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New flights lift Bandung's future

But success relies on airlines' cooperation

By Mimi Hudoyo

JAKARTA Garuda Indonesia's new daily Bali-Bandung flights, launched on May 18, are expected to spur stronger international travel demand for Bandung.

West Java Tourism Promotion Board board member, Maktal Hadiyat, said: "The new service (gives us the) opportunity to introduce Bandung to travelers who have been visiting Bali mostly all these years."

Herman Rukmanadi, chairman of Association of the Indonesian Tours and Travel Agencies West Java Chapter, believes the new service will enable travel specialists to better attract visitors from countries that are already served by Garuda.

Besides the current daily flights from Osaka and Tokyo-Haneda to Bali and between Tokyo-Narita and Jakarta, the Indonesian flag carrier plans to launch Jakarta-Osaka services in August. Garuda's North Asian network also includes flights between Jakarta and Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou. Meanwhile, Thai access will be enhanced by a Bangkok-Bali connection come September. Garuda presently flies thrice daily between Bangkok and Jakarta.

According to Herman, multi-destination tours can be offered to Japanese and Thai travellers who will arrive in Jakarta, drive three hours to Bandung – the capital of West Java – where they will spend two nights, and then fly on to Bali for the rest of their vacation. Alternatively, travellers can begin their holiday in Bali, fly to Bandung and conclude their trip in Jakarta.

He said: "We must create an attractive package and it will only work with the cooperation

of the airlines".

While Jakarta remains the only gateway for the Chinese to the rest of Indonesia, the new air link is believed to open new business avenues for Bandung.

Herman added: "Filipinos have started coming (to Bandung) over the last few years, but they are mostly FITs (flying in on) Philippine Airlines or SilkAir via Singapore. I expect some co-operation between Garuda and these airlines to...boost market (potential)."

Moving swiftly to promote West Java on the back of the new air link, the province's travel trade partnered Garuda and SilkAir in bringing buyers from Japan, Thailand, China, and the Philippines, among other markets, to the West Java Travel Exchange in Bandung held from May 13-15.

Buyers at the show told *TTG Asia* they are eager to showcase other Indonesian destinations. Garuda Orient Holidays Japan sales manager, Shinya Mori, calls for stronger destination promotion, saying: "Bandung has the potential to attract the Japanese with its heritage, (Ciater) hot spring, (Tangkuban Perahu) volcano and Trans Studio theme park. (But) some Japanese still think Indonesia is Bali, some have confused Jakarta with Jogjakarta (where the firm operates tours to) and most don't know anything about Bandung."

Lily Holiday China assistant general manager and senior manager (outbound), Chen Yuxuan, is also optimistic about Bandung's appeal. However, she said the lack of Mandarin-speaking guides and direct flights between Shenyang and Jakarta were obstacles.



Mori: more promotions please

Like her father, Stanley Ho, Pansy Ho is a force behind Macau tourism's destiny – although she insists she does not call the shots. *Raini Hamdi* talks to Ho at last month's PATA Annual Summit and discovers a tireless lady who believes in a bigger, greater Macau and is helping to build bridges towards it – see page 6

Bridging and leveraging

Malaysian travel firms mired in price war

By S Puvaneswary

KUALA LUMPUR A year-on-year increase in business this Indian summer season has not translated into better profits for inbound specialists in Malaysia, as competition intensifies among travel agencies for business and air seats from India.

Adam Kamal, managing director of Tina Travel and Agencies, said: "New (travel agencies) have entered the market and are selling cheap to secure new accounts. To compete, existing players are selling at nett prices. In our case, we had to lower our selling price to almost nett. So while we have seen a 10 per cent year-on-year increase in business volume, our profit margin has slipped 10 per cent."

Adam said the spate of rate dumping was more acute this

year due to reduced seat capacity on the Mumbai-Kuala Lumpur and New Delhi-Kuala Lumpur routes.

Last year, AirAsia X suspended its flights between the Malaysian capital and India's Mumbai and New Delhi, leaving Malaysia Airlines with a monopoly on these sectors.

Arokia Das, senior manager of Luxury Tours Malaysia, who has predicted a smaller profit despite a 15 per cent growth in business this summer, said some travel specialists were keeping package prices low by offering optional meals and attraction entrances – items that were once part of a basic tour package.

"We have to be creative in our packaging. We are promoting sit-in-coach tours instead of private tours for FITs and groups. We

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Terruce Wang
Vice President
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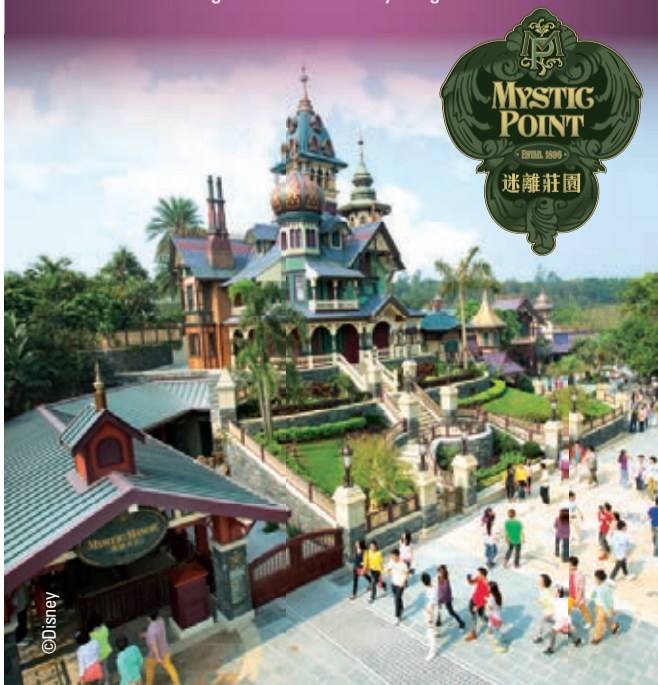
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After the opening of Toy Story Land and Grizzly Gulch, *Mystic Point* marks the final chapter in the Hong Kong Disneyland expansion plan. With the new themed land additions, you and your guests will have so much to enjoy at the Resort, with classic Disney rides, entertainment shows, and our two hotels.

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Codeshare to benefit Samui?

Wider flight network a boon to Thai outbound firms too

By Greg Lowe

BANGKOK The recent codeshare agreement between Bangkok Airways and Qatar Airways is set to boost travel between Thailand and the Middle East, although the Thai travel trade expects benefits to weigh in favour of the outbound segment from the Middle East.

The partnership will make it more convenient for Middle Eastern tourists travelling to Bangkok Airways destinations in Thailand and other countries such as Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, said Craig Harrington, general manager for Indochina and Southeast Asia, Destinations of the World (Thailand).

"It will help to expand the coverage of destinations in Indochina for the Middle Eastern markets. For Thailand specifically, it may also help expand lesser known destinations, giving wider breadth to the source market."

Several inbound consultants

in Thailand were positive about the codeshare deal despite not accruing direct benefits for their operations.

"As an inbound operator we won't really get anything (from the codeshare), but it is good news for the overall sector (dealing with the Arab market)," said Suchat Madamun, managing director of Prestige Holidays Thailand, which specialises in the Middle East market.



Wiesner: gains for outbound

But Suchat expects benefits to trickle down to his agency's outbound business to the region and its ability to provide better services to clients based outside Bangkok. "We'll be able to get a better fare for our (Thai) clients travelling to the Middle East. We'll also be able to sell Qatar tickets for Chiang Mai-Bangkok-Doha or Phuket-Chiang Mai-Doha."

However, not all consultants view the airline partnership in a positive light.

"It's really about their mo-

nopoly at Samui," said Chaladol Ussaman, CEO of CNS Travel, alluding to Bangkok Airways' ownership of the Samui Airport. "They want more visitors from the Middle East going to Samui, but most (Middle Eastern) business is with Bangkok, Pattaya and Phuket. Why would they fly with Bangkok Airways unless they are going to Samui?"

Rejecting claims that the codeshare was aimed solely at driving traffic to Samui, Peter Wiesner, Bangkok Airways' senior vice president network management, said: "The codeshare enables Qatar to sell tickets on the London-Doha-Bangkok route for example, and publish its own fare with its distinct 'QR' code for travel agencies and ticketing services. This gives Qatar the opportunity to sell a whole new product throughout its network."

Wiesner acknowledged that some Bangkok-based inbound agencies might lose out as they could no longer earn commission selling Bangkok Airways connections to their Middle East partners, since the latter are likely to take advantage of the codeshare agreement with Qatar.

On the other hand, outbound consultants in cities such as Chiang Mai would benefit from being able to sell tickets to anywhere within Qatar's network covered by the codeshare.

Wowed by the South Beach scene

It won't be ready until January 2015 but from their thumbs up, these Singapore travel CEOs appear wowed following the preview tour of the South Beach Hotel & Club development. Designed by Philippe Starck, the Capital Development Limited project – located opposite Raffles Hotel on the Beach Road side and Suntec Singapore on the Nicoll Highway side – is billed as the hip hotel to watch in Singapore.

Pictured above (from left) are JTB's Ow Yong Kit Fun, H.I.S. International Travel's Christina Chiang, RMG Tours' Steve Ng, Hong Thai's Alex Chan, South Beach Hotel & Club's Kellvin Ong, Star Holiday Mart's Dominic Ong and Tour East's Judy Lum.



Sri Lanka's SME grant to raise tourism standards

By Feizal Samath

COLOMBO Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Sri Lanka's tourism sector will be given a helping hand to upgrade their facilities and products under a US\$16 million project launched by the government.

While new hotels are springing up and high-end properties have rolled out refurbishment projects in Sri Lanka, small hotels and guesthouses have not embarked on similar moves to spruce up their amenities due to a lack of finances.

"We have received complaints from tourists that the rooms and facilities at small accommodation units are below standard and desperately need an upgrade," said A B M Ashraff, director of the Sustainable Tourism Development Project (STDP) at the Economic Development Ministry, which oversees the tourism industry.

Funded by the World Bank, the STDP targets to support 1,500 SMEs in Sri Lanka through a matching-grant scheme, in which interested businesses and

entrepreneurs put in 50 per cent of the project funds, while the government contributes the rest.

Ashraff revealed that up to a maximum of Rs10 million (\$80,000) would be given to organisations with an annual turnover of Rs100 million. The money would be released in four monthly installments only after at least 25 per cent of the work has been carried out, he said.

The grant is available to SMEs in the tourism sector, including small hotels, homestays, gift shops, operators of water sports, boats and whale watching activities, as well as industry associations.

According to Ashraff, the informal SME sector accounted for 80 per cent of the country's recent tourist growth, while the formal sector made up the balance.

"This is a landmark grant," remarked Suresh De Mel, president of the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises in Tourism Sri Lanka. "Never before in the history of (Sri Lanka's) tourism has so much money been doled

out to small entrepreneurs."

Such loans will encourage the "informal and unregistered" business operators to register with the authorities and upgrade their facilities, he pointed out.

However, M H A Raheem, president of the Arugam Bay Tourism Association (ABTA) pres, said its members were unlikely to afford 50 per cent of the funds to upgrade their facilities. The ABTA represents some 100 small hotels, guest houses and homestays in Sri Lanka's eastern region, which has been devastated by the 30-year civil war that ended in 2009.

"We cannot afford to close for repairs or upgrading," he said, while acknowledging that dozens of small properties were in a state of disrepair and badly needed renovation.

Raheem added that the ABTA has requested for the government to provide financial assistance without the need for a matching contribution.

Sri Lanka targets to attract 2.5 million visitors by 2016, up from the current 1 million.

BritAgent programme sees waning interest in SE Asia

VisitBritain reacts with promise to boost interest and reach

By Greg Lowe

BANGKOK The number of outbound travel specialists from key South-east Asian markets engaged in VisitBritain's specialist product-training programme has plummeted by almost 20 per cent over the past four years.

Travel trade associations in Singapore and Malaysia blamed the decline on a lack of communication from the UK's national tourism office about the BritAgent programme.

There are now just 120 BritAgents across Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, down from 140 in Singapore and Malaysia alone in 2009, according to the latest figures from VisitBritain. About two-thirds of the total 5,200 BritAgents are in the Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Africa region.

Anita Tan, CEO of the National Association of Travel Agents Singapore, said the decline was not surprising.

"There has been a lack of aggressive promotion, or really any promotion at all, of the (BritAgent) programme to local travel specialists," she said. "As such, many travel specialists are unaware of the programme, or do not see much value in it."

The Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents echoed these sentiments, saying it had not received any information about the scheme. "We doubt if our outbound specialists are aware of the BritAgent campaign and its benefits," said a spokesperson for the association.

VisitBritain acknowledged it could do more to improve communications about the initiative in certain markets, but said the BritAgent programme – a modular English-language training scheme which educates travel specialists about Britain and its various tourism products – was only one part of its overall strategy to increase tourism arrivals to 40 million by 2020.

Keith Beecham, the NTO's director of overseas network, said the decline in South-east Asia was not overly significant because the 2009 figures were from the initial pilot scheme and that the focus was on building quality relationships with travel specialists instead of opting for quantity alone. Furthermore, the programme has now been fully road-tested and VisitBritain recently appointed its B2B and insights manager Asia-Pacific, Carol Maddison, to roll out the project across the region.

"She'll be developing this engagement programme and driving that forward over the next six months to a year by identifying (travel trade) associations and organisations that we believe can deliver," said Beecham. "We're actively encouraging friends from the region to tell us they're interested so we can provide them with the help, encouragement and support needed."

Meanwhile, a stronger Greater Mekong Subregion presence – from 12 sellers in 2012 to 20 in 2013 – indicates "good growth in demand for this region", Juthaporn opined. One of the new exhibitors this year is Yunnan Provincial Tourism Administration.

The mart will also see more buyers, with 303 participants from across 58 countries, including new source markets of Al-

New markets at TTM+

By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

BANGKOK Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) 2013, which will take place from June 5-7 at IMPACT Muang Thong Thani, will once again focus on the niche tourism markets of health and wellness, wedding and honeymoon, golf and ecotourism.

Organised by Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the mart will feature 39 niche tourism operators, according to TAT deputy director for international marketing, Juthaporn Rerngronasa.

TTM+ will expand from 380 sellers in 2012 to 395 in 2013, of which 86 are making their debut this year, up from 75 last year.

Attending TTM+ 2013 is Khiri Travel, as the event is aligned with the company's profile as a "regional DMC in the GMS", said CEO and co-founder Willem Niemeijer. "Plus, Bangkok – and Thailand – is a popular location so we also see enough interested quality buyers."

At the mart, TAT will introduce a new forum with two keynote sessions, as well as its biannual Friends of Thailand awards presentation ceremony.

geria, Belarus, Laos, Latvia and Slovenia. Similar to last year, the UK and India will have the highest representation, with 30 and 26 buyers respectively. There will also be nine buyers from Latin America and 23 from Central and East Europe.

Juthaporn said: "The shift in buyer profile reflects the global shift in source markets, especially India and Russia. It also reflects our policy to expand our presence and profile in emerging and potential markets, such as Central and East Europe and Latin America ... We try to keep the traditional major markets while expanding to new ones."

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Juthaporn: niche tourism still key



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Here's what you've missed

Tourism Data

Global corporate bookings for April posted the strongest year-on-year growth since August 2011, spiking 8.8 per cent, according to Pegasus Solutions. Meanwhile on the leisure front, bookings for April rose 6.2 per cent year-on-year

Hot Moves

Mittu Chandilya will pilot AirAsia's newest operation, AirAsia India, effective June 1; Murlidhar Rao has been named estate manager of the The Sanchaya, Bintan; PATA has appointed Parita Niemwongse manager – human capital development projects and awards, Halona Padiachy as manager – communications, and Chi Lo as engagement strategist – corporate social responsibility specialist



From left: Mittu Chandilya, Parita Niemwongse and Halona Padiachy

Hot Deals

Design Hotels is offering a 15 per cent commission on best available rates for travel consultants booking through GDS; TACentre.com has launched its summer promotion, offering cash rewards and prizes to travel consultants for products purchased on its online wholesale system



Mira Moon, Hong Kong

Hyper-personalised



“Prying is the new pampering.” Used positively and without violating a client's privacy, it will help you create “wow” moments.

Raini Hamdi
Senior Editor

This week, if I may suggest, make **retainment** the word for you to revisit and think about deeply. With both new customers and employees being in short supply, why not pay a closer attention to retaining what's already in your pocket?

Veteran industry CEO and consultant Giovanni Angelini once told me something that made a lot of sense: Gaining a new customer will cost you five times more than retaining an existing customer. To hire a new staff is even more expensive. It will probably cost you more than five times to gain a new employee than to retain an existing one.

“You have to train the new person, get him to buy into the culture, etc, and 40 per cent of the time you lose him during probation,” Angelini said.

One can write a whole book of course on keeping one's customers and employees. I thought I'd just share a few ideas here on customer retention in the hope these will inspire travel agency CEOs towards it.

Every brand today is concerned about getting it right with customer relationship management (CRM), data-mining and loyalty programmes in order to please and retain customers. In the US and Europe, this has come to a stage of “hyper-personalisation”, a JWTIntelligence report shows. I've picked out here a couple of examples from the list it gave, which I thought best demonstrate the length companies are now going to with personalisation.

• **Bo-misses-you moments:** Hotels are researching their VIP guests online to find relevant personal details they can use to surprise and delight these guests. One such online research, for example, revealed that a guest at a high-end Beverly Hills hotel had a dog named Bo. When she arrived, she found a doggy gift and note reading “Bo misses you” in

her room.

• **Fine-tuned dining:** With the help of software and Internet companies such as OpenTable and Urbanspoon, restaurants are logging detailed data on customer preferences, everything from food allergies to an affinity for crushed or cubed ice. Patrons can then have their needs catered to without having to ask; diners may even visit a restaurant for the first time yet be treated like a regular.

• **Personalised itineraries:** These are no longer the domain of travel agencies. A number of companies are focused on helping travellers create itineraries tailored to their interests by aggregating data from a pool of varied sources, for example, Citybot, which collects data from various travel review sites and factors in Facebook “likes”. Users can choose from existing itineraries or create their own by employing filters such as means of transportation and desired activities.

In Asia, travel agencies such as Chan Brothers Travel in Singapore are looking to retain customers through offering personalised service. Chan Brothers is investing S\$500,000 (US\$398,109) in rolling out a “multi-channel” (ie. online and offline) CRM system that will enable the agency to offer the right programme to the right customer (*TTG Asia e-Daily*, May 15, 2013).

This is a step in the right direction. Asian agencies must start investing in CRM, data-mining and loyalty programmes if they hope to please and retain their guests.

As an article in *Travel+Leisure* states: “Prying is the new pampering.” Used positively and without violating the privacy of a client, prying need not be a nosy, ugly word but a tool which can help you create the opportunities that make guests go “wow” and pledge their allegiance to you forever.

Most commented on www.ttgasia.com

Indonesia has to boost hotel supply by 50 per cent

Responding to earlier comments on the article saying that more rooms were the last thing Bali needed, Kevin B Murphy from Hong Kong and Thailand, wrote: “I don't think David Ling was suggesting those hotels rooms were only needed in Bali, but rather throughout the rest of the country, which has been identified by the more responsible of the local experienced hotel companies.

“Oversupply more often comes from uninformed and reckless development by those who do not seek the best professional advice, nor conduct proper market feasibility studies.

“That said, both public and private sectors have a needed and more serious role for better cooperation on ensuring the full benefits for the communities, from (taking) a more balanced approach to the development of infrastructure supporting communities and visitors alike, if the benefits to be drawn from the complete visitor economy are to be evenly spread for long-term sustainability.”

Taiwan scraps Philippine tourism links over political spat

Flights and group tours to the Philippines were cancelled and a travel advisory was issued by Taiwan after a diplomatic tiff between the two states. Said Jerome F De La Fuente from Manila: “Does it really matter if (the Taiwanese) boycott Manila or the Philippines in general? The same scenario happened with China and Hong Kong and there was no effect at all. The growth rate from other markets is on an upswing, which will compensate for the losses.”

Tiger sinks teeth into Jogjakarta, Bandung

Maktal from Bandung welcomed news of Tiger Airways' plans to launch flights to Jogjakarta and Bandung, commenting: “That's good news for Bandung, especially for the travel industry.”



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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)
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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.



Led by legendary President David Babai, the travel industry icon, G2 Travel (www.G2-travel.com) grows by leaps and bounds in just under 19 months since its inception in September 2011.

This is surprising news yet a welcoming breeze when the global economy is still very much affected and recovering from the financial crisis. Unbelievable, but G2 proves critics wrong. It was not a flash in the pan, merely a strong trend to stay.

Babai being a true leader, a great visionary and an exceptionally astute businessman made the impossible-possible.

Wasting no time, when his six-year non-compete agreement hiatus with Gullivers Travel Associates (GTA) ended in April 2011, being a true-blooded entrepreneur, Babai does what he does best by accepting to become president of the newly launched G2 travel managed by ex-GTA senior managers. As if he could see the future and possibilities of what this purely B2B player can offer to worldwide clients.

G2 Travel tag line "Your partner in travel" is just awesome. It speaks to the travel agents who are seeking true long term partnership.

Babai sold GTA which he founded in 1975 to Cendant (which later became Travelport) for US\$1.1 billion in 2005. GTA was then sold to Kuoni for a much less USD 720 million in 2011.

Despite facing numerous hiccups during the first six months in operations, there was no looking back for the G2 pioneering team. There are no rosy stories. It was by no means feat to find the ultimate business model to sell this new vehicle to clients already so contented with the existing wholesaler operators.

Markets appreciate competition. Competition creates value for the end users.

G2 offers key travel agents not just prices but personalised attention to service, details and building for a long term relationship.

Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, teams are spearheaded by former GTA General Manager - Al

Mulenga. Mulenga has lived in Asia since 1995, having spent time in Hong Kong, Singapore and then opened the GTA office in 2003 in Jakarta.

Thailand, Hong Kong and Japan teams are headed by David Littlefair. Littlefair has lived in Thailand since 1993, and knows the Asian expectations very well.

While Michael Greenwood, takes charge of the London office. He has worked in the travel industry for more than 26 years.

Headquartered in Hong Kong, G2 global management team has offices in Jakarta, Bangkok, Bucharest, Taipei, Tokyo, Osaka, Rome, London, Geneva, Paris, Berlin and Madrid.

G2 leaders possess immeasurable boundless expertise in business development, client servicing, supplier relationships, operations, systems, financial management and IT.

With the magical dynamics, G2 top chain of command made calculative strategies to extend its influence in the groups travel markets in Asia, South and North America, Australia, Middle East, Europe and Russia. The global sales network was able to execute the command with timely precision and achieved the desired results.

G2 has successfully tapped into Asian group's outbound travel only in 12 months, pitting itself against Trafalgar, Kuoni and Miki.

In first year operation, the company handled 1,300 groups-registering US\$35 million in sales. And the target is to grow by 500 per cent in group numbers by end of this year which can be translated to approximately US\$100 million.

Publicity shy Babai appears to be chairing the old band back together, in Blues Brothers style.

His golden remark: "The emerging economies are growing rapidly and with new wealth comes the desire to travel abroad. For the inexperienced traveller, long haul destinations are incredibly exciting but a huge challenge owing to language barriers, cultural norms, difficulty in getting visas simply the desire to find the food one likes to eat. Our team really understands how to deal with these issues and provide a memorable experience

for the traveller at an acceptable price point, whilst earning a fair return for the effort and knowledge required".

G2 TRAVEL

your partner in travel

DIRECTORS OF G2 & SUBSIDIARIES



for the traveller at an acceptable price point, whilst earning a fair return for the effort and knowledge required".

Packaged group land services offered includes restaurants, entrances, hotels, guides and long distance coaches-wholesaled to travel agents.

Sticking to effective business model, it is not strategic to use third party suppliers for Europe. However, only for non-European destinations, it will be through third party suppliers who are working as close partners.

Specialist group purchasing requires unique skills, experienced and tailor made IT systems, not only to satisfy our clients, but also our suppliers, according to Al.

"We recognised that hotels do not want to be dictated to by multinational giants on how to sell their rooms, encompassing the whole spectrum of wholesale, retail and on-line distribution," he said adding that it was important to recognize the service supplier needing a choice of a partner who truly appreciates the word partner in both growing and difficult economic times.

The G2 team believes that this segment of the market mentioned earlier offers the opportunity to create a sustainable competitive advantage (unlike individual travel, known in the trade as FIT, which has been rapidly commoditised

over the past few years) because there is substantial value in the creativity of tour design, customer relationships, product knowledge, negotiating ability, operational expertise and client service.

MISSION AND GOALS

...satisfy our client and suppliers...recognising the service supplier as partner during both buoyant periods and testing times...treat future partner with respect rather than just a number...our promise to service travel groups with the highest possible standards...

WHO WE ARE

...a worldwide B2B operator with core business being to strongly and competitively supply group land services worldwide...

STAFF BACKGROUND

Industry leaders from well diverse background with over 20 years' experiences

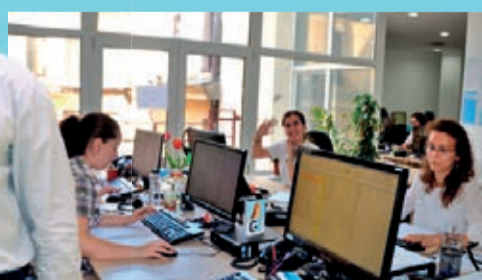
BENEFIT FOR CUSTOMER

- Quality of products
- Quality of negotiation rather than quantity
- Quality of sales, selected client base
- Quality of operation, experienced personnel
- Service destinations

Babai was impressed with the management team, saying: The key people are very able and I was immediately inspired with their plan. It is a huge pleasure to work again with a team I respect and trust in business.



Bangkok Office



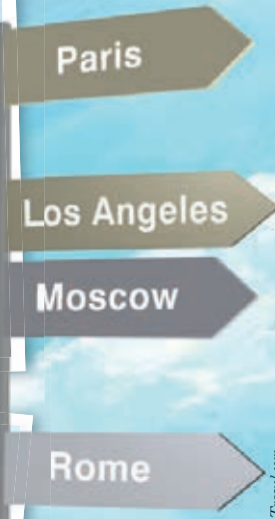
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Putero Olimpico area -Barcelona



Plaza Mayor Salamanca





Go west! Introducing Best Western's newest hotel

There are many stunning sights to behold in Western Australia. Why don't you take a break to come and see the latest sight, found in the west of Perth's CBD: BEST WESTERN PREMIER The Terrace Hotel.

The newest hotel to join The World's Largest Hotel Family® is located in Perth's exclusive city residence, St George's House, and offers a restaurant with garden terrace dining, excellent facilities and a first class wine cellar. Here are some reasons why your stay at Perth's BEST WESTERN PREMIER The Terrace Hotel will be a memorable one.

· **Unmatched services:** Enjoy the hotel's elegant and artful hospitality including 24-hour in-room dining, 24-hour laundry and dry-cleaning, or even the great express check-in and check-out options.

· **New dining experience:** Whether you are in town for business or pleasure, make sure you sit down and taste the world-class produce throughout the modern Australian menu brought to you by Executive Chef Shannon Wilson in the hotel's restaurant.

If you are looking for a relaxing break or somewhere to impress a prestigious business client, you will find the BEST WESTERN PREMIER The Terrace Hotel is the quintessential experience in accommodation, dining, entertainment and style.

For more information on Australian hotels, please visit www.bestwestern.com.au/hoteltypes.



Australasia

All aboard



HOW SHOULD I SELL?



In this monthly column, Kevin Leong, general manager, Asia Cruise Association (ACA), floats ideas on how travel consultants can jump on board to sell holidays at sea. Established in 2009, ACA's goal is to promote the growth of cruise tourism in the region.



When a client seated across the table from you had done his homework surfing the Internet and seems to know as much or more than you about the cruise regions in the world as well as all the cruise lines and the ships under their brands, the success or failure of your personal marketing to him will hinge on your confidence in your cruise product knowledge, the experience you had on cruising some of the ships, your skills in getting to know your client and finally delivering what he is looking for. As I had mentioned in previous articles, there is nothing like the good training provided by cruise lines and ACA – soon to come through its affiliation with CLIA.

At the end of the day, you need to overcome the fear factor that arises from inadequate training if you want to make that sale – and it is a very personal thing. Passing the client to another better-trained colleague does not make you any richer or give you the

progress you want in your career. So let's take a look at what else you will need to arm yourself with for success.

Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War*: "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles". It means that it is not quite enough to be well-trained and confident in your knowledge of the cruise product; you must know your target market equally well too. Are you facing a senior couple who can travel anytime during the year? Or is it parents with school-going kids who have to plan a cruise around the school holidays? Or a young couple with time only for quick breaks, especially around long weekends and public holidays? What would your recommendations be as a cruise consultant for each of these market segments?

It is great if you have an database of existing clients that you can convert from land tours to cruises, but if you want to ex-

pand your business with new customers, you will need to find the best way to reach the target segments identified. There are all kinds of marketing books that you can read regarding the channels to reach them but the basic ones are still very useful. Print advertising is still quite cost-effective, especially if you can find niches like club magazines whose members are in the segments you want to tap. TV is costly and you will need to tie up with strategic cruise line partners or ride on their campaigns.

However, in this age of the Internet, online marketing is gaining in importance. EDMs and banners on appropriate sites are old hat – you really need to keep an eye on emerging platforms like search engine marketing and the potential of mobile apps when almost everybody owns a smartphone nowadays. And not forgetting Facebook and Twitter for your current database of clients who would be interested in

the latest cruise offerings. Keeping your clients engaged is an important step in preparing for an easier sell when you have an offer they cannot refuse.

In developing a good marketing strategy, know that you are not alone. Cruise lines are always open to collaboration and would welcome your good ideas. Your commitment to a cruise brand may allow your agency to be carried in their campaigns and to be listed in their advertising. If you invest in a consumer roadshow, they can share some of your costs. At the very least, they will support you with collaterals, flyers, pull-up banners and even decorate a whole wall in your agency to position you as a cruise specialist. The cruise lines value the travel agency distribution network and will continue to support you in your marketing efforts. Take advantage of it.

Like Sun Tzu said: "Opportunities multiply when they are seized."

Is this your agency?

After speaking to Bangkok-based A&F Tours Travel, (A&F) TTG thinks its telephone skills could be sharpened to make lasting impressions.



TTG Hi, I'll like to visit Myanmar with my husband. I've been to Yangon a few years ago and I want to explore more of the country. Can you recommend something?

A&F Send me an email please, then I can contact our Myanmar office to give you more details.

TTG But I'm looking at your website now, so I just want to ask some quick questions.

A&F Okay.

TTG What's the difference between the Myanmar Classic and Myanmar Glimpse packages?

A&F Hold on please. (I was put on hold for about 15 seconds.)

TTG I'm thinking of a seven-day trip. Is it enough?

A&F Yes, one week is enough. Okay, Myanmar Glimpse goes to Golden Pagoda, Mandalay and Inle Lake.

TTG I heard a lot about Inle Lake. What's at Inle Lake? Is it nice?

A&F It's nice. (She paused for a while and sought help from a colleague on suitable words to describe.) It's a big lake with good views.

TTG Is Inle Lake more for hiking and nature activities or for culture?

A&F It's more for culture.

TTG Do you need visa to enter Myanmar? My husband and I have ASEAN passports.

A&F Yes, you still need a visa. Everyone needs a visa to enter Myanmar.

TTG Is visa fees included in your tour package?

A&F No. But we can do it for

you.

TTG What if I want to visit Myanmar during the Songkran (mid-April) period? Is it a good time?

A&F Songkran is the same time for Myanmar too. They have the Water Festival too.

TTG So will things close down then?

A&F After Songkran is better.

It will be a very busy period in Myanmar then, plus it will be a bit more expensive. If you want to visit during Songkran period, you have to book right now to secure bookings.

TTG Can you give me the cost of Myanmar Glimpse during the Songkran period?

A&F Please send me your questions and details like the travel period, the number of people, to my email address, and I'll reply you within the weekend. (She proceeded to give me her email address.)

TTG Okay. Can you give me an estimate of the minimum cost now?

A&F It will be a minimum cost of around 40,000-50,000 baht per person.

TTG Is Myanmar very popular now?

A&F Yes, Myanmar is very popular now. And it's very expensive to travel to Myanmar too.

VERDICT Her replies were polite but short; it seemed like she was more accustomed to email enquiries as she didn't ask me for my name at the end of the phone conversation. Her response to my email came within two working days with the package cost and a full itinerary. A&F offers generally pleasant and prompt service but the staff need to polish up their English conversational skills to make a deeper impression during phone enquiries.



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Pansy Ho, managing director, Shun Tak Holdings, Hong Kong

Bridging and leveraging

Like her father, Stanley Ho, Pansy Ho is a force behind Macau tourism's destiny – although she insists she does not call the shots. **Raini Hamdi** talks to Ho at last month's PATA Annual Summit and discovers a tireless lady who believes in a bigger, greater Macau and is helping to build bridges towards it

What's something that people might say about Macau that makes you go, 'hey, that's not Macau'?

Lately there hasn't been too much of that. But from time to time there still is a misconception about the past of Macau, which of course is connected to us, especially before the return of sovereignty (to China) when Macau had not much to lean on and my father (Stanley Ho) had been instrumental in building up its economic fabric. A lot of people had the misconception that in those days the casinos were operating in an illicit manner with a lot of triad infiltration, which simply was not the case.

Do you feel a sense of responsibility?

I don't feel a sense of responsibility so to speak,

but I definitely want to demonstrate and prove that Macau has its own capabilities, that we have something to be proud of.

Where's Macau at right now?

We now have a good cross-spectrum of products – hotels, transportation means, etc – so visitors have a lot of choices in the basic amenities.

We have in a short time been able to train up a strong and skilled labour force. In the usual travel and hospitality market, you might have the skills and expertise but not on a 24-hour basis, whereas in Macau, down to even F&B and retail, people can cope with that kind of hours. In retail, for example, the best operational hours are not during the day as most gaming customers shop well into the evening, up to midnight. So we have this kind of specialised skills set.

Since the deregulation of casinos, people have also learnt that in tourism, there are different segments and are beginning to come up with innovative concepts and ideas. This will give Macau a strong competitive edge over the other developing markets, which means we can really be at the forefront.

Even us at MGM: last year, we brought in the butterfly pavilion, not just a conservatory but the whole works including an incubation room and so on. The installation was a major success and this year we will repeat that with an aquarium. So it does not always have to be a new building or hardware, but creative events and software.

Nowadays, whether you are a hotel or transport provider, your customer is becoming more sophisticated. The aspirational, emotive travel is not just for culturally-rich destinations. Even Macau has to cater to this and craft experiences for different types of customers.

Is Macau's customer mix now diversified?

Frankly, no. But we are moving from a strong dependency on high rollers, which is pure gaming. They are such keen gamblers they want to utilise all their time basically on gambling; they might not even go to the restaurants. Now, the migration is starting to the mass gaming floor. That's also still gaming, but they tend to spend time and money on entertainment, shopping and F&B. We saw a significant growth especially in the first quarter, while the high-roller market is slowly stabilising.

Will the geographical market mix also start to diversify?

(South) Korea is a success story and we wish to work on more (source markets), such as South-east Asia. We invest in the airport and airline (Air Macau) so I do understand we need to build traffic both ways. Only then will there be equitable mutual interest.

This is where I feel Macau can be that little hub for the smaller, rising airlines from Asian countries to immediately land and work their way into China. It has actually become more difficult for these airlines to do so, as the scene is dominated by the major carriers. So if they desperately want to reach China, what better way than through Macau? We are right there, we are efficient, we still have the capacity and we are trained. If that happens, we can have more foreign arrivals to Macau.

How's Air Macau (of which she is executive director) doing?

It has turned around and did quite well last year. There is still not enough international routes as it has to focus first on its financial well-being, but it has added quite a number of domestic routes within China, which is also important. That's one way to build the airline's credibility. The world is getting to be collaborative so eventually, with that domestic network, we might not have to grow the airline organically but reach out and collaborate with other airlines, so we become the feeder for them to go into China.

In Macau, your company owns or has stakes in all corners – TurboJet, the airport, Air Macau, Macau Tower, One Central (mixed-use residential, serviced apartments and the Mandarin Oriental, Macau) and the Cotai Strip, to name a few. Surely you call the shots?

I don't! But since I have the outreach and exposure, I can make the best use of my knowledge and insights to try and explain or, like at this forum (PATA Annual Summit), take back the ideas from a few people who have expressed interest to the government. Or we ourselves could collaborate and invest with these partners. Our group is now heavily invested in all spectrums of tourism, so it is in our interest to continue to make the right investments which can contribute to Macau.

It's not about who is calling the shots as nobody can do everything singlehandedly. It is good when the private and public concerns have common objectives and goals, because both of us simply want to build up Macau's capabilities and attractiveness and contribute towards repositioning Macau for a sustainable future.

How do you think Macau will look like in 10 years?

We are blessed that there is vision and forward planning by the government to further enhance the connectivity of and integrate the Pearl River Delta, which includes Hong Kong, Macau, Zhuhai, Shenzhen, even reaching out to other parts of the Guangdong province. There would be a comprehensive transport network through bridges, highways and ports. Altogether we are talking about the creation of a mega metropolis with a 100 million population base. That's a major consumer market and productivity area of China. So we will have a strong capability to attract a lot of visitors from within China and outside.

In 10 years, we will become linked to Hong Kong and the neighbouring Chinese cities and be an even bigger attraction. We need to make sure this works. It is a great concept but there are challenges.



A kindred spirit in Bangkok

Ho with Chadatip Chutrakul (left), CEO of Siam Piwat, in a get-to-know-you meeting in Bangkok initiated and hosted by PATA.

Like Ho, Chadatip is a tourism force – Siam Piwat with partners are developing what promises to be a next-gen tourism icon on the last large land plot in central Bangkok on the Chao Phya River which they secured last year. It also relaunched its Siam Center in January with revolutionary retail concepts.

PATA CEO Martin Craigs (centre) said: “PATA looks forward to bringing together more of Asia’s visitor economy thought leaders. As an industry, we need to create more awareness of our industry’s sustainable practices, impact on job creation and positive societal influences.”

Chadatip will speak on a PATA panel at the Macau Tourism Forum September 18-19.



Such as?

To start, there’s still the invisible border – actually not invisible, there is a border. So even with all these road networks and so on, we are still three separate autonomous territories. In the long run, we need to ensure that although everyone needs to uphold and maintain their autonomy in governing their own security, there is a form of practical assimilation and everyone shares and contributes, not compete, so that the infrastructure that has been put in place is not wasted.

What’s an area of investment you’re focusing on?

Linking up everything, so that in future, with this massive transport infrastructure being put in place – roads, bridges, airport and our ferry operation – if you cannot come through by land to Macau, well, land in Shenzhen then use our ferries to shuttle to Macau/Hong Kong or vice versa. Now is the time when we can scale this network to the next level.

Lately, we have started to venture outside Hong Kong and Macau into China (Beijing real estate), but in a selective and specific manner. We’re not a multi-billion market capitalisation company, so we can’t afford to go all over the places, rather, we select cautiously.

You’re building the Jumeirah in Cotai too.

Yes, and we are talking about the possibility of building two or three hotels in that same complex. There is also a good chance we ourselves will start to run our own hotels (*TTG Asia e-Daily*, May 20, 2013).

As in your own hotel management?

Yes, managing and branding. We’re setting it up now. We have not gone down to the last details; we are beginning to amass a professional team of people. We would make an announcement soon and may be (it will be up and running) within a year.

You sit on so many key boards, e.g. as vice chairman of the Macau International Airport board and vice president of the Macao Chamber of Commerce, and are active with tourism associations and forums. What drives you?

People are fascinated with Macau, but are not really embracing it. What I would really like to do is to bring together organisations and people with good ideas in a consistent way, so that this will further the role Macau can play as a bridge for foreign enterprises which want to leapfrog into China.

How do you manage everything?

(Laughs) That’s why I am always busy, always in a rush. It is a good problem to have. Obviously 24 hours are not quite enough, so you have to use your resources in the most effective manner. You don’t do one thing at a time; you try to leverage some of the connections, opportunities, etc, to accomplish more.

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Widebody aircraft find favour among the Gulf carriers. Above, Etihad Airways' B777-300ER, Turkish Airlines' B777-300ER and Emirates' Airbus A380

Gulf carriers soar on plane ambitions

The fast-growing Middle Eastern airlines continue to flex their fleet muscle, positioning themselves for a bigger slice of the global aviation market, writes **Sim Kok Chwee**

Having carved for themselves a hub operation in the Middle East, the trio of Gulf carriers – Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad Airways – has since turned the tables on the once-fabled Kangaroo Route, leaving in their wake Asia-Pacific airlines which were the dominant carriers on the Australia-Europe routes. And when they are done with offering travellers from Australia and Asia a one-stop service to just almost anywhere in Europe, these airlines began to offer similar one-stop services to destinations in Africa and North and South America.

Only the Pacific Ocean routes seem to have eluded the Middle Eastern carriers but with partnerships and mergers flying in every direction, this might just be realised, as in the recently forged Emirates-Qantas alliance. Meanwhile, other Middle Eastern carriers such as the once-multinational Gulf Air (now exclusively owned by Bahrain), Royal Jordanian Airlines and Oman Air have found it difficult to challenge the dominant trio.

In the last few years, however, a new challenger in the form of Turkish Airlines has emerged. Away from the limelight shone on the three Gulf carriers, Turkish Airlines quietly grew its footprint from 10.4 million passengers in 2002 to 38.5 million passengers in 2012. Revenue grew even faster from US\$2 billion in 2002 to US\$8.1 billion in 2012.

Leveraging on its Istanbul base as a bridge between Europe and Asia, Turkish Airlines' strength, according to CEO Temel Kotil, lies in its ability to service Europe and much of Africa with narrowbodies, enabling greater frequencies and capacity-matching to achieve high load factors that triumph its Gulf rivals with their widebody jets. The airline will add Sydney to its network by 2014.

Apart from heavy investment in airport infrastructure by the governments in the UAE and Qatar, the Turkish government has outlined plans to build one of the world's largest airports in Istanbul with an annual throughput of 150 million passengers. Construction is expected to take only four years and costs around US\$8.7 billion.

In its financial year of 2012-2013, Emirates grew its fleet by 34 widebody aircraft and its profit by a spectacular 52 per cent, even as most international airlines are struggling with shrinking profits, load factors and yield.

By any measure, Emirates, Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways and Turkish Airlines have been spectacularly successful and have also proven to be highly competitive as they continue to sniff out interesting city-pairs that could be hubbed through their homebases. All four carriers

have also undertaken extensive investments in marketing campaigns and sporting events sponsorship.

The three dominant Middle Eastern carriers have invested heavily in fleet expansion since their inception. In various instances, Emirates and Qatar Airways have been instrumental in pushing the manufacturers to boost the aircraft's performance and capabilities, resulting in workhorses that perfectly suited their needs. But neither was it a zero-sum game as other airlines also benefitted immensely. Today, many of the world's most heavily travelled air routes are served by twin-engine aircraft and the Boeing 747 – dubbed Queen of the Skies – which is beginning to retire in greater numbers.

In the past decade, Airbus and Boeing have centred much of their attention on the Middle Eastern carriers as Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad have inked record-smashing deals for top-of-the-line airliners year after year. And it is certain that the major Gulf carriers will continue to hog the limelight when orders are announced at major air shows, including the Paris Air Show next month.

B777-300ER: Boeing's wonder machine

The Boeing 777-300ER – Boeing's answer to the Airbus A340-600 – appears to be a front runner in the fleet of the Middle Eastern airlines, but not necessarily bearing the honour of being the carriers' flagship aircraft. One of the most economical and versatile twin-engine aircraft to operate profitably on both longhaul and medium-haul routes, the B777-300ERs are used by the Middle Eastern carriers on nonstop services to destinations as far-flung as Australia, New Zealand and Brazil, and also on relatively shorter routes to the Indian subcontinent.

Equally versatile is the aircraft's seating configuration. Emirates' B777-300ERs have four variants ranging between the high-density, 442-seat configuration and the low-density, 360-seat configuration, and the airline has opted for the high-density configuration by putting 10 seats in each row in the economy class, while many carriers opt for just nine seats in each row. The B777-300ER comes in two variants for Etihad (330 and 440 seats) and Qatar Airways (335 and 380 seats), while Turkish Airlines has also ordered a fleet of B777-300ERs configured with 340 seats in three classes.

Even as the B777-300ER continues to gain big orders worldwide, Boeing is reported to be offering the B777X in two variants with improved performance. Qatar Airways is expected to order up to 50 of this variant, and Emirates too has confirmed that it is looking at "a healthy number"



Qatar Airways has 80 A350 aircraft on order

of these, noting that by the time the B777X is available, it will have 175 B777ERs to replace. The number ordered will depend on the replacement cycle, the Airbus A350-1000s as well as the availability of more Airbus A380s. The B777-9X, one of the two B777Xs that Boeing is reportedly offering, is nicely slotted between the A350-1000 and the A380 in capacity.

A380: a new queen in the making

Airbus envisaged the A380 as the high-capacity workhorse suited to operate between the world's major hubs, particularly in highly slot-constrained airports such as London-Heathrow and Tokyo-Narita. Singapore Airlines was the first to operate the A380 in October 2007, and with glowing media reports and passenger reviews highlighting the A380s' stability and ultra-quiet cabins soon after, the A380 quickly became a household name among the travelling public.

Early A380 operators reported higher demand for the superjumbo flights over other aircraft types on the same

routes. Many travellers also began to differentiate airlines as those who “have” or “have not” gotten A380s in their fleet.

For those who are already operating the A380 or awaiting delivery of theirs, the superjumbo is the company’s flagship aircraft. Emirates deploys its A380s mostly on longhaul destinations such as Sydney, Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, London, Los Angeles and Johannesburg and also on shorter services to key European destinations and Saudi Arabia. Emirates, however, has been prevented from operating the A380 into markets such as India and most recently Austria. The cavernous two-deck interior has given airlines tremendous flexibility in customising their premium class cabins. Emirates remains the only airline in the world to install showers and shisha rooms on board its A380s – exclusively for its first class passengers.

Both Qatar Airways and Etihad have 10 A380s on order but have not divulged their configuration plans and cabin facilities. Airbus has just begun production of Qatar Airways’ first A380. Turkish Airlines has also expressed interest in acquiring large-capacity aircraft in the same class as the A380 and Boeing 747-8 Intercontinental but no decision has been announced yet.

Boeing 787 Dreamliner: a nightmarish start

Designed as a replacement for the Boeing 767s and Airbus A310s, the Boeing 787 Dreamliner is a medium-capacity aircraft with the ability to operate on longhaul routes. Boeing had strongly marketed the B787 as an aircraft that could bypass major hubs – Japan Airlines (JAL) has utilised this aircraft in this respect to open up new



routes such as Tokyo to Boston and San Jose.

The Dreamliner – already seriously delayed by the time of its first delivery to All Nippon Airways (ANA) – failed to live up to its promise and turned out to be a nightmare for the first batch of recipient airlines (Qatar Airways, ANA, JAL, United Airlines, LAN Airlines and LOT Polish Airlines). Two separate fires in the ion-lithium battery compartment resulted in the worldwide grounding of all B787s in January 2013.

The four-month grounding was lifted after a fix was finally approved in May 2013 and airlines were quick to return their Dreamliners into the sky. Qatar Airways resumed services of the B787-8s on May 20 to serve Dubai, London-Heathrow, Munich and Frankfurt. The B787 is expected to be deployed on its trans-Atlantic routes in 2014.

As more airlines take delivery of their B787s in the next couple of years and barring any further groundings, passengers may forget the initial hiccups and instead focus on the aircraft’s large electro-chromic windows, higher

cabin humidity and pressure – factors that mitigate the effects of jetlag – and roomier and quieter cabin. Besides the strong passenger appeal, airlines will also benefit from the B787s’ highly fuel-efficient engines and maintenance savings resulting from the aircraft’s composite structure.

Boeing offers two variants of the Dreamliner: the B787-8 and the higher-capacity B787-9. Although only two of the four carriers reviewed have ordered this aircraft, it is expected that further orders will materialise, especially if Boeing rolls out a higher-capacity and longer-range model that various Middle Eastern carriers have sought.

A350: Airbus’ next venture

A strong competitor to both the B777-300ER and B787 Dreamliner, the Airbus A350 is highly suited for medium- and thin longhaul routes where demand is insufficient to support the use of the B747-8 Intercontinentals and A380s.

At press time, the first A350 painted with the Airbus’ corporate livery has just been unveiled in Toulouse, and will be put through exhaustive tests before starting its maiden flight this summer. A total of three variants have been planned: the A350-900 will be the first to be introduced, followed by the shorter A350-800. The longest, A350-1000, together with the -900 variant, find greater favour among the Gulf carriers. While Turkish Airlines has committed to a renewal of its narrowbody fleet, it has yet to announce its choice of future widebody aircraft and the race is on for Airbus to push for its A350s to be chosen.

Interestingly, Qatar Airways and Etihad have opted to order both the B787 and A350, carefully choosing the variants in both types to minimise capacity and performance overlaps. Given that recent new aircraft types such as the A380 and B787 have faced lengthy delays and performance hiccups, it is perhaps an insurance on the carriers’ part against the non-performance of either the B787 or A350. The A350s will be deployed mainly on longhaul routes to Asia-Pacific, capital and secondary cities in Europe, Africa and other cities in the Middle East where demand is high.

A340: the workhorse of yesteryear

When the competition heated up between the four-engine A340 and the twin-engine B777, Airbus and carriers such as Virgin Atlantic Airways were quick to claim that four engines were more reliable than two. Virgin Atlantic even painted the slogan “4 Engines for Longhaul” on its A340 fleet.

The A340 was produced in four variants – the A340-200, the slightly bigger A340-300, the even larger A340-500 and the longest-range A340-600. None of the Middle Eastern carriers ordered the -200 variant and only Emirates and Turkish Airlines operated the -300 variant. The A340-500 is considered a niche aircraft due to its ultra-long range capability and, as such, were often deployed on services to faraway destinations in North and South America and Australia. Where demand is high on these routes, the A340-600s’ high capacity was put to good use.

While the A340s were considered very quiet and well-suited for longhaul routes by virtue of having four engines, the General Electric GE90 engines that power the B777-300ERs were gaining a reputation for reliability and fuel economy – the latter especially attractive to airline bean counters amid skyrocketing fuel prices. Engine maintenance is a significant cost component and with four engines to maintain, the A340s quickly found the numbers stacked against it. As the A340-600s competed directly against the B777-300ERs, it was no surprise that both Emirates and Qatar Airways utilised every available avenue to cancel all and part of their orders respectively.

All these notwithstanding, the various variants of the A340s were extremely popular with passengers though, most notably for the low cabin ambient noise. Emirates’ small fleet of A340-300s are mostly deployed to European destinations such as St Petersburg, Munich, Milan, Dusseldorf and Glasgow, while Turkish Airlines continues to operate its A340-300s to Asia-Pacific, Europe and North America.

Qatar Airways’ A340-600s are operated to European cities such as Frankfurt, Paris, London and Zurich as well as to farther destinations such as Hong Kong. Etihad’s A340-600s too service many European cities but are also despatched to longhaul destinations such as New York, Sydney and Melbourne.

Ultimately, economics triumphed all else and the A340s were maintained on the current fleet of the Gulf carriers in limited numbers. Production of the A340 was halted as orders evaporated.

BOEING 777-300ER

Airline	Current	On Order	Remarks
Emirates	87	64	Supplemented by six B777-200ERs, 10 B777-200LRs and 12 B777-300s
Etihad Airways	14	4	
Qatar Airways	22	3	Supplemented by nine B777-200LRs
Turkish Airlines	12	15	To also lease three aircraft from Jet Airways (India) starting June 2013

AIRBUS A380-800

Airline	Current	On Order	Remarks
Emirates	33	57	Two seating variants – 489 and 517 seats
Etihad Airways	-	10	
Qatar Airways	-	10	
Turkish Airlines	-	-	Reported to be evaluating both the A380 and the B747-8 Intercontinental

BOEING 787-8 DREAMLINER

Airline	Current	On Order	Remarks
Emirates	-	-	
Etihad Airways	-	-	
Qatar Airways	5	25	
Turkish Airlines	-	-	

BOEING 787-9 DREAMLINER

Airline	Current	On Order	Remarks
Emirates	-	-	
Etihad Airways	-	41	
Qatar Airways	-	-	
Turkish Airlines	-	-	

AIRBUS A350-900

Airline	Current	On Order	Remarks
Emirates	-	50	
Etihad Airways	-	-	
Qatar Airways	-	43	First deliveries in 2014
Turkish Airlines	-	-	

AIRBUS A350-1000

Airline	Current	On Order	Remarks
Emirates	-	20	
Etihad Airways	-	12	
Qatar Airways	-	37	
Turkish Airlines	-	-	

AIRBUS A340-300

Airline	Current	On Order	Remarks
Emirates	4	-	Three A340-300s have been retired and another three are currently inactive
Etihad Airways	-	-	
Qatar Airways	-	-	
Turkish Airlines	7	-	Two A340-300s have been retired

AIRBUS A340-500

Airline	Current	On Order	Remarks
Emirates	10	-	One A340-500 has been retired
Etihad Airways	4	-	
Qatar Airways	-	-	
Turkish Airlines	-	-	

AIRBUS A340-600

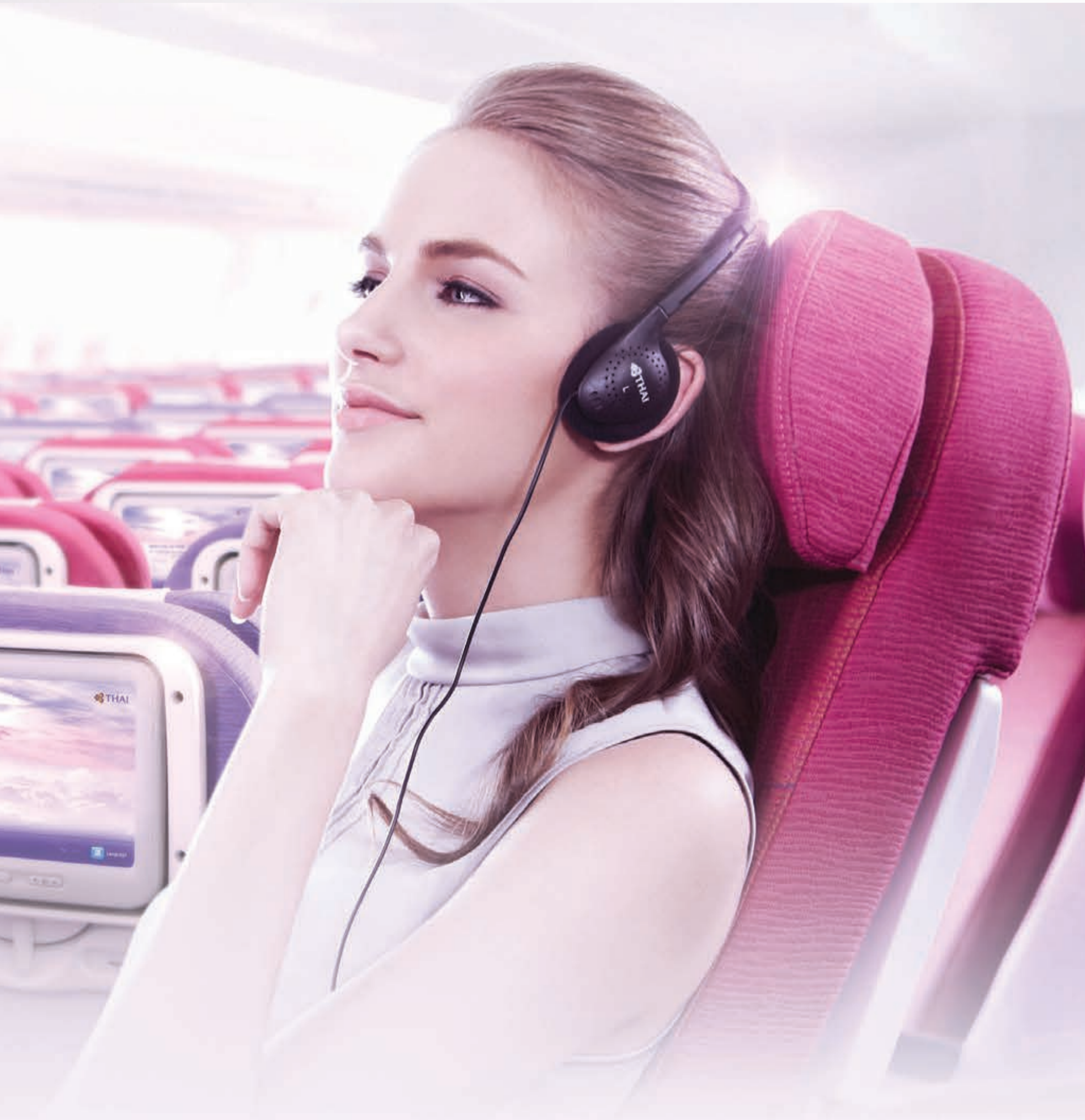
Airline	Current	On Order	Remarks
Emirates	-	-	18 A340-600s were ordered at the Paris Air Show 2003 but cancelled in 2006
Etihad Airways	7	-	
Qatar Airways	4	-	12 A340-600s ordered but only took delivery of four aircraft; remaining orders were cancelled
Turkish Airlines	-	-	



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The way to a Singaporean's heart is through his stomach. **Raini Hamdi** looks at Singapore as a source of and a destination for gourmards, both factors feeding on each other and fuelling growth

Singapore's food obsess

When a survey reveals Singapore has overtaken Japan as having the region's top diners, Singaporeans are probably the least surprised, since their obsession with food is as endemic and conspicuous as the smell of cheese.

MasterCard's latest survey of the dining-out habits of 7,678 respondents from 16 markets in Asia-Pacific shows that Singaporeans are prepared to fork out twice as much (US\$262) as the overall average monthly dining spend of US\$130 for the whole Asia-Pacific. Japanese and Chinese follow closely with an average monthly dining spend of US\$225 and US\$203 respectively. In contrast, the region's smallest spenders – India and Indonesia – spend US\$17 and US\$19, or three and four per cent of their monthly household income, respectively, on dining.

According to the survey, Singaporeans' spending on dining grew by nearly 25 per cent from US\$212 in June 2011.

The findings came just as the curtains came down on the 17th World Gourmet Summit in Singapore where, for 11 days, the city's F&B scene burst like a ripe apricot with 45 special dinners and workshops in 13 host venues, 18 partner restaurants and eight wineries.

Top chefs, including Italy's Gabriele Ferron (famed for his risotto), France's "slow food" Jean-Francois Piegé and Spain's chocolate and sugar-pulling artisans Paco & Jacob Torreblanca, partnered the head chefs of their host venues in presenting menus that showed their artisanal skills.

An Italian hands-on culinary workshop featuring masterchefs Corrado Assenza and Lino Saurro was priced S\$148+ (US\$119), while a Chateau de Beaucastel wine dinner featuring Chef Jean-Francois and Christopher Millar at Stellar at 1-Altitude was sold out, even at S\$448+. Food was paired with fashion (an edible catwalk showcasing diamonds had models wearing chocolate dresses), and with arts (a meet-the-cast of Othello with cocktails prepared by five restaurants).

Events such as this put Singapore on the world culinary map, while Singaporeans' willingness to spend on dining ensures a steady stream of new F&B establishments in the city, said Olivier Bendel, CEO and owner of Déliciae Hospitality Management.

The F&B scene is so sizzling that entrepreneurs such as Paris-born Bendel and top-gun chefs like Bruno Menard – the only three Michelin star chef in Singapore – now call the city home.

Said Bendel: "I've opened nine restaurants here in 2.5 years. We'll open our second L'Entrecôte in



Artisanal and mouth-watering: Matt Moran and Jean-Francois Piegé's (top right) masterpieces

the new Suntec Singapore (which is undergoing modernisation) in September and probably one or two more restaurants by the end of this year or beginning 2014. Then we'll explore opening in the rest of South-east Asia.

"Singapore customers know their food and always want to discover new things, which is good as it keeps us on our toes. They go for both affordable and ultra-fine food."

Which is why Bendel's res-

taurants range from fine-dining such as Forlino, to the funky and affordable &Made by Bruno Menard, which sells handmade burgers. The majority of customers are Singaporeans, said Bendel. "I'm proud of that, as Singapore is my home now and I want to bring something to the community. I actually did not come here to open restaurants."

2am:dessertbar's owner and founder Janice Wong agreed that Singaporeans always want some-

thing new. She said: "The challenge is sustain interest and create new consumer experiences."

Her latest experiment involves techniques with skins and seeds. "Mangosteen, melon and cantaloupe seeds are full of antioxidants and proteins. We're turning edible stuff that are commonly thrown away into tasty sauces or for inclusions in breads and salads. So eating becomes meaningful and a social education as well," she said.

Thailand: Where's the beef?

THAILAND's chefs and restaurants continue to build on the kingdom's reputation as a destination for food lovers, but the country boasts few marquee gourmet events.

Innovative venues continue to spring up across Bangkok, ranging from Water Library, which boasts the city's most expensive tasting menu, to smaller dining houses such as Opposite, Paste and Supanniga Eating Room.

Two Bangkok restaurants, Nahm and Gaggan, made *The World's 50 Best Restaurants 2013* list. Another two venues, Eat Me Restaurant and Sra Bua by Kiin Kiin, joined them in *Asia's Top 50 Restaurants 2013*.

Despite the groundswell of culinary creativity and local restaurants winning international plaudits, Thailand still has few major events or festivals that put it on the global gourmet map.

Last year, the Tourism Au-

thority of Thailand (TAT) and Visa International teamed up to launch Thailand Splash and Spice in Bangkok, a three-month campaign targeting Visa cardholders and international and domestic tourists (see list).

"There are about 127 restaurants in this programme," said a TAT spokesperson. "The programme is open to all restaurants interested in participating. These include hotel restaurants, dining venues at malls and authentic,

must-visit local restaurants."

The campaign is promoted through the media but has no dedicated sales agencies.

Thomas Kinsperger, F&B manager, Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok, said Thailand Splash and Spice had not worked well for the hotel last year.

In general, Mandarin Oriental, like many high-end establishments, relies on its own activities and organises five or more events with Michelin-starred chefs each year.

"We always target chefs that cook a similar cuisine to what we do in a particular outlet (we host the event in)," Kinsperger said. "It is important to us that the chefs are all established and known worldwide and have not been to Bangkok previously."

Despite bringing in some of the best chefs in the world, a majority of diners at these events are local Thais or expatriates, with

only one in 10 bookings into the hotel for the experience.

Of the handful gourmet events Thailand has, the pinnacle is the Annual World Gourmet Festival hosted by Four Seasons Hotel Bangkok, a week-long extravaganza which has built its reputation over the past 13 years. But tour operators still tend to focus on Thai food as more of a cultural experience when putting together packages, rather than emphasising high-end cuisine.

"We're not really influenced by food festivals or visiting chefs," explained Michael Lynden-Bell, Thailand general manager, Extotissimo Travel.

A concerted effort from the public and private sectors is needed to promote the country as the foody destination in South-east Asia, said Kinsperger. "Both sectors should drive this, but particularly the TAT," he added. – **Greg Lowe**

Key F&B events in Thailand

Thailand Splash and Spice, March 15 – May 31 This campaign by TAT and Visa International was launched last year. This year's event went beyond Bangkok to include Chiang Mai, Pattaya and Phuket. Prices start at 749++ baht (US\$25) for lunch and 1,499++ baht for dinner.

14th Annual World Gourmet Festival 2013, September 2-8 Hosted by Four Seasons Hotel Bangkok, this event has grown over the years into Bangkok's premier culinary event. Last year, eight top chefs from around the world were flown in with each showcasing their cuisine for two nights.

Samui Fine Dining Festival Now in its second year, this biannual two-month long event focuses on Thai and international chefs based on the island rather than flying in culinary superstars for one-off events. Each night, 16 restaurants create special six-course menus priced from 1,800 baht to 4,900 baht per head. More than 2,500 menus were created in March and April during the event earlier this year. The next takes place in June.

ion



Singapore is “the biggest theatre of food”. Above, celebrated entrepreneurs and chefs (from left) Bendel, Menard, Kapoor and Moran

Matt Moran, known for his successful Aria restaurant in Sydney aside from being a judge on *MasterChef Australia* (Season 3), said Singapore’s culinary scene kept getting better each year in the past 11 years he had been visiting. “You can tell by how many chefs are coming here from around the world, by how many great restaurants there are here – Singapore has become a food mecca,” he said. His favourite restaurant in Singapore is André, which he thinks is “top 10 in the world at the moment”. Asked why he had not opened a restaurant here, Moran said: “May be one day.”

India’s celebrity chef and restaurant owner Sanjeev Kapoor, judge of *MasterChef India* (Season 3), described such reality TV shows as “a theatre of food” – de-

signed to entertain, not educate – and Singapore as “the biggest theatre we have in this part of the world”. But, like Moran, he too was non-committal about opening a restaurant in Singapore. “Let’s see,” said Kapoor.

The fact is, while F&B has become big and Singaporeans are appreciating more good food, operating a restaurant in the city is a challenge even to the best of them. Menard said: “I thought I knew Singapore quite well, as I had been coming here (before moving to Singapore) most of the time. I’ve been here for over a year now and the experience has been challenging, to be honest.

“The biggest frustration is finding people to work in this business and I would not be the only to tell you that. We’re all struggling to find staff who want

to spend their lives as a chef, waiter, maitre’d or sommelier, which in Europe are real professions. It is also difficult to hire foreign talent.

“There’s also the challenge of getting fresh produce. We import of course but you can’t talk ‘fresh’ if you import. Fresh fish for me is fish caught overnight. Here, the freshest and nicest fish you get is five days old. Fortunately, the companies which import are trying to make it faster and better all the time.

“But it’s also exciting to live here, build up the F&B business and create something new from scratch. When I came here 15 years ago, there was nothing in terms of French or European food. Today this is well-represented and there are lots of outstanding restaurants.”

The bite on F&B trends



The Society Group

“The big trend in Singapore and all around the world is authenticity, going back to strong concepts on not only food, but decor, ambience and service, offering a whole experience.” – **Olivier Bendel, CEO and founder, Déliciae Hospitality Management, Singapore**

“What’s big in Australia right now is shared food. It’s a lot of more casual.” – **Matt Moran, celebrated Australian chef and restaurant owner**

“We’re turning edible (seeds and skins) that are commonly thrown away into tasty sauces or for inclusions in breads and salads. So eating becomes meaningful and a social education as well.” – **Janice Wong, owner and founder, 2am:dessertbar and 2am:lab, Singapore**



“The understanding of produce – the quality of chicken, how the vegetable is grown, etc – has increased. Respect for the ingredient that you use in cooking has grown and you become a better chef when you understand that best.

“Besides, before, when you tell the customer, ‘this ingredient has travelled so many miles to reach to your table’, he gets excited. Now he says, ‘oh, so many carbon miles!’ So sustainability of the whole world is also causing a shift in the kind of food people eat in a restaurant.” – **Sanjeev Kapoor, India’s celebrity chef and restaurant owner**



“Knowing when the dish is perfect as it is and not elaborating it or making it too complicated for the sake of making it a showpiece. I noticed in Paris that while the butter cream is still there, the touch is a lot lighter. There are not layers and layers of foie gras, everything’s a bit more pared back.” – **Christopher Millar, group executive chef & F&B director, 1-Rochester Group, Singapore**

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Get to know the locals at Ulu Temburong National Park

Brunei Tourism

Brunei looks further

It now aims to expand the longhaul market with nature-based products. By **S Puvaneswary**

NTO Brunei Tourism is aiming to capture more travellers from the UK, as arrivals from this longhaul market last year dropped to 11,401, compared to 18,222 in 2011.

Brunei Tourism acting director, Mariani Hj Sabtu, said this year the tourism board is targeting at least two roadshows in London. "We want to tap the UK market, which is strong in nature-based clubs such as bird watchers and Brunei is an ideal destination for nature lovers."

However, the longhaul market is small, unlike the Asia-Pacific market which makes up the bulk of air arrivals. Hence, the NTO will continue to focus its marketing efforts on its neighbours.

Brunei had 209,108 air arrivals last year compared to 192,755 in 2011. The NTO aims to grow the figure to 260,000 this year.

Islamic tourism packages are also being promoted in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, markets with large Muslim populations and direct flights to Brunei. "Joint efforts will be made to promote the *Brunei-Malaysia Islamic Tourism Package* launched last November with Malaysia's Islamic Tourism Centre and Tourism Malaysia," said Mariani.

Hotels As Brunei is the chair of the ASEAN Summit, there will be government meetings throughout the year. The national average occupancy this year is expected to jump to 70-75 per cent, compared to 45-48 per cent last year, said Mariani.

Brunei has a total of 3,038 rooms. The average room rate (ARR) of four-star hotels is between B\$150 (US\$119.60) and B\$170, while that of three-star hotels is B\$80-B\$110.

In terms of new hotel products, Radisson Hotel Brunei Darussalam completed renovation of its 142 rooms in April, while Empire Hotel & Country Club, which faces the South China Sea, will introduce water sports such as jet-skiing and parasailing by this year-end.

Empire Hotel & Country Club's spokesperson, Hafiza Mohamad, said the property's ARR was B\$220 for a superior room, plus a 10 per cent service charge.

ARR at the Radisson Hotel Brunei Darussalam is B\$158 and occupancies on weekdays can hit 70-80 per cent, according to director of sales, Paula Munoz.

Brunei Hotel manager, Andy Goh, urges Brunei Tourism to participate in the MATTA Fair,



"The inaugural Borneo International Bird Race is a new tourism product for the Sultanate. Brunei had never been associated with bird-watching before this. It is another activity to support Brunei's varied ecotourism offerings."

Leslie Chiang
Managing director
Hasa Incentives

organised by the Malaysian Association of Tour & Travel Agents, in Kuala Lumpur this September "to further promote the destination". Said Goh: "We will do our own marketing, especially through social media platforms and consumer advertising, to reach out to FITs from Malaysia."

Products Freme Travel & Tours launched a night safari tour early this year, which takes visitors on a boat along Brunei River to spot wildlife. Sugumaran Nair, manager, inbound and MICE, said the response has been "good".

Hasa Incentives has introduced a Water Village express tour for travellers who wish to visit the famed Kampong Ayer but are short of time. Managing director, Leslie Chiang, said: "We are targeting ASEAN summit delegates and transit travellers."

BonAsia Holiday Management Services' new product combines golf and spa. Managing director, Caroline Ang, said: "We are targeting China, South Korea and regional markets. We have good golf courses and staging the Brunei Open has helped promote Brunei as a good golf destination."

Airlines Royal Brunei Airlines has increased frequencies between Bandar Seri Begawan and Kuala Lumpur to 14 times weekly, effective May 20. It will take delivery of a B787 Dreamliner aircraft this September, another in October and three more in 2014, all serving existing longhaul routes such as London via Dubai and Melbourne, according to deputy chairman, Dermot Mannion.

Events Brunei and Malaysia will co-host the inaugural Borneo International Bird Race, which will run at Ulu Temburong National Park in Brunei on June 1, followed by Borneo Highlands Resort in Sarawak on June 4, and Kinabalu Park and Rainforest Discovery Centre in Sabah on June 6 and 8 respectively. Participants have to identify as many species as possible within 24 hours in each leg of the race.

Roger Rajah, organiser for the Brunei Chapter of the race, said: "The competition is our way of promoting birdwatching in Borneo and a chance for bird-watchers to see some of Borneo's endemic birds."

My choices

Brunei

Compiled by S Puvaneswary



Peter Feran
General manager
Radisson Hotel Brunei Darussalam

Lack of regional and global marketing as well as limited air access and direct flights from capital cities in Asia-Pacific and longhaul destinations.

Positive, due to the ASEAN Summit, and our redesigned rooms, suites and business-class lounge have been well-received. We hope to close 2013 with more than 50 per cent occupancy.

With a positive outlook, I would like to see a 10 per cent increase in rates across Brunei.



Andy Goh
General manager
The Brunei Hotel

That Brunei is able to host the ASEAN Summit 2013 successfully, without any hiccups.

Last year, our average occupancy in our 63-room hotel was 65 per cent. We hope this year, with the ASEAN Summit, we will be able to close 2013 at 80 per cent.

I would like to see hotel rates increase by 10-20 per cent by Q4.



Caroline Ang
Director
BonAsia Holiday Management Services

Limited air connectivity. We hope more foreign airlines will come to Brunei and that Royal Brunei Airlines will not suspend any of their existing routes.

Positive. We are working on getting more high-yield tourists rather than going after the mass market to get volume.

If there is to be any increase, we hope it will be a gradual one and also justified with improvements in the hotel facilities and services.



Wong Peng Hoon
General manager
Anthony Tours & Travel Agency

Possible hotel room and transportation shortage on the days of the ASEAN Summit. This will make it difficult for us to conduct our regular tours.

Very good. We're hoping for year-on-year growth of 10 per cent. The ASEAN Summit will bring a lot of people, media exposure and publicity to Brunei.

Rates are currently at an acceptable level and we hope they will be maintained.

What is your biggest concern in the next six months?

What is your business outlook for the next six months?

What would you like to see happening to hotel rates in the next six months?

Test drive

Tasek Merimbun Heritage Park



Museum, butterflies and trails are under one roof in the region's rare nature retreat. *By S Puvaneswary*

WHY Tasek Merimbun Heritage Park is the only ASEAN Heritage Park in Brunei.

As I was travelling alone and on a tight schedule, I did not have time to enjoy some of the recreational activities offered here, such as taking a boat ride on Brunei's largest black water lake and enjoying a picnic by the lake. These are best done with friends in the evening, when it is not too hot.

I spent what little time I had doing a bit of jungle trekking, and visiting the museum and the park's latest attraction, Butterfly Garden, which opened in July 2012.

WHAT I usually find museums a dull place but the Tasek Merimbun Museum is different and

worth visiting. The exhibits also have clear explanations.

The Natural History section exhibits the flora and fauna in the form of live and preserved specimens, models and pictures. Among the interesting specimens exhibited are live fishes, plants, and preserved birds, insects and mammals that are endemic to Borneo.

The museum also holds archaeological records of recovered graves in the area, indicating the presence of the Dusun ethnic tribe believed to have settled there 500 years ago.

Tasek Merimbun Museum is maintained by the Museums Department, under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. It has a small theatre, and at my request, a Powerpoint presentation and explanation of what Tasek Merimbun has to offer were provided. Be sure to make prior arrangements if you are bringing groups to the museum.

The Butterfly Garden is a short walk from the museum. The park houses over 100 but-

terflies from 30 different species. The landscaping is also impressive, with a fish pond in the middle of the park and a small bridge across the pond.

The garden provides so much information on butterflies that I can now tell you the specific difference between butterflies and moths!

There are also two botanical trails to attract the adventurous. The trails are safe as long as visitors stick to the path. The trail will not take them more than an hour to complete.

I would advise operators to book guides for their guests as the guides will be able to explain the medicinal properties of the plants found along the trail, which make for a much more interesting walk.

HOW The activities can be done at one's own pace and one can easily spend half a day here. The Dusun Community living in the area earns extra income by providing guiding and boat ride services. The people are friendly and captivate tourists with insider information about the area's history, flora and fauna.

Name Tasek Merimbun Heritage Park

Entrance fee Free

Opening hours

Sunday to Thursday: 09.00-17.00

Friday: 09.00-11.30/14.30-17.00

Saturday: 09.45-17.00

Contact

Museums Department
Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.

Tel: (673) 224-4545/6

Email: bmexhib@brunet.bn



Checking in



Name The Brunei Hotel

No. of rooms 63

Rate Standard room at B\$135 (US\$107.60) and Deluxe room at B\$150 per night inclusive of breakfast for two. Executive room at B\$170 per night

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The Brunei Hotel



First-time visitors to Brunei will especially appreciate this hotel's strategic location *By S Puvaneswary*

LOCATION Great location for first-time tourists to Brunei as some of the must-see places are within walking distance. There are the Waterfront, Water Village, Tamu Kianggeh (morning market), Royal Regalia Museum and Yayasan Shopping Centre, which is the biggest shopping centre in the city.

There are also many local restaurants within walking distance, which gave me a chance to sample local delights like *roti canai*, *nasi katok* and chicken rice.

ROOMS The standard room I was given was spacious, with large windows providing a good view of the shops below.

Everything in my room worked well and looked spanking new, which is not surprising since the entire hotel had undergone major renovations in 2010 and reopened in February 2011.

I had brought a DVD set with me, which I could watch on the 32-inch flatscreen television. I

loved the strong rain shower, firm bed and soft pillows.

The room also came with complimentary Wi-Fi and a minibar stocked with cheese flavoured crackers, nuts and cans of soft drinks.

FACILITIES There are two function rooms at the lobby area which, when combined, can fit 50 people U-shaped and 100 people theatre-style.

The Luna Lounge at the rooftop on level four is strictly for private functions of not more than 50 pax. The price for 20 pax is B\$1,500 inclusive of buffet. The space is ideal for evening or night functions in good weather. Indoor, there is a small boardroom which can fit up to eight people, a karaoke room and a dining area for up to 40 guests.

F&B Choices Restaurant is open 06.30-22.00 daily. It is contemporary-styled with mood-lifting bright colours. I only had a chance for breakfast here, which was adequate, with a spread of eggs, cereals, sausages, bread, local fruits and an ever-changing Asian menu.

VERDICT Friendly staff, excellent service and comfortable room made my stay a great one.

China and South-east Asia are fast rising as Sydney's largest sources of visitors

Ethan Rohoff, Destination NSW



Dawn of a new market

New South Wales hops onto the Chinese bandwagon to grow visitor arrivals. **By Natasha Dragon**

Arrivals New South Wales (NSW) leads Australia in international arrival numbers, having recorded more than 2.9 million overnight visitors and a tourism spending of A\$6.3 billion (US\$6.2 billion) in 2012.

Last year, mainland Chinese arrivals to NSW rose 19 per cent to 363,000, becoming the state's second largest visitor source market after New Zealand, whereas Malaysian arrivals surged 40 per cent to 67,000 to rank as the 11th biggest source market. Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and India were also in the top 10 source markets for NSW.

Meanwhile, arrival figures from India and China are expected to grow 97.9 per cent and 78.3 per cent respectively between 2011/12 and 2021/22.

NTO To achieve its target of doubling visitor expenditure to the state by 2020, Destination NSW rolled out a new China Tourism Strategy 2012-2020 last year. Focusing on four primary Chinese source markets – greater Beijing, greater Shanghai, Guangdong and Chengdu – the strategy involves supporting aviation and route develop-

ment into China, expanding its marketing reach in these markets, targeting high-performing consumer segments such as FITs and business events, among others. The NTO has launched a Chinese website and a series of videos featuring Chinese bloggers promoting the state. It will also ramp up its presence in Asia with additional staff in Shanghai, plus new offices in Chengdu and Mumbai.

Sandra Chipchase, CEO of Destination NSW, admitted that a major challenge lies in attracting repeat visitors, which could be addressed by “improving the quality and range of visitor experiences” in the destination.

Airlines China Southern Airlines will deploy its new Airbus A380 aircraft on the daily Guangzhou-Sydney route from October 27, with plans to launch Boeing 787 Dreamliners on the sector too. The carrier also aims to increase its capacity to the region from the current 38 weekly flights to 55 by 2015.

In December 2012, China Eastern Airlines launched thrice-weekly Beijing-Nanjing-Sydney flights; last year also saw the arrival of Scoot and AirAsia X into



“Asian travellers know what they're doing when they're travelling to New South Wales (NSW). It is essential that...NSW continues to evolve its offerings and make itself more appealing in the years to come.”

Paul Fischmann
CEO
8Hotels

Sydney, connecting the city with daily flights from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

Having forged a partnership with Emirates, Qantas will refocus on key Asian hubs by boosting flight frequency and capacity from Australia to Singapore and Hong Kong, and expanding its regional network through local partners, said the airline's executive manager of global sales Stephen Thompson. The Australian flag carrier is also considering flying to Beijing, Seoul, Mumbai, Delhi and Tokyo from 2016.

Hotels In the Circular Quay neighbourhood, the 90-key 1888 Hotel will open in June in Pyrmont while Baillies Sydney will debut as a 10-suite hotel within two historic buildings in the Rocks district in mid-2014.

Central Park will undergo a A\$2 billion development to transform a former brewery site into a mixed-use retail precinct, including a 60-room boutique hotel due to open in late 2014 by Singaporean hotelier Loh Lik Peng under his Unlisted Collection portfolio.

The waterfront Barangaroo Project is currently underway to feature a park, event spaces,

apartments, retail outlets, a 500-room hotel and upgraded cruise terminal facilities by 2015. Nearby, the 682-room Four Points by Sheraton Sydney, Darling Harbour will add 231 rooms and meeting facilities as part of a A\$150 million expansion.

At Darling Harbour, the 20-hectare Sydney International Convention, Exhibition and Entertainment Precinct will house Australia's largest MICE facilities and two hotels with 1,000 rooms when it launches in late 2016.

Outside the CBD, the 113-key Adina Apartment Hotel Bondi Beach will debut this June, while the 318-room Rydges Sydney Airport has opened in May as the city's first on-site airport hotel.

Events Corroboree, Australia's largest indigenous arts and cultural festival, is set to take place in Sydney from November 14-24 this year. This new festival will be based in Sydney for at least the next three years, and forms part of the government's efforts to attract repeat visitors. Currently on show until June 10, the annual Vivid Sydney light festival has expanded to North Sydney and Darling Harbour this year.

Tough times for the outback

To arrest declines in foreign arrivals, the Northern Territory reaches out to Asian markets. By **Natasha Dragun**

1 How is Asia faring as a visitor source market? Of the total 6.1 million international tourist arrivals to Australia last year, only 4.5 per cent visited the Northern Territory (NT). International arrivals to the NT slipped 12 per cent year-on-year, from 290,000 in 2011 to 254,000 in 2012.

For 2011/12, the NT's top three Asian source markets were Japan with 26,000 visitors (+21 per cent year-on-year), Hong Kong with 4,000 visitors (+53 per cent) and China with 3,000 visitors (+80 per cent). However, significant dips were observed in arrivals from South Korean (-31 per cent), Singapore (-19 per cent), Taiwan (-44 per cent), Malaysia (-71 per cent) and Indonesia (-35 per cent).

Within the NT, the Top End suffered more than the Red Centre, as many tourists visited Uluru only. Central Australia, one of NT's five regions, currently receives 81 per cent of all visitors to the state, but leisure arrivals dipped 8.9 per cent in 2012. The NT government is targeting a 10 per cent turnaround in 2013 figures.

2 What is the NT doing to grow Asian arrivals? To draw tourism traffic from the East Coast, the NT government is targeting Asian travellers visit-



Australia's Northern Territory needs to spread visitors beyond Uluru, also known as Ayers Rock

ing East Coast relatives through digital marketing and new travel promotions. Said Adam Coward, executive director marketing & communications, Tourism NT: "We need to make the outback seem more accessible, not just literally but also mentally."

The state has injected a record A\$8 million (US\$7.7 million) into the 2013/14 marketing budget and is working with airlines to open up new routes, such as the launch of Tiger Airways' four-weekly flights from Melbourne and Sydney to Alice Springs in April.

Resort operator Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia has rolled out initiatives such as

employing Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking staff, launching a Chinese website and tailoring menus to Asian guests. Ray Stone, Voyages' executive general manager, said: "We have to focus on markets with the greatest potential, which is why China is so strong." Other tour companies like SEIT Outback Australia have also introduced Mandarin-language tours into their portfolio.

3 What challenges are there? Distributing visitors beyond Uluru is a challenge as "many visitors come to the (Ayers) Rock and then leave," said Danielle Thomas, international marketing manager, Tour-

ism NT. "People are still coming to Australia but have less time and are spending less. The NT drops off the list...We're pushing for more regional development."

Another challenge is getting visitors to stay in the NT for more than one night, said Grant Hunt, CEO of Anthology, who owns Wildman Wilderness Lodge and Wilpena Pound in the NT. "We are encouraging people to stay longer by expanding facilities and offerings," he said.

4 How will air access to Darwin improve? Tourism NT aims to develop Darwin as a regional gateway, driven by booming oil and gas industries in the

region plus proximity to Southeast Asia. Darwin is already connected by SilkAir and Jetstar to Manila, Tokyo, Dili and Bali, while Philippine Airlines will begin daily Darwin-Manila flights from June 1 and AirAsia Indonesia will resume four-weekly Darwin-Bali flights from July 1.

The tourism board is also seeking direct flights from Uluru to Darwin and more flights from the East Coast cities, in particular Brisbane, a popular base for Asians to explore the Great Barrier Reef. "Brisbane only has two weekly flights to Alice. Adding an extra stop (at Alice) is just another deterrent to visiting (Darwin)," said Coward.

Qantas will upgrade facilities and more than double the size of its Club lounge in Darwin by mid-2014 when Darwin Airport completes its expansion too.

5 What's new in the hospitality sector? The 18-room Cicada Lodge opened in March in Nitmiluk National Park near Katherine Gorge, while three DoubleTree by Hilton hotels recently launched in the NT, adding 617 rooms to the state.

Voyages recently spent A\$30 million to upgrade its facilities, including the debut of the Uluru Meeting Place featuring two new ballrooms seating between 300-420 pax at Ayers Rock Resort.

Products

Down Under, a raft of adventures awaits discovery

Rydges Sydney Airport
Sydney Airport is now home to its first on-site airport hotel, featuring 318 rooms and suites, some of which come with views over the runway. Rydges Sydney Airport boasts the Blackwattle Grill restaurant, Touchdown Sports Bar, a gym and 11 conference rooms.

Located a one-minute walk from the international terminal, the 11-storey property also comes with travel essentials such as free Wi-Fi, flight arrival and departure information and an international currency ATM. Rooms start from A\$250 (US\$244).

Contact
Tel: (61-2) 9313-2500
Website: www.rydges.com

1888 Hotel, Pyrmont
Opening in June 2013, this 90-room boutique hotel occupies a historic building that dates back to 1888. Offering an old-world charm with design features like exposed brick walls, original ironbark beams and bespoke



Clockwise from top: a room at Rydges Sydney Airport; guided walks in Sydney by Unique Down Under; and Scenic Railway



furniture by Australian artists, the heritage property also boasts modern in-room amenities like complimentary Wi-Fi, Smart TVs, iPads, custom-made bedding and walk-in rain showers. Neighbouring the Sydney Fish Market in the inner-city suburb of Pyrmont, the hotel also features an intimate restaurant-cum-bar plus event space.

Contact
Tel: (61-2) 8586-1888
Website: www.1888hotel.com.au

Sydney Moonwalks

Sydney-based tour company Unique Down Under has rolled out a new guided walk, *Sydney Moonwalks: Sunset-Sunrise*. The experience includes exploring a national park at sunset, a candle-lit alfresco dinner, learning about night photography from a professional photographer and sleeping under the stars at Wattle Lagoon, situated just south of Sydney.

Lasting approximately 14-18 hours overnight, the trips are priced from A\$229 per pax, in-

cluding CBD transfers.

Contact
Tel: (61) 448-388-687
Website: www.udu.com.au

Scenic Railway

In the Blue Mountains, 100km west of Sydney, Scenic World has unveiled its newest attraction following an A\$30 million upgrade. The new Scenic Railway is now the world's steepest incline railway, travelling between 44 and 64 degrees along a 415m track through a cliffside tunnel and ancient rainforest.

The new enclosed glass-roofed carriages allow passengers to choose their own adventure by giving them the chance to adjust their seated positions up to 20 degrees – a 'laid-back' option, the 'original' 52 degrees or a thrilling 'Cliffhanger' ride at a steep 64-degree incline down the mountain side. The 84-pax train departs every 10 minutes.

Contact
Tel: (61-2) 4780-0200
Website: www.scenicworld.com.au

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We ask that you take a few minutes to vote for your choices in the following form, or on our online voting form

www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards

Closing Date: 2nd August 2013

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LUXURY
for buyers of premium travel and luxury meetings

Award Categories

1. Travel Agency Awards

Winners in this category are decided by votes from industry suppliers.

- Best Travel Agency – Australia
- Best Travel Agency – China
- Best Travel Agency – Chinese Taipei
- Best Travel Agency – Hong Kong
- Best Travel Agency – India
- Best Travel Agency – Indochina (Cambodia, Laos)
- Best Travel Agency – Indonesia
- Best Travel Agency – Japan
- Best Travel Agency – Malaysia
- Best Travel Agency – Singapore
- Best Travel Agency – South Korea
- Best Travel Agency – Thailand
- Best Travel Agency – The Philippines
- Best Travel Agency – Vietnam
- Best Corporate Travel Agency
- Best Online Travel Agency

2. Travel Supplier Awards

Winners in this category are decided by votes from travel consultants and experts.

Airline Awards

- Best North American Airline
- Best European Airline
- Best Middle Eastern Airline
- Best South-east Asian Airline
- Best North Asian Airline
- Best China Airline
- Best Pacific Airline
- Best Regional Airline
- Best Asian Low-Cost Carrier

Hotels, Resorts, Serviced Residences & Spa Awards

HOTEL Chains

- Best Global Hotel Chain
- Best Regional Hotel Chain
- Best Local Hotel Chain
- Best Hotel Representation Company
- Best Luxury Hotel Brand
- Best Mid-range Hotel Brand
- Best Budget Hotel Brand

HOTELS – Individual Property

- Best Luxury Hotel
- Best Mid-range Hotel
- Best Budget Hotel
- Best Independent Hotel
- Best Boutique Hotel
- Best City Hotel – Bangkok
- Best City Hotel – Delhi
- Best City Hotel – Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City
- Best City Hotel – Jakarta
- Best City Hotel – Hong Kong
- Best City Hotel – Kuala Lumpur
- Best City Hotel – Macau
- Best City Hotel – Manila
- Best City Hotel – Seoul
- Best City Hotel – Singapore
- Best City Hotel – Taipei
- Best City Hotel – Tokyo
- Best New City Hotel
- Best Airport Hotel

RESORTS – Individual Property

- Best Beach Resort
- Best Resort Hotel (Non-Beach)
- Best New Beach Resort
- Best Integrated Resort

SERVICED RESIDENCES

- Best Serviced Residence Operator

SPAS

- Best Spa Operator

BT-MICE Awards

- Best Airline – Business Class
- Best Business Hotel
- Best Meetings & Conventions Hotel
- Best BT-MICE City
- Best Convention & Exhibition Centre
- Best Convention & Exhibition Bureau

Travel Services Awards

- Best Airport
- Best GDS
- Best Cruise Operator
- Best NTO
- Best Theme Attraction

3. Outstanding Achievement Awards

The winners in this category are decided by the TTG Asia editorial team.

- Travel Personality of the Year
- Destination of the Year
- Most Entrepreneurial Travel Company
- Best Marketing & Development Effort

4. Travel Hall of Fame

The Travel Hall of Fame honours organisations that have won at least 10 consecutive times at previous editions of the TTG Travel Awards. These special award winners will be recognised at every TTG annual awards presentation ceremony. Votes for them will not be counted.

Inducted Travel Hall of Fame honourees are:

- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Singapore Airlines (2002)
- Hertz Asia-Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Abacus International (2009)
- Silkair (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)

VOTING INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES

For Travel Agency and Travel Supplier Awards

1. Please use the correct voting form.

Voting Form A: Travel Agency Awards

For voting by hoteliers, airline staff, car rental companies, cruise operators, national tourism organisations, GDS companies and all other travel professionals (except travel consultants, tour operators and destination management companies).

Voting Form B: Travel Supplier Awards

For voting by travel consultants, tour operators and destination management companies only.

Online Voting Forms

You can opt to vote using our online form www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards instead.

2. Voting Criteria

Please refer to the voting criteria for **each category and title** to ensure that all judging is done on an equal basis.

3. Voting Rules

- Only one voting entry per person is allowed – using the voting form or online voting.
- All votes are confidential.
- Voting forms are published in TTG Travel Trade Publishing print titles and are available online at www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards

- No responsibility will be accepted by the organisers for voting forms lost, delayed or damaged in the post.
- There are no pre-nominated contenders for any voting awards.
- The results for TTG Travel Awards 2013 are final and no correspondence will be entertained.
- Voting forms will be tabulated and evaluated by an independent auditor in Singapore.
- The closing date is **2nd August 2013**.

4. Voting Form Submission

Completed voting forms are to be returned to:

SINGAPORE

Ms Lina Tan (TTG Travel Awards 2013)
TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd
1 Science Park Road #04-07 The Capricorn
Singapore Science Park II
Singapore 117528
Tel: (65) 6395-7575 Fax: (65) 6536-0896

HONG KONG

Ms Carol Cheng (TTG Travel Awards 2013)
TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd
China.com Inc
11/F ING Tower No. 308 Des Voeux Road
Central Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2237-7272 Fax: (852) 2806-0646

VOTING FORM A: TRAVEL AGENCY AWARDS

For voting by • Hoteliers • Airlines • Car rental companies • Cruise operators • National Tourism Organisations • GDS companies • All other travel professionals (except travel consultants, tour operators and destination management companies)

VOTE ONLINE AT
www.ftgasia.com/ftg-awards

Criteria

Best **Travel Agency** in its respective category in terms of:

- Professionalism and excellence in staff.
- Best value-added services to client.
- Best use of computer technology applications to help improve efficiency and effectiveness in services provided to client.

- Best Travel Agency – **Australia**
- Best Travel Agency – **China**
- Best Travel Agency – **Chinese Taipei**
- Best Travel Agency – **Hong Kong**
- Best Travel Agency – **India**
- Best Travel Agency – **Indochina (Cambodia, Laos)**
- Best Travel Agency – **Indonesia**
- Best Travel Agency – **Japan**
- Best Travel Agency – **Malaysia**
- Best Travel Agency – **Singapore**
- Best Travel Agency – **South Korea**
- Best Travel Agency – **Thailand**
- Best Travel Agency – **The Philippines**
- Best Travel Agency – **Vietnam**
- Best **Corporate** Travel Agency
Best travel agency specialising in serving the needs of corporate travellers.
- Best **Online** Travel Agency
Best online-based travel agency offering the most user-friendly and effective interface to meet client needs. This online travel agency must also boast the best sales and marketing network in terms of service innovation.

VOTER INFORMATION

Name: Passport no.:
 Job title: Company:
 Address:
 Country:
 Telephone no.: Fax no.:
 Email: Signature:

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

VOTING CLOSES
2nd August 2013

VOTING FORM B: TRAVEL SUPPLIER AWARDS

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

For voting by • Travel Consultants • Tour Operators • Destination Management Companies

Airline Awards

Criteria

Best **airline** in its respective category in terms of:

- Providing the best service, network and schedules.
- Most agent-friendly in terms of reservations, confirmations and commission payments.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas, incentive programmes and servicing.

17. Best **North American** Airline
Best airline based in North America operating Asia-Pacific routes.
18. Best **European** Airline
Best airline based in Europe operating Asia-Pacific routes.
19. Best **Middle Eastern** Airline
Best airline based in Middle East operating Asia-Pacific routes.
20. Best **South-east Asian** Airline
Best airline based in Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand or Vietnam operating Asia-Pacific routes.
21. Best **North Asian** Airline
Best airline based in South Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei, Macau or Hong Kong operating Asia-Pacific routes.
22. Best **China** Airline
Best airline based in China operating Asia-Pacific routes.
23. Best **Pacific** Airline
Best airline based in the Pacific operating Asia-Pacific routes.
24. Best **Regional** Airline
Best airline based regionally operating Asia-Pacific routes.
25. Best **Asian Low-cost Carrier**
Best airline based in Asia-Pacific that operates on a low-cost strategy.

Hotels, Resorts, Serviced Residences & Spa Awards

Criteria

Best **Hotel Chain** in its respective category in terms of:

- Most consistent in products and services.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas, incentive programmes and servicing.

Best **Hotel/Resort/Serviced Residence/Spa** in its respective category in terms of:

- Best services and facilities.
- Best range of value-added benefits.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.

HOTEL CHAINS

26. Best **Global** Hotel Chain
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties globally.
27. Best **Regional** Hotel Chain
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties in the region.
28. Best **Local** Hotel Chain
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
29. Best **Hotel Representation Company**
Best company providing the most agent-friendly products and services and showing the best marketing effort in generating sales for member hotels via agents.
30. Best **Luxury** Hotel Brand
Best hotel chain operating a network of luxurious properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
31. Best **Mid-range** Hotel Brand
Best hotel chain operating a network of mid-range properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
32. Best **Budget** Hotel Brand
Best hotel chain operating a network of economical properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.

HOTELS – Individual Property

33. Best **Luxury** Hotel
Best hotel catering to the upmarket traveller. This hotel must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting upmarket status.
 34. Best **Mid-range** Hotel
Best mid-range hotel catering to the traveller who seeks three- to four-star quality and comfort.
 35. Best **Budget** Hotel
Best hotel catering to the budget traveller.
 36. Best **Independent** Hotel
Best non-chain (ie not part of a network of properties) hotel.
 37. Best **Boutique** Hotel
Best small, fashionable and unique hotel.
 38. Best **City** Hotel – **Bangkok**
 39. Best **City** Hotel – **Delhi**
 40. Best **City** Hotel – **Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City**
 41. Best **City** Hotel – **Jakarta**
 42. Best **City** Hotel – **Hong Kong**
 43. Best **City** Hotel – **Kuala Lumpur**
 44. Best **City** Hotel – **Macau**
 45. Best **City** Hotel – **Manila**
 46. Best **City** Hotel – **Seoul**
 47. Best **City** Hotel – **Singapore**
 48. Best **City** Hotel – **Taipei**
 49. Best **City** Hotel – **Tokyo**
 50. Best **New City** Hotel
Best city hotel that opened in 2012/2013.
 51. Best **Airport** Hotel
Best hotel – located within the vicinity of an airport – that caters to travellers in transit.
- ### RESORTS – Individual Property
52. Best **Beach** Resort
Best resort located by a beach. This resort must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting local flavour.
 53. Best **Resort** Hotel (Non-Beach)
Best resort not located by a beach. This resort must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting local flavour.
 54. Best **New Beach** Resort
Best beach resort that opened in 2012/2013.
 55. Best **Integrated** Resort
Best hotel offering comprehensive accommodation, shopping, dining, entertainment and sports.
- ### SERVICED RESIDENCES
56. Best **Serviced Residence** Operator
Best serviced property catering to mid- and long-term staying guests.
- ### SPAS
57. Best **Spa** Operator
Best managed and operated spa or network of spas in the region.

BT-MICE Awards

Criteria

- Best services and facilities catering specifically to the BT-MICE market.
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing the BT-MICE market.
 - Most desirable and attractive incentives and value added services to business travellers and MICE planners.
58. Best **Airline – Business Class**
Best business class airline across the board.
Refer to Airline Criteria.
 59. Best **Business** Hotel
Best hotel catering to the business traveller.
Refer to Hotel Criteria.
 60. Best **Meetings & Conventions** Hotel
Best hotel catering to meeting and convention needs.
Refer to Hotel Criteria.
 61. Best **BT-MICE City**
The city most friendly and desirable to business travellers and for MICE planners to host their events.
 62. Best **Convention & Exhibition Centre**
 - Best facilities.
 - Best value for money.
 - Most flexible in catering to MICE planners.
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.
 63. Best **Convention & Exhibition Bureau**
 - Most efficient, flexible and friendly in terms of response to enquiries and information.
 - Most effective in raising awareness of MICE at government and community levels.
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.

Travel Services Awards

Criteria

- Best product, services and facilities
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.
64. Best **Airport**
 - Best facilities.
 - Most user-friendly, efficient and hassle-free immigration.
 - Most organised baggage claim.
 - Best planned floor layout, with easy ground access.
 65. Best **GDS (Global Distribution System)**
 - Most comprehensive network offering ease of operation and user friendliness.
 - Most efficient and reliable system.
 66. Best **Cruise Operator**
 - Best product in terms of service, routes and schedules.
 - Best onboard programme and facilities.
 - Most agent-friendly in terms of reservations, confirmations and commission payments.
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas, incentive programmes and servicing.
 67. Best **NTO (National Tourism Organisation)**
 - Most efficient, flexible and friendly in terms of response to enquiries and information.
 - Most effective in raising awareness of tourism at government and community levels.
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.
 68. Best **Theme Attraction**
 - Best ambience.
 - Best facilities and services.
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.

VOTER INFORMATION

Name: _____ Passport no.: _____
Job title: _____ Company: _____
Address: _____
Country: _____
Telephone no.: _____ Fax no.: _____
Email: _____ Signature: _____

VOTING CLOSES
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