning before you start the market for business. Pressure will avalanche for cheaper and cheaper prices as competition among the Indian travel consultants is great. – Eric Sinnya

INDONESIA TO THROW VISA REQUIREMENTS OUT THE WINDOW FOR MAIN SOURCE MARKETS
Indonesia should also look at draconian laws/fees that currently apply to foreign expats living there. Encourage foreigners to live, who will then spend more and boost the economy. Take a leaf out of Malaysia's book Indonesia, they allow three-month VoAs for free. – Stephen Flynn



BORACAY HOTELS DIVERSIFY SOURCE MARKETS AFTER CHINA TRAVEL BAN
I think there's a silver lining to it as more European arrivals may bring opportunities for more branded properties to open up. – Eric Ong

Tweets

THIS YEAR’S WORLD TRAVEL MARKET IN LONDON TOOK PLACE FROM NOVEMBER 3-6, WHERE A LARGE NUMBER OF TRAVEL TRADE PROFESSIONALS GATHERED TO NETWORK, DO BUSINESS AND HAVE A BALL!

@WTM_London Lots of exciting things happening today in the UK&Ireland region at #WTM14 @RipleysLondon @wbstudiotour @HRP_palaces



@DanielPearce So this is the actual piano that The Beatles played on Magical Mystery Tour at Abbey Road.... @VISITFLORIDA #WTM14

@EmbassyMagazine Round the #WTM14 in 80 min. Last stop: Guinness at #Ireland. Good things come to those who wait @IrelandEmbGB

Instagram



Brand USA wants more South-east Asian travellers, launching in 2015 an online training programme for travel agencies and fam trips. New in its marketing push will be the focus on the great outdoors and culinary offerings.



Tonight's classy opening for the #Travelrave Leaders Gala was held at recently reopened grand dame of Singapore theatre, the Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall. The Travel Business Leader award for 2014 went to Stephen Ho, APAC president, Starwood Hotels & Resorts. Congratulations!



#Philippines tourism secretary Ramon R Jimenez Jr encourages “co-opetition” between #ASEAN countries at The Philippines in 2015 trade dinner: “Changi is the Philippines' best airport; Boracay is Singapore's best beach.”

@challenor Tourism Malaysia's Secretary General cuts a ribbon on the stand to mark the start of #WTM14

@TheTravelCamel Comparing Indiana Jones hats at the @VisitJordan stand at @WTM_London I need to purchase a whip. #WTM14



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TRAVEL PURSUITS

TRAVEL INDUSTRY VERSUS REAL WORLD

Industry phase	Real-world meaning
We will be boarding the flight shortly	We have a problem
Rate for this car type is \$25 daily	+ insurance waiver (and you pay the first \$500), + air conditioning, + automatic, + second driver, + taxes, and maximum 100km daily
This flight transits ABC airport	You have a five-hour stopover
Our hotel check-out time is 12.00	Check out at 11.00 if you want to avoid a queue
Your gate is a 15-min walk from here	Run!

QUIZ

- Which airline plans to axe its flights to Mumbai and Tokyo?
- Which Asian destination has just introduced e-visas?
- Who is the odd one out – Richard Branson, Conrad Hilton, Ho Kwon Ping, Adrian Zecha?
- Outside Asia: Which company recently overtook Expedia to become the world's largest online travel group?
- History: What did Kuok Hotels change its name to?

(1) Virgin Atlantic, early-2015. It plans to concentrate more on its trans-Atlantic links, dropping flights to Australia this year but maintaining its Hong Kong and Shanghai routes. He (2) Myanmar, available only for tourists, each costs a hefty US\$50. (3) Richard Branson. He founded the airline, Virgin Atlantic. The others founded hotel companies – Hilton, the eponymous hotel group; Ho, Banyan Tree; Zecha, Amararesorts. (4) Priceline, in terms of gross book- ings in the first-half, Expedia's US\$25.7 billion was bettered by Priceline's US\$25.8 billion. Shangri-La Hotels, in 1983. In 1983, The original company was based in Penang but registered in Hong Kong, as is SLH.



EDITORIAL
Karen Yue Group Editor
karen.yue@ttgasia.com
Gracia Chiang Deputy Group Editor
gracia.chiang@ttgasia.com
Hannah Koh Assistant Editor, TTG Asia Online
hannah.koh@ttgasia.com
Paige Lee Assistant Editor, Singapore
lee.peiqi@ttgasia.com
Xinyi Liang-Pholsena Assistant Editor, Thailand/Indochina
liang.xinyi@ttgasia.com
Kathy Neo Copy Editor
kathy.neo@ttgasia.com
S Puvaneswary Editor, Malaysia/Brunei
puvanes@ttgasia.com
Mimi Hudoyo Editor, Indonesia
idmfasia@cbn.net.id
Sim Kok Chwee Correspondent-at-large
aviasian.images@gmail.com
Greg Lowe Correspondent, Thailand
ttg@thegreglowe.com
Oliver Slow, Sid Dhartha Correspondents, Myanmar
oslow99@gmail.com, siddhartha.ttgasia@gmail.com
Marianne Carandang, Rosa Ocampo
Correspondents, The Philippines
marianne.carandang@ttgasia.com, rosa.ocampo@gmail.com
Prudence Lui Correspondent, Hong Kong
prului@yahoo.com
Caroline Boey Senior Correspondent, China & Special Projects
caroline.boey@ttgasia.com
Shekhar Niyogi Chief Correspondent, India
shekhar.niyogi@ttgasia.com
Rohit Kaul Correspondent, New Delhi
rohit.kaul@ttgasia.com
Feisal Samath Correspondent, Sri Lanka/Maldives
feizalsam@gmail.com
Redmond Sia, Goh Meng Yong Creative Designers
Lina Tan Editorial Assistant
SALES & MARKETING
Michael Chow Group Publisher
michael.chow@ttgasia.com
Shirley Tan Senior Business Manager
shirley.tan@ttgasia.com
Karen Cheung Senior Business Manager
karen.cheung@ttgasia.com
Jonathan Yap Senior Business Manager
jonathan.yap@ttgasia.com
Cheryl Tan Corporate Marketing Manager
cheryl.tan@ttgasia.com
Stephanie Toh Marketing Executive
stephanie.toh@ttgasia.com
Cheryl Lim Advertisement Administration Manager
cheryl.lim@ttgasia.com
Carol Cheng Assistant Manager Administration and Marketing
carol.cheng@ttgasia.com

PUBLISHING SERVICES
Tony Yeo Division Manager
Haze Loh Senior Creative Designer
Lynn Lim Web Executive
Carol Wong Senior Circulation Executive

TTG ASIA MEDIA
Darren Ng Managing Director
darren.ng@ttgasia.com
Raini Hamdi Senior Editor
raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com

OFFICES
SINGAPORE 1 Science Park Road #04-07 The Capricorn,
Singapore Science Park II, Singapore 117528
Tel: (65) 6395-7575 Fax: (65) 6536-0896
contact@ttgasia.com; www.ttgasia.com
HONG KONG Unit 2011, 20/F Harbour Center,
25 Harbour Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2237-7174 Fax: (852)2237-7227

40th Anniversary
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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.





CONFERENCE 2014

Technology & The 5Cs

30 October 2014 | Marina Bay Sands, Singapore

Travel agencies and other like-minded trade professionals gathered for TTG Asia's annual conference, held as part of the 2014 ITB Asia official programme. The 3-hour power-packed session saw technology leaders share how Content, Channels, Customer marketing and C-Level strategy is changing and solutions that the industry can adopt stay ahead. Conference attendees discovered what it means for the industry to have a mobile-first approach, build a tech-savvy workforce, expand content and launch campaigns with technology.



TTG Asia's Gracia Chiang (left) and her speakers, Dynasty Travel's Clifford Neo, Amadeus Asia-Pacific's Angel Gallego, Diethelm Travel's Maarten Groeneveld, Microsoft Dynamics Asia's John Chan, Bong SC and TTG Asia Media's Darren Ng and Raini Hamdi.



Dynasty Travel brings home the honor of being the **TTG Asia 40tude Innovator Award** winner with their efforts in driving staff mobility and efficiency via their Tourix System.



Fusing travel with technology. The conference gathered trade professionals who are as passionate as we are in technology and travel.



TTG Asia Media's Darren Ng welcomes all TTG Asia Conference 2014 attendees.

Above: Dynasty Travel's Managing Director, Clifford Neo with TTG Asia Media's Managing Director, Darren Ng



GFK Singapore's Laurens van der Oever and Anthony Tan.



Thai Airways International's Pariya Chulkaratana and Preyanan Mongkolsri.



Fly Abroad Australia's Ashwini Sonthalia and Abhishek Sonthalia.



Tripanzee Singapore's Ho Siang Twang and Tham Shimming Shawn.



Giamso International Tours Singapore's Helen Giam and Temasek Polytechnic's John Low.



Ayurva Traveller Sri Lanka's Nilusha Kodithuwakku and Elevated Training Singapore's Nisha.



TTG Travel Trade Publishing's Michael Chow and Fascinating Holidays Singapore's David Teo.



The team behind Dynasty Travel's award-winning Tourix System, with TTG Asia Media's Darren Ng (3rd from left).

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