

TTG

A S I A

December 13, 2013 – January 16, 2014
No. 1699

Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year!

Year-end Issue

Newsmakers 2013 A recap of the hottest stories in the Asian travel trade as covered by our team of reporters in the region, and the smelliest news of the year – page 2 • **If I were a hotel brand, I'd be...** Hotel CEOs reveal which brand in their portfolio best fits their personality – page 4 • **NTOs look back** Asian countries highlight their milestone achievements – page 6 • **My favourite fam** Fam trips are fertile grounds for fresh product inspiration. Travel buyers share their best – page 8 • **Virtual high** Industry experts pick the top apps, gadgets and websites that were eyeball grabbing – page 10 • **No challenge too big, no detail too small** Leading attractions describe their most unusual requests – page 12 • **Pioneering new routes** From sky to sea, airline and cruise executives recount their most exciting new destinations and ports of call – page 14 • **That's all folks** The *TTG Asia* team recollects the outstanding and not-so-great moments encountered while working the ground – page 16

NEWSMAKERS 2013

We wrote. You read and responded. Here's a recap of the hottest stories in the Asian travel trade as covered by *TTG Asia's* team of reporters and correspondents in the region

Friday . December 13, 2013

Asia-Pacific's leading travel trade business resource since 1974

Hottest Features*

- Travel companies are being put through the washer. After a good tumble, who will come out dry and unruffled, with more shelf life yet?
- Despite Asian spas becoming more holistic, outbound travel agencies say the regional wellness market remains miniscule for them.
- Gone are the days when budget hotels are sniffed at by both developers and tourists. Economy has never been sexier.
- As theme parks flourish in Asia, expert producers urge differentiation through storyline.
- Travel consultants are set to enjoy cheaper five stars and better choices in the region.
- Short-term vacation rental websites are fast gaining popularity worldwide as more travellers cosy up to rental apartments or homes in place of the traditional hotel experience.
- In a perfect world, hotels would rely on only their own direct channels. However, the world is not perfect: OTAs, wholesalers and GDSs continue to wield power today, although in some markets more than others.

* Most popular feature-length articles published in *TTG Asia* in 2013, based on page views for Editor's Pick

TTG Asia this week

In Memoriam

Peter Gautschi, philanthropist and hotelier who served The Peninsula Group for five decades, died on June 6 in a car crash in Myanmar. He was on his way to help the underprivileged.

Philip Randolph Hill died on July 22 in his Sanur residence in Bali after battling a long illness. The hotelier was last serving the Kima Bajo Resort & Spa in Manado, Indonesia.

Edwin Yeow, former joint managing director and senior vice president marketing of Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts, died on August 28 following a long battle with cancer.

Julia Noordraven, president-director of Vista Express Tour & Travel, a pioneer travel company in Indonesia, died on November 12. She was 81 years old.

Alain Guernier died on November 23 in China after a nine-month fight with bladder cancer. The hotelier spent most his hotel career in Hong Kong with companies such as Holiday Inn Asia, Omni Hotels Asia and Allison International Hotels & Resorts.

Best of Page 1 Stories in TTG Asia



Raini Hamdi

China's new policy on zero-cost tours have actually benefited quality tourism players. Above, a Chinese luxury traveller in the Maldives

- Paving path to recovery:** As central Philippines picks up the pieces after Typhoon Haiyan and a 7.2-magnitude earthquake, one of the country's biggest challenges is how to bring back the tourists (November 29 issue)
- US shutdown dents tourism:** Without a determinable end in sight, the partial shutdown of the US government is starting to cast a gloom over travel to the country although the long-term impacts of the crisis are yet to be discernible (October 18 issue)
- China rules out zero-cost tours:** Inbound operators in Asia are bracing themselves for a temporary drop in bookings from China come October, when a new tourism policy by Beijing takes effect (September 6 issue)
- 80 days of summer woe for airlines:** Dubai International Airport, already one of the world's busiest, causes major disruption to traffic as it undertakes an 80-day runway enhancement project from May 1, 2014 (August 23 issue)
- Vying for Muslims:** Japan National Tourist Organization is ramping up its focus on Muslim tourists from South-east Asia (April 5 issue)

Most Read on TTG Asia e-Daily*

- Edwin Yeow passes away, August 28
- Peter Gautschi dies in car crash in Myanmar, June 10
- Japan's visa waiver for Thais, Malaysians to start July 1, June 26
- Park Regis' trademark registration blocked in Singapore, December 2
- Singapore's tourism growth slows, March 14

* Culled from Google analytics from January 1 to December 3

Hottest Online Polls 2013

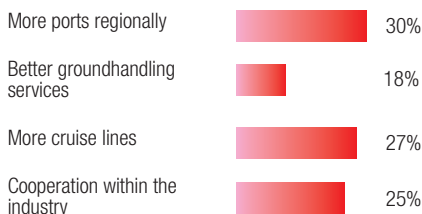
Does Indonesia need more hotel rooms?

Total Vote: 207



What is most urgently required for South-east Asia's cruise sector to develop?

Total Vote: 97



instagram.com/ttgasia



Rocker Rafin at TTG awards



Visit Japan mart opening



Accor walks the talk

Most Commented

- Readers couldn't agree more with our story, *Thailand must avoid reaching breaking point: tourism secretary*. Bernard from Tanzania said mass tourism is detrimental in the long run. David Kevan said Chic Locations UK is conscious many Thai destinations are reaching saturation point.
- Japan's Muslim tourist-friendly initiatives won kudos. Nugroho Setiamadji from Indonesia said it would help grow this segment further.
- RIP, hotel marketing?* Some marketers agreed. Others, like Nelli Yong of Starwood Hotels & Resorts, assured "there are brand marketers in the world who truly understand the craft".
- China market too dominant in some destinations? McGordon from Hong Kong felt it's racist to say that; Adrian from Tokyo said the bigger issue is a real cultural difference, which must be addressed.
- Many readers disagreed with the article, *Indonesia has to boost hotel supply by 50 per cent*. Reza Dranie from Bali said perhaps in places such as Kalimantan, Sulawesi or Sumatera – certainly not Bali.
- To the article, *Passengers weigh in on fat tax*, Nishioka Yoshihiro said: "I am 50kg heavy and allowed to carry 20kg luggage = 70kg. Many people seem to be more than 70kg and also allowed to carry 20kg. This is not fair."
- To the article, *Middle man's not dead yet*, Paul Humphreys urged hotels to "realise which side your bed is buttered and who has been working for the last 100 years to help you fill your rooms".

Rainmakers



"Frankly, no. But we are moving from a strong dependency on high rollers."

Pansy Ho, managing director, Shun Tak Holdings, when asked if Macau's market mix is now diversified.



"I've always said, we have to learn from other industries, not ours."

Harry Hohmeister, CEO, SWISS, who told us he takes best practices from everywhere but the airline industry which "in itself is bankrupt".



"I'm the striker. My brother defence. (Mum's) the coach...she also plays as well."

Vitanart Vathanakul, executive director, Royal Cliff Hotels Group & PEACH, Pattaya, who likens the family business to a football team.



"Don't be so impatient. You need a lot of ingredients to make a good soup and it is not just on our part, but everyone."

Pier Luigi Foschi, chairman/CEO, Carnival Asia, when we told him Carnival ought to be ashamed it has only four – out of 101 ships – based in Singapore for year-round cruising.



"Try to talk about the experiences. Don't sell the nuts and bolts."

Gavin Tollman, CEO, Trafalgar, on the need for travel consultants to evolve the way they clinch sales and communicate with changing customers.

And the smelliest news of the year goes to...

In case you missed the news, duly and diligently reported by *TTG Asia's* network of correspondents in the region, **Raini Hamdi** trawls through our bounty this year and presents this collection

Most inspiring news of the year

Travel agencies in the region are crossing boundaries in order to expand the size of their market. Some examples: Australia's Corporate Travel Management acquisition of Westminster Travel Hong Kong, effective January 2014, giving it a springboard to China; STIC Travel Group India, which set up its first overseas office in Singapore to capture Asian outbound to India and bring more Indian tourists to South-east Asia; Luxury Travel Vietnam, which opened a JV, Asia Premium Travel, in Cambodia, possibly the country's first high-end tour operator; Flight Centre Australia, which opened its fourth store in Singapore and promised to be a game-changer in how it engages today's customers; Asiatravel.com Holdings, which inked an agreement with China Xinhua Travel Network Services to power its online wholesale system.

Most shocking news of the year

The collapse of Oad Reizen. The outbound travel company in the Netherlands had been around since 1924, sending tour groups to some 60 countries across the world. Indonesian hoteliers and ground operators said they saw numbers from OAD declining but did not see its bankruptcy coming.

Over in Spain, one of the country's leading integrated travel groups and Asia specialists, Orizonia, also collapsed, while another, Globalia, announced plans to axe 175 of its travel agencies, a major source of clients for its longhaul tour operator, Latitudes.

Saddest news of the year

Mother Nature wielded a strong hand this year, destroying many lives and tourism livelihoods. Central Philippines is still reeling from the impact of Typhoon Haiyan. In October, Central Vietnam was whipped by a second typhoon in less than a month as Nari passed through, forcing the airport and coastal resorts to shut. Also in October, a 7.2-magnitude earthquake shook Bohol and Cebu, disrupting airport and ferry operations and destroying Bohol's road network.

In September, Typhoon Usagi, or Odette, resulted in flight delays and cancellations to countries in its path, Philippines, Hong Kong, Macau, China and Taiwan.

In mid-June, flash floods devastated the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand. Even though only Kedarnath was affected, arrivals plunged 85 per cent.

Happiest news of the year

Om Prakash, director of Inorbit Tours Mumbai and ex-chairman of the Travel Agents Association of India Western Region, issued an open invitation to travel consultants to beat stress by joining daily laughter sessions at the Laughter Club of Worli Seaface in Mumbai. According to Prakash, laughing helps us relax our muscles, activates our immune system, reduces our stress levels, and aids us in sleeping, eating and healing.

Sounds better than *Eat, Pray, Love*. Make sure you laugh your way through 2014.

Friendliest news of the year

Two fiercely competing NTOs, Japan and South Korea, joined hands to offer a single



Above, The Chedi one day, Anantara the next. See unfriendliest news of the year

vacation combining the two destinations. The initiative was a first between Japan National Tourist Organization and Korea Tourism Organization, and was driven by their directors in the Singapore office.

The 'Kimchi & Sushi' initiative was timely: Japan had recovered from the 3/11 tsunami, while South Korea's Gangnam Psyched the NTOs up for a successful tie-up. Four carriers and 13 local travel agencies were roped in to twin the destinations in time for the NATAS Travel Fair in February this year.

Unfriendliest news of the year

Minor Hotel Group (MHG) was jubilating that it signed up its 100th property, The Chedi Chiang Mai, and was rebranding it Anantara – but we noticed legal actions being initiated by General Hotel Management (GHM) against the owning company and MHG over the management takeover. GHM said “the manner in which it was carried out was wrongful and violated key conditions and criteria from the existing agreement”.

Incidentally, has anyone noticed that the acronym MHG is GHM in the reverse?

2013 saw a string of other high-profile owner-chain partings, including Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group from the Dhara Devi in Chiang Mai (“different aspirations for its management and long-term development”), Starwood Hotels & Resorts from Le Méridien Khao Lak (effective January 15, 2014) and Hilton Worldwide from the Iru Fushi in the Maldives (“unforeseen and due to factors outside Hilton's control”).

Sickest news of the year

A proposed plan to charge all foreign visitors to Thailand an entry fee of 500 baht (US\$15.50), the money collected to solve a problem caused by a tiny number of sick or injured foreign tourists who checked into hospitals in Thailand for treatment and left behind unpaid bills, running into millions of baht a month. So the health ministry came up with the idea of how the government could foot this bill, through the entry tax. Apparently the tourism ministry supported it.

Most glamorous news of the year

And the winner goes to... Zhangjiajie National Forest Park in Hunan province, which we reported had gained greater stardom fol-

lowing the premiere of 2009 science-fiction movie, *Avatar*. The movie was filmed at the natural attraction which has spectacular columnar land formations. Bet you didn't know that.

The number of tour groups to the national

Least surprising news of the year

The number of international standard rooms in Yangon is set to soar within the next four years as brands enter the as-yet untapped Myanmar market, predicted Jones Lang LaSalle's (JLL) Hotels and Hospitality Group.

While Myanmar's Ministry of Hotels & Tourism counted 9,110 hotel rooms in the city, JLL estimated that only 1,500-2,000 were of international standard due to previous economic sanctions that kept European and American hotel operators out. This would quadruple to about 7,000 rooms by 2017, it said.

Smelliest news of the year

A 4D3N Deluxe Durian Tour Package, jointly offered by Tourism Malaysia and EGL Tours Hong Kong, sold 800 packages, recording sales of RM1.3 million (US\$406,758) for 15 group departures to Penang in June and July. The package included durian sampling and buffets, along with a tour of Penang's popular heritage sites.

Our story, *Durian tours spiked sales*, led us to another trail, thanks to a reader, Lindsay Gasik, who directed us to her durian blog, www.yearofthedurian.com.

We must say the Durian Porn section under Photos is juicier than porn – go check it out.



Sonia Cheng

CEO, Rosewood Hotel Group, Hong Kong

Our three brands are a reflection of me in some ways. Rosewood for its appreciation of culture and a sense of place. New World Hotels – essentially contemporary Oriental – definitely my values and outlook. But since it's the end-of-year holiday season and I'm feeling festive, if I had to choose which brand is most 'me', I'd have to say pentahotels – it's fun, forward-thinking and grounded in the community – and I'd like to think I'm the same way.



I AM A RITZ-SEASONS.

Ricco M deBlank

CEO, Sun Hung Kai Properties (SHKP), Hong Kong

Editor's Note: No, deBlank hasn't created a new brand. He's a mix between Four Seasons and Ritz-Carlton, brands in SHKP's portfolio, which also includes a Crowne Plaza and a Holiday Inn Express, among others, in Hong Kong



I'm a Radisson Blu. It represents my passion for people, design, good food and of course, red wine!

Simon C Barlow, president, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, Asia-Pacific, Singapore

I'd like to think I'm a Best Western Premier (Best Western International's top brand tier). It is designed for the adventurous traveller who appreciates unique experiences, but with all the comforts of home. That reflects me quite well, as I like to travel and my job takes me all across the world. But at the end of the day, I love to come home and enjoy life with my family and friends.

Glenn de Souza

Vice president international operations, Asia and the Middle East, Best Western International, Thailand, pictured with wife Lorna

If I were a hotel brand, I'd be...

Raini Hamdi asks hotel CEOs which brand in their portfolio best fits their personality



Brett Butcher

CEO, Langham Hospitality Group, Hong Kong

I'm a Langham Place. I like keeping it real and authentic yet still casual and not compromising on the quality of experience.

Langham Place is young at heart with a strong creative and less formal outlook but still delivering an excellent, luxury travel experience.

I personally enjoy art and am continuously inspired by the new ideas delivered by art. Walking through a Langham Place hotel is like walking through an art gallery.

Jan Smits
CEO, InterContinental Hotels Group, Asia, Middle East & Africa, Singapore

I'm a Holiday Inn Express, a brand grounded in strong roots yet is fresh, young at heart, exciting and represents a new way of thinking for both guests and the business. I'd like to think that we're mixing things up in our region and paving the way for a bit of a game change in the industry. It is also fast expanding in countries that hold a special place in my heart – namely Indonesia, where I grew up, and Australia, a place I will always call home no matter where I am in the world.



Iqbal Jumabhoy
Managing director & group CEO, SilverNeedle Hospitality, Singapore

I'm a Next Hotel, as it conjures everything modern, sophisticated and sleek where everything works seamlessly and efficiently. I'd like to think of myself as being as efficient while I multi-task, although that is perhaps best left to others to judge.

Editor's Note: Next Hotel is a new brand by SilverNeedle Hospitality targeting modern business travellers. The first is scheduled to open in Brisbane in mid-2014.



Bill Heinecke
CEO & chairman, Minor Corporation, Thailand

I'm an Anantara. I created Anantara in 2001 because I felt there was a need for a hotel brand that combines luxury with a sense of adventure and discovery in exotic locations across the planet.

I take great pride in the destination experience philosophy that lies at the heart of the Anantara brand, and in my heart too. Each Anantara has been designed to capture the individual soul and culture of its location, be it in the mountains of the Golden Triangle, the unspoiled beauty of the Maldives, the towering red dunes of the Liwa Desert in Abu Dhabi or the limestone cliffs of Uluwatu, Bali.

Having grown up in Asia, I have always been attracted to the perfect blend of adventure, discovery, exoticism and culture. Anantara reflects all of these things and – I guess it also reflects what I, too, really love about life!



Thirayuth Chirathivat
CEO, Centara Hotels & Resorts, Thailand

I'm a Centara Grand, as I feel I have a mature personality that appreciates and enjoys the luxuries of life, but I don't feel the need to pay excessively for them. My office is at Centara Grand at CentralWorld, and I feel at home there, on top of the world every time I gaze out the window at the Bangkok cityscape.

But there is also a part of me that is Così, the brand we launched a year ago which is designed for those who want everything done quickly and are at ease with technology. Primarily, these are young people, and although I am now celebrating two years as CEO here, I like to think I'm still young and dynamic.

Arthur Kiong
CEO, Far East Hospitality Management, Singapore

Personally, Oasia resonates the most with my personality. The brand offers discerning travellers an opportunity to rejuvenate – away from the hustle and bustle of the city – and anticipates their travel needs ahead of time. Likewise, it's in my nature to enjoy tranquillity and comfort without excess.

I also love attention to details without being overstated. Similarly, Oasia presents just the right touch of world-class design without screaming for attention.



Martin Rinck
President, Hilton Worldwide Asia-Pacific, Singapore

If I were a brand, I'd be a Conrad because of its philosophy: The greatest luxury is the luxury of being yourself. I too believe luxury is not about price or opulence but the quality and memory of the experience. Conrad offers a freedom of choice, allowing guests to tailor their stay according to personal preferences, down to small details like how they like their messages delivered, preferred bathroom amenities and pillow selection. This highly personalised approach is a reflection of my own travel behaviours.

Conrad's contemporary design and service style also resonate strongly with me. I love the way Conrad strives to continue learning, growing and reinventing itself in a way that creates new opportunities and possibilities to engage with guests, similar to the philosophy of eternal learning I myself follow.

It is a brand for the future global luxury traveller. As well, it advocates Hilton Worldwide's values of giving back to the communities we work and live in, which is a true reflection of my own personal values.

In the end, richness is not in what we have but in who we are.



NTOs look back

Asian countries highlight their milestone achievements in 2013 as they break new ground

Contributed by Xinyi Liang-Pholsena, Lee Pei Qi, S Puvaneswary, Mimi Hudoyo, Karen Yue, Hannah Koh and Prudence Lui



Petronas Twin Towers



We recently reopened our tourism office in Istanbul, which will oversee our markets in Turkey, Armenia, Romania, Azerbaijan and Bulgaria. We have seen arrivals growing from these markets and with an office in Istanbul, we will be able to further promote Malaysia to these markets.

Azizan Noordin
Deputy director general, planning
Tourism Malaysia



Great South Gate



Our highlight of the year was definitely the restoration and reopening of Sungnyemun, the Great South Gate of Seoul. When erected in 1398, the massive two-storey pagoda-style gate served as a main entrance to the royal city of the Joseon Dynasty. For centuries, through trials and triumphs, the gate has stood watch over the capital and fittingly earned the title of National Treasure Number One. Sungnyemun is an enduring historical landmark as well as a symbol of South Korean hospitality.

Maureen O'Crowley
Vice president
Seoul Convention Bureau



River Safari Giant Panda Forest



2013 has been an exciting year for Singapore. We continued to elevate the country's status as a vibrant leisure destination with new attractions such as the River Safari, and exciting tourism content including the famed private art museum Pinacothèque de Paris and the season-ending Women's Tennis Association Championships. The launch of our Kickstart Fund this year has also enabled us to tap into creative minds and support the development of innovative lifestyle concepts.

Lynette Pang
Assistant chief executive, marketing group
Singapore Tourism Board



There were several milestone events but the most important one was the launch of our new global marketing and promotion tagline, *Amazing Thailand: It begins with the people*. This tagline is designed to reflect our positioning and core values. It is also an extension of our long-standing marketing tagline, *Amazing Thailand*.

The tagline speaks of the increasingly human-centric aspect of *Amazing Thailand*. It deepens the emotional value of visiting the country, one that is linked to its people in their attitude, hospitality and spirit. It is also a core component of our adherence to the Marketing 3.0 concept whereby customers are treated as complex, multi-dimensional human beings.

Today's travellers are choosing destinations and services that satisfy deeper needs for participation, creativity, community and idealism. We believe that Thailand is able to provide travellers with all of these aspects.

Suraphon Svetasreni
Governor
Tourism Authority of Thailand



Plain of Jars



We have been preparing to organise a caravan tour in the second week of 2014 to the Plain of Jars in Xieng Khouang province and Vieng Xay caves in Houaphanh province, in north-eastern Laos. The purpose of this event is to promote the new tour route showcasing the historic stone jars and caves.

Houaphanh, one of the least visited provinces in the country, is home to 22 different ethnic groups. The province offers an authentic, varied experience where travellers can learn about weaving techniques, enjoy the pristine natural environment and explore the mysterious standing stones of Hintang Archaeological Park that dates back more than 2,000 years.

Viengxay Caves, or the 'Hidden City', is a network of caves used during the Lao revolutionary movement and the site of a little-known episode of the world's history.

Saly Phimphinit
Director general, tourism marketing
Lao Ministry of Information,
Culture and Tourism



The highlight of the year was developing special interest tourism through a number of events, including jazz festivals, sporting events (such as the Jakarta Marathon and Musi Triathlon) and cruises (such as Sail Komodo).

The Ministry has also stepped up efforts to create unique events outside the tourism mainstream to expand our means of attracting travellers to the country.

It is also working together with the Indonesia Tourism Promotion Board, whose role, among others, is to promote creative tourism involving the creative industries in the country.

Esthy Reko Astuti
Director general, tourism marketing
Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism
and Creative Economy



2013 saw the completion of an important tourism infrastructure in Hong Kong, the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal. Hong Kong Tourism Board has stepped up the terminal's promotion as Asia's cruise hub. A ground-breaking effort was our collaboration with Taiwan Tourism Bureau to invite an international cruise line to deploy its vessel to Hong Kong and Taiwan, with Hong Kong as the home port. This marked a significant milestone in regional cooperation to grow Asia's cruise tourism market.

This year, visitor arrivals grew steadily, with new markets demonstrating encouraging performances. Russia, the GCC countries and Vietnam recorded double-digit growth in the first three quarters, while India recorded a stable rise. In terms of marketing, we continued to inject new elements into our mega events. In the recent Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival, we set up a tasting room for exclusive culinary activities and divided the venue into six zones, offering guests a unique experience of Hong Kong's sumptuous wine and food offerings.

Anthony Lau
Executive director
Hong Kong Tourism Board



Kai Tak Cruise Terminal



Tokyo being selected as the host country for the Olympic Games in 2020. This is also a remarkable opportunity for overseas visitors to come to know the various prefectures of Japan.

Besides Tokyo, Osaka and Hokkaido, there are many other attractive places across Japan, such as Shirakawa-go in the Chubu region, Wakayama in Kansai, and the Kyushu and Shikoku regions where travellers can enjoy streets lined with traditional houses, local produce and great food, as well as activities like fruit picking, fishing, driving through refreshing highlands and shopping. JNTO feels that it is necessary to promote these local charming hotspots that have yet to be widely known to the world and the Olympics is a great catalyst to showcase them.

With the depreciation of the Japanese yen, now is the best opportunity to enjoy a trip to Japan and experience *omotenashi* (Japanese hospitality).

Hideki Manabe
Executive director, Singapore office, Japan National Tourism Organization



Green Hill Hotel

Best Western Brings International Comfort to Magical Myanmar

Guests can now experience the exotic charms of Myanmar from the international comfort of a Best Western hotel. The brand new BEST WESTERN Green Hill Hotel in Yangon offers the perfect base for travelers wanting to explore this enchanting country.





My favourite f

From hurling tomatoes in Spain to scaling stupas in Myanmar, fam trips are fertile grounds for fresh product inspiration. Travel buyers from all over the world share their best experiences this year

✧ Lisa Chau

Assistant general manager, Guangzhou Anlu Travel Service

I recently went to Spain, participated in their tomato festival and we really painted the town red because everyone was throwing tomatoes at each other as part of the celebration. It was really unique because this was something not possible in any other country in the world.

I think Asians will definitely like this idea because it is so fun so I will consider bringing groups there next year. – **Lee Pei Qi**

✧ Alina Sithideth

MICE & group travel specialist, Flight Centre Singapore

My best fam trip was to Dublin, organised by Etihad Airways and Tourism Ireland in March.

The highlight of the fam trip for me was marching through Dublin as part of the Saint Patrick's Day parade. We were able to show our Aussie colours with a tad

of green! The food was fresh, all made in Dublin and the shopping was fantastic.

The fam trip also took us outside of Dublin, where we stayed for one or two nights at B&Bs in other parts of Ireland. I also got to visit the amazing Upper Lake at Glendalough.

As a specialist in MICE and special interest groups, it was good to see the course of the Dublin Marathon first-hand, as well as what else there is around and get a feeling of the area. It gave me so many ideas on what to do and which areas could be sold in the future.

I could take special interest groups to watch the musical performances there, as Ireland has hundreds of years of history in music. Ireland can also be a destination for religious pilgrimages – the round towers were built near monasteries by monks of the early Irish church. – **Hannah Koh**

✧ Tony Hwang

President, Island Marketing South Korea

I attended a fam trip to Vietnam recently

and found the destination has the potential to become a new destination for South Korean travellers. Korean Air flies (from Seoul) to Danang and new hotels like Angsana Lang Co have made Vietnam suitable for the Korean market.

We have been sending travellers to Hawaii, the Philippines, Thailand and Bali, and now we can introduce Vietnam as a new destination. We are preparing honeymoon packages (combining) Nha Trang and Danang for next year. – **Mimi Hudooyo**

✧ Mário Grilo

Director, Incentive & Travel Designer Portugal

Myanmar was my most memorable fam trip in 2013. The country has all the ingredients to be a fantastic destination. People are very nice and genuine, and there is an array of (ethnicities) and tribes with more than 100 dialects – truly a melting pot. Myanmar has many attractions, from mysterious cities like Mandalay and Bagan to the beautiful Inle Lake with se-

rene waters and traditional fishing lifestyles, as well as Yangon with its very beautiful and imposing colonial English architecture.

Since Myanmar is a truly cultural destination, programmes should focus on this fundamental aspect.

Time wise you have to allocate enough days in each of Myanmar's main cities such as Yangon, Mandalay, Bagan and Inle Lake. A duration of eight to nine nights is therefore the minimum, and you must carefully select the temples to visit and (bundle them with) market trips, shopping and leisure time. Avoid showing places that could be considered similar in the eyes of the European traveller. – **Hannah Koh**

✧ Sreat Mom Sophear

Director, Sophiya Travel & Tours Cambodia

The post-show Phuket tour for IT&CMA 2013 was my best fam trip. From the start till the end, the arrangements were pretty good with flexible time management, as



am

well as care and attention from the tour guide despite a few hiccups.

During the trip, I met a lot of tourism professionals from different countries and we shared our experiences and knowledge. I also experienced a lot of interesting activities such as the Thai traditional dance, fire show, elephant riding and teambuilding activities on the beach.

Phuket is one of the most interesting destinations in Thailand, and we are keen to develop this destination for MICE, leisure, honeymoon and family clients.

In 2014, we are eyeing new destinations in Asia-Pacific such as Bhutan, Mongolia, Taiwan, New Zealand, Nepal and the Maldives. We are packaging different categories – MICE, leisure, business, study, medical or honeymoon tours – depending on the destination. – **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

➤ Mauro Lazzari
Business development manager, HTMS International (Czech Republic)

India is going to be my brand-new destination. It is getting too common to always visit Europe (for Czech Republicans). I explored the Golden Triangle route recently, and I especially like Jaipur, the Pink City. I think the contrasting cultural experiences between Czech Republic and India will be exciting. – **Lee Pei Qi**

➤ Alicia Seah
Marketing communications director, Dynasty Travel Singapore

The best fam trip I went on this year (with previous company CTC Travel) was organised by the Japan National Tourism Organization to Shikoku and Hiroshima. That was the first time I visited these places. There were unique experiences such as cycling on the Setouchi Shimanami Kaido (expressway) which gave us a very different perspective of seeing the surrounding areas. I also remember walking on a suspension bridge in Shikoku which tested my bravery. I loved the fam trip as it was well organised and gave me a first-hand experience of the destination.

From this trip, we came up with seven- and nine-day programmes to Hiroshima and Shikoku. – **S Puvaneswary**

➤ Eka Moncarre
General manager, Panorama Leisure France

The best fam trip I had this year was a five-day, four-night trip organised by the Portuguese National Tourist Office to Porto and Madeira in September. I was among the 29 travel consultants and corporate clients from France who attended the fam trip. It was well organised and there were buyer-meet-seller sessions in both Porto and Madeira, giving us opportunities to know the sellers and their products better.

After the trip, we started selling 12 days/nine nights to Spain and Portugal or Portugal for 10 days/seven nights. I believe Portugal will be easy to sell as the weather is nice and the destination is competitive compared to France where the cost of living is higher. – **S Puvaneswary**

SOFITEL BALI NUSA DUA BEACH RESORT
NOW OPEN

AN ENCHANTING ESCAPE
FRENCH ELEGANCE MEETS BALINESE CHARM
IN A LAVISH BEACHFRONT RETREAT

KARANGAN PAKSIWISATA BEACH LOBBY NUSA DUA
BALI NUSA DUA PHONGSERA - TEL: +62 361 840 2000
INFO@SOFITELBALI.COM

MY MAGNIFIQUE VOYAGE

The lobby at night

Life is Magnifique in Bali!

Pool Villa living room

luxury room

SOFITEL
LUXURY HOTELS

A TASTE OF TROPICAL LUXURY ON THE MAGICAL ISLAND OF BALI

BOASTING MAGNIFICENT VIEWS OF THE SHIMMERING SEA, SOFITEL BALI NUSA DUA BEACH RESORT'S SPACIOUS ROOMS AND SUITES OFFER SOPHISTICATED STYLE AND EXQUISITE COMFORT. REVEL IN A WORLD OF REJUVENATION WITH A SAVANT MIX OF WORLD-CLASS FACILITIES, FRENCH COSMETOLOGY AND TRANQUIL SURROUNDS. DISCOVER ALL OUR MAGNIFIQUE ADDRESSES ON WWW.SOFITEL.COM

LE CLUB ACCOR HOTELS
JOIN US AT ACCORHOTELS.COM

Virtual high

Technology has had another impressive run this year. Industry experts pick the top apps, gadgets and websites that were eyeball grabbing. Compiled by **Gracia Chiang**



Patrick Andres

Vice president & regional managing director,
Asia-Pacific
Travelport

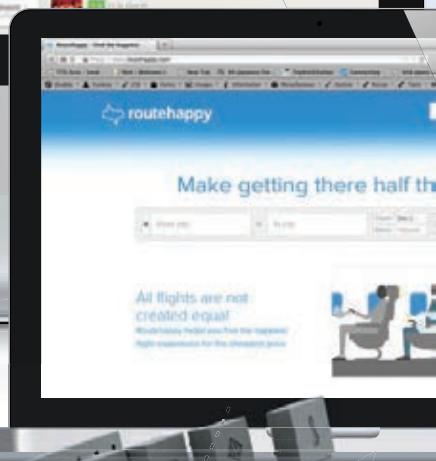
The Museum of Modern Art in New York City launched a scavenger hunt on Foursquare, inviting people to find and check into modernist architectural sites across the city for rewards. The use of technology to mix e-commerce and gaming is an effective way to engage consumers, particularly the Gen Y and Millennials. At the same time, the social engagement aspect of this was brilliant, as it made people experience art within the city before even entering the museum.



Christian Lukey

Commercial director, Asia-Pacific
HRS - Hotel Reservation Service

I would like to highlight DriveNow, a car-sharing app developed by BMW and Sixt in Germany featuring BMW i, Mini and BMW vehicles. I used it in Germany and I love it because it is practical and pleasant to use, catering to the new needs of mobile users. This modern application is user-friendly and a real innovation – perfect for savvy mobile consumers.



Angel Gallego

President
Amadeus Asia Pacific

I love the idea of the Get Home Safe app, which tracks whether you get home safely after an activity and calls for help if you don't.

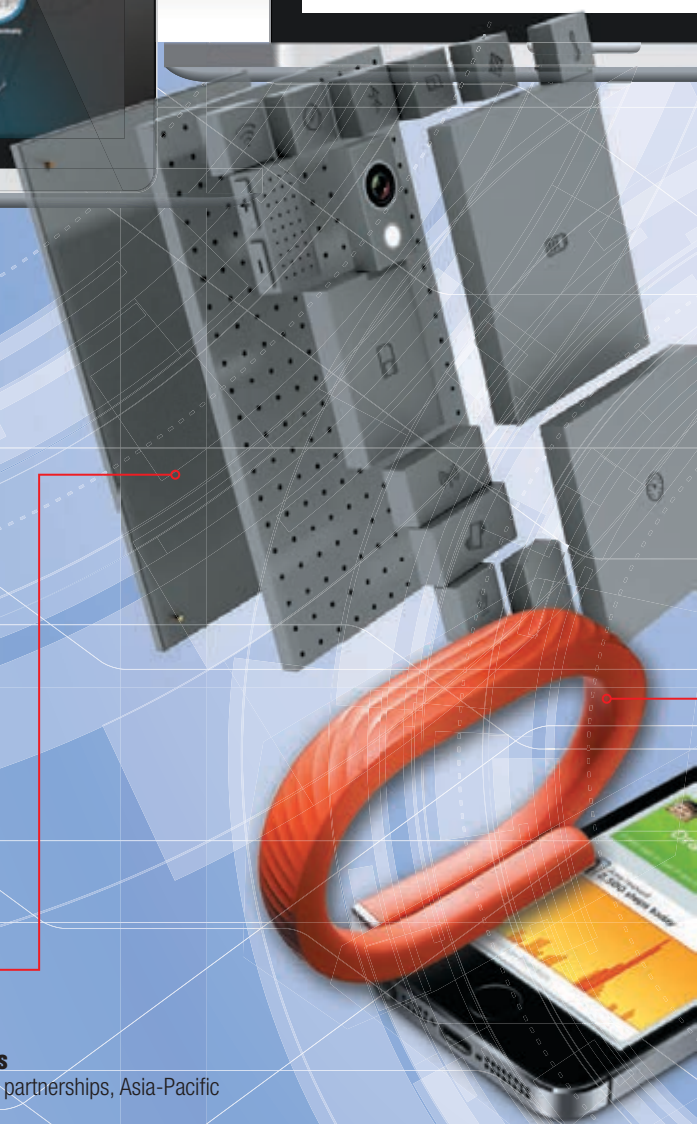
As a father of two, this is exactly the kind of thing that can help me get rid of that persistent worry at the back of my mind. But whether you are a parent or a travel consultant with a duty of care responsibility, it has the potential to be used by anyone in any market. It's just simple and clever.



Andreas Behrens

Director of mobile partnerships, Asia-Pacific
TripAdvisor

The innovation that wowed me most this year is Phonebloks, an open-concept modular hardware platform that enables you to set up a smartphone to your liking, with the initial idea to reduce waste but with many more possibilities. I'd describe it as the 'Android approach to hardware' and hence it was not surprising that Google's subsidiary Motorola Mobility announced Project Ara, taking the Phonebloks concept to the next level. Why is this great for travel? Imagine the possibilities of replacing a smaller screen and a QWERTY keyboard that you use on your business phone with a better camera, bigger battery and an additional SIM card slot for your next international trip. The options are endless!





Craig Hewett
Co-founder & COO
Wego.com

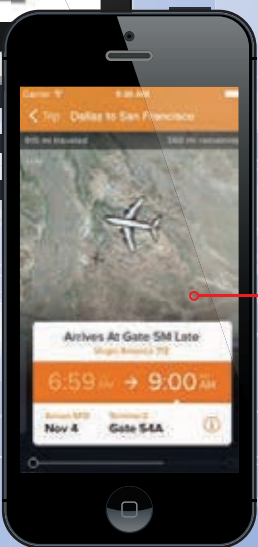
My favorite travel site for 2013 is www.routehappy.com. Routehappy helps me to see which airlines are popular on certain routes and what are the specific features/services that make an airline popular, e.g. is the seat comfortable, is there Wi-Fi, can I charge my devices, is it a new or old plane, is there in-flight entertainment and is it good, etc. This value proposition is unique to Routehappy as such information is difficult or even impossible to find on some airline and OTA websites.

The information provided is largely objective as it comes directly from fellow travellers and not a merchant with a vested interest in selling you a ticket.



Andy Sleight
General manager, Asia-Pacific
Skyscanner

An app that I love is Trover. It's a really good example of how the combination of social and mobile can be brought together to enrich the travel experience in a personalised way. It's like exploring a city with your own guide in your pocket and is a great enabler of independent travellers the world over.



Vikram Malhi
General manager of South-east Asia & India
AirAsia Expedia

As a frequent flyer, I love checking out and discovering travel apps. Mobiata, which was acquired by Expedia, develops some award-winning travel apps that have had millions of downloads. FlightTrack, for instance, has caught my eye with its comprehensive way of monitoring flight information such as weather updates, flight delays, terminal maps and more. What's more, all their apps are incredibly intuitive, beautifully designed and are constantly breaking new boundaries.

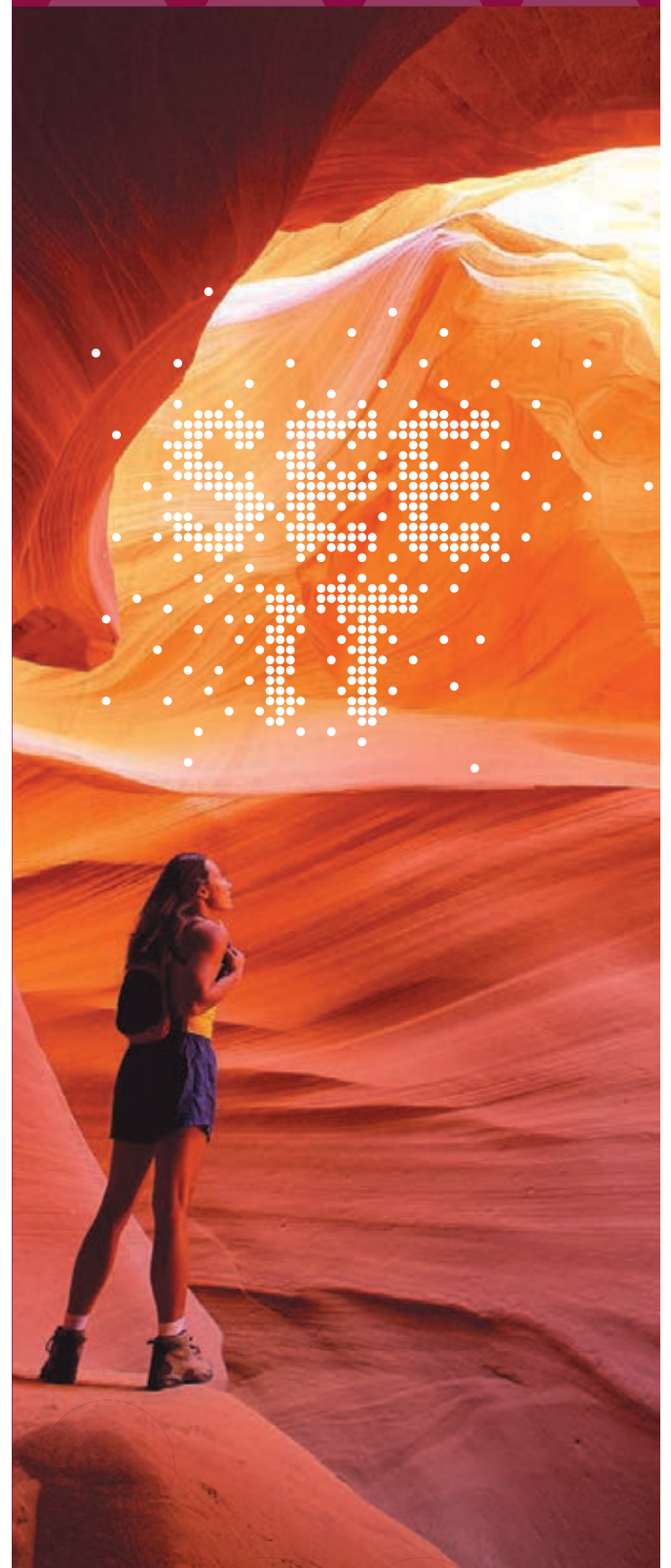


Robert Rosenstein
CEO
Agoda.com

I have been very interested in the varieties of wristband health monitors – I'm currently testing the Jawbone UP. You can build a personalised 'health team', track how much exercise you get, log your meals and even track your sleep patterns. All of this connects to your social network and helps drive motivation, gamifying your health progress. This space will be big in coming years, and important for travellers or executives who travel often and want to maintain consistency in their fitness regimen.



DiscoverAmerica.com



Discover this land,
like never before.



Flight of the Gibbon



No challenge no detail t

The region's leading attractions describe their most unusual requests in 2013 and the ways they overcame the challenges

Flight of the Gibbon, Chonburi, Thailand

Ian Leonard, COO

The most unusual request this year was from a Malaysian gentleman who asked if there was anywhere on our zip line course where he could propose to his girlfriend. It was our pleasure to ensure the first request of this nature succeeds, so we planned his proposal spot at the finish of the course, which lies at a 45m abseil down from a 350-year old ban-yan tree.

On the day, we spoke with the gentleman's brother-in-law to abseil down first to the bottom in order to get his video recorder ready, followed by the nervous gentleman who was about to propose to his girlfriend. Then came the bride-to-be, who came down the abseil totally unaware of what was about to happen.

When she reached the bottom, the gentleman fell to his knees and asked his girlfriend if she would marry him. The look of shock on her face was worth a thousand words; she said yes and

burst into tears as he put the ring on her finger.

The brother-in-law then gave her a bouquet of flowers specially prepared by us, and there was much happiness at Flight of the Gibbon that day. – **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

Gardens by the Bay Singapore

Ong Chui Leng, director,
programming

Gardens by the Bay was the venue for the Mid-Autumn Festival @ The Gardens 2013 between September 13-22, marking the Garden's first partnership with Singapore Press Holdings' Chinese newspapers division and the People's Association to organise the event.

While we had hosted many evening programmes at the Gardens before, this was the first time that we have been involved in organising a night festival of such scale. The 10-day event featured 54 huge lantern sets spread across the Gardens' grounds and numerous activities, from stage



Hong Kong Disneyland Resort

ge too big, oo small

performances and food stalls at The Meadow to handicrafts at the Supertree Grove.

As the lanterns had to be crafted on-site, a temporary workshop for the craftsmen was set up at one end of the Gardens. Even though we had pre-determined the locations of the lantern sets, we still had to move the displays several times to find the perfect spot to maximise visibility to facilitate movement around the Gardens and encourage visitors to explore our extensive grounds while taking in the colourful sights.

To complement the festivities taking place outdoors, Gardens by the Bay put up a special Mid-Autumn-themed floral display in our Flower Dome. Opening hours of our cooled conservatories, information counters, retail and F&B establishments were also extended during the 10-day period. The Gardens further extended support to the event by mobilising staff to assist with traffic and crowd control. – **Hannah Koh**

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort

Martin Leung, business solutions & events director

Earlier this year, a client approached us looking for a venue for their bi-annual town hall

meeting cum company outing for over 1,000 staff. While the venue had to be well-suited for a corporate presentation, it also had to be inspiring and fun for that wow factor.

We leveraged our circular, concert hall setting of the Theater in the Wild in Adventureland, as a non-traditional platform. Gobo plate projections on the theatre floor were utilised instead of using the usual screen-and-projector-type presentation. This ultra-creative approach and unique environment made for a more interactive and unforgettable experience. – **Lee Pei Qi**

Mutiara Taman Negara, Pahang, Malaysia

Nathan Vaithi, general manager

The most unusual request we had recently was from a Dutch couple who wanted to do a Malay traditional wedding in our resort amid the rainforest. They asked if we could organise the event for them. This was the first time we received such a request to hold a wedding ceremony in our property.

We sent them details of the facilities available here and the pricing for organising a traditional Malay wedding ceremony for 60 pax. We are awaiting their reply. – **S Puvaneswary**

What's in your travel bag?

With their firm understanding of the local destinations, these travel experts dispense advice on what to pack or take away if they were visitors to their own countries



Laurent Granier

Co-founder & general manager, Laos Mood Travel

A bottle of *lao-lao* (rice liquor): make 'Laogria', the Lao version of the Spanish sangria, to wow guests at a home party. Otherwise, get a big, well-wrapped bottle of Beer Lao as you may find only smaller versions in cans outside Laos. Add some ice into your glass and recall the lovely sunset on the Mekong River.

A rattan *kator* ball (sepak takraw), which is light and can be played anytime, anywhere. Impress your friends with your juggling skills or organise a game.

A Lao cookbook: after you have participated in a Lao cooking class, show off your newly acquired techniques of mixing herbs and ingredients to make unusual appetisers and dishes during BYOD (bring your own dishes) parties.

Traveling can be educational, so be engaged and buy responsibly such as a T-shirt from the Co-operative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise and spread the word on the ban of cluster munitions or recycled and fair-traded scrap items like spoons and bracelets made by communities affected by unexploded ordnances. – **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

Joey del Rosario

Director of operations, Annset Holidays Philippines

Pack a hygiene pouch with a toothbrush, toothpaste, shav-

ing set and other personal items. With the exception of luxury properties, hotels outside Manila generally will have only basic amenities like soap, shampoo and towel in the room, so other personal items will come in handy.

An emergency kit with personal utilities will be useful in case of delays or transfers, especially since the geographical set-up of the Philippines often require travellers to hop from one destination to the other by car, boat and/or a short flight.

Casual wear like T-shirts, shorts and a pair of good walking shoes will be ideal for exploring the Philippines, which is home to a lot of destinations with natural beauty. Cameras and the latest gadgets will enable you to capture the unforgettable moments and share them with your loved ones, friends and all. – **Rosa Ocampo**

Eimi Miwa

Sales manager, international sales for Asia & Oceania, international travel division, Nippon Travel Agency Japan

First, a camera to capture pictures of both the traditional and modern sides of Japan, whether it's the bustling cities of Tokyo and Osaka or the countryside.

Second, a portable Wi-Fi device as there are not many free Wi-Fi spots in Japan and tourists



will have to pay US\$10 a day for Internet access. Hotels receive a lot of complaints about this.

Third, a travel guidebook and translator app on my phone, as most Japanese cannot speak English and I would have to explain what I want in Japanese. – **Hannah Koh**



Leonardus Nyoman

Leonardus Nyoman

Managing director, Flores Exotic Tours Indonesia

Whenever I travel in Indonesia, I bring along my camera and support accessories. I love taking pictures and there are just so many interesting things to capture in Indonesia. I always post the pictures on social media and share them among my photography club friends. This also serves the purpose of promoting Indonesia.

I always carry my laptop wherever I go in order to check emails and the latest news. A first aid kit with medicine for small injuries, mosquito repellent and vitamins are always in my bag, not only useful for myself but also for travel companions or even people we meet during a trip. – **Mimi Hudoyo**

Manish Poddar

Vice president – sales & marketing, Orient Express Travels & Tours India

A mobile phone to stay in touch with family, colleagues and work partners, a compact camera with a rechargeable battery as India has many interesting sights and monuments, and a comfortable pair of shoes for sightseeing. – **S Puvaneswary**



Mutiara Taman Negara



Joey del Rosario

Pioneering new ro



Bangkok Airways

Peter Wiesner, senior vice president-network management

The most exiting new destination is definitely Naypyidaw. As Myanmar opens up, businessmen still have to obtain permits, etc, from the ministries in Naypyidaw. Despite improving road network and more regular Yangon-Naypyidaw flights now, the trip via Yangon involves more time and expensive hotels.

We made a bold guess and launched thrice-weekly services from Bangkok to Naypyidaw on ATR72-500 on September 30. We soon realised that we hit an untapped market; within weeks we had a reasonable seat load factor and we have upgraded the service to five-times weekly flights as of November 18.



Star Cruises

Michael Goh, senior vice president (sales)

This year marks an exciting year of inaugural regional deployments for Star Cruises' fleet. Asian holidaymakers prefer short cruises with multiple stopovers in exotic destinations. These all-time favourite cruise itineraries allow them to see at least two Asian countries in one short cruise. One of them is our *SuperStar Libra*, which made a 7D6N maiden voyage to Yangon from Penang on August 15, marking Star Cruises' first return to Yangon in 10 years.



Royal Caribbean Cruises

Jennifer Yap, managing director, Singapore

Yangon is an up-and-coming tourist destination that is attracting the interest of a lot of our guests for its rich, exotic cultural and scenic attractions. Overnight voyages will offer (travellers) a more immersive experience and the chance to explore the destination in greater depth, so Azamara Club Cruises will feature Yangon with two overnights as one of the key highlights on a new itinerary featuring additional regional ports of call.



China Airlines

Sun Huang-Hsiang, chairman



The most exciting developments for us started two to three years ago and we are just keeping up the momentum this year. China and Japan are the most exciting markets for us. Direct services (to China) started from 2009 and we have grown quite rapidly. We are now flying to 28 cities in China, expanding from zero in the period of four years. Before the (open skies agreement with Japan), we had only eight cities and about 95 weekly flights to Japan; now we fly to 12 cities and have 128 flights a week to Japan.



Princess Cruises

Farriek Tawfik, director of Southeast Asia

The highlight is the announcement of our expanded Japan cruise programme, which will see our Japan-built *Diamond Princess* make her maiden call to the Japanese islands of Ishigaki, Amami Oshima and Abashiri in 2014. There is vast potential in the growing Japanese cruise market and we believe there is substantial untapped demand for cruise vacations there.



Dragonair

Patrick Yeung, CEO

We just launched Siem Reap (below) in October, and earlier in the year we launched Wenzhou, Zhengzhou and Yangon, etc. Each route is exciting because these are all brand-new destinations for us. Last year we also reopened some of the routes we stopped since 2008. We have just announced Penang for next year.



Silversea Cruises

Melvyn Yap, regional director (Asia)

The most exciting thing this year was the launch of our new ship, *Silver Galapagos*. Due to their remote location, the Galapagos Islands are home to an abundant variety of unique wildlife – species found nowhere else on earth. With this new ship of ours, you can explore this remarkable destination in a way that is unlike any other.



utes

From sky to sea, airline and cruise executives in the region recount their most exciting new destinations and ports of call this year.

Compiled by **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena** and **Lee Pei Qi**

All Nippon Airways

Osamu Shinobe, president & CEO

In July, we started flying daily flights to San Jose (in California) using the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. We had a difficult time with the grounding of the 787s but flights to San Jose have resumed. San Jose is the most exciting route because like the Tokyo-Seattle route started last year, these destinations were made possible by the 787s; the 777 is too big and the 767's range is not long enough. We are able to reinforce our international network with 787s.

We will disclose our next new route – somewhere in Asia – sometime in January 2014 because we have secured new slots at Haneda International Airport.



Crystal Cruises

Mimi Weisband, vice president of public relations

The most interesting new itinerary we introduced this year was the Christmas/New Year cruise in South America, which features three days of cruising in Antarctica. Due to the very understandable restrictions regarding travel to this region, Crystal Cruises had to go to great expense and logistics to make this (itinerary) happen. We had to install special boilers to burn low-sulphur fuel and other special arrangements regarding provisioning. We did all these to offer a most special holiday cruise for our guests.



Garuda Indonesia

Emirsyah Satar, president & CEO

The most exciting development for us is using our new turboprops to make sure people visiting Indonesia can go beyond Bali to other areas. As for new routes, we just launched daily flights from Denpasar to Brisbane (right) in August, and we are going to add frequencies and capacity next year. Brisbane is part of our strategy in terms of having more capacity into Australia because we are capturing a very good market in Australia. Down Under, here we come!



FITUR 2014 PROMOTES BRANDING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

FITUR has launched a campaign in the social media for Europe and the Americas which aims at boosting their use as a tool for promoting tourism and fostering closer ties with leaders within the industry.

In collaboration with a number of renowned bodies and companies from the industry, FITUR is organising a series of different environments, designed to boost the tourism of the different participating destinations and bodies as new technologies have opened up unlimited branding opportunities, with the Internet and the social media operating at the forefront of all of the latest trends.

This will be the main theme of the Seventh Exceltur Forum, an event organised by the employer's association, EXCELTUR, in collaboration with the UNWTO and FITUR. This forum will take place on 21st January, the day before the commencement of FITUR, in the North Auditorium at Feria de Madrid. The guiding theme, "Tourism: A Key Industry for Strengthening a Country's Brand" aims to bring together wide-ranging representatives from the international tourism industry and the worlds of politics and business. This event will focus on promoting and facilitating progress in terms of competitiveness within the tourist industry, based on the vital role of the Internet and new technologies.

Within the framework of **Fitur Know How & Export**, participants will gain an insight into the vision of different experts in sustainability, accessibility and technology on the tourist destinations of the future. Other themes of interest will include Googleglass, in its capacity as a tool for discovering destinations via the Internet. We will also be offered a review

of the current map of tourist apps, which serve as a model for promotion, sales and branding.

FITUR Travel Bloggers

As part of the unstoppable rise of new technologies, FITUR is also heading a number of innovative initiatives, effectively promoting the Internet as a tool for tourism promotion, dissemination and a means of bringing professionals together. Since 2011, 62,000 followers have joined FITUR community on Facebook and another 37,564 followers on Twitter. These platforms provide a key forum for interaction and promotion, involving all of the different tourism representatives that participate at the trade fair.

FITUR has gone a step further with two new initiatives that will help to extend the trade fair's projection and strengthen the branding of its participants, whilst also facilitating virtual and physical meetings. First of all, FITUR has joined the Russian social network, V Kontakct, which is aimed at the tourism industry that operates in all Russian-speaking countries. Russian tourism is still incipient in Spain, but presents the highest rate of growth of any nationality. Second, FITUR has launched its FITUR Travel Bloggers Competition, an initiative that has been designed to be developed via the Internet. The awards, however, will be presented in person at the trade fair, with the two best bloggers selected from Europe and America being invited to attend FITUR. The extension of

this competition to include two continents represents a new challenge following the success of the last edition, which was only open to entries from Latin America and witnessed a total of 132 candidates from 16 countries throughout the region. This year, the competition has been laid open to all tourism bloggers from any of the countries that make up the European Union and any of the countries within the American Continent.

The registration period for this initiative shall be open up until 26th November through the site <http://travelblogger.es/> and through the app <http://www.facebook.com/FeriaFitur>.

There is little doubt that the Internet and its different platforms have become one of tourism's best allies. They constitute a key tool when it comes to boosting competitiveness, effectively complementing other physical forms of support offered by FITUR and its various specialised forums, events that offer an indispensable means of establishing real contact and securing business deals. The entire tourism industry worldwide is invited to take advantage of these sterling opportunities.



(Fitur) 2014

For more information:
Jesús González
Head of Press | Tel. (0034) 91 722 50 95
Email: jesusg@ifema.es

Helena Valera
IFEMA International Press | Tel. (0034) 91 722 51 74
Email: evalera@ifema.es

www.fituronline.com

That's all folks

As we bid goodbye to a year of ups and downs, the *TTG Asia* team recollects the outstanding and not-so-great moments encountered while working the ground



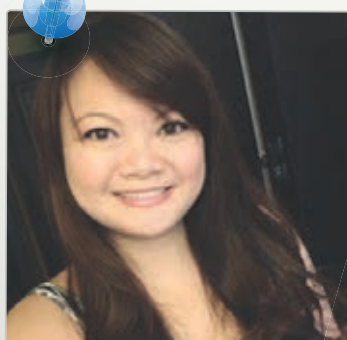
Raini Hamdi
Senior editor

Best My best interview of the year was with Pansy Ho, managing director of Shun Tak Holdings, which seems to have a finger in every pie of Macau tourism.

Like her father Stanley Ho, she's a force behind Macau's tourism destiny, but I glimpsed new-generation thinking, passion and drive. She was powerful yet accessible, talking patiently to each of the delegates circling her after her panel at the PATA Annual Summit in Bangkok. When my turn came, she agreed to a 30-minute private interview at the Centara lounge. I made her promise to be there (I had an experience when the CEO just didn't show up) – she was there before me.

Worst A CEO friend wanted me to develop "strategic communications and promotions", "beautiful full-page features" and "interviews with photos" for him and his company in not just *TTG Asia* print but "also *TTG UK* and others".

I'd featured him when he launched his company and acquiesced whenever he asked for email addresses in the early days, but this was a little greedy of a friend, aside from being offensive to a journalist, who does not do PR.



Karen Yue
Group editor

Best I attended the Asian Attractions Expo for the first time this year when it was held at Marina Bay Sands in June, and was awestruck by all the science and technology that went into creating a theme park. I used to think that anything with 4D capability was wonderful, but after walking through the exhibition, I realised how backward I was. Also, through my interviews with International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions' chiefs and production specialists, I learnt that the sole pursuit of the latest technology will not bring lasting success, as theme parks are an emotional product and a great storyline is king. The expo made me appreciate theme parks so much more.

Worst None, thankfully!



Gracia Chiang
Deputy group editor

Best This year's TravelRave Leaders Gala was well-executed by Singapore Tourism Board (STB). Held at Gardens by the Bay, it offered a platform to mingle with the region's who's who and showcased the country's event capabilities amid a verdant setting. The F&B was orchestrated by pop-up restaurant Gastrogig, which rounded up an unconventional culinary collective, from a gourmet food truck-cum-social enterprise to edible gardens. This wasn't all. An STB representative booked cabs for delegates as transport out of the park was anticipated to be a problem. Good service is always a winner.

Worst I was rudely brushed off by a seller at ITB Asia who had earlier granted an interview to my *TTG China* colleague. Even after I explained that we worked for two separate publications, she insisted it was "first come, first served". It was the first time in my years of reporting I encountered such a "policy".



Hannah Koh
Assistant editor, *TTG Asia Online*

Best I was assigned to stay at Banyan Tree Hotel & Resorts' upscale Banyan Tree Lang Co property. It was four glorious days of sun and sea, being chauffeured around in buggies, feasting on top-notch Vietnamese fare and getting some me time by the private pool of my own villa.

The highlight was a visit to a local fishing village. There, a sun-baked fisherwoman with an endearingly toothy grin steered our party through mangrove swamps and emerald green waters in a coracle held together with tar and buffalo dung. Which is far more charming than it sounds, I assure you.

Worst I was tasked to go to the launch of a refurbished cruise ship in January and to interview the cruise line's CEO.

Despite having sent in my questions at the PR department's request, the CEO had not been briefed and refused to answer most questions due to their "sensitive" nature, leaving me with very little to report on. Worse, the PR in-charge later said with thinly veiled patronisation: "Well, you're not a real reporter, are you?" It was disappointing to see how the region's leading cruise line could be so unprofessional.



Kathy Neo
Copy editor



Xinyi Liang-Pholsena
Assistant editor, Thailand

Best In 2008, Exotissimo Travel's Hamish Keith hired me for a position in the company, prompting my move to Bangkok and launching a career in travel journalism. Five years later, we saw a reversal of roles as I got to interview my ex-boss-turned-friend Hamish in my position as a *TTG Asia* reporter. I enjoyed the interview and felt very happy to be part of Thailand's dynamic tourism landscape. After all, Thailand has become my second home.

Worst When I approached the staff of a Chinese airline for more information at a recent tradeshow, all of them ignored me; one even gave me an exasperated look and asked me to visit the website instead. And when I asked for a contact, they said they were sales staff and could not provide a point of contact to their marketing/communications department. I wonder why the airline bothered to take up a booth space at the show when the money could be spent on training its staff on better communication skills.



Lee Pei Qi
Assistant editor, Singapore

Best The impressive hospitality from the Taiwanese during a fam trip there. And I am not just talking about the locals in the hosted facilities, but basically everyone from the taxi driver to the guy selling street snacks. They literally welcomed me with open arms, making me feel right at home.

Worst During a media event, the company spokesman introduced me to everyone as a representative from Channel NewsAsia and I had to awkwardly clarify that I am from *TTG Asia*. He did not seem apologetic too—.

Best Western Touches Down at Dhaka Airport

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

Best Western International has signed a new agreement that will see us touch down at Dhaka Airport for the first time. Following a recent contract signed with Maple Leaf Hotel & Resorts Ltd, we will manage a new-build hotel located adjacent to Bangladesh's main international air gateway, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. Currently under construction, the 56-room hotel will operate under the upscale BEST WESTERN PLUS product when it opens in the second quarter of 2014, and will include such facilities as a restaurant, bar, rooftop barbecue outlet, fitness center, sauna, steam room and spa.

With a population of more than 160 million people and a fast-growing economy, Bangladesh is becoming an increasingly important regional and global player. I am confident that this new property will be extremely popular with the rising number of local and international air travelers flying in and out of the country.



THE WORLD'S LARGEST
HOTEL CHAIN®



S Puvaneswary
Editor, Malaysia/Brunei

Best Stumbling on the Chinese government's new tourism law that became effective October 1 while interviewing Malaysian inbound agencies handling the Chinese market for their 2014 business predictions. I was very lucky to get an opportunity to sit in at their discussions. This turned out to be a page one story in *TTG Asia*.

Worst The worse function I attended was the launch of the 1Malaysia year-end sale in mid-November. As it was during the rainy season, the organiser created a temporary tent to hold this event. It rained heavily that evening. The tent leaked and was just too small to accommodate everyone. Many reporters turned up for this event and anticipated a press conference with the tourism minister, who did not want to hold one. Perhaps he anticipated unwelcomed questions on the kidnapping of the Taiwanese tourist and her husband who was killed in Pom Pom Island just two days earlier.

I was sorely disappointed. Why were the media called to cover an event without a press conference? Why not just send out a press release and save everyone time and money?



Mimi Hudoyo
Editor, Indonesia

Best The fam trip to Solok, West Sumatra. The trip was an eye-opener for me, showing me how a small city which did not exist on the Indonesian tourism map managed to place itself on it within 10 years of development. From a city deserted by its inhabitants following the end of the coal era, Solok has managed to draw people back and develop agricultural and travel-related businesses. I was impressed by the local government and community's ability to accommodate a large number of guests for dinner at the old railway station, despite the lack of restaurants.

Worst When one airline, through its media consultant, invited *TTG Asia* to attend its press conference at ITB Berlin and I was assigned to cover it. The press conference turned out to be in German, which I don't understand, and there was no English press release.

I requested for an interview with the airline's executive right after the press conference but was turned down due to the person's full schedule. The English press release eventually arrived in my mail box in the evening, but I couldn't submit my story without seeking additional information.



Greg Lowe
Correspondent, Thailand

Best Chatting with Phoenix Voyages' Jean Michel Romon about his calamitous experiences as the official ground agent for the World Economic Forum in Naypyidaw, Myanmar. It was the first major event to be hosted in the country, which has scant infrastructure for such events. For some 2,500 delegates, the 220-strong team arranged 5,000 room nights across 22 hotels, more than 800 transfers and 14 charter flights. To ensure attendees could get from A to B in the city, 146 cars and buses had to be transported from Yangon and Mandalay as Naypyidaw has only 11 private taxis. But as Romon said: "It was hard but worth it. Everyone was proud to play a part, especially the Burmese."

Worst Networking and meeting sources are especially important when reporting on trade events. But at September's Global Tourism Economy Forum in Macau, journalists were separated from delegates, save for pre-arranged interviews. We dined and were accommodated separately, and only had an hour post-event to rub shoulders with the travel trade's great and good, by which time most seemed more keen on wine than being interviewed.



Prudence Lui
Correspondent, Hong Kong

Best The city's grand dame – The Peninsula Hong Kong – threw a celebratory gala to mark its 85th anniversary. The open house concept was adopted, with all outlets lavishly decorated and opened to invited guests, complete with free flow of wine, food, live music and entertainment.

Worst Taipei ITF this year, which was branded as its biggest show ever. I had to pin down as many trade buyers and sellers in the first morning, which was the only session for the trade. The show drew more than 310,000 visitors, and I lost my voice after three days.



Sim Kok Chwee
Correspondent-at-large

Best One of the best interviews was with Chris Heim of Sea Explorers, a diving and travel expert company based in Cebu, which opened in 1989 and now operates in four main locations. Meeting him and other dive operators gave me the chance to write about one of the Philippines' genuine advantages as the world's true centre of marine biodiversity: the best diving in the world is here, guys.

Worst At one travel association's meeting, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) representatives were there to brief the members on changes in passporting procedures. When the Q&A rolled around, some travel consultants were very vocal about feeling excluded from the new process, which intends to end the need for their services. This avenue of business is starting to close for the trade, but some appear to hang on without looking for other opportunities.



Marriane Carandang
Correspondent, The Philippines

Best Interviews with John Paul Cabalza, president, Philippine Travel Agencies Association. Not only is he nice, accessible and approachable, he also has depth. His comments are well-thought out and analytical.

Worst In the Visayas just weeks apart, the tragedy wrought by the 7.2 magnitude earthquake that crippled Bohol and to a much lesser extent Cebu, followed by super typhoon Haiyan that flattened Tacloban, eastern Samar, certain parts of Cebu and several other destinations.

Rosa Ocampo

Correspondent, The Philippines



Shekhar Niyogi
Chief Correspondent, India

Best/Worst Meeting a group of Chinese travel consultants in Colombo for an interview, I was more intrigued than amused to find there was a Mr Sketic (I heard it as 'sceptic'), Mr Trigger (certainly looked a happy bloke) and Mr Sword among them. Honestly!

The interview went on well, but there were occasions when they couldn't understand my English (or maybe my accent). There were times they smiled sheepishly or nodded their heads; I didn't know whether they nodded in agreement or didn't understand a clue of what I said!



Lina Tan
Editorial Assistant

Best Undoubtedly ATM in Dubai. It was an event that unfolded with clockwork precision. The media conferences and briefings were spaced well with plenty of prior information handed out at the media centre that was located in the hub of all activity and not tucked away in a corner as in many other events. The exhibitor booths were also buzzing with activity and were well manned so one got the opportunity to speak to at least one person during any unscheduled visit.

Worst Although the maiden IBTM India was a success with its one-on-one meeting format, as hosted media I was offered two nights' accommodation for a three-day event and no airport-hotel transfers. On the final day, one had to check out in the middle of the day's proceedings and leave before all the sessions were over as we had to catch our respective flights. One expects an international event to make it more convenient for hosted delegates and I hope they will next year. I would want to work through the entire IBTM India event as it was buzzing!



Rohit Kaul
Correspondent, New Delhi



Feizal Samath
Correspondent, Sri Lanka

Best The opening of Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan in August was the best event for me. Apart from the fact that the property is located in a serene and peaceful setting, I finally got to be on a media fam trip! The opening also coincided with my birthday so that was special too. It was my first trip to Pune, and I found the city to be a wonderful place for a sojourn, thanks to its pleasant weather and people.

Worst The "exclusive interview" with a senior official of the Ministry of Tourism in the beginning of the year turned out to be a damp squib. Even though I waited for three hours at the ministry's office for the interview, the senior diplomat was not keen to answer my questions and would only divulge information that I already had.



Redmond Sia
Creative Designer



Goh Meng Yong
Creative Designer

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE TTG ASIA EDITORIAL TEAM!

TTG Publishing Travel Trade

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

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)

Lee Pei Qi
Assistant Editor, Singapore (lee.peiqi@ttgasia.com)

Xinyi Liang-Pholsena
Assistant Editor, Thailand (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 (avianiam.images@gmail.com)

Greg Lowe
Correspondent, Thailand (ttg@thegreglowe.com)

Marianne Carandang, Rosa Ocampo
Correspondents, The Philippines (marianne.carandang@ttgasia.com, rosa.ocampo@gmail.com)

Prudence Lui
Correspondent, Hong Kong (prului@yahoo.com)

Shekhar Niyogi
Chief Correspondent, India (shekhar.niyogi@ttgasia.com)

Rohit Kaul
Correspondent, New Delhi (rohit.kaul@ttgasia.com)

Feizal Samath
Correspondent, Sri Lanka (feizalsam@gmail.com)

Redmond Sia, Goh Meng Yong
Creative Designers

Lina Tan
Editorial Assistant

SALES & MARKETING
Michael Chow
Group Publisher (michael.chow@ttgasia.com)

Marisa Chen
Senior Business Manager (marisa.chen@hk.china.com)

Shirley Tan
Senior Business Manager (shirley.tan@ttgasia.com)

Karen Cheung
Business Manager (karen.cheung@hk.china.com)

Jonathan Yap
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@hk.china.com)

PUBLISHING SERVICES

Tony Yeo
Division Manager (tony.yeo@ttgasia.com)

Nancy Lee
Desktop Publishing Executive (nancy.lee@ttgasia.com)

Carol Wong
Senior Circulation Executive (carol.wong@ttgasia.com)

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 2001-2005, 20/F Harbour Center,
25 Harbour Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2237-7174
Fax: (852) 2237-7227

BPA TTG Asia is a product by TTG Travel Trade Publishing, a business group of TTG Asia Media. It is mailed free on written request to readers who meet predetermined criteria. Paid subscriptions are available to those who do not meet the criteria. Annual airmail subscriptions are US\$180 to Asia and US\$199 elsewhere. Cover price US\$5.
MICA (P) 145/10/2012
PPS 619/02/2013(022926)

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

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.



Mark Your 2014 Calendars

IT&CM Asia
Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings

**IT&CM 中国(上海)
CHINA**
国际奖励旅游及
大会博览会 | Incentive Travel &
Conventions, Meetings

IT&CM
Incentive Travel &
Conventions, Meetings **india**

See You at **3** of the Industry's
Leading International Annual
MICE Events

**IT&CM 中国(上海)
CHINA**
国际奖励旅游及
大会博览会 | Incentive Travel &
Conventions, Meetings

15
APRIL

16
APRIL

17
APRIL

Shanghai World Expo Exhibition
& Convention Center, China



The Leading International MICE Event In China

Open To **Exhibitors** (MICE and Corporate Travel),
Buyers (MICE, Associations and Corporate Travel) and **Media**
Hosting Programme For Buyers and Media Available

Scan This QR Code

To Find Out More About Participating At The Event

www.itcmchina.com

IT&CM
Incentive Travel &
Conventions, Meetings **india**

19
AUGUST

20
AUGUST

21
AUGUST

Kempinski Ambience Hotel
Delhi, India



The Leading International MICE Event In India

Incorporating Luxury Travel

Open To **Exhibitors** (MICE, Corporate Travel and Luxury Travel),
Buyers (MICE, Associations, Corporate Travel and Luxury Travel) and **Media**
Hosting Programme For Buyers and Media Available

Scan This QR Code

To Find Out More About Participating At The Event

www.itcmindia.com

IT&CM Asia
Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings

30
SEPTEMBER

1
OCTOBER

2
OCTOBER

Bangkok Convention
Centre at CentralWorld
Bangkok, Thailand



The Leading International MICE Event Centered in Asia-Pacific

Incorporating Luxury Travel

Open To **Exhibitors** (MICE and Luxury Travel),
Buyers (MICE, Associations and Luxury Travel) and **Media**
Hosting Programme For Buyers and Media Available

Scan This QR Code

To Find Out More About Participating
At IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific

The World's Only Doublebill Event In MICE and Corporate Travel

IT&CMA is co-located with CTW Asia-Pacific - The Leading Conference And Exhibition On Travel & Entertainment (T&E)
Management For The Asia Pacific Region. CTW Asia-Pacific is open to **Corporate Travel Exhibitors**, **Corporate Travel
Managers** (Hosting Programme Available) and **Conference Delegates**.

www.itcma.com
www.corporatetravelworld.com

P
LANGHAM PLACE
GUANGZHOU



BRILLIANT, INDEED.
LANGHAM PLACE NOW OPEN IN GUANGZHOU

Blending modern allure with local authenticity, the landmark design hotel
Langham Place, Guangzhou now joins the city's luxury hotel landscape,
offering dynamic experiences infused with modern innovation.

Langham Place, Guangzhou is located adjacent to the China Import and Export Fair Complex.
The hotel consists of 500 contemporary guestrooms,
versatile meeting and banquet venues of over 5,000m²,
five stylish restaurants and bars and comprehensive recreational facilities.

LANGHAM PLACE, GUANGZHOU
638 XINGANG EAST ROAD, HAIZHU DISTRICT, GUANGZHOU, 510335, CHINA T (86) 020 8916 3388 F (86) 020 8916 3333
CHINA TOLL-FREE RESERVATIONS 400 1338 338 GUANGZHOU.LANGHAMPLACEHOTELS.COM

AUCKLAND BEIJING BOSTON CHICAGO DALIAN DATONG GUANGZHOU HAINING HAIKOU HONG KONG LONDON JAKARTA
LONDON LOS ANGELES MELBOURNE NEW YORK NINGBO QINGDAO SHANGHAI SHENZHEN SYDNEY XIAMEN