

VIEW FROM THE TOP

James Reed, CEO and managing director of Destination Asia, on why online is a must for the DMC, which is continuing to expand in the region



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APP, APP AND AWAY

More travel agencies and tour operators are building their own apps in order to target mobile-savvy customers



RAISING THE STANDARDS

Indonesia wants its tourism professionals and businesses to be certified in the run-up to the ASEAN Economic Community



PUTTING THE HOUSE IN ORDER

Singapore has imposed stricter rules on the conversion of shophouses to boutique hotels in the city's historic districts



STATE OF THE ART

Singapore has seen high-quality art venues coming on stream and a flurry of events making an appearance. But is this attractive enough for tourists?



SHANGHAI FOR FAMILIES

The opening of Shanghai Disney Resort and other attractions will help increase the city's appeal among younger visitors

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A DEEPER SHADE OF GREEN



What if sustainability policies reduce profits – would hotel and tourism companies still do them?

Sustainable tourism practices must move on to the next level or the industry risks facing a consumer backlash.

Consumers are done with what they see as the Linen Card trick: their bed linen gets washed only if they put the card on the bed. A friend forwarded me a welcome email he got from the GM of a five-star hotel in Hong Kong after he made a booking there. It said: “*You are highly encouraged to use your bed linen more than once as part of our green initiative.*” He had barely arrived.

We’re still in the phase where the green buck lies with the traveller, who is highly encouraged to pay for his carbon footprint, cut waste and save energy, as our roundtable on tourism sustainability, printed in the last issue (October 10, 2014), showed. We flag these initiatives as *our* green moves although it’s the consumer who does the job. Sure, we do play some role too – we make our hotel building green, install low-flow faucets and showerheads, recycle furiously, etc. Yes, all these practices do benefit the environment, but these are efficiency measures, not sustainability policies, and they increase company profits, not reduce them. Any wonder if guests see red instead of green (like my friend who got the welcome email)? Instead of educating guests to be environment-friendly, are we turning them off it?

What if sustainability policies reduce profits – would hotel and tourism companies still do them? Sustainable development has been defined in many ways but the most frequently quoted is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising on the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. It’s not about cost-cutting. The tourism industry should

think of this definition deeply and come up with deeper sustainability policies.

I like, for example, Shangri-La Villingili Resort & Spa Maldives’ partnership with local farmers, which won the resort a HICAP Sustainable Award last week. It provided funds to build four greenhouses, which the farmers could not afford. The cooperative paid back the funds within 10 months, and additional facility and technology enhancements will be funded on a similar basis. Since 2010, the resort has bought over 233,000kg of locally-grown fruits and vegetables, while the local community has started to buy as well, which not only enhances farmer incomes but gives locals a wider variety of highly nutritious fruits and vegetables. Today, the cooperative supports the livelihoods of 93 farmers.

But these kinds of measures invariably require companies to pour in an investment at the start (which reduces profits) and evaluate rewards they will achieve only in the long run, compared with the current gains to the bottom line firms gain immediately by cutting costs through efficiency measures.

Nevertheless, scale the next bar the industry must, for in the future consumers and regulators will be ever more demanding about how firms behave, as our roundtable heard.

For them, the Linen Card trick will no longer do.

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COMING UP

NEXT ISSUE:
NOV 14, 2014

PHILIPPINES The Calamian Islands, led by an influx of new hotel operators, are raising the visibility for Palawan as a luxury ecotourism destination

VIETNAM Despite recent connectivity improvements, Hanoi still remains very much a cultural destination

ECONOMY HOTELS How will peer-to-peer marketplaces change the game for existing hotel players? Do vacation rentals necessarily mean more economical stays?



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Analysis

Mimi Hudoyo examines Indonesia's quest to certify its tourism professionals and businesses in the run-up to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)

Indonesia is trying to get its tourism businesses certified to ensure that they achieve certain standards as the country prepares to compete regionally, especially with greater economic integration coming in the form of AEC 2015. According to local laws, all professionals working in the industry must attain competency standards, while products, services and management of tourism businesses have minimum business requirements to meet.

Indonesia's outgoing minister of tourism and creative economy, Mari Elka Pangestu, said: "In 2013, travel to ASEAN grew 12 per cent, the highest growth worldwide, to 92.7 million. Out of this, 46 per cent was intra-ASEAN traffic. This region has a lot of potential."

Citing the latest World Economic Forum Competitiveness Index on Travel and Tourism, Mari added: "Indonesia's position is 70th out of 140 countries. Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Brunei are ahead of us."

"In terms of human resources, Indonesia ranks 38th. The position is not bad, but...it is our homework to move up."

How the standards work

Currently, 24 out of 56 standards for the industry have been established, covering areas like accommodation, restaurants, tourist attractions, tour operators and travel agencies. The target is to finalise 28 standards by this year and the rest in 2015.

Spelling out the regulations at a recent workshop organised by the Association of the Indonesian Tours & Travel Agencies (ASITA) Jakarta Chapter, Agus Priyono, director of tourism industry, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, said a tour operator must be a legal entity and sell more than one tour package, with at least one of them being a package the company creates. A travel agency can be a one-person operation selling tickets and accommodation.

He explained: "Although it is a one-person operation selling products online, a travel agency must have an office, even if it is at home, as long as the office is a separate area from household activities."

"This means that OTAs that do not have a land address are not recognised as travel agencies."

Another stipulation is that those working in both tour operators and travel agencies must hold competency standards.

Agus said: "This is a gradual process. If we impose the law requiring companies to employ certified staff fully, no tourism-related company will be able to pass the certification process."

Major tourism enterprises must be audited and certified within the next two years, while SMEs are given four years to comply with the government regulation, according to Agus.

He added that there is, in fact, a growing demand for certification beyond Indonesia. "The new China law, for example, states that only certified guides can lead tours from the country," he pointed out.

Implementation obstacles

While the government is pushing for the

implementation of the regulations, it acknowledges several challenges.

The number of business certification agencies and auditors as well as the number of professional certification agencies and assessors are still limited. Also, there seems to be a lack of urgency among industry players to engage in the certifica-

cito Travel and board member of ASITA South Sulawesi, agreed. "ASITA South Sulawesi has received several complaints from travellers who booked and paid a tour from an OTA scammer. When things go wrong, people turn to ASITA even though it is the government's mandate to stop this from happening," he said.

be certified as assessors for their internal certification," Mari said.

Sumarna Abdurahman, vice chairman of the National Professional Certification Agency, said: "The way to make the programme work is not through law enforcement but encouragement of industry participation with government incentives."

"In Australia, for example, the government funded the industry (association) to create the standards. It then brought the standards to the educational institutions, with the government giving funding support to schools that use the standards in their curriculum. Similarly, some incentives were given to industry members that met the standards."

"Within 15 years, the system worked so well that the government did not need to give incentives."

Indonesia's Ministry of National Development Planning has plans to roll out something similar although this is still being discussed, according to Sumarna. The idea is to maximise the use of the government's education trust fund for accelerating professional certification.

RAISING THE STANDARDS



Speeding up the process

A suggestion is for bigger companies to become certification agencies as well, working alongside the tourism academy and professional certification agencies.

"Major hotels, for example, need a huge number of staff for their own properties. They can send human resource development staff to

tion process for both their staff and companies.

Agus said: "In the hotel industry, for example, there are 16,000 hotels to certify in the country. However, there are currently only 60 auditors and they will only be able to audit 3,000 hotels in one year."

"Other than encouraging business certification agencies to increase the number of auditors, we are also encouraging them to appoint auditors in secondary destinations."

As for manpower, the certification programmes supported by the ministry have turned out 64,000 professionals this year.

"While this is higher than our targeted 50,000, the number is still small compared to the (industry's) 10 million workforce," Mari noted.

Herna Danuningrat, president of Citra Netratama Tours & Travel and advisor of ASITA Jakarta, said: "Travel-related associations have been conducting training and inviting members to take part in the professional certification process, but the industry bosses are concerned that their staff will later be hijacked by other companies. Also, for this programme to succeed, we need the government to finance it."

Rudiana, board member of ASITA Jakarta, raised the same point. "The government needs to assist small companies, with subsidised or free trainings and upgrading," he said.

Herna added: "While ASITA Jakarta has 130 registered members, there are more people selling travel without legal entities that we have to compete with. While tour companies are required to go through audits and be certified, we need law enforcement to curb illegal operators, especially those operating online."

Sebastian Ng, managing director of In-

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PUTTING THE HOUSE IN ORDER

Even as boutique hotels in Singapore continue to find new fans, hoteliers seeking out new developments in prime areas will have to hold their horses following restrictions implemented by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) in July.

These new measures seek to prevent the proliferation of tourist accommodation in areas not intended for hotel use, which in turn affect hoteliers looking to convert existing shophouses in historic precincts such as Chinatown and Little India. This policy will be reviewed in two years.

Within the Central Area, proposals for new hotels, boarding houses and backpackers' hostels, including any change-of-use proposals, will generally not be

allowed within certain areas inside the Outram, Rochor, Downtown Core and Singapore River Planning areas. For other parts of the Central Area, URA will evaluate such proposals individually, considering the planning intention for the locality and the potential traffic impact that the individual proposal will generate. Outside the Central Area, all proposals will generally not be allowed.

According to URA, the move seeks to ensure such (hotel) developments "do not dominate and displace other commercial activities" in these areas.

Boutique hotel owners told *TTG Asia* that the regulation would further fuel their expansion abroad. Two-year-old homegrown brand Hotel Clover currently

has four properties under its name, and the fifth one will be opened next year, according to CEO, Teo Kok Hwee.

Admitting that this new measure has halted his expansion plans in Singapore, Teo will instead cast his sights on overseas markets like Thailand, Malaysia, China and Indonesia.

He said: "I can no longer have my hotels in these historic areas, which is a pity, but it is fortunate that Hotel Clover has already built its name in Singapore."

Wang Tjang Yuin, director of luxury boutique hotel Wangz Hotel, also expressed his disappointment at the new ruling, especially when combined with challenging labour situation in Singapore. He remarked: "We have placed any ex-

pansion plans within Singapore on hold and are focusing on developing countries around the region instead."

This is a pity, however, as many interviewed noted that travellers are showing a greater interest in accommodation options offering a unique experience that hotel chains cannot give.

Small Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH) area & development director for Asia Pacific, Victor Wong said: "Having hotels built among other shophouses located in historic areas gives travellers a nostalgic feel and a back-in-time experience, since most shophouses date back to a century or more. This proves to be a refreshing experience in a very modern city like Singapore."

The Naumi Hotel and The Scarlet Singapore on Seah Street and Erskine Road respectively – under the SLH umbrella – were themselves converted from shophouses in historic areas.

Likewise, Loh Lik Peng, director, Unlisted Collection, said heritage has been a key selling point for its three luxury boutique hotels in Singapore: New Majestic Hotel, Hotel 1929 and Wanderlust. He said: "Our guests love being in a historic and interesting local ethnic location such as Chinatown or Little India, and they love staying in heritage buildings."



Singapore has imposed stricter rules on the conversion of shophouses to boutique hotels in historic districts. **Paige Lee Pei Qi** finds out how the new measures affect hoteliers and travel consultants

More leeway please

SLH's Wong opined that there should be flexibility in exercising this rule. He said: "The new regulation seeks to prevent a hotel overcrowding situation within a single area to ensure the diversity and charm of the different districts – which is a fair consideration."

"However, I also think there should be room for evaluation on a case-to-case basis regarding new hotels' application in the restricted zones."

Mary Sai, executive director, Knight Frank, said: "It is a very clear-cut signal from URA that they want to protect these areas for the residents because the proliferation of hotels means that residents may be deprived of their own amenities like coffeeshops or supermarkets."

"In the past, it would be refreshing to see a boutique hotel in the neighbourhood, but now it is becoming too much

We have placed any expansion plans within Singapore on hold and are focusing on developing countries around the region.

Wang Tjang Yuin, director, Wangz Hotel

that enough is enough."

According to Sai, while the demand for shophouses may be dampened by the new rules, owners of shophouses already approved for hotel use will find their assets rise in value over time because of the difficulty in getting hotel sites.

She said: "The added value is subjective because it depends on various factors like location, size, number of rooms, etc. But the asset value goes up by approximately 30 per cent."

For existing approved hotels and boarding houses on sites zoned for hotel use, any proposed intensification of the Gross Floor Area (GFA) will continue to be subject to evaluation.

Expansion of existing approved boarding house and backpackers' hostel uses that are on Temporary Permission will be considered individually, up to the total GFA of the existing building that it occupies. Further renewal of the permission will only be allowed if they have not caused any adverse traffic impact and disamenity to the surrounding users.

Agreeing with the need to protect historic neighbourhoods, Unlisted Collection's Loh said: "There has been a rash of poorly thought-out conversions recently, and they have very poor quality spaces and fit in poorly with the rest of their neighbourhood."

"I think for a district to thrive there needs to be variety, and having a concentration of hotels will only make the area touristy and irrelevant for locals."

However, Loh shared that the new measures would have minimal impact on his business. He elaborated: "Given the prices of property in Singapore now and

the very acute labour situation, there is no realistic prospect for me to purchase any shophouses for (hotel) conversion."

Similarly, inbound operators were generally unfazed by the new developments.

Tour East group vice president of sales and marketing, Judy Lum, said: "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."

However, she conceded that special interest groups may be lost due to the dearth

of variety in the market.

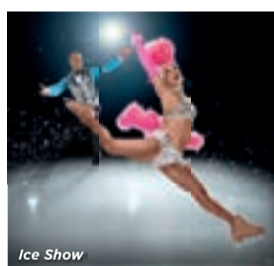
Luxury Tours & Travel Singapore's director, Michael Lee, added: "Boutique hotels are a niche market that appeals more to the younger and solo FIT travellers. It is a good addition to have but it is not really our core audience."

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Agency

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

INNOVATORS SEEKING SUSTAINABLE ADVENTURES

WHO Green Discovery's founder and owner Inthy Deuansavan has been developing a number of sustainable products in Laos with the aim of benefiting local communities.

One of the company's most successful programmes is the Tree Top Explorer, a jungle hotel in Paksong developed with International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and UNWTO, adhering with international standards of sustainable development, community benefits and wildlife conservation. This has become a renown attraction in Southern Laos and helped create another source of income following a drop in coffee prices in the region.

WHAT More recently, Green Discovery has developed the Green Climbers Home in Thakhek, a climbing camp in Khammouane

Province, Central Laos. Taking advantage of the karst mountain landscape, Green Discovery worked with two climbing professionals to secure a land concession next to a cliff range where they developed a sustainable camp constructed from wood. Bamboo bungalows, a bar and restaurant were built for guests, and climbing lines bolted into the mountain face.

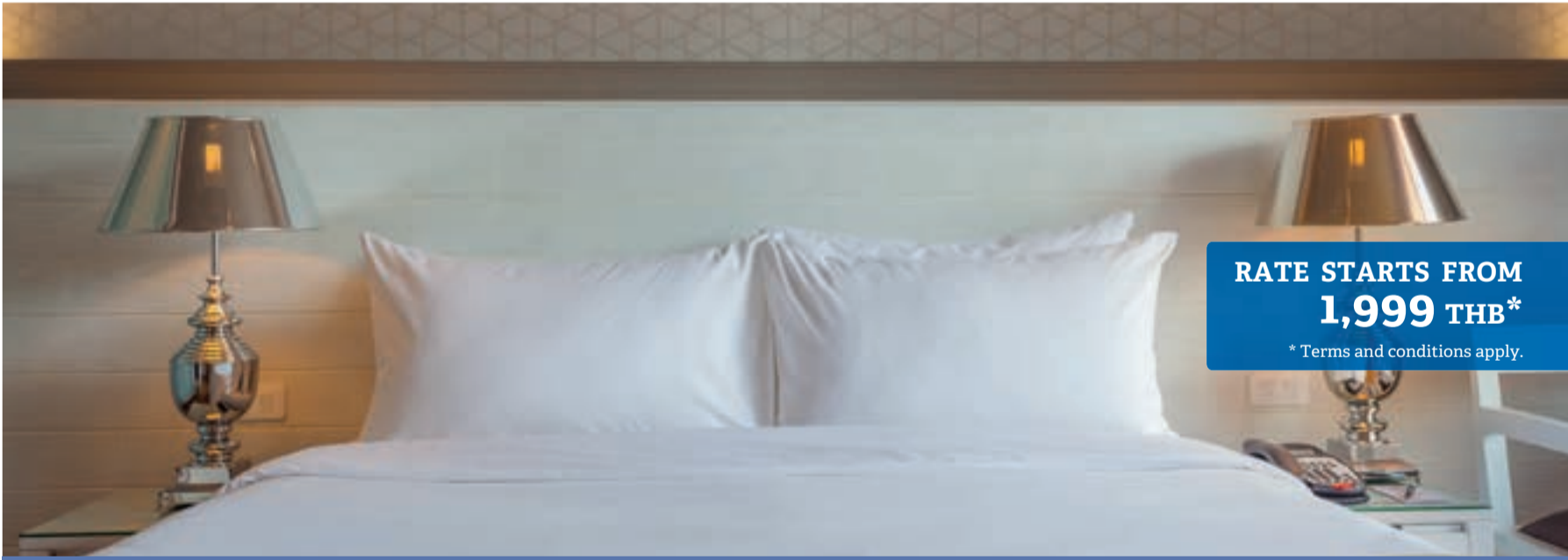
More than 90 per cent of the guests at Green Climbers Home are dedicated climbers who travel across the world in search of the best climbing spots, and many stay for several weeks. Climbers world-wide are represented at the camp, with the greatest concentration hailing from Europe and Australia, although a growing number of Asian markets are now showing an interest in the destination too.

WHY Between October 2013 and May 2014, the camp operated at full capacity and was forced to stop selling accommodation, a reflection that the camp's policy of allowing free climbing while only charging for accommodation has proven to be very popular. There are no plans to expand as the management believes the camp would lose its personal touch where managers know each of the guests, and the guests each other.

TARGET Fifteen Laotian villagers are employed for cleaning, cooking and transporting clients to and fro Thakhek town. Almost all the food is sourced from the local market, which creates an indirect source of income by driving higher demand for produce in the area. The policy is to source locally as much as possible.



Green Discovery's Inthy Dueansavan is a champion of adventure tours and ecotourism in Laos



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Artist's impression

A breath of fresh air

Check into one of Hong Kong's most iconic hotels as it celebrates its 40th anniversary and enjoy award-winning guest chef menus, upgraded guest rooms, facilities and amenities, and a brand new wow-worthy Rooftop Garden.

There is much to rejoice as the 40th anniversary celebration unfolds at The Park Lane Hong Kong. Constantly upgrading, the hotel has revitalised its guest rooms, amenities, facilities as well as food & beverage offerings as it seek to give guests even greater value.

THE ROOFTOP GARDEN

The latest event venue is the brand new **Rooftop Garden**. With a breathtaking panoramic view of Victoria Harbour and Park, the garden boasts 3,000 square feet of indoor space and 4,000 square feet of outdoors space. It is capable of accommodating up to 250 people.

That's not all. There are altogether **14 function rooms** of different sizes catering to different needs at The Park Lane. All rooms enjoy natural daylight, while some can be combined to host a larger event. Whether it's a corporate or private event, wedding banquet, business seminar or private dinner, the hotel's experienced events team is able to deliver with utmost professionalism.

NEW FAMILY ROOM

Guest rooms at The Park Lane have always been more spacious compared to other hotels in Hong Kong. And the newly renovated **Family Room** is the perfect example. These family-friendly rooms now feature two double beds—which is ideal for two



adults and two children. A range of toys such as Lego and Nintendo Wii/NDS are available from Front Desk for the kids too.

The Family Rooms now complement the other options — superior rooms, deluxe rooms, the spacious Park Lane Suites and Presidential Suite and the Park Lane Club for business travellers. All rooms offer tech-friendly amenities and a magnificent view of the famed Victoria Harbour, park view or city view.

There is a flat-screen HDTV with DVD/CD player, universal sockets, wall mirror, study desk, a modern marble bathroom and complimentary wired and WiFi Internet access in each room, giving guests exceptional comfort and convenience in one of Hong Kong's most vibrant business, shopping and entertainment districts.

GOURMET DELIGHTS

George & Co. has been one of the most stylish bars in Causeway Bay for

cocktails or a glass of wine. Since August, its all-new **gourmet burger** menu has been making waves for its quality beef and inventive interpretations.

Using US Black Angus Beef, the burgers may be wholesomely traditional or tantalisingly cross-cultural, such as the Bull's Tail & Foie Gras Burger and Tandoori Chicken Burger. Do try the **"Park Lane 1974"** cocktail too as it was created to commemorate the hotel's 40th anniversary.

At **RIVA and The Deck**, the contemporary dining restaurant on the 27th floor, another must-try is **"The Deck Rosé Sensation"** (Pink Canapés Paired with a Glass of Moët & Chandon Rosé Champagne) at the **Moët Mobile Bar**.

CELEBRITY CHEFS

As part of the anniversary celebrations, The Park Lane Hong Kong has been hosting celebrity chefs from around the world since January.



Two double beds at the all-new Family Rooms

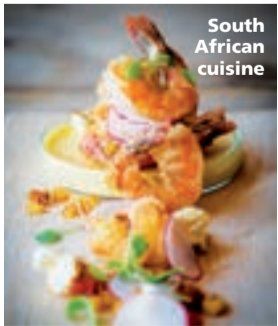


These talented chefs, and their specialties, have been star attractions.

So far, celebrity chefs from France, Australia and Spain have presented their creations. Next up from

November 3-9, 2014 is South Africa's **Arnold Tanzer**, who will host a **Wine Dinner** featuring award-winning South African wines on November 6 and a **Deluxe BBQ Menu** on the Rooftop

Garden on November 8. Looking ahead, French and Australian cuisines will take center stage in March and May 2015 respectively, giving guests even more reasons to return. ■





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HOTELS



NEXT HOTEL BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

SilverNeedle Hospitality opened last month the first hotel under its flagship brand. Located in Queen Street Mall, the 304-room Next Hotel Brisbane and its restaurant celebrate its heritage as the former Lennox Hotel. Appealing to tech-savvy travellers as well, the Next app allows smartphones to be used as room keys, while a Samsung Galaxy S4 phone in every room functions as a wireless hotspot when guests are out and about.



HOLIDAY INN JAIPUR CITY CENTRE, INDIA

Opening in Rajasthan its ninth Holiday Inn hotel in India, InterContinental Hotels Group's 172-room property offers easy access to key attractions such as Amber Fort and Hawa Mahal. Rooms are equipped with 37-inch LED TVs, iPod docking stations and complimentary Wi-Fi, while on-site amenities include a gym, spa and rooftop swimming pool. Guests also have a choice of three different restaurants and a cocktail lounge.



HAIKOU MARRIOTT HOTEL, CHINA

The first Marriott-branded hotel in Haikou, capital of Hainan, launched this month. Adjacent to Hainan International Convention & Exhibition Centre, the hotel has 386 rooms, including two luxury villas. There are three restaurants and four bars, while recreational offerings include adult and children's pools and an eco-pool. Hot spring pools can also be found at the Touch Spa.



HILTON NAY PYI TAW, MYANMAR

Hilton Worldwide made its debut this month in Myanmar in the country's capital city. Set amid lush tropical landscaped gardens, the 202-key hotel is within easy reach of main government offices and a 30-minute drive from the international airport. In addition to three F&B options, guests can enjoy facilities such as an outdoor swimming pool, a fitness centre and a tennis court.

TRANSPORTATION

BANGKOK AIRWAYS OFFERS FREE BIKE LOADING ON ALL ROUTES

In an effort to promote ecotourism holidays, Bangkok Airways has just kicked off its *Bike On Board* campaign to offer free bicycle loading apart from personal baggage. The first phase of the airline's new service commenced on October 15, 2014 and will end on March 29, 2015 on its entire network, except sectors that are operated by ATR aircraft.



MYANMA AIRWAYS LAUNCHES SIGHTSEEING TOURS

State-run Myanmar Airways is welcoming the peak tourism season with new sightseeing tours from Mandalay, Yangon and Ayeerawady. Three routes are available out of Chanmyathazi airport, and tours are available from 07.00 to 15.30 daily. Prices vary between US\$50 and US\$60, while charters are at US\$750 per hour. Yangon-Pathein-Yangon tours are at US\$30 per person. From Pathein the airline is also running two routes, ranging from US\$25 to US\$30 per person. The airline will deploy 10-seat Grand Caravan aircraft for the tours.

TECHNOLOGY

ABACUS ROLLS OUT A RANGE OF SOLUTIONS

Abacus International unveiled a slew of new products during the recent biennial Abacus International Conference in Abu Dhabi.

Streamlining workflow to a single desktop, Abacus WorkSpace allows travel consultants to access all content sources within a single point of sale – with super-PNR integration between Abacus ContentPlus and the Abacus GDS. Consultants therefore no longer have to log on to multiple systems.

Other products and solutions announced include travel itinerary app TripCase, Abacus Travel Plus aimed at wholesalers, and Abacus Mobile Connect, a tool that allows travel agencies to launch their own apps.



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View from the top

James Reed, CEO and managing director of Destination Asia, is no stranger to the ever-changing travel trends and mix of visitors to the region. He tells [Xinyi Liang-Pholsena](#) where he thinks the opportunities are for the DMC

AN INDEPENDENT STREAK

Destination Asia rolled out several B2B portals in recent months. Why the big focus on online?

Our client base wants immediate confirmation, but our offices are six, seven hours ahead of Europe and 12 hours ahead of the US, so we need to give immediate access and represent all hotels. Also, new customers can see that they can book through one source to all 11 countries – we actually own all 11. Few competitors (can claim that) as they actually sub, sub, sub-contract, but we have our own licenses.

Another reason is that we are among the last few independent companies of our size. Tour East is owned by Qantas Airways; Diethelm Travel is owned by a Swiss international trading company; and Asian Trails is owned by Kuoni.

Tour wholesalers...have used other inbound DMCs and found that part of these companies are owned by their European competitors, and they don't like that. Independence has helped us tremendously.

What benefits have been reaped?

B2B first came in on straight single-destination bookings – somebody in London booking Thailand only or somebody in Sydney booking Bali. But now the technology allows more sophisticated software, so that we can now offer multiple countries. It has helped us to grow our business into a one-stop shop.

For tour wholesalers, it's better economies of scale and quality standards if they use the same DMC in as many countries as possible.

Are you targeting any new markets?

The US, the UK, Australia, Scandinavia; and the German market is growing, while South America is growing a lot.

As for Asia, currently we have only inbound India and inbound China, both of these (divisions) are owned by us. We have no Singapore, Malaysia, Japan or Hong Kong business, simply because we believe those markets are very mature, saturated and tight. We see 10-20 years of growth in India and China, particularly the latter.

You opened earlier this year an inbound India division

in Thailand. Will you also do the same for other destinations?

Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Vietnam are probably the next four countries to have inbound India divisions. By the end of this year we will have Indian inbound everywhere; maybe not Japan because the market is very small there as it's very expensive for Indians.

Is there already an inbound Chinese division for all your countries?

Not all, because some Chinese business is into Thailand, Bali, etc, but some is into Australia, Europe and America. We would love to get all the (Chinese) business into Asia, but that's not possible, plus the main destinations for Chinese outbound (in the region) are Bali and Phuket. Our main business in China is still inbound – inbound opened eight years ago, outbound two years ago. We will do outbound next in Indonesia.

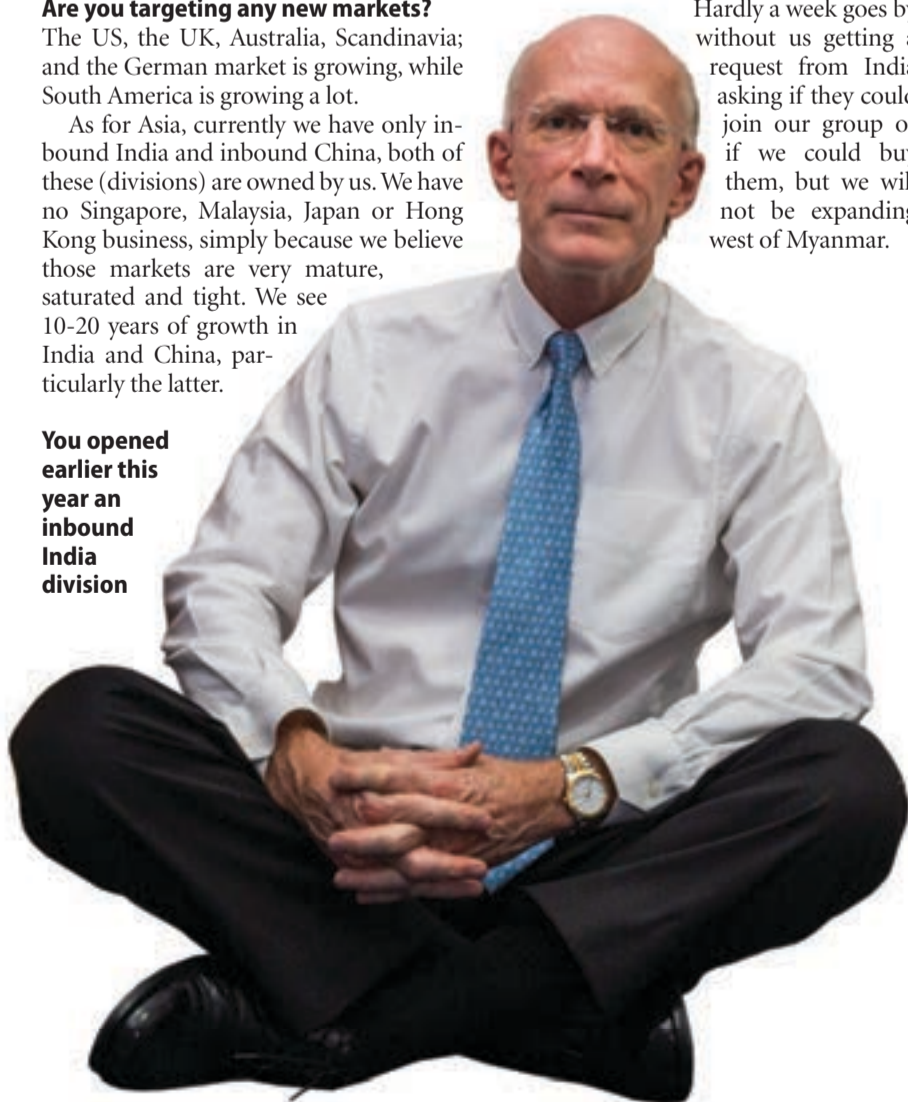
Which segment of the Chinese business are you most excited about?

The leisure business. However, Chinese outbound incentive business is growing. Like Western companies, Chinese companies do see travel as a kind of reward, for example, a trip to Hawaii/Thailand. (Similar to what you'd find in) Western countries, there's also families and honeymooners, but you also have dancing groups, jazz clubs, art clubs, sport clubs – all kinds of hobbies and associations.

What about new offices overseas?

We do have expansion coming, which we will be announcing in January (2015).

Hardly a week goes by without us getting a request from India asking if they could join our group or if we could buy them, but we will not be expanding west of Myanmar.



10 NEED TO KNOWS ABOUT JAMES REED

■ **Who's in your family?** I have three kids: a son who lives in New York, a daughter who lives in Iceland and a younger daughter who's in law school in Sydney.

■ **What do you do for fun?** I collect original vintage travel posters. Some people also know me as a model man because in my apartment I have a big collection of toy soldiers. I collect Patek Philippe watches and everything to do with the Beatles. I love travel and enjoy going to rock concerts.

■ **Your ideal vacation?** Bora Bora, the most beautiful place in the world that takes your breath away.

■ **How do you book your own leisure trips?** Depends on where I'm going, 75 per cent online by myself or through connections, and 25 per cent through a third party. I'm a typical online guy.

■ **What are you reading right now?**

Lost Horizons by James Hilton and *The Arsenal of Democracy* by AJ Baime

■ **How do you stay healthy?** I jog in Lumpini Park, and I take no-fat food, fresh vegetables and fruits, and no beer.

■ **Favourite food?** By far, Japanese – sushi, sashimi, fresh fish. Followed by Vietnamese because most of it is steamed with fresh vegetables.

■ **A bad habit you cannot kick?** I'm a perfectionist, and sometimes you have to accept the world can't be.

■ **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** I find it unacceptable that Asian men never open doors for women, let the women leave the elevator first and give up seats for women on the subway.

■ **Most people don't know that you...** I'm one of the few people in the world who plays ice hockey and cricket.

Why not India?

All sorts of operational, legal issues, etc. There are other countries in Asia where the entry is easier and more transparent, so we will never do inbound in India.

Which of your 11 destinations has the greatest potential?

Thailand is currently the largest, but in two years it will be overtaken by China. Coming behind is Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam and Singapore. Myanmar, however, has phenomenal potential. We are very bullish about it (because of its) stunning historical sites and geography. There's huge demand from Europeans, Americans and Chinese.

Asia has seen an unplanned recipient travel business diverted from the Middle East. In the last two years, we have been asked by almost every (international tour wholesaler) and their customers to increase the tours and capacity into Asia to help them compensate the loss of business to Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, etc. It's sad what is happening in the Middle East. How long would that last? Nobody knows.

MICE business will also continue to grow. The future of the world economy is Asia, and that means there will be more corporate meetings required, training meetings, product launches, incentive travel, so we see MICE growing by leaps and bounds. The upcurve is never-ending.

We are very bullish about the future in Asia – we see double-digit growth every year for the next 10, 20 years in all markets.

How do you foresee Thailand's tourism development?

Twenty years ago, Thailand had 95 per cent of the business to the Indochina area. It's inevitable the area has opened up, first Cambodia and now Myanmar. (Development) has been good for all these countries, but Thailand has also benefitted because it's currently the hub. Eventually Myanmar and Vietnam will become standalone destinations, but that won't come

for at least another 10 years because they don't yet have the infrastructure. In 10, 15 years, that will change, absolutely.

Protests in Thailand had only really affected MICE, but leisure, no – it hasn't grown but it's only down four, five per cent. We have been able to transfer approximately 35 to 40 per cent of the MICE groups that were booked in Thailand to other Destination Asia countries, mainly Hong Kong, Singapore, Bali and Malaysia. We are hopeful the business will come back once they lift the martial law. But it will come back, and everyone knows this – Thailand has got great infrastructure and hotels.

What are some of your biggest challenges today?

Finding qualified staff with a good service mind, and training and keeping them. But the problem in most parts of Asia is, the unemployment rate is one per cent, half a per cent.

There could be more outbound if there are fewer visa restrictions. For example, up until six months ago, Thais still needed a visa to Japan, but it has been cancelled and now Thais are going to Japan in hundreds of thousands, and Japan has benefitted in real actual economic activity.

I also believe Asia has to continually expand its infrastructure. Travel in Asia is still at a baby stage, and it's going to grow. There are still a lot of poor people in Asia, but in 10 years' time they will become middle class and travel. China has built this phenomenal fast-train system and Thailand's going to do it. What I would like to see is Singapore to Bangkok, and Bangkok up to Beijing, and this will come in the next 20 years. Rail traffic is definitely a growing part of the business.

We're the biggest handler of inbound cruise ship passengers (in Asia), but apart from Singapore, Hong Kong and Tokyo, the port facilities in Asia are geez...For Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, there really needs to be investment. And if they build it, more ships will come.

PRESENTING

THE GREAT 1920s

18 September 2014
Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra,
Cambodia

Celina Marasigan of Celina Tours and Travel, M. Zaki of RZ Travels
and Elena Archetti of Associazione Carpediem

Bringing the Great 1920s back with fantastic beats of Jazz, elegant canapés and drinks at Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra, PATA Travel Mart 2014 delegates swayed the night away with fun-loving industry partners who proved that business can be fused with pleasure! It was indeed a great night for all.



Choki Dorji of Blue Poppy Tours & Treks, Cecelia Teo of TTG Asia Media, Sophany Kong of Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra and Adi Haryanto of ESA Tours



The party hosts, Michael Chow from TTG Asia Media, Charles Henri Chevet, Area General Manager of Sofitel Phokeethra Hotels and Natalie Moser of Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra show our guest, Emmanuel Menateau (2nd from right) how fun 1920s can be in 2014.



Amanda Wan, Stephanie Vu, Alice Coelho of Macau Government Tourist Office together with Susana Esmeriz of Office of Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Government of Macao Special Administrative Region of People's Republic of China (2nd from right)



Luisa Yu of Westchester Travel Inc, Ashraf Samir of Snob Travel and Monique Petrus of Nokia



Jude Chua and Kenneth de Silva of Holiday Villa



Darren Ng of TTG Asia Media, Suvimol Thanasarakij of Tourism Authority of Thailand, Domingo Ramon C. Enderio of Department of Tourism Philippines and Michael Chow of TTG Asia Media



Neil Kirby of Travel Masters and Timea Voros of JTB Hungary



Coming together for a toast, the delegates sure know how to have fun and this is what networking is all about!



(2nd from left) Stephen Chang of PATA Chinese Taipei Chapter, Wayne Liu of Tourism Bureau Ministry of Transportation and Communications, R.O.C and David Tsao of Taiwan Tourism Bureau KL Office together with the Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra team.

SOFITEL
LUXURY HOTELS

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Travel Trade

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

2015 hotel price growth to surpass air: CWT, GBTA



Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) has jointly published an annual report on expected travel prices for 2015 with the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) Foundation, the education and research arm of the GBTA.

- Some of the report's findings for APAC are highlighted here (for specific measures, see table below):
- Airfares forecast to grow an average of 0.5%, including 0.8% for airlines based in China and 4.4% in India.
 - Hotel rates forecast to grow an average of 2.7%, including 0.1% in China and 4.4% in India.
 - CWT reports that occupancies above

80% in Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney and Tokyo will push up rates in 2015. It, however, makes no reference to the current negative results in Bangkok – a surprise given its reference to other trouble spots such as Russia/Ukraine.

- CWT mentions Airbnb, where owners of nominally private accommodation sell online directly to travellers, only in the North America section, even though Airbnb's growth worldwide seems to be rapid. CWT notes that Airbnb says 20% of its bookings are from business travellers. That said, CWT also notes that Airbnb's influence on hotel prices is 'minimal'.

CWT air and hotel travel prices forecast, % growth

Market	2015		2014	
	Air		Hotel	
Australia	-1.1	1.7	3.6	2.5
China	0.8	5.2	0.1	2.5
Hong Kong	0.9	3.3	4.3	2.3
India	4.4	3.6	4.4	-3.7
Japan	0.0	0.4	1.0	3.9
Singapore	0.5	3.8	1.4	2.3
APAC	0.5	2.6	2.7	2.7

Notes: Periods as available from CWT. For 2014, figure shown is average of high-and-low forecasts. Source: CWT, TBA.

China's outbound travel trends investigated

Hotels.com has produced its third edition of its Chinese International Travel Monitor – covering just China, not Chinese markets as the title may suggest – with information gathered online from travellers and hoteliers.

- We have selected some market trends and insights – with comments for some:
- 97% have taken a leisure trip and 49% a business or “education” trip, which adds up to more than 100%. Hotels.com told us this is because respondents could give more than one category – devaluing the finding.
 - Hotels.com reports an average daily spend of RMB6,707 (US\$1,095), excluding hotel costs. This appears to be wrong or wrongly defined; the amount seems closer to a per-trip, not per-day measure. (Hotels.com says the figure is correct.)
 - Social media is used as a source of information before booking, by 33% (up 6 percentage points from 2013).
 - 53% book online, including mobile, which has grown from 6% in 2013 to 17%.
 - Booking through a travel agency has fallen slightly from 36% in 2013 to 34%.
 - Highest in terms of information sources is, surprisingly, travel guides at 53%, with friends just below at 52%; third is

- websites, 48%.
- Hotel choice is difficult to interpret from Hotels.com's findings. 57% book three- or four-star hotels (star rating would generally be in the eye of the beholder because not many destinations rate hotels this way, and there is a difference between destinations). 11% prefer to stay in 'Chinese-style' hotels internationally, but Hotels.com does not define this type of hotel, and so respondents may also think differently.
 - Only 10% say hotel rates are the main factor in hotel choice, but we believe the price factor is much more important than travellers say.
 - Noted as 'most important' in hotel services/products are free Wi-Fi (59%), China-based payment system (59%), Putonghua-speaking staff (50%), Chinese-language tour guides (48%), Chinese-language websites (38%). Those service elements often considered important are further down Hotels.com's list – Chinese food room service (37%), Chinese breakfast (33%).
 - Places to visit: there is a disconnect between where travellers would like to visit, and where they actually go (see table below). Our list of destinations visited, however, is different from Hotels.com's.

Wishlist of travellers from China and actual destinations visited

Rank	Wishlist (Hotels.com)	Actual (Hotels.com)	TBA*
1	Australia	US	Hong Kong
2	France	Hong Kong	Macau
3	New Zealand	Thailand	Thailand
4	US	Japan	South Korea
5	Switzerland	France	Taiwan
6	Canada	UK	Singapore
7	UK	Italy	US
8	Singapore	South Korea	Japan
9	Hong Kong	Taiwan	France
10	Germany	Malaysia	Germany

Notes: Of those likely to be in TBA's top 10, numbers not clear for Mongolia. *Based on arrivals in relative destinations in 2013. Source: as shown.

The Singapore slip

A fall in arrivals from China in Singapore seems to be the main reason for the serious slip in the city's hotel results in June (see table on right). There may also have been a slowdown from Indonesia, another important source market, related to its presidential election – although that took place in July.

Occupancy fell a sizeable 9%, but rates held better – falling just 2%. However, that could mean a continuing rate slowdown in the subsequent few months – particularly if there is not enough good news on China outbound.

Bangkok continued with serious falls in occupancy, although rates held better. That could indicate that the trough has been reached – or is close – if there is no more news that the market considers bad.

Hong Kong's occupancy slipped, but

changes in this destination are generally slight, and do not affect much its seemingly perpetual upward trend of steady growth.

Melbourne is doing well, and this will likely continue with a good economy – Australia's GDP in Q1 was +3.1% against +3.0% forecast for 2014 – and good growth in arrivals (8% in 1H). The 5% fall in rates in US dollar is partly an exchange rate factor.

The overall hotel TBA-100 Index – a measure to standardise hotel results over numerous cities – at the half-year stage stood at 96, representing a 4% fall growth in comparison with the same months in 2013. Of the three parts that make up our Index, occupancy fell 5%, but average room rate held better, falling only 1%, with the resulting RevPAR falling 4%.



HOTEL BAROMETER

Notes/Caveats: Although rates are quoted in US dollars, the data is supplied by hotels to TBA in local currencies, and thus changes in exchange rates can affect figures. Different cat-

egorisation of hotels across countries may also distort the rate comparison. For this reason, percentage changes of ARR within a city may be a surer comparison of market progress.

Hotel operating results in selected cities, June 2014

Location	Occupancy, %	Growth, %	ARR, US\$*	Growth, %	RevPAR, US\$*	Growth, %
Bali	71.3	-0.2	168	14.2	120	14.0
Bangkok	50.0	-27.9	102	-5.4	51	-31.8
Hong Kong	82.0	-2.7	207	5.3	169	2.5
Melbourne	85.7	10.2	185	-5.1	159	4.5
Shanghai	62.1	7.8	102	-1.5	64	6.2
Singapore	81.4	-8.9	186	-1.8	151	-10.5

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

KEEPING A WATCHFU

Although corporate travel has gradually recovered since the global financial crisis (GFC), the sector remains cautious of their spending, disclosed participants of this Roundtable at Travelpoint's APAC Customer and Partner Conference, moderated by Andrew Kelly, regional director Australasia, Association of Corporate Travel Executives.

Has the corporate travel market recovered from the GFC?

ORSZACZKY After the GFC, people were predicting the death of corporate travel and if growth in business travel demand could be sustained. Qantas did a lot of research in the Australian market

to try and understand what it would mean for long-term future demand and to have substitutes like video conferencing, and concluded that travel is an essential part of doing business. We also looked at people's choice drivers and adapted our proposition to suit the changing market.

On the back of the mining resources boom we've seen several waves of growth. However, in the Australian market, the last six to 12 months have seen a real fall-off in consumer and business confidence. We've seen serious overcapacity both from the domestic market where things are quite competitive and internationally.

In summary, we've done quite well in the Australian market since the GFC. We see a more subdued economic outlook ahead and the impact it's having on corporates and how they adjust costs.

MAHINDROO The corporate segment has always been the more resilient travel segment. A number of interesting things has happened. People are travelling smarter – they're doing day trips, short-

hauls. On longhauls they arrive at their destinations in the morning, freshen up and go for their meetings straightaway. The length of stay has shrunk, so suddenly you see room nights have dropped, but it's actually the length of stay that has dropped, not the frequency of bookings.

The next thing I think is a nice refreshing change for us at Four Seasons is that corporate and leisure travel are being combined. If someone's flying on towards a weekend – a Thursday or Friday – those kind of travellers tend to extend their trips. It's no longer corporate, it's corporate and leisure travel.

TAM In our area of business, we have recovered. Companies are now very price-driven and have changed their spending habits. They are doing more videoconferencing than flying, and shortening the length of their trips.

For Hong Kong-based business travellers, there are a lot of convenient flights, e.g. Beijing, Shanghai. They can stay one night and come back.

What other trends are you seeing in the corporate market?

FRASER There's been a shift from pre-GFC behaviour. There's now a much higher uptake of discount fares, coupled with tightening of travel policies. Previously MNCs had quite generous regional travel policies – first and business class for three- and four-hour flights – but that's certainly changed. From our business point of view, corporates are now negotiating a lot harder on service and transaction fees than they were before.

ORSZACZKY There's a point to be made about visibility. The veil has been removed with all online pricing. The conversations we're having with corporates in our market are absolutely becoming more price-sensitive and they are looking to take cost out, whether it's through volume or price or a combination of both. We try to bring the conversation back to value rather than purely price.

For example, in the mining sector, the largest driver of corporate travel growth

Not pictured:

John Chapman
Chief commercial officer
JetAsia Airways Thailand

In the Australian market, the last six to 12 months have seen a real fall-off in consumer and business confidence. We've seen serious overcapacity both from the domestic market and internationally.

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Companies are now very price-driven and have changed their spending habits. They are doing more videoconferencing than flying, and shortening the length of their trips.

There's now a much higher uptake of discount fares, coupled with tightening of travel policies...Corporates are now negotiating a lot harder on service and transaction fees than they were before.



David Orszaczky, head of sales and commercial planning, Qantas Australia

Puneet Mahindroo, director, revenue management, APAC, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts

Tommy Tam, managing director, Arrow Travel Hong Kong

David Fraser, executive general manager, Greater China, Flight Centre

Austerity measures continue to bite the corporate travel market, which has become more prudent in spending and is driving a harder bargain in the wake of the global financial crisis, reports [Hannah Koh](#)

LEYE

in Australia, it's the interest in saving 10, 20 or 30 dollars more per ticket and getting the whole team there three hours late, which costs a million dollars in lost productivity. It's hard to have that conversation with the procurement manager, but a little more balanced when you have it with the business owners and managers.

One thing I see with TMCs is that they really understand the drivers of the business behind those decisions so it's not just purely price, and then you become more of an advisor about value.

With the growth of OTAs that supply direct to customers, do you believe there will always be a need for TMCs?

TAM Yes. They may supply information and price directly to customers, but we're matching OTAs – we have to match them. There's still room to survive.

FRASER We've had to move from something very commoditised, a ticketing agent in the past, to about travel tracking data. That's what we see now and that will change again in the future. The good (consultants) will survive and prosper, and the rest will fall away.

There's now a trend of airlines unbundling and selling ancillaries. What impact is that having on servicing the needs of corporate travellers?

CHAPMAN You need to come up with a different product offering for the corporate travel segment, something with more flexibility that you wouldn't offer to the leisure traveller. That's been the big trend. I've seen airlines come up with packages that would appeal to corporate travellers, e.g. AirAsia X and its lie-flat bed.

FRASER There's not too much of that trend in the Hong Kong and China markets at the moment, but more broadly we need to be more involved with that.

Metasearch engines like Google Flight Search and Skyscanner are playing a larger role. Would their influence be contained to more price-sensitive leisure markets or also extend to corporates?

MAHINDROO We're seeing a lot of impact, and when it comes to structured, managed travel for larger corporations, the GDS allows you to compare corporate prices and that's why GDSs talk about rate parity. It's not about metasearch but price transparency. You can see how corporate prices vary from what's available publicly.

ORSZACZKY I would say that metasearch engines are definitely more for unmanaged markets that are more price-sensitive.

MAHINDROO There are tools available today that show what segment of business is really growing. Last time, 90 per cent of business travel was managed but today in more matured cities, that's 65 per cent, closer to how it stands in North America where it's 50-50.



FRASER The other part of why metasearch engines are taking off is that the information corporate travellers need are all there. They can pull it off sites like Kayak and be as informed as travel agencies, so the pressure is now on TMCs/travel consultants to show that they are the absolute experts. We're not in the position of power where we have all the information.

With your knowledge of the travel industry, will GDSs play an important role in the future?

TAM The GDSs have a lot of resources they can develop; (they can also) provide travel consultants with more apps, software to let them communicate with suppliers. A good example is Roomsandmore that uses aggregated force to negotiate with hotels and airlines.

ORSZACZKY At a very general level, as long as you're relevant, innovative, flexible and listening to what partners and customers needs, then there's a future.

Another point – it's not either-or, it's a combination – is letting customers choose how they want to interact, and letting customers and partners build strategies on that.

CHAPMAN Travel agencies need to be able to differentiate themselves from others and package their products and market them across their own channels. I think Travelport's done quite a good job of filling that gap (so there's still a role for GDSs).

MAHINDROO GDSs have been looked at as a transaction platform, but it's no longer about that. It's about a merchandising and sales process, making it easier and faster.

As a hotelier, one of the biggest challenges is how to put the most relevant product in front of those that facilitate travel, whether for corporate travellers or those that combine leisure and corporate, and how to distinguish products on the channel, which requires a significant amount of merchandising, getting the banner ads going, showcasing the service-oriented facilities, etc.

That's one area where we feel GDSs can

make a change going forward. We've heard GDSs are dying, but last year GDS volumes hit a maximum high. I rest my case.

FRASER Content is still important

through GDSs, direct connects or APIs. Increasingly, working and partnering with us on new solutions and technology will enable our businesses to meet the demands of our business.

► **Thank you for your participation.**

Congratulation to all winners. You are invited for the grand prize Swiss Pass Superstar ceremony and an educational trip to Switzerland.

- Ms Channarong Martwijit, RTS Travel, Thailand
- Ms Thidarat, Diethelm Travel, Thailand
- Ms Chow Lin Ding, Chan Brothers Travel, Singapore
- Mr Derick Chan, Dynasty Travel, Singapore
- Mr Koh Lih Chinan, Price Breaker, Singapore
- Ms Yen, Boustead Travel, Malaysia
- Ms Nani Setiowati, Pan Travel, Indonesia
- Ms Le Dang Xuan Hanh, Viet Travel, Vietnam
- Mr Hein Thant, Sunfar Travel, Myanmar
- Ms Ian Evasco, Adventure International, Philippines

and Rail Europe GSAs :

- Diethelm Travel
- RTS Travel
- Dynasty Travel
- Europe Rail
- Pacific Arena
- Boustead Travel

APP, APP AND AWAY

Wing On Travel



What The Hong Kong travel agency's app offers 400,000 properties worldwide and air tickets to more than 200 destinations. What sets it apart is the choice of 70 LCCs, powered by Abacus. Future additions include bus tickets to China, attraction tickets and even restaurant bookings.

Wing On will continue to invest in search engines like Google and Yahoo, so that the app comes up top in search results. It will also increase promotions on social media like Facebook and Twitter during the launch.

How Consumers can pay by credit card, and the process takes less than five minutes.

When An eight-figure investment, the app was developed a few years ago with support from parent company, Ctrip. A team of about 100 IT professionals worked on this platform, and Wing On sped up the process early this year to make it available in October, coinciding with its 50th anniversary celebration. It hopes to see return on investment from 2016.

Why As FITs account for a single-digit percentage of overall business, Wing On Travel director and CEO, Lanny Leung, hopes to expand this market to 10 per cent. The company also intends to establish itself as a mobile travel agency by targeting younger travellers.

She said: "So far, there is no similar app designed with such a scale of content and price-comparing function to filter the best options for consumers. Wing On also has its eye on the Macau market, where OTAs are hardly present."

Yatra.com



What Consumers can search for flights, hotels and holiday packages on the app.

Yatra.com also claims it is the only Indian OTA that provides a web check-in facility, which is currently available on its iOS app. There are also plans to offer this service on other platforms.

"No other OTA is currently offering this facility. Travellers can also view their booking history and recent selections," said Sharat Dhall, president, Yatra.com.

How "Yatra.com tries to make the experience as smooth and comfortable as possible for its consumers, with features like eCash, a loyalty reward programme that gives instant cashback to customers for every purchase made, as well as offering them the benefit of instant refunds in the case of cancellations," said Dhall.

When Developed in-house, the mobile app was launched in the last quarter of 2013.

Why The main objective was to provide ease and convenience, enabling customers to plan and book their travel on the go.

Dhall said: "We have seen the mobile booking segment grow significantly, and the market is definitely headed in that direction. With the easy availability of cheaper smartphones and rising Internet penetration via mobile, an increasing number of travellers are researching and booking their holidays on the mobile."

Yatra.com currently receives 25 per cent of its bookings through the app, compared to 10 per cent last year. Twenty per cent of its digital spend is for its app.

Lvmama.com



What Catering to FIT travellers in China, Lvmama.com's app was developed to provide users with a convenient one-stop service to book tickets to scenic spots in China, domestic trips, regional and longhaul outbound travel, cruises and more.

At present, the majority of users are using the app to book tickets for scenic spots and travel to nearby countries, said Kate Ni, assistant general manager, Lvmama.com.

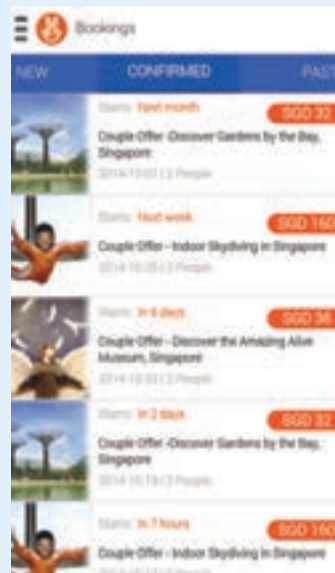
Claiming to have more than 10 million registered users, the company is still in the process of acquiring more users. Ni said: "We are promoting mostly in the mobile app segment, especially among search engines and social media."

How Users can browse, book, and pay for purchases through the app. In addition, they can share their travel experiences and photos using the app.

When The app was launched in June 2011. It was developed by Free-trip Wireless Center, a Lvmama.com division, and cost more than RMB10 million (US\$1.6 million).

Why With the rapid development of mobile technology, sales through the app is expected to grow. It now accounts for more than 50 per cent of sales.

BeMyGuest



What Created by Singapore-based tours and activities aggregator BeMyGuest, this B2B app caters to its suppliers. Suppliers are able to manage bookings, reviews as well as access customer details and active listings.

How Bookings can be accepted and completed entirely through the supplier app.

When Kicked off in March, the app is built entirely by the company's own technology and design teams.

Why The app was built to provide a mobile booking management tool for tours and activities providers.

BeMyGuest CEO, Clement Wong, explained: "As many of our suppliers are frequently on the move, this app reduces the time taken to accept booking requests. Many suppliers are even bypassing having a laptop altogether, hence the need for an app specifically for mobile devices."

Luxury Tours Malaysia



What Groundhandler Luxury Tours Malaysia is in the midst of testing its mobile app, eTravel Partners, which aims to give travellers an easy way to have a soft copy of their itinerary wherever they are.

With help from Singapore-based IT provider DesignerSoft, the app also provides suggestions on additional tours and other add-on products they can include in their itinerary.

How Consumers pay their local travel agency for bookings, while any add-on purchases made upon arrival in Malaysia can be made to Luxury Tours Malaysia.

When For Android phones, the app is being tested and is scheduled to go live in February 2015. A similar app for iOS is being developed and testing is scheduled for November.

Why Ganneesh Ramaa, manager, Luxury Tours Malaysia, said: "It is meant to enhance the services of our tour partners by offering more options on hotels and restaurants within the same location and within the same price range; our partner's logo will appear on the welcome page." Being paperless, it also helps save the environment, he added.



Travel agencies are keen to capture the rapidly growing customer base on mobile with their own apps. [Prudence Lui](#), [Caroline Boey](#), [Paige Lee Pei Qi](#), [Rohit Kaul](#) and [S Puvaneswary](#) profile some, while [Kathy Neo](#) looks at others that could benefit the trade

For travel agencies intending to go big on mobile...



Travelport Mobile Agent

Targeted at TMCs as well as business/leisure travel agencies, the app allows travel consultants to make bookings for their customers from handheld devices by obtaining quick access to Travelport's Travel Commerce Platform.

The latest version features enhanced interface, graphics, content and speed, as well as customisable keyboard quick keys, ViewTrip integration and a news-feed section with relevant news articles from travel publications.

Travelport ViewTrip Mobile

A mobile itinerary management and planning tool offered to agencies currently using Travelport ViewTrip. It provides travellers with flexible itinerary management throughout their entire journey through timely push messages, flight alerts, a trip list, a currency conversion tool, as well as airport, travel and events guides, among others. The itinerary automatically appears on the customer's mobile device when it is emailed to them by their travel consultant.

The app was designed to enable travel consultants to extend service and support to their customers beyond the initial booking, improving value and customer communications.



TripCase

Offered in Asia-Pacific by Abacus (of which Sabre is a shareholder), this consumer travel itinerary app pulls together all elements of a trip such as flight, hotel and rental car bookings for easy viewing. Travellers automatically get updates such as gate details or flight schedule changes, and can easily share their itinerary with friends and family.

The corporate version of the app is used by American Express Travel to keep its business travellers informed. There is also an airline version.

Sabre Red Workspace on mobile

Last year, Sabre launched its iPad app for travel consultants to sync their Sabre desktop solution, Sabre Red Workspace, to their mobile device, effectively allowing them to book and manage travel anywhere on the go.

Sabre also launched its own agency app store, Sabre Red App Centre, giving travel consultants the ability to download a wide range of apps for their job.



Abacus MobileConnect

This travel agency tool was launched in

mid-October, allowing companies to create their own branded apps.

Functions include check-in prompts, trip alerts, flight status and contextually relevant destination information such as weather and events, together with personalised promotions in-trip. In addition, a Call for Help function uses GPS data to

alert next of kin to difficulties, and allows agencies to offer a 24/7 helpdesk via VoIP, IM or SMS.

For Asia's hyper-social markets, there is also a Send Postcard option to share images with family and friends, as well as the agency for reviews. The app will also integrate with popular social media platforms.



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Destination Singapore



Destination in numbers

7.5 million

The number of international arrivals from January to June 2014, a three per cent year-on-year drop

S\$11.8 billion

The amount, equivalent to US\$9.3 billion, achieved for the first six months of the year, representing a two per cent growth year-on-year

9.1 per cent

Year-on-year growth in gazetted hotel room revenue during 1H2014, hitting S\$1.6 billion

The ArtScience Museum is one of many new additions that has helped to contribute to Singapore's burgeoning arts scene

The arts scene in Singapore has dramatically transformed over the last few years, with high-quality venues coming on stream and a flurry of events making an appearance.

Renowned art institutions like the Singapore Art Museum currently present thought-provoking international contemporary art, while the ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands has managed to attract major international exhibitions. For example, the latter was chosen for the South-east Asian debut of the original masterpieces of Leonardo da Vinci in November.

Carrie Kwik, executive director, arts, entertainment and integrated resorts at Singapore Tourism Board (STB), observed the destination has enjoyed “exponential growth” in its visual arts industry, spurred by such significant developments as the opening of the government-led Gillman Barracks (a new art cluster housing top international galleries) as well as events like Affordable Art Fair (pictured on our front cover) and Art Stage Singapore, which has become the region’s leading international art fair held every January since 2011.

Another show that will make its debut at Suntec Singapore next month is the Singapore Art Fair, the region’s first contemporary art fair dedicated to the artistic offerings of the Middle East, North Africa, South and South-east Asia. The inaugural edition will feature 60 galleries from around the world and 20 solo show booths from artists.

Expecting an audience of 12,000 through the four-day event, Singapore Art Fair project director, Sue Ngo, estimates at least 40 per cent will be tourists.

She said: “Singapore is fast becoming a hub for arts and culture, and it is evident when you see how many art fairs we have today – from one in 2009 to 10 this year.”

“The government has kickstarted efforts by putting the infrastructure in place...the presence of internationally renowned exhibition exhibitions will draw everyone’s attention (to the fact) that Singapore has the necessary capabilities to host such shows,” she added.

Upcoming in 2015 are also two new museums – the Singapore Pinacothèque de Paris and the National Gallery Singapore – that will “add breadth and depth to

How to sell

Those who love taking photos will enjoy the newly opened **Trick Eye Museum** at Resorts World Sentosa. Relying on an art technique that turns 2D paintings into 3D

images through the use of optical illusions, walls, floors and ceilings come to life on camera. Step inside or crawl into exhibits, interact with the characters and become the subject of the artwork on display. Visitors are

challenged to be as creative as they can.

The 272-seat, all-day dining **The Clifford Pier** has opened at Fullerton Bay Hotel. The historical venue has been carefully restored to evoke a sense of nostalgia, paying homage to Singapore's hawker food culture with local favourites such as *sup kambing* (a traditional spiced mutton soup), laksa and Teochew porridge.

Visitors to the River Safari can now see exotic animals like the red-backed bearded saki monkey, collared peccary and red howler monkey on a journey down the 483m man-made river. **Amazon River Quest**, the latest attraction at the River

Safari, is a 12-minute boat ride simulating an open-top boat voyage down the Amazon River. Aimed at showcasing the rich diversity in the Amazon Basin, visitors will be able to catch a glimpse of over 30 animal species such as flamingos, jaguars and the giant anteater.

Escape into one of the 11 Ocean Suites at **Equarius Hotel**, Resorts World Sentosa. The upper level – where the living area is – leads to an outdoor patio and private Jacuzzi. Downstairs is where the real experience can be enjoyed as the bedroom boasts a floor-to-ceiling glass panel with an underwater view of over 50,000 marine animals in the SEA Aquarium.



River Safari's Amazon River Quest

Singapore is steadily gaining visibility as a regional arts hub, but is its fledgling art scene enough to draw visitors to the city-state? Paige Lee Pei Qi finds out

the institutional strength of the visual arts industry”, according to STB’s Kwik.

She said: “These (openings) will position Singapore as an international hub for South-east Asian visual arts and contribute to Singapore’s ambition of becoming a global city for the arts.”

Suguna Madhavan, CEO, Singapore Pinacothèque de Paris, added: “The Singapore Pinacothèque de Paris will bring a compelling new dimension to Singapore’s visual arts scene, which has matured rapidly in the past five years.

“The collection of masterpieces from international and Western art like Vincent Van Gogh and Chu Teh Chun, as well as our rotating feature exhibitions, will hopefully inspire new dialogues about art...this will build Singapore into a more well-rounded global arts hub, focusing not just on contemporary art but also international modern art masterpieces.”

Many tour operators in Singapore, however, have yet to jumped on the bandwagon.

Luxury Tours & Travel Singapore’s director, Michael Lee, explained that most travellers to Singapore don’t come here for its art offerings.

“They will rather go France,” he remarked. However, he admitted that within the region, Singapore could be a substitute.

Dominic Ong, general manager, Star Holiday Mart, observed: “Art appeals to a very targeted audience, and currently we

may not have the resources to reach out to this group of audience yet because we have no experience with this segment.”

Sharing similar sentiments, Samson Tan, CEO of GTMC Travel, said: “I have not done any requests for art tour packages before, and honestly, it will not be easy for travel agencies to promote them as they are very niche.”

Edmund Chua, general manager at Lex Travel, on the other hand, felt it was still too early to tap the segment.

“While we now have art festivals, art shows and established art galleries luring buyers and visitors from the region, I would estimate the impact in yield to be minimal,” he said. “Art is a good-to-have in tourism offerings as an added variety, but it is not ready to evolve into a scalable segment.”

However, STB’s Kwik begged to differ. She said: “In today’s tourism landscape where travellers are becoming increasingly discerning, it is important that we continue to develop compelling tourism experiences and adopt targeted marketing strategies to achieve high-yield growth in the sector.

“In the area of visual arts, visitors are increasingly looking for quality art experiences as part of their travel. Singapore’s growing host of exhibitions, galleries and fairs thus offers many opportunities for the regional art community to make new connections and discover South-east Asia’s evolving art scene.”

TRIED & TESTED



Viewpoint

What does Singapore need to develop itself as an art destination?

Edmund Chua, general manager, Lex Travel

“While we do have such arts amenities, they are mainly serving the community. Art as a main driver for tourism is still niche for Singapore. Singapore needs to be more outward-looking in its approach and be bolder in taking risks.”



Samson Tan, CEO, GTMC Travel

“The government should set aside a few prominent spaces in Singapore where artists can book spaces to display their arts. We will then work closely with the Singapore Tourism Board to market it globally, like setting up a consortium of retailers in each city round the world to market every art event throughout the year. We will then be moving towards a creative city.”



Wings of Time

Paige Lee Pei Qi is dazzled by the technology that goes into making Sentosa Island’s newest night-time show an impressive display of water, laser and fire effects

WHY Hailed as Singapore’s upcoming iconic entertainment attraction, *Wings of Time* is the latest night attraction on Sentosa Island, replacing the seven-year-old signature night show *Songs of the Sea*. This multimedia night spectacle promises to wow the audience with a range of effects from robotic water fountains to pyrotechnics.

WHAT The 25-minute show tells the tale of two teenagers, Rachel and Felix, who help a bird-like creature, Shahbaz, find its way home through time and space. This S\$10 million (US\$7.9 million) production projects the story through a display of water, laser and fire effects, alongside majestic music and a panorama of breathtaking vistas.

HOW It was befitting for this outdoor attraction to be set against the backdrop of an open, gentle sea. The show started awkwardly with a pre-show lasting for approximately 10 minutes where the cast members led the crowd into a spontaneous singing lesson.

The story started unfolding with the descent of Shahbaz, which resembled a

grand phoenix. Shahbaz was soon joined by Rachel and Felix who began journeying through an adventure from the Industrial Revolution and the Silk Road eras to the African Savanna and underwater depths. Each of these scenes was depicted with an accompanying backdrop, coupled with charming music and dialogue.

The wonders of technology seemed to surpass itself infinitely because I could not believe how such realistic imagery could be brought forth simply by a fusion of multimedia lights.

To literally end the show with a bang, the highly anticipated fireworks lit up the skies with electrifying colours that left us in awe – and busy snapping away on our cameras.

VERDICT A unique one-of-a-kind production that provides a refreshing open-air experience, away from the traditional stage setting. A perfect spectacle to end the day on Sentosa Island.

Name Wings of Time

Rate Shows run daily at 19.40 and 20.40 along Siloso Beach. Premium seats are priced at S\$23 while standard seats cost S\$18 (S\$15 for local residents)

Contact details

Website: <http://wingsoftime.com.sg>



Ocean Suite at Equarius Hotel



Destination Singapore

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 Villa Samadhi at Labrador

Malaysian hospitality group Samadhi is gearing up for the opening of Villa Samadhi in Singapore at the end of 2014.

Located in Labrador Nature Reserve, the ultra-boutique resort has been converted from a restored colonial residence.

It offers 20 “chambers” that look out onto views of trees and wildlife. Guests can expect amenities such as private plunge pools, Wi-Fi connectivity, iPod docks and rustic wooden furniture set against blue and white china décor.

The resort will feature a library, a bar equipped with a pool table and the signature Tamarind Hill restaurant.

Samadhi earlier this year opened The Blue Mansion, a Cheong Fatt Tze Legacy in Penang following the renovation and refurbishment of the historic landmark.

2 Explore the human body from the inside

This larger-than-life exhibition gives visitors a chance to imagine what it is like to be swallowed up and discover the human body from the inside. Based on the expertise of Australia's Newman Entertainment International and Science Centre Singapore, the exhibition provides a thrilling way to experience science

first-hand.

Adults and children alike will be fascinated as they step into the oversized mouth of a six-metre tall human face. Slithering down the throat, visitors take on an audio walking journey through the vocal chords, respiratory system, circulatory system, the brain and finally, the digestive system.

Opened in May, this temporary exhibition will last for two years. Tickets are priced at S\$20 (US\$16) for adults and S\$15 for children.

3 Peter Pan flies into Resorts World Sentosa

Peter Pan, The Never Ending Story, an inspiring and innovative theatrical production, will make its Asian debut at Resorts World Sentosa on November 27. Featuring a blend of stunning visual effects and heart-warming music, the magic and wonder of JM Barrie's timeless classic will be brought to life.

The show will be running until January 20, 2015, and tickets are priced from S\$58.

4 Gordon Ramsay debuts restaurant in Singapore

Renowned British chef Gordon Ramsay has unveiled plans to launch his Bread Street Kitchen concept at The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands next year. With an industrial ware-



house-style design, the new restaurant and bar will be modelled after the Bread Street Kitchen outlet in London and will serve a British-European menu.

5 It's time for Mamma Mia!

Following a 10-year hiatus, *Mamma Mia!* will be back in Singapore from November 13-30 at the Marina Bay Sands Grand Theatre. This global smash hit will celebrate the magic of ABBA's timeless songs, promising an ‘ultimate feel-good show’ for all ages. Tickets are priced from S\$95.



MY WAY

Patrick Fiat

General manager, Royal Plaza on Scotts

What do you do during your free time?

I pursue my favourite pastimes in cooking and oil painting, and I am an avid antique collector.

Can you share one particular favourite hobby?

I love food and appreciate the friendships that are built and strengthened over meals. This adds meaning to the simple act of eating. Food encompasses many stories to tell about the different cultures, people and experiences.

What would be a must-do/see in Singapore?

Explore the authentic hawker scene. Twenty years ago, I used to think that the hawker scene will disappear with the (city's) rapid development. However, it looks like it is here to stay as Singaporeans have the habit of eating or doing takeaways at hawker centres. This is one of the ways to see the real Singapore.

There are also always great performances and Broadway shows that are showing in Singapore. Do not leave Singapore without catching one.



Which dining spots would you recommend?

There are many hawker centres, and I like to explore the ones that are frequented by locals such as ABC Market located at Alexandra. Some of my favourite dishes are chicken in bamboo steamer, claypot rice and Chinese herbal desserts. There is also a Chinese restaurant called Tonny located on Geylang Lorong 3, which serves braised crocodile's horn strip and a very flavourful shark's head soup. These dishes are packed with collagen, which is the key to looking young! Most Singaporeans I've introduced this place to do not know about it.

Which is your favourite attraction?

I like Resorts World Sentosa because everything is ‘under one roof’. There are so many things to do there that you can always revisit for a different experience. They also have attractions for all ages such as Universal Studios Singapore and Marine Life Park, the world's largest oceanarium. To fill your stomach, you can pick from a simple meal at the Malaysian Food Street to a fanciful one at one of the celebrity chefs' restaurants such as Joël Robuchon.

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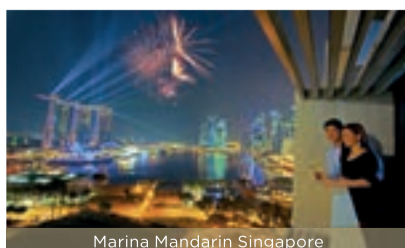
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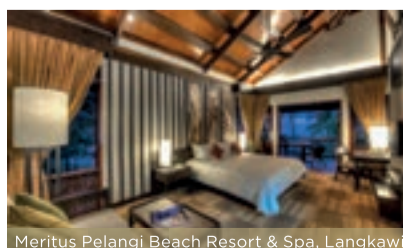
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Social

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

TTG TRAVEL AWARDS 2014

Held on October 2 in Bangkok, the 25th edition of the industry's well-loved annual event lauded 82 winners. Look out for more highlights in our supplement!



Best Western International celebrating its two wins – Best Mid-Range Hotel Brand and Best Travel Trade Supporter, the latter an Outstanding Achievement Award



Musical talents shared the stage with our prize winners



The Philippines was crowned Destination of the Year



TTG Asia Media's Travel Trade Publishing group



Centara Hotels and Resorts took home the trophy for Sustainable Travel Company of the Year



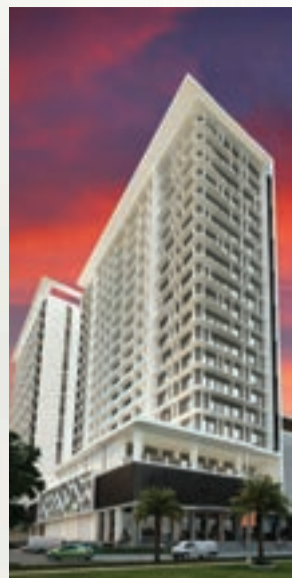
Best Travel Agency – Malaysia went to Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel



PATA's Martin Craigs surprising the TTG team with a birthday cake to mark the company's 40th anniversary



Accor with its Best Budget Hotel Brand award for Ibis Hotels



High-end Best Western to Rise in Kota Kinabalu

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

Best Western is delighted to announce the signing of a management contract for a major new hotel and convention center in Malaysia. Our new partnership with Sabanilam Enterprise Sdn Bhd will see a brand new high-end Best Western hotel and conference facility be developed at the ITCC Penampang complex - a 10.5-hectare mixed-use development that is taking shape in Kota Kinabalu.

Opening in 2016, this complex is expected to be a significant addition to Kota Kinabalu's landscape and economy, and I am delighted that Best Western has the opportunity to be part of it. And with 330 guest rooms, restaurants, a swimming pool, fitness center, business center and meeting rooms, plus the adjacent conference facility with its large pillar-free ballroom, our new Best Western is destined to be extremely popular with guests.

This marks the latest example of a new generation of Best Western hotels that is emerging across Asia and the Middle East, combining cutting-edge design, state-of-the-art amenities and a proactive service



APPOINTMENTS



Alan Watts



Anne Tan

ALAN WATTS

NOW COO for AMEA, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG)

THEN COO, Australasia and Japan, and operations performance, AMEA, IHG

CLARENCE TAN

NOW Senior vice president, development for AMEA, IHG

THEN COO for South-east Asia and resorts, IHG

ANNE TAN

NOW Group sales director, Park Hotel Group

THEN Vice president – marketing and sales, Meliá Hotels International



Bennet Chang



Shirlena Tan

BENNET CHANG

NOW General manager, Qliq Damansara

THEN General manager, Swiss-Belhotel International Hotels & Resorts

SHIRLENA TAN

NOW Regional director of sales and marketing, Furama Hotels International Development

THEN Director of sales and marketing, Goodwood Park Hotel

RAJAT CHATTERJEE

NOW General manager, Bangkok Marriott Hotel Sukhumvit

THEN General manager, Dubai Marriott Harbour Hotel and Suites

DOMINIQUE BERHOUE

NOW General manager, Crowne Plaza Macau

THEN General manager, Crowne Plaza Hong Kong Kowloon East and Holiday Inn Express Hong Kong Kowloon East

BECKY IP

NOW Deputy executive director, Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb)

THEN Regional director, Greater China, HKTb

SCOTT MURRAY

NOW Hotel manager, Fairmont Singapore

THEN Hotel manager, One&Only Royal Mirage

Destination China

The opening of Shanghai Disney Resort and more leisure attractions to come will help increase the city's appeal among younger visitors. *Caroline Boey* reports

SHANGHAI GROWS MORE FAMILY FRIENDLY



Destination in numbers

623.1 million

Total visitor arrivals to China between January and June 2014, a drop of 2.8 per cent compared to the same period last year, according to the China National Tourism Administration

77.1 million

Total visitor arrivals from Asia to China between January and June 2014, a drop of 0.2 per cent compared to the same period last year. Arrivals from the region registered the lowest drop for the first half

3.9 million

Total visitor arrivals from Oceania to China between January and June 2014, a drop of 11.4 per cent compared to the same period last year. Arrivals from the region registered the highest drop for the first half

Shanghai will be home to the first pirates-themed land in a Disney park

Anchoring Shanghai's family-friendly push will undoubtedly be the Shanghai Disney Resort (SDR), opening end-2015.

While the resort is predominantly targeted at a local audience, it will appeal to visitors curious to see Shanghai and discover the magic of Disney in a Chinese setting. Classic Disney characters and storytelling will be combined with a distinctly Chinese flavour.

According to Frances Li, director, communications, SDR, the resort will also boast many firsts.

She said: "It will be home to the first pirates-themed land in a Disney park, to be named Treasure Cove. This is unique to Shanghai Disneyland and includes a major attraction, Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle of the Sunken Treasure, an all-new high-technology boat ride attraction.

"SDR will also house a Disney Broadway-style theatre, another first, and it will stage the global premiere of *The Lion King* in Mandarin."

Unique selling points include the largest and most immersive Disneyland castle

around the world, the iconic central attraction of the theme park.

In addition, SDR will house two themed hotels; a large retail, dining and entertainment venue; and outdoor recreation areas.

A high-speed rail line will offer fast transfers from the city, while Disney Express rail services will connect the attraction to other Chinese cities.

Sunny Li, general manager, China Travel International (Suzhou), welcomed the addition of SDR, noting that family travel to Shanghai can account for up to half of his business.

More than 60 per cent of inbound tourists the company gets are from the Asian market, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan being the top three, Li said. MICE travellers to Shanghai are also increasingly being accompanied by family members.

In Singapore, Alicia Seah, director, marketing communications, Dynasty Travel, agreed that SDR will add a family-friendly dimension to the city.

She said: "China on the whole and Shanghai is more attractive to travellers 35 years old and above, so the opening of Shanghai Disney Resort will give us

another reason to promote the city for family travel and offer something for everyone – shopping, eating, culture, plus a theme park visit.

"Many cruise lines in Asia are promoting Shanghai, so it is also possible to combine regional cruises and a visit to Shanghai Disney Resort."

While SDR may not be a strong pull for well-travelled Asians who may have already been to Disney resorts in other destinations, Voo Wei Keong, director, WTS Travel Singapore, said: "Special rates and promotions will help us sell the resort and its various attractions like the theme park, hotels, etc to our customers."

Shanghai will also be home to another integrated development come 2017, when the creative arts, technology and cultural attraction Shanghai DreamCenter is targeted to complete.

The flagship project of the West Bund Media Port at Xuhui, the T-shaped riverside is being developed into a new lifestyle destination complete with an IMAX theatre, an entertainment district, film production facilities, restaurants and bars, as well as retail outlets. Among the key players behind the project are DreamWorks Animation and the Lan

Kwai Fong Group.

Meanwhile, Shanghai has other amusements for younger visitors such as the newly opened Sketch Aquarium at Shanghai World Financial Center Observatory, which is targeted at families with children. Visitors are inspired to draw and colour fish and other underwater creatures, and watch them come alive in a virtual fish tank (see page 25).

The 2013 *Museum Index* published by the Themed Entertainment Association and engineering design firm AECOM, also placed the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum as the 16th most-visited among the world's top 20 most popular museums.

The museum, which opened in December 2001, has 13 permanent interactive multimedia exhibitions – on plants, life on earth, robots, human health, space navigation – and four science theatres, making it the largest science education cinema in Asia featuring 10,000 films annually.

In addition, the Chinese Ancient Science and Technology Gallery showcases ancient Chinese inventions and works, while the Explorer's Gallery features Chinese and foreign explorers.



NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 The River Mall

The former Expo Axis, the main entrance to the 2010 Shanghai World Expo site, reopened earlier this year as a four-storey shopping mall housing retail outlets, restaurants and a Polymax theatre.

The mall is close to nearby Expo pavilions, including the China Art Museum, and the Mercedes-Benz Arena.

The 50,000m² mall has two floors above ground and two underground. Metro Line 8, which goes to the China Art Museum Station, connects visitors to the River Mall.

2 Hengshan Fang

Once the address of cultural celebrities, the newly restored neighbourhood includes 11 garden houses and two rows of the alleyway houses that have been converted into boutique retail shops, art galleries, creative office spaces as well as restaurants.

Largely typical of early-20th-century Shanghai residential developments, Hengshan Fang blends both Western and Eastern architecture. Located near Xujiahui business district, shopping aficionados can also easily pop by its malls and department stores for more retail therapy.

3 Grappa's

Italian restaurant chain from Hong Kong, Grappa's, has opened in Shanghai, setting up in the city's new Jing An Kerry Centre and offering access to Jing An Shangri-La and the rest of the high-end development on Nanjing West Road.

Priding itself on authentic home-style Italian recipes, signature mains include the veal shank in Barolo red

wine sauce with risotto, and roasted lamb chops with fennel parmesan gratin and rosemary Port sauce. Round off your meal with desserts such as a tiramisu or classic Italian cheesecake.

4 Sketch Aquarium at Shanghai World Financial Center Observatory

Parents can take their children to this futuristic aquarium, which hopes to inspire young minds to become creative through play and learning.

Drawings of fishes magically appear on a giant screen and are programmed to move like real fish – fish of the same type even swim together, plus there are also other special effects.

The brainchild of Team Lab, its founder Inoko Toshiyuki is regarded as Japan's Steve Jobs.

5 K11 Art Mall

K11 is more than just about art exhibitions. Featuring areas like Urban Farming, the 300m² horticultural section showcases breakthroughs in urban planting where an outdoor growing environment for vegetables is simulated.

The central courtyard is an Urban Forest with a large vertical green wall that can lower temperature and reduce energy consumption. Featuring a 33m tall artificial waterfall, realistic sounds of rushing water, birds chirping and a refreshing fragrance, visitors will feel as if they are immersed in nature.

There is also some high-end shopping – although not all have opened – and a number of interesting dining options.

Viewpoint

How has the perception of Shanghai as an expensive city impacted your business and tourism?

Inka Uusitalo-Raoult, residence manager, Ascott Huai Hai Road Shanghai

"Although Shanghai's consumption index is higher than before, many Fortune 500 companies have set up their Asia-Pacific headquarters in the city. Their employees are exactly our targeted clients, so it has been good for us."

Not only are business travellers quite familiar with serviced residences as another accommodation option, the continuous development of Shanghai is also attracting non-business travellers to explore what the city has to offer and this is bringing more business opportunities to Ascott."



Ricky Lam, general manager, Shanghai Marriott Hotel Parkview

"Shanghai is a value-for-money destination because it is able to offer a truly unique experience for international guests while also offering top-calibre facilities and services."

Travellers who think Shanghai is a cheaper destination because it's in China are mistaken. Shanghai is not cheap, but it offers competitive value for international-standard facilities and services.

Apart from being a business city, Shanghai is also a popular tourist destination as it is renowned for its historical landmarks, is a 'showpiece' of the booming China economy and offers easy access to other cities for those who wish to explore more of the country."





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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

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Most commented

ASEAN OPEN SKIES DREAM REMAINS UNFULFILLED
We, Thais, are partnering ASEAN for the open skies policy. That is why we have Thai AirAsia, Thai AirAsia X, Thai Lion Air and NokScoot, while Thai Airways International and Thai Smile are on the way down. Hail, AEC! – Manob Song-Im, Bangkok



PEACH ESTABLISHES NEW OKINAWA BASE, EYES ASIA
Asian travellers now have many options to travel thanks to the profitable Peach Aviation and the Okinawa airport operating round the clock. – Nugroho Setiatmadji, Jakarta

EXPLOSION AT KL ENTERTAINMENT OUTLET KILLS 1, WOUNDS TOURISTS
The government should bring out the investigation results at the earliest so that it will not hamper the tourism industry. The department of government concerned should inform tourists to take precautions before some kind of serious incident happens. Another thing is that the local police should be vigilant at tourist places to prevent such type of incidents. – Bijaya Pradhan, Kathmandu

LUX* RESORTS EXPANDS BEYOND INDIAN OCEAN, OPENS IN LIJIANG
This is a welcome development, as it would add to Lijiang's allure as an interesting international-quality tourist city. Lux* Resorts & Hotels should endeavour to complement this status by stimulating the foreign tourist's appetite for more travel to the city through the inclusion of English-language TV and radio channels, and a mixture of non-Chinese cuisine in the hotel's services. Lijiang is an interesting city, make it more interesting! – Austine Odo, Abuja



TRAVEL PURSUITS

- QUIZ**
1. What is the new name of the owner of Eastern & Oriental Express train and Road to Mandalay river cruiser?
 2. What is Vistara?
 3. Which is the odd one out – Expedia, Kayak, Orbitz, Priceline, Travelocity?
 4. Outside Asia: The main international airport for Paris is Roissy/Charles de Gaulle. What is the city's second airport?
 5. History: Hong Kong's InterContinental hotel opened under what name?

(1) Belmond. Its corporate name was changed from Orient-Express Hotels in July. Many of the company's hotels and other travel products now incorporate the Belmond name. (2) Name of the Singapore Airlines/Vistara joint venture airline. New Delhi-based Vistara is due to start flights this October. Vistara in Sanskrit means 'expansion' or 'expansion'. It is a metasearch website that might direct you to those other four, which are online travel agencies. (3) Paris City – the main airport until Paris CDG opened in 1974. Others included Le Bourget and Beauvais. (4) Paris City – the main airport until Paris CDG opened in 1974. Others included Le Bourget and Beauvais. (5) The Hong Kong Regent. Bought by InterContinental in 2001, the site was originally earmarked for a new Peninsula hotel.

Instagram



Time to test your eyes and see if you can spot Abacus International CEO, Robert Bailey, as he says hi from Abu Dhabi! Clue: He's dressed in traditional Emirati attire ;)



Abacus International CEO, Robert Bailey, welcomed approximately 500 delegates to the biennial Abacus International Conference in Abu Dhabi last night, marking the first time Abacus is holding their conference out of Asia.



Aviation industry leaders convened at the CAPA Asia Aviation Summit & LCC Congress 2014 today at Capella Singapore. Such a gorgeous ballroom!

Tweets

THE AVIATION INDUSTRY'S OPERATIONS ARE INTRICATELY INTERTWINED WITH GLOBAL EPIDEMICS, AS SEEN IN THE CASE OF SARS AND NOW, EBOLA.

- @STForeignDesk #Obama open to appointing #Ebola czar, opposes ban on travel from #WestAfrica
- @ttg_digital EU health chief urges Ebola screening for airline passengers
- @ReutersAero Airline clean-up crews walk off job in New York over #Ebola concerns
- @RT_com 'I have #Ebola, you're all screwed!' US man jokes, taken off plane by hazmat-suited medics



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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.



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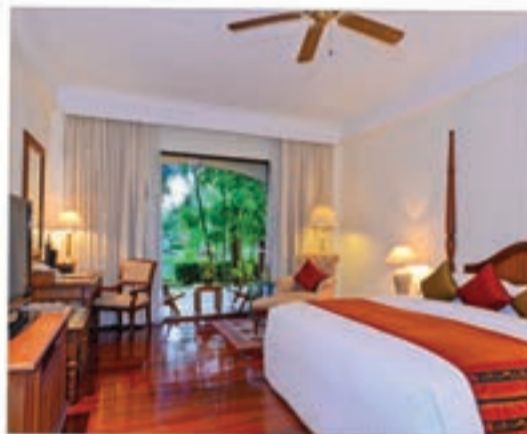


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