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# TTG

## ASIA

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# ASEAN grows intra-region itineraries

New initiative focuses on experiential, creative themes

By Greg Lowe

**BANGKOK** The Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) has unveiled plans to promote multi-country experiential travel in South-east Asia as a key focus of its tourism strategy in the run-up to the formation of the Asean Economic Community (AEC) in 2015.

The new strategy by the ASEAN Tourism Marketing and Communication Working Group – comprising NTO representatives from each of the 10 member states – has been lauded by the industry, which has long called for more coordinated efforts to promote intra-region travel.

As part of the *ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy 2012-15*, multi-country itineraries offered by an initial list of 20 tour operators will be packaged under six themes, including The Tastes of Southeast Asia; ASEAN, a Tropical Paradise; World-Class Cities; Experience Diverse Traditions; Sport and Relaxation; and Diverse Contemporary Creativity.



**“ASEAN Tourism Working Group is best suited to promote multi-country tours.”**

**Luzi Matzig**, CEO, Asian Trails

While these themes may not set the world on fire, their general focus is relevant, said Luzi Matzig, CEO of Asian Trails. “It is not easy to find attractive titles for touristic programmes, so we believe that the six titles chosen are fairly

relevant.”

Matzig added: “ASEAN Tourism Working Group is best suited to promote multi-country tours. Many people have heard of ASEAN and roughly know which 10 countries are involved (even if ASEAN is not a destination in its own right).”

However, care needs to be taken to ensure the intra-region initiative complements rather than clashes with the

*Continued on page 2*

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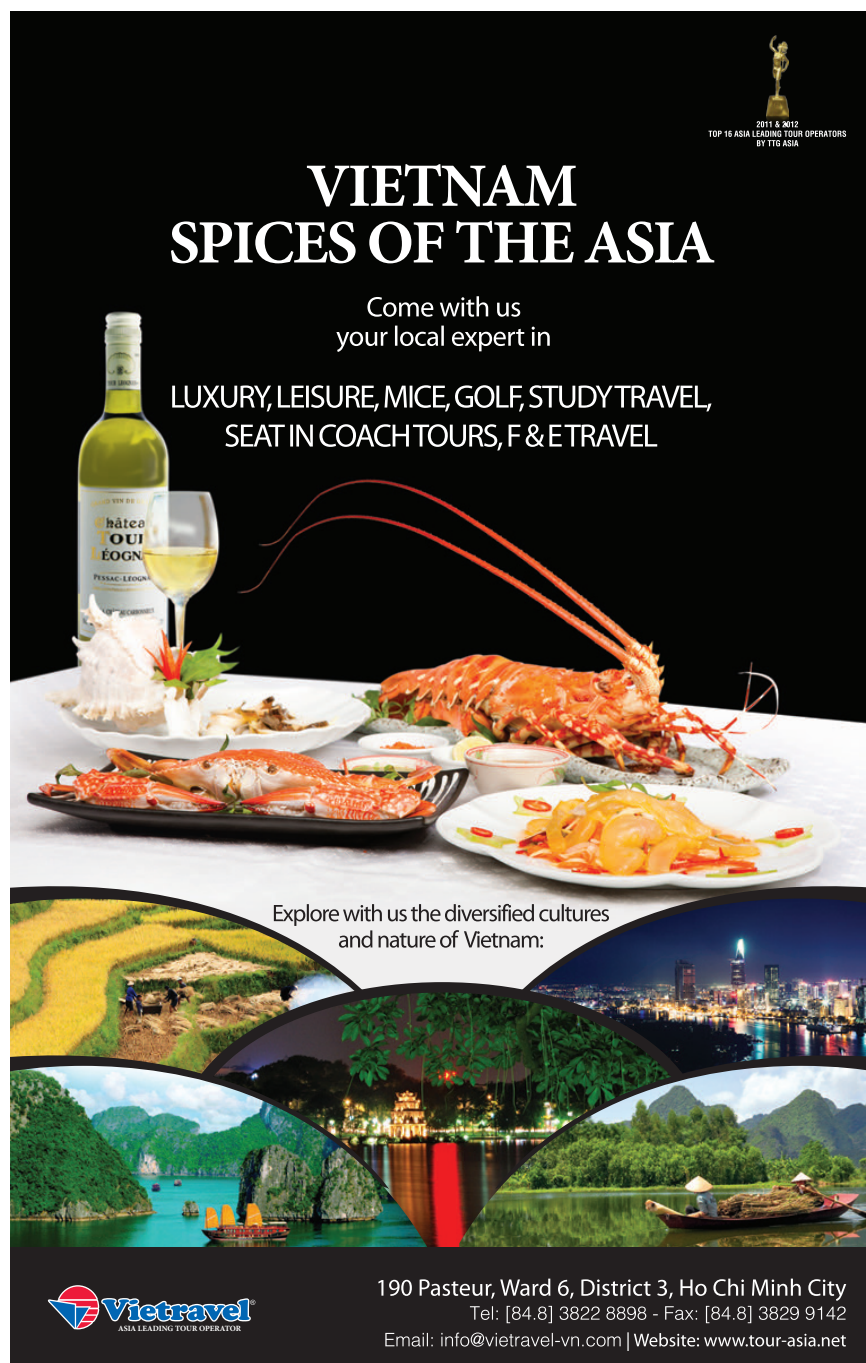
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# Making the magic work



After two decades in the business of operating Disney theme parks, Randy Garfield concedes that nothing beats the satisfaction derived from putting smiles on the faces of families across different generations. Prudence Lui talks to him about creating “the happiest place on earth” – see page 6



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# Thailand flaunts 'Thainess' plan

But trade ponders concept, calls for sharper strategy on TAT's part

By Greg Lowe

**BANGKOK** The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has set its sights to achieve a record target of more than two trillion baht (US\$64.6 billion) in total tourism revenue next year through its recently launched Marketing Action Plan 2014, which highlights "Thainess" and "balance" as key words driving the campaign.

While generally welcoming the strategy, the travel trade has also called for a more substantial focus on specific aspects of Thai culture, history and regionalism to strengthen the destination's appeal to potential visitors.

"We know that (Thainess) really encompasses everything you'd expect of Thailand... but building everything we have into a one-word concept is difficult as we really are more than just one word," said a senior executive at a leading DMC who requested anonymity but broadly supported the marketing strategy.

"TAT does a good job with the resources they have. Sometimes the concepts they come up with are not so strong, but they are good at trying to be different."

TAT should also promote new and interesting destinations in Thailand, she suggested. "We also need TAT to entice our past visitors back to re-visit us by marketing us as a progressive country that is not only good at

## Tourist boom

# 28

The number, in millions, of international arrivals that Thailand expects to receive in 2014



Gomez: tap on heritage tourism

preserving our traditions and cultural heritage but also embraces the new," she added.

A stronger emphasis on Thailand's history and its development of local culture could also help spur an increase in the more lucrative heritage tourism segment, said Andre Gomez, general manager, Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa.

"Thailand is as unique a country as you can get," he said. "It's one of the few countries (in the region) which has not been colo-

nised...As strong as tourism is in Thailand, I'd say the majority of people who travel to the country wouldn't know that fact or understand how different it makes the local culture.

"We could do more to educate people on that rather than just saying 'this is Thainess' or 'this is the Thai way of life'. We should explain things better, (elaborate) more on the history. By digging deeper and giving it more substance, you would attract a whole different type of traveller," added Gomez.

Mondop Lamache, general manager of AMI Thai Ticket & Travel, shared that TAT had previously been successful in using the Thainess concept to target luxury travellers. If executed effectively, next year's marketing plan could provide new opportunities to connect with travellers by promoting the diversity of the country's regions.

"I hope (the focus on Thainess) will be something real and not just a show-off campaign," he said.

TAT expects to attract 28 million international tourist arrivals in 2014 to generate estimated foreign receipts of 1.3 trillion baht, up 13 per cent from this year's goal. Domestic tourism is targeted at 136.8 million trips and 700 billion baht in revenue, nine per cent more than this year.

Continued from page 1

## 'Less rhetoric, more action'

national tourism strategy in each country, remarked Andrew Wood, president of Skai International Thailand.

"ASEAN's tourism strategy bodes well with the Tourism Authority of Thailand's goal of hitting 28 million tourist arrivals in 2014 ahead of the AEC, but there's the danger that it may confuse consumers as in some areas it overlaps and duplicates the Thai action plan (and that of other NTOs in the grouping)," Wood said, adding that ASEAN needs to focus on turning rhetoric into reality.

"Unfortunately, (ASEAN) doesn't have much clout within member states. For example, the formation of the AEC was delayed from January to December

2015 as countries were not ready and had until recently only been paying lip service to (the AEC's) enormous potential."

Eddy Krismeidi Soemawilaga, a senior officer at the ASEAN Secretariat's tourism infrastructure division, told *TTG Asia* the initiative was aimed at supporting private-sector operators that develop multi-country products. More tours and themes will be developed in the near future to leverage destinations in all member states and will be promoted through [www.aseantourism.travel](http://www.aseantourism.travel) and other digital channels.

"The ASEAN NTOs' focus is still online through our website and Facebook page, as well as websites and social media in China," he said.

## MAHTEC grants certification



INTI Universal Holdings and the Malaysian Association of Hotels Training and Education Centre (MAHTEC) recently came together to sign an MoU, which will see MAHTEC award industry certification to INTI's hospitality graduates to bolster graduate employability.

At the MoU signing ceremony were (from left to right) Tan Ling Ling, INTI International College Subang's interim chief executive; Rohit Sharma, INTI's chief operating officer; as well as Sam Cheah and Reginald Pereira, both members of MAHTEC's board of directors.

# Medan's new airport to pave for greater connectivity

By Mimi Hudoyo

**JAKARTA** The Indonesian travel trade is anticipating that the recent opening of Kuala Namu International Airport (KNIA) in Medan will usher in opportunities to expand international links and inbound traffic not only to Sumatra island but also the rest of Indonesia.

Built on the former plantation of Perkebunan Tanjung Morawa in Deli Serdang, North Sumatra, the much-awaited KNIA finally started operations on July 25, after a delay of several years. The new airport also features a 3,750m runway and 33 aprons, enabling it to accommodate wide-bodied aircraft such as the Airbus A380.

KNIA has an annual handling capacity of 8.1 million passengers, making it the second biggest airport in Indonesia after Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport and nearly twice the capacity of the overcrowded Polonia Airport; the

former airport has since closed down on July 25 following the launch of KNIA.

"The opening of the airport is good news for North Sumatra. We are expecting more accessibility, not only with neighbouring (Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand) but we also hope for direct air links, particularly with China and India as their outbound markets are strong," said Robert Lam, managing director of Horas Tour Medan, who revealed that China Southern Airlines had shown interest in flying to Medan.

Currently, Medan has direct regional links with Singapore through SilkAir and Valair, Kuala Lumpur and Penang via AirAsia, Malaysia Airlines, Garuda Indonesia, Lion Air, Firefly, Tigerair Mandala and Sriwijaya Air, while Indonesia AirAsia flies to Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Bang-

kok and Hong Kong.

Panorama Destination COO, Achmad Sufyani, said: "The airport will attract more airlines to come in and they will provide opportunities to grow the regional

markets to Medan and the neighbouring areas in North Sumatra."

While Europe still comprises the main market for Panorama Destination, its Asia market grew by 50 per cent last year, shared Achmad. More accessibility would mean more

new markets for tapping, while Medan could start links with Bangkok and Vietnam, he added.

As Medan is the gateway to Sumatra, Achmad expected Garuda Indonesia to consider launching direct services from Europe to the city. Currently, traffic from Europe entered Medan via Singapore or Kuala Lumpur.

While also hopeful of the opportunities KNIA will bring,



Emir Syah: more Medan links

Marintur Indonesia's executive director, Ismail Ali, urged the government and private sector to actively promote this new airport to airlines in the neighbouring countries.

He said: "Instead of trying to compete with Singapore, Kuala Lumpur or Bangkok as gateways, we should work with their airlines to launch flights to Medan and bring international tourists through their gateways here. In the mean time, create better connections from Medan across the archipelago."

Meanwhile, Garuda Indonesia has started to develop Medan as its fourth hub in Indonesia after Jakarta, Denpasar and Makassar.

Garuda president and CEO, Emir Syah Satar, said: "Garuda is continuously improving its connectivity in East and West Indonesia through hub openings and new route network (development) to support the continuous growth of business, trade and national tourism."

Connecting neighbouring cities in Sumatra like Palembang (South Sumatra), Padang (West Sumatra) and Batam with nearby Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Penang through Medan is also in the pipeline of the Indonesian flag carrier.

Emir Syah was also quoted by *The Jakarta Post* that Garuda's future plan would be to create a hub bypass, connecting Medan with other major Indonesian destinations such as Denpasar or Surabaya without having to transit through Jakarta.

At the same time, the trade has stressed the importance of improving accessibility in Sumatra, particularly in the north.

Said Horas Tour Medan's Lam: "It is crucial to improve the roads to the tourist attractions and improving the existing or adding good accommodation in Brastagi and Lake Toba areas. These are major tourist attractions, but accommodation is a problem there."

# Breaking the Ramadan lull

KL hotels record a stronger showing this fasting month, in part driven by pent-up demand post elections

By S Puvaneswary

**KUALA LUMPUR** Unlike previous years, the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan – a traditionally low season – is turning out to be a brisk season for hotels in Kuala Lumpur this year.

Hoteliers in the capital have attributed the stronger demand for rooms, F&B and meeting packages during the Ramadan month and in general the second half of 2013 to the big slowdown in the first half of the year leading to the 13<sup>th</sup> Malaysian General Election (GE13).

According to Hotel Istana Kuala Lumpur director of sales and marketing, Eugene Yeo, the hotel was full for the first six days of July and projected a 70 per cent average room occupancy for this month. In contrast, the hotel was “not as busy” during the Ramadan period in the past two years, he shared.

Yeo remarked: “We’re getting bookings, especially from the Asia-Pacific region. The MICE segment is also moving and we are benefiting from our close

proximity with Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

“We’re also seeing more demand for meeting packages from local companies and government agencies, which is quite unusual for Ramadan. (They) are using their budgets to hold meetings, trainings and launches until the end of the year, after holding on to their budgets for the first half of 2013 in anticipation of the GE13 and its outcome.

He added: “We’re also getting more last-minute, ad hoc enquiries for meeting packages compared with last year. Some companies booked our meeting rooms to hold private break fast sessions.”

For Ramadan this year, Hotel Istana Kuala Lumpur has launched a new meeting package that starts at 17.00 and ends at 23.00, in addition to its usual 09.00 to 17.00 package.

“We expect meeting packages to do slightly better than last

year, but about half of what we normally do (during non-Ramadan months). This is the norm during Ramadan,” said Yeo.



Choa: higher occupancy seen

Likewise, Seri Pacific Hotel Kuala Lumpur MICE director of sales, Mohan Bhanu, predicted the sales of meeting packages, rooms and F&B for Ramadan this year to do better than last year too.

He said: “Many corporate companies and the government had deferred their training and meetings earlier in the year in anticipation of the GE13 on May 5. As the budget has to be used before the current financial year ends, many are taking the opportunity to hold trainings, seminars and workshops in our hotel during the fasting month to benefit from our special meeting package promotions.

“This year, we are also seeing early corporate bookings, at least two months prior to Ramadan,” he added. “Based on current en-

quiries and bookings made for this Ramadan, we are expecting a 30 per cent increase in meeting packages sold compared with Ramadan last year.”

Bhanu expected the average occupancy rate for his hotel to reach 60 per cent in July, down from 80 per cent in May but still considerably better as compared with Ramadan last year when the average occupancy was just 50 per cent.

He remarked: “There are more foreign travellers this year staying in our hotel and greater awareness of Kuala Lumpur as a MICE destination as they know they can get better deals during this month. So far, we have four confirmed international meetings for this month.”

Vivian Choa, director of sales and marketing at Le Méridien Kuala Lumpur, was anticipating a higher room occupancy in the 70s range for the hotel this July. A week after Hari Raya, room occupancy is expected to be moderate in the 50s before improving thereafter, she revealed.

Said Choa: “Last Ramadan, the hotel closed the books at around 50 per cent and was affected by the temporary closure of meeting rooms for refurbishments, which in turn had affected room occupancy. This year, the hotel is seeing an increased business from regional markets which have helped boost occupancy.

“During Ramadan, Muslim meeting delegates are given dinner vouchers that can be redeemed within one week of the meeting. This is to make up for the lunch and tea breaks they missed during the day.”

Le Méridien Kuala Lumpur has confirmed around 20 meetings and events so far for Ramadan this year, according to Choa. Moreover, the number of F&B buffet covers for fast breaking sold during this one-month period is likely to surpass last year’s 7,500 covers by 10 per cent due to greater awareness of the hotel’s Ramadan offerings among the local resident community, she added.

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## Tourism Data

Hotel transaction volumes within Asia reached US\$1.3 billion in 1H2013, representing an 85 per cent year-on-year increase over 2012, or the strongest first half since 1H2008, according to Jones Lang LaSalle's (JLL) Hotels & Hospitality Group

## Hot Moves

Jesselyn Koh has been named general manager of Four Points by Sheraton Bangkok, Sukhumvit 15; At the soon-to-open Sofitel So Singapore, Jessica Khoo takes up the post of director of sales and business development; Simon Hirst has been appointed general manager of Raffles Singapore; Jan Buttgen is now general manager of Grand Millennium Beijing



From left: Jesselyn Koh, Simon Hirst

## Hot Deals

Cicada Lodge has pushed out a package for the peak season, which includes: two nights' accommodation in a luxury king room, free drinks and tapas each evening on the pool deck, breakfast, and a three-course dinner accompanied by wine each evening. Email reservations@cicadalodge.com.au



Cicada Lodge, Australia

## TTG Intelligence

Analysis by Murray Bailey

## No-frills-airlines share grows

The seat capacity of NFAs (no-frills-airlines) has passed the 50% share in two sub-regions in Asia-Pacific, according to calculations on OAG data\* at mid-year.

NFAs represented a 58% share of South-east Asia's intra-sub-regional capacity, and 56% of South Asia's intra-sub-regional capacity. These are well above all-world NFA share of 26%.

Total intra-regional capacity, at 645 million seats, has grown 25% this decade, but NFA capacity has soared 73%.

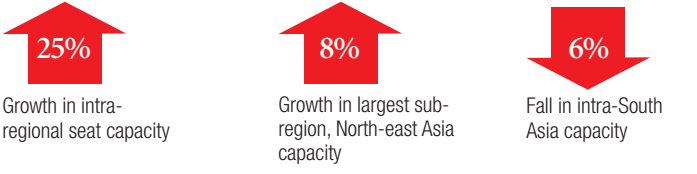
The biggest sub-regional capacity is North-east Asia, mainly because it includes China; it is 53% of the whole Asia-Pacific total. Intra-North-east Asia grew 8% to 340 million seats in the

first six months. However, its percentage growth this decade, at 21%, is below that of the whole region.

NFA capacity rarely falls, but in the latest figures, it fell 6% intra-South Asia, 17% to/from South-west Pacific, and a stunning 51% intra-South-west Pacific+.

*\*All data extracted from the June edition of the monthly OAG Facts. Data for January to June. Some calculations by Travel Business Analyst. For more information on this product – of which this report is but a tiny part – contact facts@oag.com.*

*+Some changes are caused by new definitions; for instance, Virgin Australia was once categorised as an NFA, but as it changed some service patterns, and acquired part of Tiger Australia, the group became what might be called a hybrid.*



Source: OAG Facts; facts@oag.com

## Asia-Pacific outbound travel starts well

Outbound travel from most of the leading markets in Asia-Pacific is growing at about 10% so far this year.

This is led by China – whose outbound figures are now currently being published monthly for the first time. Its growth was 17% to just over 30 million for January to April. That compares with almost 18% for all-2012.

Also starting strong is South Korea, up nearly 10% to 4.8 million over January to April.

Japan's data is missing from the list. The Travel Business Analyst estimates slower growth than

the 9% recorded for all-2012; possibly just +3% for Q1.

New Zealand, the smallest of this group, experienced a fall of 3% over January to March.

### Outbound travel from Asia-Pacific, 2013

Market	January–	No, millions	Growth, %
Australia	March	1.79	4.8
China	April	30.40	16.7
Hong Kong	March	21.43	4.5
South Korea	April	4.82	9.9
New Zealand	March	0.39	-2.7
Singapore	February	1.12	1.6
Taiwan	March	2.53	5.7

Note: Some calculations by Travel Business Analyst (TBA) on PATA data.

Source: Pacific Asia Travel Association, TBA

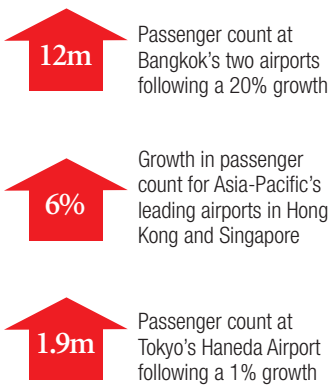
## Rapid growth at Asian airports

Passenger count at Bangkok's two airports grew 20% to 12.1 million in the first quarter of this year, while Phuket's shot up 23% to 1.8 million. Much of this growth would have been driven by arrivals in Thailand from China – up near-double in this period.

Growth at the region's two biggest airports was 6% for both – taking Hong Kong to 14.1 million, Singapore to 12.7 million.

Also growing fast was Guangzhou, up 15%. This was not matched by China's other big two – Beijing +5% and Shanghai (two airports) +8%.

Seoul (two airports) recorded a 10% growth, while Tokyo's two airports were disappointing in comparison. Narita's passenger count rose 2% to 7.4 million; Haneda saw only +1%, to 1.9 million. Until now, Haneda had been recording fast growth as it opened to international flights. This may indicate that the initial boost is over.



Source: Airports Council International, Travel Business Analyst

## Most commented on www.ttgasia.com

### IATA clarifies stance on Sri Lanka remittances

IATA wrote to *TTG Asia Online* in response to our article on Sri Lankan travel consultants who were locked in a dispute with the association to make its position on the issue known. Ajay Prakash from Mumbai, wrote: "Mr Tjoeng has been a little economical with the truth! What he's omitted to mention is that any proposal from an Agency Program Joint Council can be struck down by a single dissenting airline at the Passenger Agency Conference. How the weekly settlement has been imposed in India is a prime example of IATA's hegemony."

### Depreciating rupee hits Indian leisure outbound

The fall in the rupee has affected the spending power of outbound Indian tourists, however, Jannet from Singapore pointed out: "Non-resident Indians are benefiting, thanks to the rupee depreciation!"

### Turkey plans five-city India roadshow

On Turkey's ramped up efforts to woo the Indian market through organising a five-city roadshow in India, M Shanmuganantham from Bengaluru commented: "Good input and timely message."



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## Travel Hall of Fame

Since 2002, TTG Asia Media has honoured luminaries that have won the prestigious TTG Travel Award for at least 10 consecutive times for the same award title in the Travel Hall of Fame.

At present, these exceptional organisations and their years of induction are:

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

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.







Mahboula

## Best Western arrives on Kuwait's glittering coast

Best Western has arrived in the dynamic Gulf state of Kuwait. Overlooking the glittering Arabian Gulf, BEST WESTERN Mahboula is a striking new 18-story hotel in the heart of Kuwait City's thriving Mahboula district. With 96 rooms and suites, extensive amenities and stunning views across the Gulf, there is no better location in this exciting country.

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**Randy Garfield**  
president, The Walt Disney Travel Company,  
and executive vice president,  
worldwide sales & travel operations,  
Disney Destinations

After two decades in the business of operating Disney theme parks, Randy Garfield concedes that nothing beats the satisfaction derived from putting smiles on the faces of families across different generations. **Prudence Lui** talks to him about creating “the happiest place on earth”

# Working the magic

**How has business been for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts in Asia-Pacific? What's the industry outlook?**

We published Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL) business results recently and it's pretty encouraging. Asia, especially China, has a very robust and growing economy. We are starting to see Chinese travelling to the US, primarily to the western part. We know that it's quite small right now, but it has tremendous potential over time.

Regarding the regional outlook, I don't have a crystal ball. We are very encouraged as HKDL gets significant business from China and a variety of markets that are still strong. Tokyo Disney Resort celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary (this year), which has been very successful and continues to be very popular.

Right now, our products, theme parks and resorts include Tokyo Disney Resort and HKDL. We also have the construction of Shanghai Disney Resort, which is still a few years from its scheduled opening.

**How do you choose where to open a theme park? Where else in Asia are you planning a Disney resort?**

That's business development side because site selection is complicated due to a variety of infrastructure issues and government support and funding. My role is really to focus on the demand from the source markets and how successful we can be to encourage visitation. This is only one element of the many factors that everybody looks at when ultimately making a decision of where to go. We haven't made any announcement on building additional theme parks beyond Shanghai.

**How does Disney Parks keep the Disney concept alive and relevant to children of this era, who have access to lots of entertainment and grow up with the Internet?**

We create a magical experience that people will cherish for a lifetime.

Our product is really in our legacy of storytelling so even for exciting rides, there are stories behind the journey. The thematic attention to detail, storytelling and entertainment are key elements of our products. While we always introduce new products, a lot of them are timeless. It's just like the long-time Great Wall of China, which people still visit.

Disneyland presents a portfolio of timeless products that people want to experience again and again at different stages of their lives and show it to other family members. And at the same time, we periodically create new products, whether it's a parade, shows, entertainment or rides to ensure a pretty good portfolio mix of new and timeless.

Internet changes the way we market ourselves. You have to be (present on) multiple channels, (combining) traditional as well as technological. Just think of the way you consume news, from radio to newspapers to online. However, we want to be really in every place people would go to plan and book travel. Moreover, we also recognise that we can continue to keep guests engaged

after they've left our products by becoming involved with different elements of Walt Disney companies such as films and TV.

**Asia has a different culture from the US, so what did you learn when developing sales strategies for HKDL and the upcoming Shanghai project? What works and what doesn't?**

The similarities are in how our sales people work with stakeholders like retailers, wholesalers, airlines and tour operators to find out how they communicate with their existing client bases: what are the tools they use and what's most effective in terms of messaging? More than just tools, (the strategies) may be segmented by life stage. To appeal to a student group, my messaging is going to be aimed at the teachers and parents about the educational value of engineering creativity; if I talk to someone who's got young children, it may be a little different from someone multi-generational, say, grandma and grandpa. But the leisure message is really about spending timeless moments that you cherish for life. This is where everyone can have a great time.

I wouldn't say that any one thing works because it depends on emphasis. The most important thing is sending the most relevant message to the consumer, followed by delivering the right product at the right time

through the right media.

**HKDL eventually turned into a profitable operation after seven years. Is that in line with targets?**

We started recording a profit last year. We are encouraged by the progress HKDL has made. Certainly, we're continuing to invest and expand product portfolio as a result of financial success.

**How successful is HKDL in attracting business traffic as the brand is perceived as a family destination? Are there any new initiatives or products to build this segment?**

MICE is a prospective business for us. We are in a locale which is conducive for meetings because it's a little bit more relaxing, picturesque, outside the hustle and bustle of the city. We also utilise Disney Institute for professional development training, and that's a key portion of our portfolio offered for groups visiting HKDL for meetings, product roll-outs or exhibitions. HKDL is doing well in terms of its share of MICE business. As Chinese MICE business grows, we will continue to maintain a good share.

For initiatives, there are none we are ready to talk about as we are very strategic about these.

**Brand USA will launch a representative office in Hong Kong soon. As one of the board of directors for the campaign, how would you leverage on your position to grow more Asian traffic to the US?**

I sit on the board on Brand USA and is responsible for generating tourism for the US. We are seeing increasing number of Chinese travellers to the US, primarily to the West Coast. But we know that will expand as time goes by. Aliana Ho (vice president of Asia Pacific regional sales and travel operations, The Walt Disney Company (Asia Pacific)) just met with Brand USA so they are evaluating different markets, and I know that China is high on the list. China continues to grow and it's certainly strong enough to be





a relevant factor in a successful Disneyland. We are starting to see more tourism from China to North America. For the last few years, we have large groups coming to Disneyland for Chinese New Year.

**Tell us more about HKDL's trade engagement activities like the Sales Excellence Award. How is it different from other regions?**

The rationale behind the Sales Excellence Award is recognising and thanking trade partners for their support. We want to show our partners how much we appreciate, respect and value them all these years. This event is a formal opportunity (of recognition and celebration), where they get to spend time not only with a broad cross section of our sales executives but also with their colleagues.

The concept takes place across different regions and while we may label it differently, it has similar objectives. In fact, it's not limited to travel (experts) but also applicable for the meeting and convention, and student/youth travel segments.

The message that you see on TV is primarily for the leisure market but we are pretty active in the MICE and student markets; we have tremendous kindergarten programmes and that

is unique to HKDL.

**What do you think are the future trends for theme park operation in Asia?**

I don't have a crystal ball but I still believe that people will be looking to spend quality time with their friends, families and loved ones. The Disney experience will more than exceed that expectation and help people create memories that they will cherish forever, but we will always remain relevant and a world-class leader creating entertaining and exciting travel experiences.

**Do you think theme park business in Asia-Pacific has become more competitive? Why?**

I'll relate this to North America, where there are about 420 million people. In the US, Disney operates 16 parks and there are also strong competitors like SeaWorld, Universal Parks & Resorts and a variety of smaller entities. In China, we'll operate two theme parks, drawing on a population of 1.3 billion people. So we think there are plenty of opportunities, and competition is healthy in raising awareness. It gives us more opportunities for differentiation.

When catering for the Chinese market, the challenge is certainly that the Disney brand

is not as widely known in China because in the US, the brand has been around since 1923. Disneyland has been in business since 1955 and Walt Disney World since 1971, so there is far more awareness of the Disney brand in North America than traditionally has been in China because

**“There are a lot of meaningful jobs in the world, but I am in the job creating happiness.”**

of the theme parks, movies, TV and consumer products. China is a strong growing market but a lot of western products are still in the early stages of awareness.

**How's the progress of Shanghai Disney Resort?**

We are still in the early stages of construction, which is moving on schedule. We are also building our marketing sales team as well

as the operations team. The staff strength is growing bigger and bigger closer to the opening. We hired Wang Yan as vice president, sales and distribution marketing of Shanghai Disney Resort. She's got a long history working in the travel industry, and she's pulling together her sales team as we speak.

Strategy-wise, we are in the discovery phase, formulating our marketing and sales strategies, doing consumer insight research and planning our work before we work our plan. The trade will continue to play a significant role in the success of Shanghai Disney Resort, just as it has been for HKDL and every other theme park product that we have. Philosophically, the strategy is to identify and work with partners whom we believe have a strong, established track record and generating regional demand, and similarly for the MICE side with different players.

**How fast do you expect Shanghai Disneyland to make profit?**

I can't speculate on financial issues but I am confident that Shanghai Disneyland will be successful, and this success will not be at the expense of Hong Kong. They'll both be successful in their own way for just the reason I mentioned before – the size of

the Chinese market. Two theme parks in a country the size of China is really not an issue when you have six of them in the US.

**What keeps you working in the group in the last two decades? What's your proudest moment or project?**

Great people and great products. I am very blessed by being able to work with exceptional talented members not only in marketing and sales but in imagineering, entertainment and operations. They all inspired me. When I think about all the different jobs that I could be in or helping my career, all I need to do is walk out that door and take a look at the families out there. See the happiness we created, that makes me feel pretty good. There are a lot of meaningful jobs in the world – teachers, doctors, lawyers – but I am in the job creating happiness.

**What do you like to do in your leisure time?**

I like to read books and fish. I travel off the beaten path to small, out-of-the-way places like Montana and Vermont. I like to go to more rural parts of America when I travel because I like to see small-town living. I travel so much for work, so when I am on vacation, I try to spend a lot of time at home.



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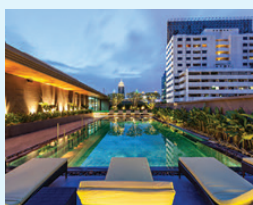
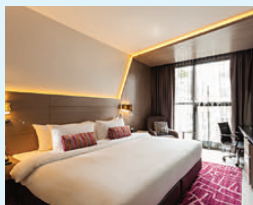
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## Best Western honored for design excellence

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

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the BEST WESTERN PREMIER Sukhumvit, which recently received two major awards for its interior design. Best Western's flagship property in Thailand picked up the titles of 'Best Hotel Interior: Thailand' and 'Best Hotel Interior: Asia Pacific' at the prestigious Asia Pacific Hotel Awards.

As our latest luxury hotel in Thailand, the luxury BEST WESTERN PREMIER Sukhumvit perfectly reflects our vision for Best Western in the region. A modern 21<sup>st</sup> Century hotel, the hotel is designed with smooth lines and sharp edges, mixing soft-fabrics with hard woods and marble finishes.

These awards are testament to the vision of the hotel's owners, and the impact Best Western is now making on the Asia Pacific hotel scene, not only in terms of portfolio growth, but also with the quality of the Best Western product.



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## TIP SHEET



### Thailand's midscale hotels: a latent investment opportunity?

It seems to be a good time to be managing a hotel property in Bangkok. Many hotel general managers in the capital have reported their best quarter since 2008, on the back of strong hotel trading performance across the board in Thailand.

Thailand's tourism market has made a steady recovery in the last few years, with visitor arrivals growing 19.3 per cent to 6.8 million visitors in 1Q2013. This growth is expected to continue with full-year figures expected to hit 24.5 million in 2013.

Of these arrivals, China continues to be Thailand's largest and fastest-growing source market, with a phenomenal 93.5 per cent year-on-year increase based on year-to-date figures. Russia,

Japan, South Korea and India have showed impressive double-digit growth and sit among Thailand's top seven source markets.

The improvement in demand in Bangkok has seen occupancies across all hotel sectors substantially improve. However, the standout has been the midscale and economy hotel segments, which registered market-wide occupancy growth of 15.3 percentage points to 81.3 per cent in the first quarter. The luxury and upscale hotel segments have also seen substantial improvements, growing 5.5 percentage points and 11 percentage points respectively.

Consequently, RevPAR in luxury and upscale hotels rose 8.8 per cent to 4,454 baht (US\$143) and 19.2 per cent to 2,441 baht respectively. This is trumped

by the staggering 35.7 per cent RevPAR growth in midscale and economy hotels, rising to 1,362 baht year-to-date.

Looking forward, an estimated 8,000 rooms will be due for completion in Bangkok by 2015, which may temper further RevPAR growth in the short term. At the same time, given the rate of land-price appreciation, hotel projects will become harder to get off the ground, with a slower rate of new room supply potentially assisting in a market recovery in the medium term.

We find that attractive investment opportunities exist in the three-star market segment, which generally provides the highest internal rate of return and comprises the smallest portion of major future supply in the Bangkok market.

In this column targeted at hotel owners and operators, Jones Lang LaSalle's experts weigh in on topics ranging from investment markets to watch to asset management. This issue, we shine the spotlight on Thailand's midscale hotels

### Andrew Langdon

Senior vice president -  
Thailand and  
Indochina, Jones  
Lang LaSalle Hotels  
& Hospitality Group



### Is this your agency?

TTG Asia calls up Malaysian Harmony Tour & Travel (MHTT) to enquire about a cruise package and, in the process, tries the patience of the speaker at the other end



TTG Hello, I saw the ad on SuperStar Libra sailing from Penang to Phuket and Krabi. I've never been on a cruise before. What are the dates in August?

MHTT It sails every Sunday, returns on Wednesday.

TTG The ad reads: "Hot deals from RM999 (US\$313)". Is that the nett price per person?

MHTT You have to add RM196 for tax.

TTG So the total price per pax would be RM999 plus RM196?

MHTT (Sighs) Correct.

TTG How many restaurants does the cruise ship have?

MHTT Let me see. (Pauses for about 10 seconds before counting aloud) One, two, three... eight restaurants.

TTG The ad says: "Halal restaurant on SuperStar Libra". How many halal restaurants are there?

MHTT One halal restaurant.

TTG Is pork and alcohol served

## Case study

# Enhancing travel for people with special needs

**WHO** Incorporated in June 2004, Ace Altair Travels is licensed with the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism to conduct inbound, outbound and ticketing operations. The Kuala Lumpur-based firm boasts a central location at The AmpWalk in Jalan Ampang, attracting a lot of walk-in customers from the surrounding offices, residences and diplomatic communities in the area.

**WHAT** In January 2013, Ace Altair Travels expanded its range of inbound tour services to include travel products catering to the disabled and the elderly. Travel Assist, which has been trademarked and registered by the company, is a service specially designed to provide travel assistance for people with special needs, including the blind and hearing-impaired, in Kuala Lumpur and the surrounding areas.

Services include arranging suitable disabled-friendly accommodation, providing accessible transportation to the disabled, crafting tailor-made itineraries for guests with special needs and arranging trained personnel to assist the traveller on vacation. Upon request, the company is able to arrange for rental of equipments such as wheelchairs, ramps, hoists, portable toilets and portable shower chairs.

Late last year, the company



A wheelchair accessible van is part of Ace Altair Travels' Travel Assist services for disabled travellers

has also purchased a van fitted with an automatic wheelchair lift, which is used to serve wheelchair-bound passengers during airport transfers and tours.

**WHY** Travel Assist is the brainchild of Ace Altair Travels' managing director Antony Leopold, who has post-poliomyelitis syndrome in both legs. He said: "My travel experiences as a disabled person has inspired me to provide a dedicated disabled service as I sincerely believe that travel should be all-inclusive, encompassing the able-bodied, the disabled and the elderly. There have also been requests for such services from my travel partners overseas that have FIT clients with special needs.

"What I find sad is that Malaysia presents a great challenge for travellers with mobility impairments. Sidewalks are often in disrepair, curbs are high and curb cuts are often missing or inadequate. Wheelchair users will frequently find their path of travel obstructed due to poorly designed walkways, parked cars, motorcycles, stairs and trees, and will rarely be able to travel more than 50m without having to backtrack or divert to the road. In many areas of the city, it is virtually impossible to travel without some assistance."

**TARGET** The company plans to expand its Travel Assist tour services to Penang, Langkawi and Johor Bahru within the next three years.

Leopold said: "This will involve working with tourism players such as hotels, restaurants and airlines as well as government agencies to ensure that their products and services are disabled-friendly and have trained staff to cater to the needs of our disabled clients.

"We also plan to start hands-on training programmes for the hospitality industry in the near future on how to assist the disabled person, as well as theoretical lessons on communicating with the disabled. We are currently working on the syllabus and hope to start this by this year-end. We will collaborate with the various associations working with the physically-challenged, the blind and the hearing-impaired in Malaysia." – S Puvaneswary





onboard?

**MHTT** Most restaurants don't serve pork. The Chinese restaurant serves pork.

**TTG** So only one restaurant serves pork?

**MHTT** (Heavy intake of breath heard) Yes.

**TTG** The ad also states shore excursions to Phuket and Krabi at RM220. If I choose not to go on the shore excursion, can I take a private tour instead?

**MHTT** We don't do private tours.

**TTG** The ad says: "Free upgrade to Oceanview stateroom with window". If I don't want an upgrade, can the price be lowered?

**MHTT** (Sighs) No, this is already a hot deal.

**TTG** Can you email me some pictures of the cruise ship? I would like to show it to friends.

**MHTT** Please check our website. There are pictures there.

**TTG** What is the original selling price of this cruise?

**MHTT** Please check our website.

**VERDICT** The sales person knew her stuff, but her constant sighing made me feel I was wasting her time. She could be more obliging instead and answered my questions, rather than just directing me to the company website. – S Puvaneswary

# Hop on the app bandwagon

Having created an app that allows users to explore international tourist attractions in 3D, 3rd Planet CEO, **Terence Mak**, urges travel agencies to invest in a new generation travel app to enhance revenues

Surveys have shown that travel app users are between 20 and 45 years old, educated, sophisticated, tech-savvy and buy the latest versions of electronic devices.

It has also been found that 87 per cent of travellers go online for travel information before making a decision.

According to market intelligence firm IDC, worldwide shipments of smart devices rose 29 per cent last year, with a value of US\$576.9 billion, chiefly driven by a 78.4 per cent jump in tablet shipments, which surpassed 128 million in 2012.

All these point towards a major opportunity for travel agencies to reach out to more consumers, and most importantly, to affluent ones.

## Face of the future travel app

Most travel apps today serve specific needs. One may provide destination information, another allows users to book flights and hotels, and yet another spe-

cialises in maps and directions.

With the market explosion of smart devices and the hyper acceleration of Internet speed over the next few years, the new generation of travel apps will be more powerful. They should give consumers an integrated solution that addresses major travel needs by allowing travellers to search, understand, plan and book their travels; be easily accessed through smart devices; and be connected to major social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Renren and Weibo to allow users to share information and location with their loved ones.

The next phase of travel apps should also ideally *edutain* users about destinations by allowing interaction with the environment, capturing sight, sound and effects for the ultimate user experience – just like the Wonders of the World (WOW) travel app which allows tablet users to explore international attractions in 3D for better trip planning.

## Necessary considerations

While travel apps are gaining popularity here in Asia, not many travel agencies are using them to gain customers yet. This is largely due to two reasons.

First, marketing budget is a major constraint for many agencies and the return on investment may not justify the effort. Critical mass of users is necessary to attain economies of scale and cost-effectiveness. To ensure strong returns and user numbers, WOW app is working with a mix of sectors, from NTOs to telecommunication companies to target travellers globally.

Second, launching a travel app requires time and domain knowledge. There are many devices in the market with different operating systems, with key ones being iOS, Android and Windows 8. Many factors, such as screen size, programming language and licensing, must be considered when developing an app for each operating system. WOW app addresses these issues

by working with leading brands of smart devices to make the app available to their consumers.

Be warned that a poorly executed app will cost the company its business and credibility.

## Go at it alone or with a partner

The key objective for travel agencies is ultimately revenue. Travel apps will no doubt enable a travel firm to connect with a massive consumer base, but agency owners must be aware of the many different apps – for travel or other purposes – that are competing for consumers' attention.

If a travel agency wants to develop its own app, it must be ready to define a clear push-pull strategy and invest in marketing to garner as many users as possible.

Travel agencies with limited resources should consider working with a partner that has a ready travel app and a substantial pool of users for cost-effectiveness.



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Slowly but surely, GDSs have finally begun to make available airline ancillaries, a move that has been hailed as “revolutionary” in the current evolving GDS environment.

While GDSs traditionally serve airlines by reserving seats for travel consultants, it is becoming increasingly common among them to distribute ancillaries in their quest to bridge the divide between travel consultants, airlines and travellers.

Amadeus, which claims to be the “first GDS in the world to offer an ancillary service catalogue”, has allowed travel consultants to view airlines’ services offerings in real time since 2010.

Martin Symes, vice president, marketing, Abacus International, said likewise to keep up with global competition, the company started offering ancillaries like excess baggage, meals, premium seats and Internet access through its Abacus Air Extras function introduced in 2012.

Ian Heywood, head of global supplier strategy for Travelport, said: “Travellers today are expert shoppers and are expecting to get more from their purchase.”

Travelport has recently unveiled its new Travelport Merchandising Platform in April this year, enabling travel consultants to access the full range of airline products and ancillaries.

Apart from GDS-pioneered initiatives, IATA is also seeking to “modernise air travel distribution” with their New Distribution Capability (NDC) introduced last October.

Although still in its trial stage, this new XML-based standard will provide identical retail capabilities across all channels, enabling travel consultants to sell the same products and services that often can only be found on airlines’ brand websites.

Unbundling trend driven by LCCs

According to Travelport, the number of LCC passengers in Asia-Pacific is expected to almost double from 171 million in 2010 to 318 million in 2016.

PST Travel Services’ CEO Ngiam Foon has seen the demand for LCCs from his clients grown from a zero base to 25 per cent over the past two years.

Likewise, BCD Travel’s vice president, sales & account management for Asia Pacific, Todd Arthur, commented that the demand for LCCs is “growing strongly” throughout Asia-Pacific.

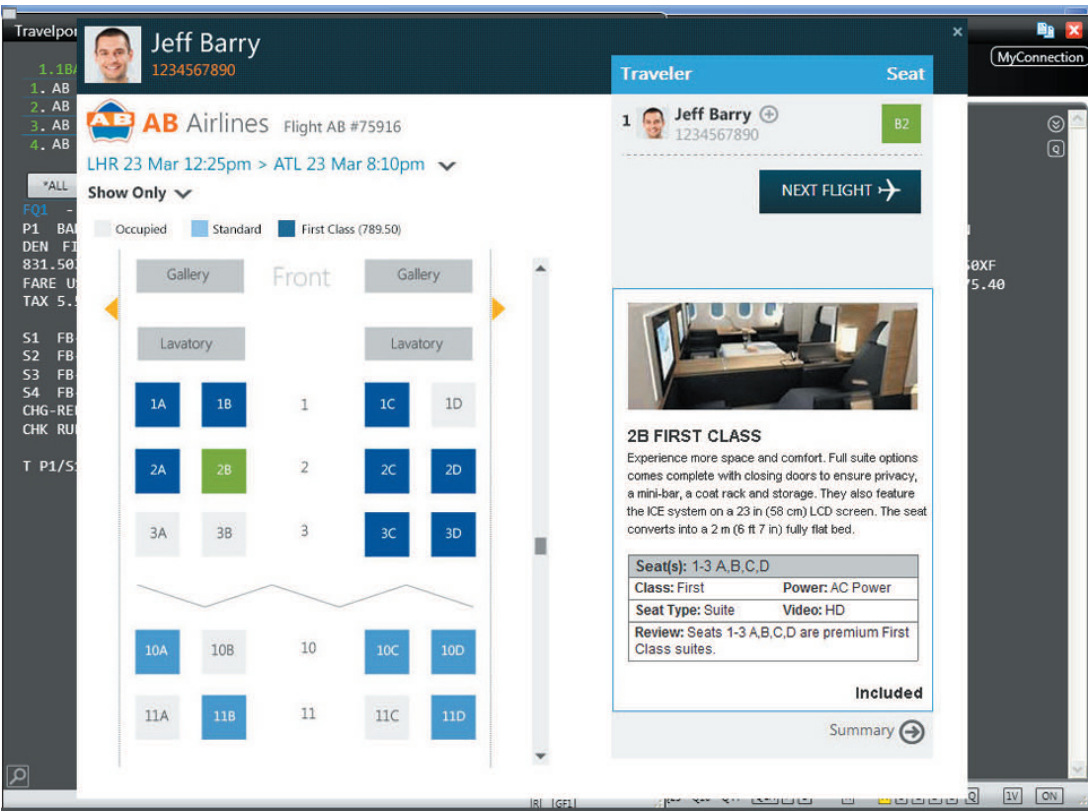
He said: “We now have to offer LCCs in our proposition to our clients because we need to provide a complete package to show a full comparison of prices.”

The entry of LCCs is interlinked with the provision of ancillaries because budget airlines are highly dependant on them as a source of revenue.

Evan Kruse, manager of trade distribution, Jetstar Airways, said: “Merchandising is crucial to us because as a LCC we need to have low-cost fares to be competitive in the market.

“Ancillaries are critical for us in our business model because only by making money from them can we then continue to keep our fares low,” he said.

Emphasising the importance of ancillary revenue, Kaneswaran Avili, commercial director of Tiger Airways, said: “It will be a huge loss to us if we cannot distribute ancillaries through the GDSs because there is untapped demand there.



Unbundling the distribution landscape

GDSs have finally started to roll out airline ancillary products, but has it been a game-changer for all stakeholders in the trade? Lee Pei Qi finds out



(From left) Arthur, Ler, Ngiam and Miyauchi opined that travel consultants should be compensated for helping airlines sell their ancillaries.

“(Consultants) have to spend more time explaining and promoting...and this will affect our productivity.”

Steven Ler  
Senior vice president and head of supplier relations, UOB Travel

“We have observed that our customers will always make use of ancillary items be it to opt for baggage or an advanced seat selection,” he said.

Travelport estimated that the airfare ancillary market will be worth US\$45 billion by 2015 to underline the rising importance of merchandising in the industry today.

Accessing ancillaries on the GDS  
Will Horton, analyst at CAPA - Centre for Aviation, said: “Ancillary development was previously stymied by the lack

of GDS’ ability to fully support ancillaries, but now as they better support ancillaries we can see that airlines will develop more.”

Horton pointed out Travelport’s new merchandising platform as an example that is “better at accommodating ancillaries”.

Through this platform, currently already live, travel consultants are able to sell ancillaries within their screen as well as aggregate on a single screen fares connected via ATPCO as well as an API connection.

Previously, travel consultants had to

grapple with the additional workload of having to leave their workflows to find products and services from the individual airline’s websites.

Travelport is due to launch on the same platform the ability for airlines to let consultants see photos and details of their products by the end of this year. With this “revolutionary platform”, Heywood expects other GDSs to follow suit.

What lies in store for travel consultants?

As airline ancillaries are increasingly integrated into the travel distribution landscape, travel experts that TTG Asia spoke to acknowledged the rising demand for ancillaries from travellers but also appeared ambivalent about the unbundling trend at the same time.

Steven Ler, senior vice president and head of supplier relations, UOB Travel, expressed his concern of the extra work and time now required on the part of travel consultants.

He said: “With all these merchandising in the picture, it means (consultants) have to spend more time explaining and promoting.

“In the past, perhaps you need just seven minutes to talk to the travellers, but now it may increase to 15 minutes and this will affect our productivity,” he added.

Echoing similar sentiments, Hankyu Hanshin Business Travel’s assistant general manager, Satoshi Miyauchi, said: “To provide more services means more workload for us because we have to invest time.”

Furthermore, there is a “lack of incentives and motivation” for consultants to put in the added work, said Miyauchi.

PST Travel’s Ngiam agreed that this will take a toll on manpower resources and urged airlines to reward consultants for the extra work.

He said: “Our commissions are already limited and this is going to further reduce our profit margin, so it would be adequate if airlines can reward us accordingly.”

Ler added: “We need to find a right balance and evaluate how this will impact the (consultants’) bottom line and then look at a way to compensate us for the extra services we are providing.”

A new GDS model of the future?

As GDSs begin to distribute ancillaries, airlines seem to be the triumphant ones reaping the benefits while travel consultants continue grappling with the “extra work”.

Horton said: “Travel consultants may not have a monetary incentive to sell ancillaries as this not only gives them no reward for their time, but no incentive to learn about the ancillaries.”

But nonetheless, Horton pointed that travel consultants may comply with the need to sell ancillaries to stay relevant.

PST Travel’s Ngiam said: “No one likes extra work, but we have no choice. I agree this is a good direction and we have to live with it but we have to see how we can be compensated better.”

Also applauding the model, UOB Travel’s Ler said it “looks good for now” but cautioned against hailing it as the new GDS model.

He said: “It is too early to testify its success because it is not tried and tested fully in the market yet, so we have to see how travellers will really respond to it then.”



# Vacation rental sites home in on SE Asia

By Lee Pei Qi

Short-term vacation rental websites are fast gaining popularity worldwide as more travellers are cosyng to rental apartments or homes in place of the traditional hotel experience.

These emerging online models are founded on a simple concept – providing a platform for travellers seeking a place to stay and owners with a spare space to connect.

Based on individual requirements and preferences, whether it is to rent an entire apartment or house, a private room in somebody's home or a shared space on the living-room couch, be it for a night, a week or a month, guests can search for a place that suits them best and connect with the host from there.

## Vacation home rental websites enter Asia

Hailed as the pioneer in the holiday rental apartment scene, Airbnb introduced its online peer-to-peer concept in the US in 2008 and has since expanded to more than 33,000 cities and 192 countries.

While well-known in the western market, Airbnb has been a bit slow to foray into South-east Asia but it has since made up for lost time by expanding its operations into Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore late last year.

As this wave of short-term vacation rentals has finally caught on in Asia, Asian players are now seeking their share of the pie with their local offerings. Competition is heating up with similar online rental platforms popping up to wrestle for this emerging market in Asia.

Travelmob, a Singapore-based startup that entered the vacation rental scene last July, operates similarly to Airbnb but sets itself apart as an Asia-Pacific specialist by offering regional content to a global audience.

Travelmob co-founder Turochas Fuad said: "We are a very Asia-versed service and product. Being based in Asia (makes us) the experts here, be it with the place, culture, or people."

According to Fuad, the number of room listings in their website has grown by 200 per cent since the start of the year to more than 14,000 properties. He said the site has been gathering "amazing response" with several thousands of nights booked every month, ranging from corporate retreats to honeymoons and expatriates relocating to a new city.

Meanwhile, the US-based vacation rental site of HomeAway has just announced in July its acquisition of a majority stake in Travelmob to accelerate its expansion in Asia-Pacific.

Another Singapore-based player, BeMyGuest, which was launched in October 2012, offers a similar suite of services as Travelmob but provides local activities and sightseeing tours across Asia in addition.

Bhavana Gupta, marketing director of BeMyGuest, said: "Apart from accommodation, we also offer authentic activities that are less commonly known to tourists like prata-making or Chinese tea-appreciation classes to give them a taste of the local culture."

"These unique experiences will appeal especially to the second-time visitors because it is unlikely for them to have done these before," she added.

## Who are the short-term renters in Asia?

As the online rental space heats up and become more mainstream, they present a potential to lure travellers away from traditional hotels with their proposition to provide guests real connections with their hosts as well as immersive local experiences in the destinations.

Business models like BeMyGuest are especially attractive to the "new millennial customers" between 30 and 45 years old, remarked Bhavana.

She said: "This group of people are seeking a differentiated tour and cultural experience because they are no longer satisfied with the usual hotels and sightseeing."

Similarly, Roomorama, another Singapore-based short-term rental player founded in 2009, also observed a



Fuad: strong response so far

younger demographic among its clientele. Users are "savvy travellers" between the ages of 25 and 55 and are often looking for a "value-for-money and unique experience", said Jia En Teo, COO and co-founder of Roomorama.

And unlike hotels, they can provide guests the comforts of a regular home with a full suite of amenities like kitchen, laundry facilities and entertainment systems, she pointed out.

In addition, Roomorama provides greater cost savings, according to Teo. She said: "Roomorama offers about 30 to 40 per cent savings compared to a typical hotel in the same location with the same standards."

Nevertheless, such social stay models are unlikely to threaten the hospitality sector, opined these travel technopreneurs.

"We offer a new type of travel experience which is different from hotels," said Bhavana. "We want to see ourselves as an added choice for travellers and view it is a good opportunity for us and hotels to work together and learn from each others' offerings."

Teo agreed: "The concept of short-term rentals has a positive impact on the travel industry and we have made travel more accessible to those who may have been constrained by the lack of affordability previously."

## Opportunities ahead, but not without challenges

However the popular practice of vacation rental may still take time to permeate through the Asian market, given that Asians' travel habits tend to be more conservative.

While Roomorama is currently more popular in cities like Beijing, Tokyo and Bangkok and Bali, Teo highlighted that one of the challenges they face is drawing awareness to this concept.

She said: "We have to convince Asian travellers that staying in a hotel-alternative can be simple, and very safe."

Fuad added that Asians do not like to host or stay in people's homes, and "education is needed" to change that perception. But he also pointed out that there are many affluent Asians who invest in secondary homes, which then offer them the chance to monetise that property in such business models.

As for BeMyGuest, Bhavana said travellers today are more "experimental" hence they do not face much concern on this aspect.

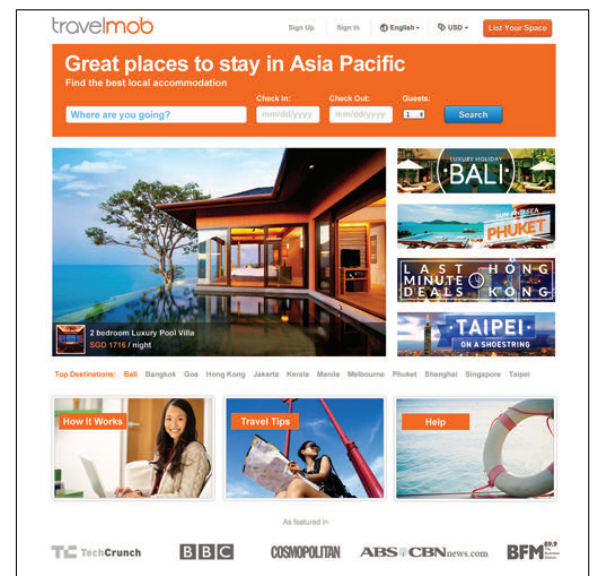
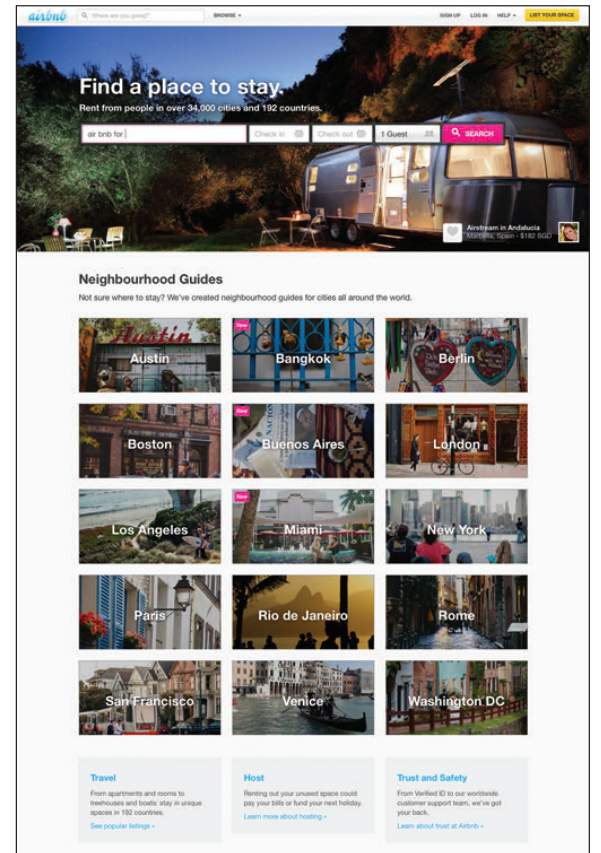
# Hail the rise of same-day booking apps?

The recent surge of last-minute booking apps in an increasingly competitive online marketplace has triggered a wave of interest among the Asian travel trade during the recent No Vacancy Southeast Asia 2013 conference in Bangkok last month.

Increased mobile usage and Asian travellers' inclination towards last-minute vacations spells potential for mobile-dedicated solutions, according to Tomas Laboutka, CEO and co-founder of HotelQuickly, a same-day, mobile-only booking app.

Laboutka remarked: "HotelQuickly would enable hotels to optimise occupancy real-time and RevPar while protecting their branding and fostering loyalty among customers."

"Unlike travel flash sites which train travellers to wait for a certain brand to offer hugely discounted rates, we



Vacation rental sites such as Travelmob and Airbnb are keen to wrestle a piece of the Asian marketplace

There is no doubt that Asia is warming up to this peer-to-peer holidaying concept, and with that travellers can now exercise the option of seeking immersive local experiences which literally promises a "home away from home".

rotate the inventory in real time every day, so users won't know which specific brand will be available on a particular day."

However, same-day booking apps drew mixed reviews from hospitality industry members that TTG Asia spoke to.

"Last-minute apps are unlikely to work with the big chains due to the higher commission rates of 20-25 per cent versus 15 per cent for OTAs," said Shade Shah, revenue and yield manager of Park Regis Singapore. "Unlike boutique hotels, our brand awareness is already there, so we don't really need such apps (to boost branding)."

On the other hand, a hospitality industry leader who declined to be named, said: "The OTA scene is very competitive and mature now as many hotels are already participating there. Our hotel is now playing it wide, tapping new channels such as Agoda, Groupon, HotelQuickly, social media, etc, to utilise all partnerships since we always play rate parity."

When asked if last-minute booking apps are revolutionising the travel landscape, Agoda CEO, Robert Rosenstein, commented: "We view them as competitors, but it's up to consumers. We also work closely with hotels. We could also sell rooms at huge discounts, but do hotels want that?" – By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena



Laboutka: optimise occupancy



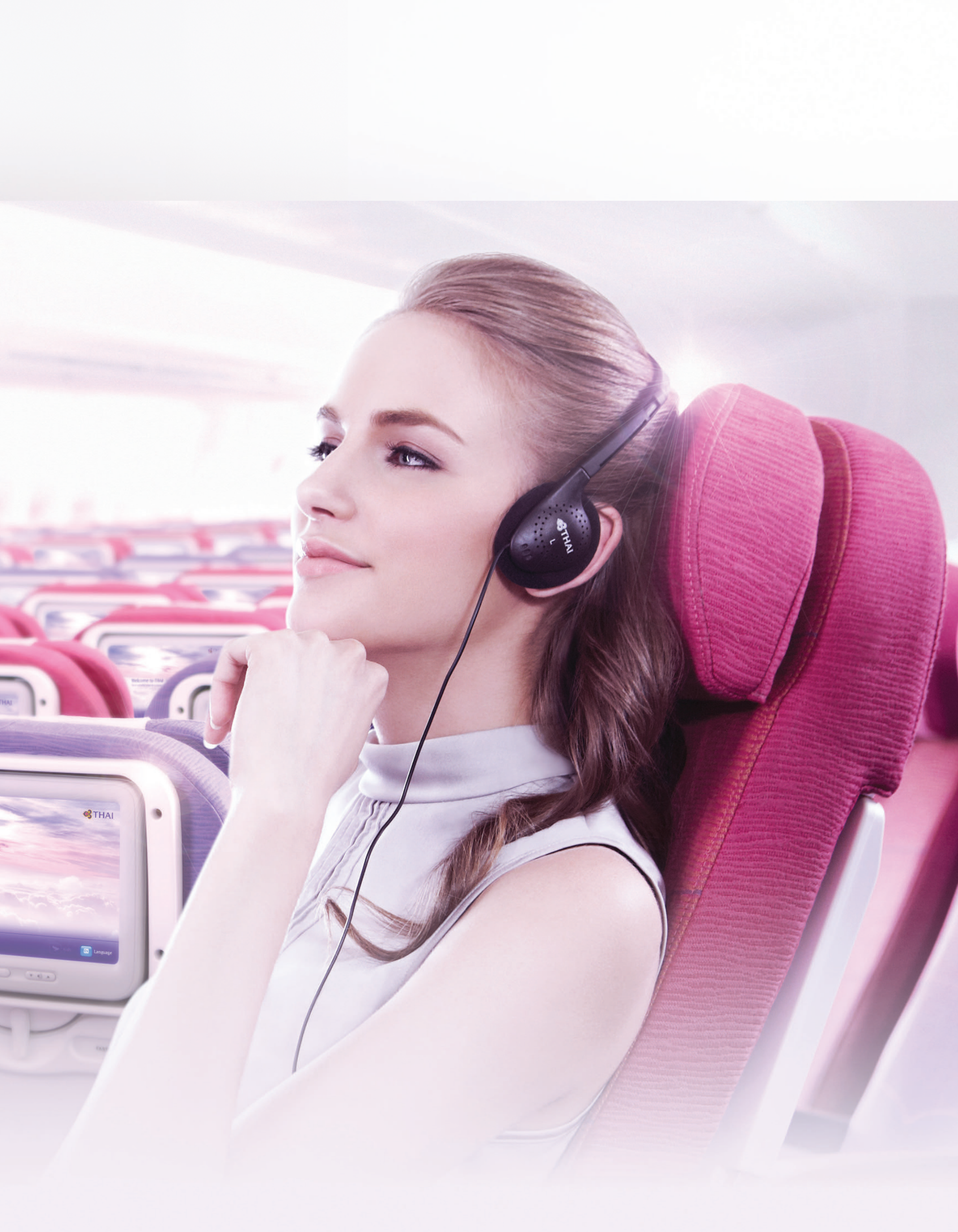


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Penang boasts well-developed tourism infrastructure



## Penang steps up its game

Massive investments in both leisure and MICE segments are made, reports **S Puvaneswary**

### Arrivals

International air arrivals to Penang in 1Q2013 has increased 11.5 per cent over the same period in 2012, totalling 185,477.

Indonesia became the state's top source market, with a 4.3 per cent rise to 87,787 arrivals. Singapore was second, with arrivals surging 29.4 per cent to 35,562, while China followed with 17,248 arrivals. The US, UK, Taiwan, Australia, Thailand and India also made it to the list of top 10 international markets.

In 2012, international and domestic arrivals to Penang totalled 614,039 and 377,449 respectively. This year, Penang Global Tourism – the state tourism bureau – is targeting a five per cent overall growth.

### NTO

Penang Global Tourism is focusing on markets with direct air access to Penang or a stop in Kuala Lumpur. These markets include South-east Asia, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and Australia.

To attract more leisure tourists from Singapore, the NTO has invested heavily in promoting its *My Penang* campaign on 34

billboards at the Dhoby Ghaut MRT station, an important interchange train station in central Singapore. *My Penang* showcases Penang's food, culture, accommodation and lifestyle of its people. It runs for eight weeks from early July. Two similar campaigns were run earlier this year, at the same venue.

Penang now wants more leisure visitors from Indonesia, having long been established as an affordable medical tourism destination, according to the NTO's managing director, Ooi Geok Ling.

"We are now capitalising on direct flights from Jakarta, Medan, Surabaya and Banda Aceh to promote leisure tourism. We have UNESCO World Heritage site George Town, beaches, hills and a national park. There's a lot of greenery to explore," said Ooi.

### Hotels

Penang has a total of 14,000 rooms across all categories of accommodation. Its seven five-star hotels offer 2,147 rooms; 17 four-star hotels, 5,429; and seven three-star hotels, 838.

The average room rates of a five-star and a four-star hotel in Penang are RM320 (US\$100.24) and RM205, respectively.



"Plans to set up a convention bureau shows the state's commitment... MyCEB looks forward to working closely with PICEB to bring in more international events."

**Ho Yoke Ping**

General manager  
Sales and marketing  
Malaysia Convention & Exhibition  
Bureau

Two hotels are scheduled to open this year-end in Weld Quay.

The 180-key Royale Bintang Hotel targets business travellers and will have four meeting rooms and a ballroom for 400 pax, banquet-style. There will be complimentary Wi-Fi throughout the hotel.

The Rice Miller Hotel & Residences will be a stone's throw from Tanjung City Marina and Swettenham Pier. It will comprise 46 guestrooms and 21 suites. Facilities will include four dining outlets, two bars, a fitness centre, an infinity pool, a spa and a multi-purpose event centre.

The 435-key St Giles Wembley Penang is scheduled to open in 4Q2014, within the heritage city of George Town. It will house a Grand Ballroom for 1,200 pax, six meeting rooms and a helipad. Other facilities include a café, swimming pool, gymnasium, health centre and an executive lounge. The hotel will also be linked to a mall.

Adjacent to St Giles Wembley is the 260-room Cititel Express Penang, also to open in 4Q2014.

### Access

Penang has direct air links with Hong Kong, Singapore, Medan, Surabaya, Ja-

karta, Banda Aceh, Phuket, Koh Samui, Bangkok, Guangzhou and Taipei. Connectivity has improved with the recent launch of twice-daily Medan-Penang flights by Garuda Indonesia and twice-daily Subang-Penang flights by Malindo Air.

Furthermore, the upgraded Penang International Airport has doubled passenger capacity to almost 6.5 million passengers annually. It now has inline baggage screening and segregation of international and domestic passengers.

### MICE

In January, the state showed further commitment to MICE when it announced plans to establish the Penang International Convention and Exhibition Bureau (PICEB), following the construction of two major convention and exhibition centres – Subterranean Penang International Convention and Exhibition (sPICE) and Penang Waterfront Convention Centre (PWCC). sPICE will open end-2015; it will be Penang's first purpose-built convention and exhibition venue. PWCC is expected to open in 2017 and will be run by Suntec Penang, a subsidiary of Suntec International.



# Growing the longhaul markets from Europe

With better air links, the trade is customising itineraries and looking to Eastern Europe. By **S Puvaneswary**

## 1 How are the traditional German-speaking countries faring as a longhaul market?

Diethelm Travel Malaysia managing director, Manfred Kurz, said: "Arrivals for this summer was the same as last year. However, it was about five to 10 per cent less than in 2011. What we are seeing are very short-term bookings of four to eight weeks prior to departure. Hence, we are not able to predict how business will fare in winter."

"The weak Euro is not helping as total package prices have gone up by 10 to 20 per cent, depending on the product. Our overseas partners in Germany and Austria have also complained that airfares to the Far East have become more expensive."

However, Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel director of business development, Noor M Ismail, said the company had seen a 15 per cent year-on-year increase this summer. "We're also seeing winter bookings from Germany. Hence, we are con-



**Kurz: reach out to niche markets**

fident that this year's business will be better than last year's."

## 2 What are travel consultants doing to grow arrivals from this market?

Kurz said: "To drive business to Malaysia, we have intensified our efforts to promote customised products to niche market segments, such as photography enthusiasts and those who love nature and soft adventure. There is still a following for the usual packages, such as city tours and visit to the national park of Taman Negara. Langkawi and Sabah are still high in demand."

Asia Experience Tours head of sales, Clement Ho, said: "We believe high-income travellers that come to the Far East can afford to spend and we will work with more tour operators catering to a high-end clientele to come up with tailor-made itineraries for them. This segment is looking for in-depth, more experiential tours to cover a combination of attractions, such as highlands,

jungles, culture and beaches."

## 3 How is Eastern Europe doing as an emerging market?

Terengganu-based Ping Anchorage Travel & Tours CEO, Alex Lee, said he had seen a five per cent year-on-year increase in business for the European summer this year from Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary for meetings, incentive travel and leisure.

He is also seeing increased demand for corporate social responsibility programmes from Eastern Europe and his travel agency is working with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Terengganu and non-governmental organisations related to turtle conservation to develop programmes on turtle and terrapin conservation in Terengganu.

He added: "Most incentives from Eastern Europe are small, fewer than 50 people. They look for good beaches and shopping. This is a good market to tap because its economy is growing, as compared to Central Europe. We will work with our partners

in Europe and attend tradeshow such as ITB Berlin to tap this market further."

Luxury Tours Malaysia senior manager, Arokia Das, said he had projected a 50 per cent increase in incentive business from Eastern Europe for this European winter based on advanced requests.

He said: "Our advantage is that many incentive groups have already been to Bali, Phuket and Bangkok and they are looking for new destinations in this region. Eastern Europe is a good market as incentive groups usually spend about five nights in Malaysia."

In July 2012, the company appointed a marketing representative in Romania to cover Eastern Europe and bring in business for leisure and MICE.

## 4 What impact has the recent growth in air links had on business?

Malaysia's air connectivity has been given a boost, most significantly by the Gulf carriers and new services from Air France.

Panorama Tours Malaysia

head of international sales, Saini Vermeulen, said the company was trying to grow the French market as competition between Malaysia Airlines and Air France on the Paris-Kuala Lumpur route would create competitively priced promotions that benefited the consumer.

He added: "The increased air capacity will facilitate promotion to incentive planners from France."

Lee, who had seen a 20 per cent year-on-year growth in the French FIT market, said he was also working with agents to get more business from the Balkans. He wants to tap this market because Malaysia as a holiday destination is fairly new to it.

Kurz said: "Malaysia has opened up to countries such as the Czech Republic and Poland via the Middle Eastern carriers. We're taking advantage of this by putting more marketing efforts into Eastern Europe."

"We are optimistic we will see a nominal growth in Eastern Europe this year. This market contributes close to 10 per cent of our business."



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Leena Andrews, APAC Travel Manager of Juniper, India

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Test drive

# Kuala Lumpur City Gallery

 Follow **S Puvaneswary** to this informative gallery for a thorough understanding of the capital city's history

**WHY** I would highly recommend the Kuala Lumpur City Gallery to any new tourist to Kuala Lumpur. This is a one-stop centre which offers many attractions in the form of prints, photos and miniatures for learning about the past, present and future of the Malaysian capital.

The future of Kuala Lumpur, for instance, is presented by miniature models of high-rise buildings that will be constructed in the next few years. These miniature models are constantly updated by the management, ARCH Collection.

**WHAT** The gallery is new, having opened in October 2011. It is situated in Dataran Merdeka (Merdeka Square), within a heritage building built in 1898. This building once housed the Government Printing

Office of Malaya and in more recent times, The Kuala Lumpur Memorial Library.

Surrounded by heritage buildings that are more than 100 years old, the gallery is also the place to go to should tourists wish to learn more about the history of the old buildings in the vicinity.

ARCH Collection, the company that owns and manages the gallery, has also produced a *Walks & Tours* map for tourists who wish to explore this old part of the city on their own. The map is complimentary and includes short descriptions of the city. It is ideal for FIT tourists with an interest in colonial architecture.

ARCH Collection produces and sells wood veneer art pieces and merchandise printed with the 'I Love KL' logo at the gallery's giftshop. There is also a do-it-yourself area in the shop where, for a small fee, visitors can purchase a frame complete with wood veneer parts and assemble these to form a unique art piece. The do-it-yourself series comprises a range of Malaysian heritage gifts and collectibles. The gallery's staff is on stand-by to assist.



Kuala Lumpur City Gallery is a must-see

**HOW** The gallery has been thoughtfully designed with separate rooms to showcase the city's past, present and future.

Information is presented through easy-to-read materials, photos and video clips of historic events such as those during the days leading up to the country's independence on August 31, 1957. There is also a five-minute video specially produced by the Kuala Lumpur City Hall showcasing the city's various attractions.


**VERDICT** The concept was well thought out. First-time tourists to Kuala Lumpur

who are interested in the history and culture of the city should make this their first stop.

Name	Kuala Lumpur City Gallery
Venue	No 27 Jalan Raja, Dataran Merdeka, 50050 Kuala Lumpur
Rate	Free entrance
Opening hours	08.30 to 18.30 daily
Contact	(60-3) 2698-3333
	Email: <a href="mailto:klcg@archcollection.com.my">klcg@archcollection.com.my</a>
	Website: <a href="http://www.klcitygallery.com">www.klcitygallery.com</a>

Checking in

# The Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat

 **S Puvaneswary** is kept happily occupied in this resort that boasts a rejuvenating spa, nature and even a bar in a cave

**LOCATION**

After two hours of smooth driving from Kuala Lumpur on the North-South Expressway, I finally arrived at the Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat. This resort is only 10 minutes from the turn-off at the Tambun exit on the expressway, and 15 minutes' drive from Ipoh.

Inside the resort, I felt as if I were in a different world altogether. It is huge – almost seven hectares – and located in a valley cradled by a lush tropical rainforest, against a backdrop of 300 million-year-old limestone hills.

Firefly's twice-daily flights from Singa-

pore to Ipoh makes the resort highly accessible from the city-state.

**ROOM**

Upon arrival, I was warmly welcomed by the general manager. The room key was unique and thoughtfully designed, doubling as a waterproof wrist band. I wore it all the time, even under water.

My garden villa encompassed an extensive outdoor terrace with a plunge pool, as well as a living and dining area. Stepping in, my bedroom comprised a very comfortable king-size bed and a 40-inch high-definition LCD screen television. The bathroom was very spacious and complemented by a walk-in closet, private outdoor rain shower, and best of all, a sunken Jacuzzi with piped-in natural geothermal hot spring water. A cold water tap allowed me to adjust the temperature of the water.

High walls separated the villas, thus giving me total privacy in my private Jacuzzi. Guests can definitely relax and dress as they please within each villa.

**FACILITIES**

The facilities at the resort kept me busy throughout my three-day stay. The Jacuzzi-style, geothermal hot spring dipping pool was a short walk from my villa. It was large enough for me to float on my back. Beside it was a cool fresh water swimming pool, a refreshing change after a hot soak. The 'doctor fish' pool with garra rufa fish nibbling the dead skin off my feet was another relaxing treat.

There are also numerous caves at the resort, each offering a unique experience for explorers.

The spa and wellness centre offers more than 40 types of holistic treatments and therapies of Malay, Chinese and Indian origins. Long-staying guests can even seek consultation with the in-house naturopath on a suitable course of treatment, ranging from a detoxification programme to a weight loss one.

**F&B**

The Pomelo Restaurant serves up healthy cuisine that is free of artificial flavouring. A variety of organic wines is also available here.

For drinks, head to Jeff's Cellar, one of the most unusual wine bars in the world – set within a limestone cave and offering a wide range of organic and rare wines. Guests will love the unique in-cave ambience. The bar is only open in the evening.



**SERVICE**

The staff was polite, helpful and eager to please the guests. They made me feel comfortable with their friendly demeanour.

**VERDICT**

With so many unique facilities within the resort to pamper my body and soul, I did not feel like leaving it. There was so much to experience, it was just as well that I forgot to pack a book in my suitcase.

Name	The Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat
No of rooms	25 villas
Rate	From RM1300++ (US\$408) per villa per night
Contact details	Tel: (60-3) 2272-8888
	Email: <a href="mailto:reservations@thebanjaran.com">reservations@thebanjaran.com</a>
	Website: <a href="http://www.thebanjaran.com">www.thebanjaran.com</a>





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Take in the majesty of Shwezigon Pagoda in Nyaung-U, Myanmar

# Poised for a big boom

There is no holding back tourism in Myanmar as investments pour in, writes **Rahul Khanna**

**NTO** The Myanmar government unveiled in June a tourism master plan for the country. Funded by the Norwegian government, the plan outlines 39 development projects worth almost US\$500 million. Projects aim to grow international air arrivals, improve the Bagan river port, build feeder roads in areas such as Inle Lake, strengthen tourism education and training, and identify US\$44.5 million in new training and partnerships.

The plan also calls for tourism police divisions to be set up, as well as a Tourism Executive Co-ordination Board to bring tourism-related ministries, agencies and federations together under an umbrella organisation, as well as suggests the introduction of pilot community-based tourism initiatives to ethnic communities to prepare locals for and give them control over tourism.

The master plan was unveiled on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum on East Asia in Naypyidaw, an event described as a “courageous step to open Myanmar to the (global) business community” by U Aung Zaw Win, director general of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

“(The forum) was a great

platform for engagement with the international community in showcasing the development of Myanmar’s reform processes since the elected government took office in 2011,” he added.

**Arrivals** The record-breaking 2012 chalked up more than one million visitors. In the first four months of 2013, Myanmar welcomed 253,136 visitors, an almost 44 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2012, according to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

Top Asian markets were Thailand (37,333), Japan (21,779), South Korea (18,813) and China (16,041). The top European markets were France (15,251), the UK (13,119) and Germany (11,289). Visitor numbers are expected to grow between 30 and 50 per cent.

**Hotels** According to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar has 787 licensed hotels and 28,000 rooms.

The Myanmar Investment Commission has put historic state-owned buildings in central Yangon up for tender to ease the city’s room crunch. Five hotels at



“The ministry, Myanmar Tourism Federation, Myanmar Marketing Committee and other auxiliary tourism associations need to strengthen their ongoing cooperation on tourism related activities... and develop links between tourism and other economic sectors.”

**U Aung Zaw Win**  
Director general  
Ministry of Hotels and Tourism  
Myanmar

the popular Ngwe Saung beach which closed in 2006 are reopening this year. Other hotels in the area are also expanding and undergoing renovations to meet demand during the 2013 SEA Games in Yangon in December. The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism expects the area to offer 840 rooms. There are plans to convert the former colonial-era Police Commissioner’s office building on Yangon’s Strand Road into a 239-room five-star hotel with meeting facilities, and the former Railway Company building will be redeveloped into a five-star Peninsula hotel.

Traders Square Commercial Complex beside Traders Hotel will be completed by 2015. The multi-storey building will house office and retail space, and will be linked to the hotel.

Meanwhile, a four-star hotel, a luxury condominium building, a serviced residence, two office towers and a retail podium will be part of the Pabedan project.

Major hotel groups such as Accor, Best Western and Hilton are planning to enter Myanmar.

**Access** Since April last year, eight international carriers have launched direct flights

to Myanmar. Low-cost carrier (LCC) Golden Myanmar Airlines was launched in January, complementing Myanmar’s six full-service domestic carriers. Operating out of Mandalay, the LCC expanded its network from Mandalay-Yangon-Singapore in April and plans to operate to Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong, via Yangon.

Elsewhere, Thailand’s Nok Air has proposed linking the port city of Mawlamyine in Mon State to Mae Sot on the Thai border in September, and extending the service to Yangon in October. It will also launch a Bangkok-Yangon flight from Don Muang airport in November, and consider connecting Chiang Mai with both Bagan and Yangon.

**Festivals** Ethnic Kachins return from abroad to meet and dance at the one-day Kachin Manaw Festival in Myitkyina to celebrate the new year. The Manaw dance originated as part of spirit worship of the past.

In December, the Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda Festival is held at The Golden Rock Pagoda in Mon State, during which devotees light 9,000 lamps to welcome the new year and give thanks to Buddha.



# Cambodia gets more exciting

The development of luxury products opens the destination to new opportunities, discovers **David Andrews**

**1** How has Cambodia fared in terms of international visitor arrivals? Arrivals to Cambodia soared from 2,881,862 in 2011 to 3,584,307 in 2012, representing the greatest growth rate since 2006. Early 2013 has again seen an increase in tourist numbers, both in the leisure and MICE categories with many hotels running at full capacity during the peak season.

Michael Assef, MICE and Cambodia product manager, Destination Asia, said: "Proximity and improving relationships with neighbouring countries are without a doubt factors playing an important role, but also the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) in 2011 which gave Cambodia more exposure. Tourism business was boosted after ATF (held in Phnom Penh), which explains how (arrivals) from Laos and Thailand could reach growth rates of 97.6 per cent and 72.5 per cent respectively in 2012."

Collectively, ASEAN countries contribute more than 42 per cent of total visitor numbers to Cambodia, making a promising statistic for tourism in the region. The top three markets remained consistent between 2011 and 2012, with Vietnam, South Korea

## Fancy footfalls

# 3.6

The number in millions of tourists Cambodia welcomed in 2012, up from 2.9 million the year before

and China contributing more than 42 per cent collectively.

**2** How will tourism in Cambodia perform in 2013? Bookings for the months of October and beyond are "looking very positive", according to Steve Lidgey, Cambodia product manager of Exotissimo Travel.

He said: "Some hotels are already experiencing availability problems for certain dates, so (travellers must) book early to get preferred hotel choices as well as the best guides available, especially for German and Span-

ish guides where there is a smaller pool to choose from."

The opening of more hotels, restaurants and a range of activities has led a number of DMCs to eye double digit growth.

Chhy Sin Sinot, Cambodia Manager, Asia World, said the beach resort of Sihanoukville was chasing Siem Reap as more hotels continued to open.

Meanwhile, with Qatar Airways flying into Cambodia with a daily Doha-Ho Chi Minh City-Phnom Penh route, there are options to connect with a number of international markets.

However, many tourism players are grappling with Cambodia's tendency to issue last minute notices for matters that can affect operations. These may include national events and state visits, changes in entrance fees, airline schedule, etc. At the same time, the lack of international standard infrastructure in some areas of the country makes it harder to send more visitors there or expand the length of stay in Cambodia, which is still very short compared to its neighbours.

**3** Cambodia gained a new luxury product when Song Saa Private Island opened in

2012. How has that impacted tourism business in Cambodia? Many Cambodian tourism players believe that Song Saa Private Island helped put Cambodia on the map as a luxury destination.

Panya Thin, Cambodia manager, Buffalo Tours, said: "Song Saa Private Island is helping to raise awareness of neighbouring areas along the coastline, with Kep being the perfect example. It already has luxury boutique hotels, such as Knai Bang Chatt, that provide excellent service for the luxury segment."

The Cambodian coastline is in development but the trade believes it will be some time before it is on par with its neighbours.

Exotissimo's Lidgey added: "For sure we need more options and Akaryn Koh Kra-beay Retreat & Spa is the next big development on the coastline."

Another luxury development is the Park Hyatt Siem Reap opening in August and the entry of such big names is a reflection of Cambodia's tourism potential.

Assef also highlights Song Saa

Private Island's green credentials, which he believes is the future of tourism in the area. "It is a sustainable and ethical vision and development," he pointed out.

**4** How can tour operators leverage on new and existing products to better sell Cambodia?

Many visitors are unaware of the touring options available beyond the Angkor temples and the capital when there are plenty of destinations within the country for Cambodia to be a mono destination choice.

Destinations such as Battambang and Kep need stronger destination promotion compared to Phnom Penh and Siem Reap which sell themselves, and it is here that travel consultants play an important role in educating clients and offering recommendations.

Asia World's Sinot said: "We are looking to create unique touring options utilising local culture and nature in the same way we have done in Thailand and Bali. We want to stand out from our competition and we do not want to sell purely based on price competitiveness."



Assef: ATF boost

## Products

# Park Hyatt debuts in Siem Reap, Orcaella in Myanmar

## Park Hyatt Siem Reap

The former Hotel de la Paix in Siem Reap is in the final stages of renovation and will reopen on August 1 as the 109-room Park Hyatt Siem Reap. This will be the first Hyatt-branded hotel in Cambodia and offers a new level of luxury accommodation in Cambodia. Facilities include a spa, a pool and a fitness centre.

### Contact

Tel: (855-63) 211-234  
Email: siemreap.park@hyatt.com

## Sala Lodges, Siem Reap

Sala Lodges are an excellent alternative to traditional hotel-based accommodation. Comprising 11 stilted houses, they were transported from local Khmer villages and rebuilt in traditional village style. Guests can enjoy tropical gardens, an infinity pool and two restaurants.

### Contact

Tel: (855-63) 766-699  
Website: SalaLodges.com

## Yangon Heritage Walking Tour – Colonial buildings

Downtown Yangon in Myanmar is dotted with colonial-era ar-



From top: Park Hyatt Siem Reap; Sala Lodges, Siem Reap; The Orcaella river cruise in Myanmar



chitecture that are religious and secular. Starting after breakfast or lunch, this walking tour takes visitors through the back streets at a relaxed pace to places such as Bogyoke Aung San Market, Yangon Central Railway Station, Telugu Methodist Church, and others.

The tour concludes with a drink at the newly opened Union Bar and Grill in the old Red Cross building on Strand Road.

### Contact

Tel/fax: (95-1) 249-171  
Website: www.khiri.com

## Orient-Express' The Orcaella, Myanmar

A new luxury river cruiser, *The Orcaella*, joins its sister ship, *The Road To Mandalay*, on the Ayeyarwaddy River. It will also sail on the Chindwin tributary.

Named after the dolphins unique to the Ayeyarwaddy River, this elegant, four-deck ship can house 50 passengers on seven- and 11-night voyages.

Offshore excursions can range from the chance to witness a traditional novice ceremony of local monks, as well as a journey to explore caves housing 492 Buddha chambers which have been

carved into the hillside.

Passengers stay in 25 spacious cabins with floor-to-ceiling sliding doors and balconies that frame the riverside vistas.

Ample cruising time will allow passengers to fully enjoy the views from the Observation Deck, restaurant, swimming pool and fitness centre, as well as regular onboard entertainment by local artists and experts.

*The Orcaella's* will run from January to April and also from July to December.

The 11-night voyage departs Mandalay and sails up the Chindwin River along the foothills of the Himalayas. Highlights include a visit to the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century temple, Thanboddhay Pagoda, covered in images of tiny Buddhas, a visit to the site of 1,000 Buddhas at Bodhi Tataung, a journey into Kalay, the trade gateway to India, and a tour of the candlelit street market.

Prices start from US\$5,600 per person on the 11-night *Discovering the Chindwin River* cruise and includes all meals onboard, excursions, transfers, and domestic flights.

### Contact

Tel: (44-845) 217-0799  
Website: www.orcaella.net





Cast Your Vote Now!

# Recognise the exemplary In the Asia-Pacific travel trade

The 24th Annual TTG Travel Awards 2013, Asia-Pacific's most prestigious annual travel industry awards, returns to honour the best organisations in the industry for their achievements and contributions.

We need to hear from you.

As a trade professional, you are the voice of the industry. Your opinions will help us discover which organisations have contributed to raising the industry's bar of excellence.

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](http://www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards)

Closing Date: 2nd August 2013

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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 honoraries 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.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards](http://www.ttgasia.com/ttg-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.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards](http://www.ttgasia.com/ttg-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.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards](http://www.ttgasia.com/ttg-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.

1.	Best Travel Agency – <b>Australia</b>	
2.	Best Travel Agency – <b>China</b>	
3.	Best Travel Agency – <b>Chinese Taipei</b>	
4.	Best Travel Agency – <b>Hong Kong</b>	
5.	Best Travel Agency – <b>India</b>	
6.	Best Travel Agency – <b>Indochina (Cambodia, Laos)</b>	
7.	Best Travel Agency – <b>Indonesia</b>	
8.	Best Travel Agency – <b>Japan</b>	
9.	Best Travel Agency – <b>Malaysia</b>	
10.	Best Travel Agency – <b>Singapore</b>	
11.	Best Travel Agency – <b>South Korea</b>	
12.	Best Travel Agency – <b>Thailand</b>	
13.	Best Travel Agency – <b>The Philippines</b>	
14.	Best Travel Agency – <b>Vietnam</b>	
15.	Best <b>Corporate</b> Travel Agency	
	Best travel agency specialising in serving the needs of corporate travellers.	
16.	Best <b>Online</b> 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

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.

VOTE ONLINE AT  
[www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards](http://www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards)

## 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  
2nd August 2013



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