

VIEW FROM THE TOP

Outrigger aims to be 'the premier beachfront resort brand in the world'. Bitsy Kelley, vice president-corporate communications and a member of the owning Kelley family, tells *TTG Asia* how the family thinks and operates



THE STAKES GET BIGGER

It's full-fledged war in Asia's integrated resorts scene as new players get into the game while existing properties up the ante with fresh attractions



Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort



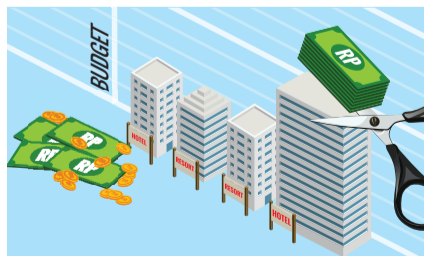
THE LEISURE SIDE OF GUANGZHOU

Guangzhou is more than just a busy transport and commerce hub, with plenty of attractions that will be of interest to FITs



JAPAN'S NEW ISSUE: A FULL HOUSE

Having recovered from the twin disasters in 2011, Japan now faces another problem, albeit a more welcomed one — too many tourists, too little infrastructure



AUSTERITY CUTS HURT INDONESIA

The Indonesian authorities' drive to curb wasteful spending by limiting meetings outside of government facilities has sent shudders through the hospitality sector



HOTSPOTS FOR SERVICED APTS

Moving beyond traditional economic centres, serviced residence operators see opportunities in new investment hotspots across Asia-Pacific

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LEE KUAN YEW
1923 - 2015

Portrait of Lee Kuan Yew, 23 November 2004, Photograph by Tara Sosnowardoyo, National Museum of Singapore Collection, <http://www.news.gov.sg>

But the Singapore brand is what sells the country to tourists, investors, talents. No amount of NTO marketing will work if a country does not have the goods.

THE REAL ICON OF SINGAPORE TOURISM

The real icon of Singapore tourism is not the Skypark pillared by three towers, or the water-spouting Merlion before it, or the Vanda 'Miss Joaquim' much earlier.

The real tourism icon is Mr Lee Kuan Yew, who passed away peacefully on March 23 at the age of 91 years. While icons change with time, I suspect this one's a Herculean feat to topple.

Mr Lee of course did not set out to make Singapore one of the most aspiring destinations in the world for tourists, which it is today. Or to be a tourism icon – in fact, he hated the idea of a monument in his honour, even though he is monumental. We are a by-product of his single-minded focus to transform a tiny third-world island with poor infrastructure and limited capital into – not just a city which should count itself lucky if it could get by – but a world-class metropolis of real standing and stature.

Singapore's destination appeal evolved as Mr Lee and his handpicked leaders went about knocking down a whole city and began rebuilding it. If you were in tourism, you would have felt it! In the 80s-90s, a large part of Singapore's tourism product development plan was to save what's left of historic districts such as Chinatown and Little India as a lot of old buildings had to make way for economic progress.

But tourism won big-time in the end not because of one restored area here or another new attraction there. Fundamentally it's because there's a country architect whose idea of what makes a good city is the basis for Singapore's attractiveness today. In an interview with Dr Liu Thai-Ker,

chairman of the Centre for Liveable Cities Singapore advisory board, published in *The Straits Times* on February 16, 2013, Mr Lee spoke about the ingredients of a great city: safety, spaciousness (and greenery), mobility (transportation – the city must move, i.e. no gridlocks), cleanliness, connectivity (aviation) and equity (home ownership, so people would fight for their city).

Fundamentally also, Mr Lee was pro-tourism, with the government spending real dollars in product development and marketing.

But the Singapore brand is what sells the country to tourists, investors and talents. No amount of NTO marketing will work if a country does not have the goods. Some countries are lucky they are born with natural spectacular attractions. Others build them. But how many cities in modern history can field the intangible, unique attraction Singapore has: that people want to visit it because they want to see for themselves its remarkable transformation as much as they want to enjoy the city? Mr Lee created Singapore and in doing so created tourism.

The Singapore brand is Mr Lee and when all is said and done, it is an age-old compelling story of the power of the human spirit to overcome huge obstacles and be outstanding. Except Mr Lee has a whole city to show for it.

As a Singaporean, I am desperate to say thank you.



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COMING UP

NEXT ISSUE:
MAY 15, 2015

AIRPORTS No longer viewed as just a layover, airport hotels have pulled out all the stops to lure guests

INDONESIA Cruise tourism is taking the spotlight in Indonesia's newest tourism development strategy

PORTS OF CALL A roundup of cruise port developments as well as the most popular cruise destinations in Asia

WE LIKE



Tourism New Zealand once again milked "Tolkien-mania" for its destination branding strategy, adding yet another feather to its cap with the recent life-sized Hobbit Hole installed at the departure hall of Changi Airport Terminal 3. While the exhibition will end its course on April 19, we are sure the world's fascination with the Middle-earth won't – and which better place to evoke travel inspiration than the airport itself?



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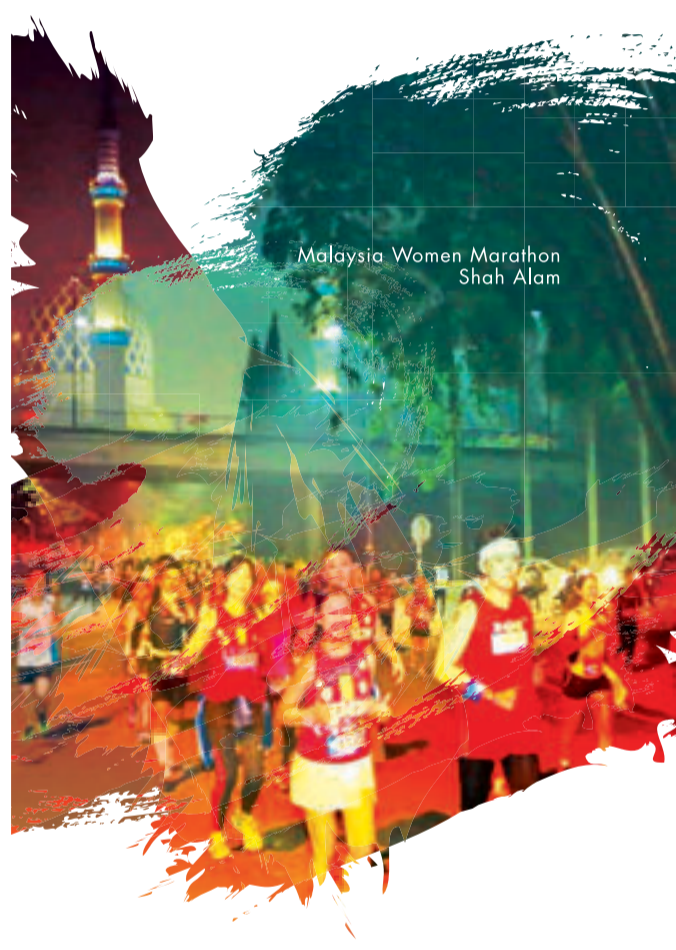
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Analysis

Having picked up from the twin disasters in 2011, Japan now faces another problem, albeit a more welcomed one – that of too many tourists, too little infrastructure. **Julian Ryall** reports

FULL HOUSE

Recovery was the name of the game for Japan after the twin earthquake and tsunami disasters of 2011, when the number of overseas visitors slumped to 6.2 million.

In a sharp reversal of fortunes, Japan has since received an all-time high of 13.4 million foreign travellers in 2014, an impressive three million increase from the previous year.

The upbeat figures have continued into 2015, with a record 1.2 million foreign arrivals in January alone, a 29 per cent hike from the same month in 2014.

Japan's inbound tourism sector benefited from a combination of positive factors: easier visa requirements for visitors from South-east Asian nations, an increase in flights operated by LCCs and additional duty-free shopping opportunities.

The single largest reason for last year's record-setting figures, however, was the dramatic weakening of the yen, which has made Japan an affordable destination for vast numbers of middle-class travellers from Asia and farther afield.

Research by the Japan National Tour-

ism Organization (JNTO) shows a 40 per cent increase in arrivals from South Korea that was in part driven by an increase in LCCs serving Japanese destinations.

Top market Taiwan was also up 20 per cent in 2013 to hit 2.8 million, while Chinese arrivals surged 83 per cent to reach 2.4 million.

Mamoru Kobori, senior executive director, JNTO, told *TTG Asia* that longhaul arrivals are similarly faring well, with the added advantage that visitors from North America and Europe tend to stay twice or thrice the duration of Asian tourists.

Australians too appear to have fallen head over heels for Japan's skiing opportunities, while 2014 also saw a 35 per cent spike in arrivals from Spain, though the reasons are unclear.

To meet "positive demand" from long-haul travellers, All Nippon Airways added services from London, Paris, Vancouver and Frankfurt last year, in addition to a new direct flight to Munich, said Ryosei Nomura, a spokesman for the airline.

"We will be launching services from Haneda International Airport to Hou-



It's cherry blossom season in Japan and I have been trying to find a hotel room in Tokyo and it is proving impossible...That's a testament to Japan's popularity, but you would also think that there would be a hotel somewhere in a city the size of Tokyo.

James Mundy
Head of marketing, InsideJapan Tours

ston and Kuala Lumpur in the first half of 2015," said Nomura. "We are also trying to take advantage of Japan's geographic position to become the key transit point for travellers going between destinations in Asia and North America."

Hiroyuki Seishi, a spokesman for the Japan Association of Travel Agents, has noted the "positive effect" of a weak yen on domestic travel, as more Japanese now take vacations closer to home.

On the other hand, the upsurge in visitor numbers, both domestic and international, has revealed a number of areas in which the domestic travel industry needs to up its game, including the provision of additional accommodation facilities to meet demand, more professional guides and interpreters, and extra signage in more languages.

"Our occupancy rate is at 100 per cent for a good part of this season because of the popularity of the cherry blossom season with both domestic and international travellers," said Junko Kajihara, a spokeswoman at the 57-room Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo.

"Tokyo definitely needs more rooms, especially as we run up to the Olympic Games in 2020," she said. "And that's not just in the luxury, high-end sector of the market. The city needs more budget accommodation and business-type properties as well."

Recent additions to Tokyo's hotel landscape include the Millennium Mitsui Garden Hotel and Hotel Unizo Ginza Ichome, while Aman Tokyo opened in late December last year.

Meanwhile, Hotel Gracery Shinjuku, Hotel Sunroute Ginza and Richmond Hotel Premier Tokyo Oshiage are due to open by this year-end.

The problem is often not just a shortage of rooms, James Mundy, head of marketing for UK-based InsideJapan Tours pointed out, but sometimes a lack of double beds – a particular problem for honeymooners.

"We have been taking groups to Japan for 15 years now, working with suppliers that range from the top international hotels to family-run ryokan, and we have seen a definite increase in the popularity of Japan as a destination," he added.

"Right now, for example, it's cherry blossom season in Japan and I have been trying to find a hotel room in Tokyo and it is proving impossible," he said.

"That's a testament to Japan's popularity, but you would also think that there would be a hotel somewhere in a city the size of Tokyo."

Another issue has been a lack of signage in foreign languages outside of major urban areas, although Mundy insists that travellers tend to see that as "all part of the experience."

JNTO is aware of the issues that need to be addressed, said Kobori, and is trying hard to meet the government's target of 20 million foreign visitors in 2020.

"We have so many visitors at present who now want to go to Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka that the hotel room occupancy rate is running at 90 per cent at peak times of the year," he said.

"What we want to do is to encourage more visitors to get away from that traditional route and go to less well-known parts of Japan," he said.

"Japan has so many great and unique attractions that will appeal to foreign visitors and we feel it is just a case of letting them know about all the opportunities that are available."

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Analysis

The Indonesian authorities' drive to curb wasteful spending by limiting meetings outside of government facilities has sent shudders through the hospitality sector. **Mimi Hudoyo** reports



Just as hoteliers were starting to look forward to stronger business prospects with Indonesia's robust tourism targets, the new government's austerity drive is causing waves.

Indonesian president Joko Widodo has set an ambitious target of 20 million international arrivals and 275 million domestic travel movements by 2019, huge jumps from 9.4 million international arrivals and 250 million domestic movements in 2014.

When the new government came into office in October last year, Jokowi also prioritised reducing official spending, including cutting the cabinet's travel and meeting budget for 2015 to Rp25 trillion (US\$1.9 billion), from Rp41 trillion last year.

In line with that minister of state apparatus and bureaucratic reform Yuddy Chrisnandi last November issued circulars instructing government officials to limit meetings outside office facilities as part of the administration's effort to trim the state budget.

According to Yuddy, the leakage of government fiscal resources reached 30 per cent, and civil servants' spending on unnecessary meetings organised outside offices was one of the violations.

Yuddy was also quoted by *Bisnis Indonesia Daily* as saying that within two months of the introduction of the state budget efficiency programme, the government managed to save Rp5.2 trillion for all sectors, including travel expenses and meetings in hotels.

While the circular sought to "limit" and not "ban" meetings outside government-owned facilities, it did not detail the do's and don'ts, resulting in government agencies cancelling a majority, if not all, of hotel meetings, to devastating effect.

Since regional autonomy took place in Indonesia over a decade ago, regional businesses have grown and prompted investors to develop hotels, big and small, with meeting facilities across the archipelago. Many of these were used for government and state-owned company meetings, train-

ings and seminars that could account for up to 40-50 per cent of the MICE business, according to the Indonesia Hotels and Restaurants Association (IHRA).

Hotels in Bandung, Yogyakarta, Makassar and Lombok, for example, reported receiving massive cancellations for November and December last year, typically busy months for government meetings.

TTG Asia understands that a recent tourism stakeholders meeting in Yogyakarta revealed that in November and December last year, the city lost Rp70 billion worth in government meetings.

Occupancy across the country dipped by as much as 50 per cent while rates declined between five per cent and 20 per cent, according to Yanti Sukamdani, outgoing chairman of IHRA and chairman of Indonesia Tourism Promotion Board.

Meanwhile, several hotels in Bali and Jakarta were reportedly experiencing a similar situation. Yanti commented: "Hotels have mushroomed everywhere (in Indonesia) in the last few years, and

many are relying on MICE.

"The government should remember that tourism is the fourth largest contributor to the country's GDP, which means that it is an important agent of development," she added, stressing the need for strong political will in prioritising the tourism sector.

She also called for deeper co-operation between the government and private sector.

Following much outcry from the hospitality sector, the government finally issued a formal guideline in end-March to clarify the guidelines given earlier.

Government meetings could be held outside of government offices but they must produce clear results, through transcripts of the meeting, reports and a list of all attendees, signed by the official in charge.

National and regional government agencies must also come up with further terms, conditions and standard operating procedures to perform such evaluations, Yuddy elaborated.

Hoteliers like Don Tiganov, e-commerce marketing manager, Lombok Raya Hotel, lauded the move and have since received inquiries from government agencies for meetings, and expects them to translate into bookings.

Vivi Herlambang, director of sales, marketing & business development of Sahid International Hotel Management & Consultant, said: "We unofficially heard about the new directive last month and managed to convince some government agencies to book with our hotels."

"The official announcement has made us more confident of the business coming back, although not as big as it was before."

However, she pointed out that besides the more stringent regulations on meetings, government offices have cut meeting budgets significantly for this year and

all additional budget approvals would require time for parliament to clear.

For others, the furore surrounding Indonesia's austerity drive stems from what is essentially a problem of supply and demand.

Addressing the industry's laments during the opening of the IHRA National Assembly on February 17, Indonesian vice president Jusuf Kalla said that the biggest problem the hospitality industry faces is the result of the massive hotel development that took place amid a slowdown in demand.

"Hotel development in Indonesia grew by 100 per cent in the last five years. It is this development which has created an over-supply at a time when demand is slowing down (due to global economic slowdown), so do not (be quick in blaming) the government's policy for that," he said.

Kalla instead urged the hospitality industry to improve their services and increase promotions, in addition to diversifying their markets to limit their dependence on government meetings.

If anything, the kerfuffle surrounding the austerity drive and its impact on the meetings market should have been a wake-up call for hotels in Indonesia.

Sahid International Hotel Management & Consultant's Vivi, has heeded the warning and the company is developing its e-commerce platform to reach out to broader market segments from overseas.

"We will participate in international tradeshow, such as PATA Travel Mart and ITB Asia, something which the company has not done for many years," Vivi said.

She hopes that such a strategy will be a stepping stone to reintroducing Sahid brands to the international market.



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Intelligence

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

Passenger traffic at APAC airports

In 2014, airports in Asia-Pacific handled 5.8% more passengers to reach a total of 568 million*. The top three single airports are Hong Kong, Singapore and Seoul's Incheon.

Seoul Incheon's +10.1% was helped by visitors from China (+42% in 2014 and now 43% of the total) and outbound travel from South Korea was +8%. China is almost solely responsible for Hong Kong's +6.2%, following 16% growth from the mainland, as well as Singapore's low +1.0%, partly due to a 24% fall in Chinese arrivals.

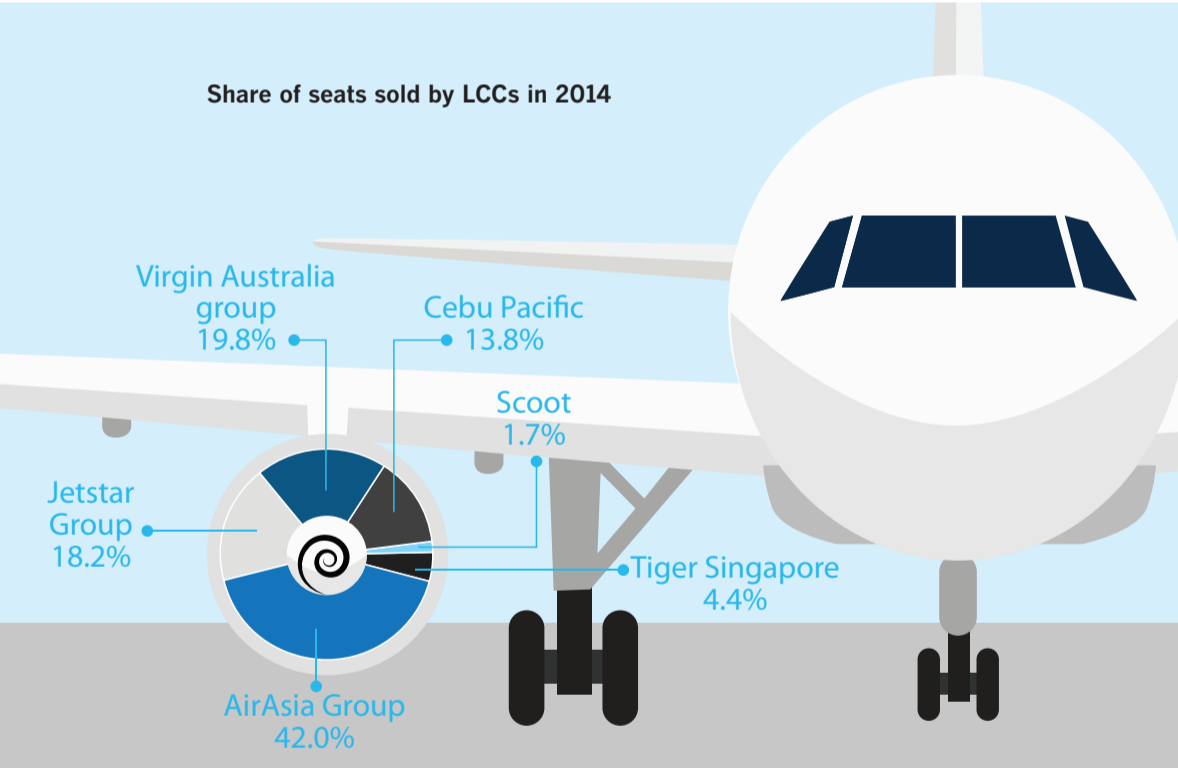
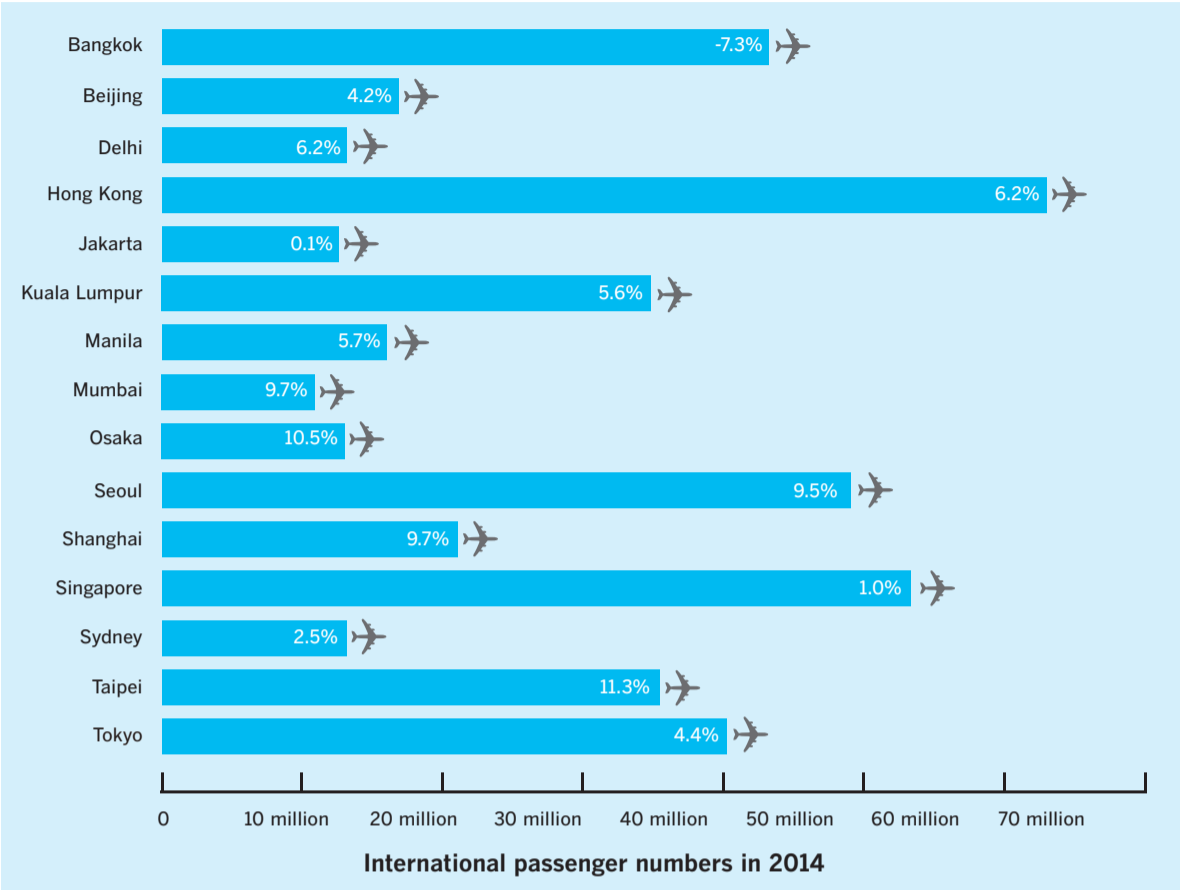
Growth at bigger airports (including multiple city airports) was slower at +5% while smaller ones grew +8%. What could be called 'resort airports' grew 10%, double the rate of the big-city airport groups. Phuket, which may be Asia-Pacific's biggest 'resort airport' (not all figures available), managed only 1% growth.

Tokyo's +4.4% hides a stunning +32% at Haneda – which took it into the 10-plus million category and the fastest-growing – and a shocking -3% at Narita.

Mumbai has joined the 10 million club following its big 9.7% growth. Taipei's surprising +11.3% (thanks to visitors from China) took it above Kuala Lumpur.

However, Asia-Pacific is no longer a clear growth leader, with the region's top three growing at just over 5%, but the US' top three were not far behind at just under 5%. Europe was at +4%, but the Gulf's top three were at 10%!

**Most data, except for Bali and Male, from Airports Council International. Compilations, estimates, extrapolations and other data from TBA.*



No thrills on the no-frills sector

Seat sales for LCCs in Asia-Pacific grew about 8% in 2014, which was not much faster than the 6% for full-service airlines (FSAs). Faster growth was primarily for such smaller LCCs as AirAsia Philippines, AirAsia X and Scoot. Overall, the AirAsia Group is the biggest, selling more seats than the Jetstar and Virgin Australia* groups combined.

While Scoot does not reveal operating data, at current rates it could become bigger than AirAsia X in 2016/7, going by approximations of its traffic totals.

Jetstar grew almost 7% on domestic routes, but its Australia-based international routes are falling. It no longer seems that Jetstar's international flights were being used to expand the group where it had become too costly for parent Qantas to grow; even international routes at Qantas fell in 2014. And Jetstar Asia is struggling with falling seat sales over the year, including a shocking 9% in Q4.

Virgin Australia's domestic routes grew in 2014, but by only 1%. And the going may get tougher as traffic fell 2% in Q3 and was flat (+0.5%) in Q4.

**Notes: Virgin's inclusion in our LCC category can be misleading. It announced that the buyout of Tiger Australia would allow it to return to the LCC segment. Virgin started operations in the LCC sector, but has gradually moved upmarket, and is now closer to a FSA than a LCC.*

Stronger dollar affect hotel rates

In Asia-Pacific overall, occupancy in December 2014 was down 0.2% to 77%, average room rate down US\$8 to US\$147, pushing revPAR down US\$7 to US\$111.

Changes in exchange rates – generally a stronger US\$ – means that many results are lower when expressed in US\$. The Maldives has been moving in the other direction, which partly explains the nearly 15% hike in rates in December, although another reason is that the hotels have been getting higher rates in terms of the Maldivian rufiyaa.

Rates in local currency were lower in December than the year earlier in Hong Kong. As the HK\$ is closely tied to the US\$, this means that the HK\$ has also increased in value, making Hong Kong's

hotel market rates higher – in some cases as much as 20% – than the earlier year. Already recording high rates, there may be a reduction in length of stay, if not in number of visitors. That said, visitor arrivals to Hong Kong from markets other than China fell 5% in December.

Sydney is a special case. Rates in A\$ increased, as there has been a big fall in the currency value. The city's occupancies are still high, but they fell almost 5%, causing a 15% fall in revPAR in terms of US\$.

Are Bangkok's pains over? Although average rates fell, occupancy growth was enough to produce a 5% growth in revPAR. Also, occupancy is still under 70%, meaning at least 15 points below what it should be in high season.



HOTEL BAROMETER

Hotel operating results in selected centres, December 2014

Location	Occupancy, %	Growth, %	ARR, US\$*	Growth, %	RevPAR, US\$	Growth, %
Bangkok	69.6	8.5	128	-2.8	89	5.4
Beijing	66.5	5.6	89	-3.4	59	2.1
Hong Kong	86.9	-2.7	237	-5.8	206	-8.3
Maldives	72.1	-6.5	1,188	14.7	857	7.3
Singapore	80.3	-2.0	169	-7.3	135	-9.1
Sydney	85.5	-4.9	211	-10.6	180	-15.0

Notes: Compared with same month, year earlier. RevPAR = revenue per available room. *Calculated at exchange rate for specific month to US\$. Source: hotels to TBA.

Notes/Caveats: Although rates are quoted in US\$, the data is supplied by hotels to TBA in local currencies, and thus changes in exchange rates can affect figures. Different categorisation of hotels across countries may also distort the rate comparison. For this reason, percentage changes of ARR within a city may be a surer comparison of market progress.

Pangkor Island

Perak, Malaysia



Royal Belum

Perak, Malaysia

View from the top

Outrigger aims to be 'the premier beachfront resort brand in the world'. Bitsy Kelley, a member of the Kelley family which owns the group, and its vice president-corporate communications, tells [Raini Hamdi](#) how the family thinks and operates

STRICTLY BEACHFRONT

How different is a 'premier beachfront resort brand' from other beach resort brands?

The other big brands have beachfront resorts, mountain resorts, city hotels, etc, but Outrigger's portfolio is exclusively beachfront properties. Secondly, we are in the premier category.

Why does it matter to be exclusively beachfront?

When travel consultants have a client who wants to go to a beach destination, Outrigger should be the number one on their list because of the clarity of the brand.

Outrigger started on the beach in Hawaii. Through the decades, we had a wide variety of products at different levels that was confusing for travel agencies for a long time. This was why we decided to clarify the brand and cleaned out the portfolio, so that our guests know what they are getting. And we're raising that (positioning) as our strategic push throughout South-east Asia, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean.

So you're not interested in city hotels?

We already do that in Hawaii with our Ohana brand and condominiums which are 'by Outrigger'. It's left to be seen if we will have a push there but right now, all our focus is on Outrigger.

We are interested in the real estate side as well, not just the hospitality side, so what we're doing is buying, not just managing, as we have done in Mauritius, the Maldives and so on.

Our earlier experience – about 10 years ago when we first went to the Pacific with primarily management contracts – shows we do better when we own the property, as we have better control. We are a family-owned business and we are true and authentic to the culture of the place we operate in.

How did Outrigger start?

The company (Outrigger Enterprises Group) is 68 years in operation. My grandparents came to Hawaii from California in 1920s. My grandfather was an architect – that's how we got into commercial buildings. Until WW2, there were only two hotels in Hawaii and they catered primarily to military personnel and VFRs. So my grandparents started building hotels to cater to (the leisure market) in the rest of America, Canada and Australia. He carried the bags and my grandmother cleaned the rooms.

I'm Gen-3 and I have children, so they

are Gen-4, and grandchildren, Gen-5. In the family, we call each other G1, G2, G3, G4 and G5 (laughs).

Who runs the business today and who decides on the direction for the group?

G2 and G3 run the business now. G4 are in their 20s and 30s and are out getting their experience and education.

The family is the shareholder so it decides the final strategic direction. It's a group decision. My dad, who has retired, is chairman-emeritus. My brother, who is a doctor, is chairman. My brother-in-law is president and CEO.

Why the need to go beyond Hawaii?

We had a big hurricane in 1982 and another in 1992, which made us realise we had all our assets in one place in Waikiki and we needed to diversify.

What's on Outrigger's bucket list of where it should be?

Key iconic beach locations – Seychelles, additional locations in Thailand, Bali in Indonesia and other Micronesian locations. We'd also love to be back in Palau and are looking at Okinawa, Japan; Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

Is it instilled in everyone in the family that hospitality is going to be their life?

Oh no, we never force anyone to be in the business. We encourage people to go find their passion. You'll be successful wherever your passion is. Then, if there is something that fits with the family business, you can come back and see what's available. We're a big corporation now, not just hotels. If your passion is in law, there's a whole legal department. IT? There's a whole IT department. Get your education and experience first, then we probably have something for you back at the company.

Why did you choose corporate communications?

I ended up having a career in the media and was living on the mainland for a while, with my own TV and radio show. I decided to leave when my brother-in-law, the president and CEO, said, 'I need you in corporate communications'.

What are the advantages and dis-

advantages of being family-owned?

Being privately owned allows us to have a long-term view, versus a public company where you have a shorter window to perform by. We can think 50 years out; we don't need to report to other shareholders. The other key advantage is just being able to have control. You don't have this when you have other investors.

The disadvantage is the potential to fall apart. Most family businesses do not survive past the second generation as each family often get bigger and it becomes harder to align them to the original goals of G1, as these dissipate from one generation to the next. So we work very hard to ensure things don't fall apart. The family meets every quarter.

We work hard to communicate with one another and to make sure everyone



10 NEED TO KNOWS ABOUT BITSY KELLEY

■ **Who's in your family?** I have a large extended family of about 30 members. My husband and I have two daughters and two granddaughters.

■ **What do you do for fun?** I love the outdoors: surfing, fishing, hunting, hiking. I also love to cook.

■ **Your ideal vacation?** Remote locations with a variety of outdoor activities.

■ **How do you book your own leisure trips?** I initially research the destination on the Internet. For actual bookings I always use a travel agency because if something goes wrong on the trip, they will be there to assist me.

■ **What are you reading right now?** *The American Plate, A Culinary History in 100 Bites* by Libby O'Connell

■ **How do you stay healthy?** It's important to engage in some form of exercise every day. Most of my outdoor activities are my exercise. When on business trips, I'll use the hotel's gym or swim laps in the pool.

■ **Favourite food?** French and Thai. I especially like spicy dishes.

■ **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Over-committing myself. Business excites me so I often have a hard time saying no to new projects.

■ **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** When a person shows a lack of respect for other people, cultures, places; humbleness grows deep roots.

■ **Most people don't know that ...**my favourite way to end the day is to sit on my surfboard in the ocean while watching the sunset.

is still engaged in the business and understands its culture. We also bring outside facilitators to work with us on topics of 'gray' areas – for example, should everyone in the family be entitled to a job at the company?

Are they?

No, we created an employment policy for the family, to make sure that we are professional and that only those who are serious about it can come work for it.

So did you go through an interview?

Yes, I met with Sean Dee (the group's executive vice president-chief marketing officer) and also the HR department. You're not entitled to or are guaranteed a job. You're not specially treated. I'm absolutely accountable and I go through reviews like everyone else.

You could get fired?

Yes I could (laughs), if I don't perform, just like a regular job.

Most family businesses do not survive past the second generation...So we work very hard to ensure things don't fall apart. The family meets every quarter. We work hard to communicate with one another and to make sure everyone is still engaged in the business and understands its culture.

Agency

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

INNOVATORS

GIVING THE GIFT OF TRAVEL By Rosa Ocampo

Aileen Clemente (left), president and chairman of Rajah Travel Corporation, makes it easier for clients to fulfil their travel dreams with the launch of the online Travel Shop.

WHO As president and chairmain of Rajah Travel Corporation, a Philippine agency specialising in inbound and outbound travel, Aileen Clemente is at the helm of ensuring the firm stays up-to-date with the rapid changes taking place in the travel world.

From its first website in the 2000s – a mostly static website with basic information about tour products on offer – to its dynamic website today, Rajah Travel has kept an unfaltering eye on the online consumer.

Serving the B2C market, the website allows online bookings for flights and hotels, has an inquiry form for tour packages and connects its global reservation system with the systems of its partner tour operators, said Clemente.

WHAT The 43-year-old agency has beefed up its B2C website with the launch of the Travel Shop.

One of its features is the online Travel Registry, which is similar to gift registries but designed for travel. Targeted at travellers looking to commemorate milestones like graduation, birthday or honeymoon, the celebrant can customise his/her dream travel package and email loved ones about it. Family members and friends can then chip in funds via the website to cover the trip cost,

while the former can keep track of the gifts received through the registry page.

Another feature is the gift certificate, which allows one to purchase travel credits to give as gifts. Together with an e-card, the sender can send a minimum of 500 pesos (US\$11) worth of travel credits to the recipient, who can redemn the gift certificate at any Rajah Travel office.

WHY Explaining the reason behind the Travel Shop, Clemente said: “The gift of travel is the perfect gift for any occasion. It is a gift to last a lifetime.

“We simply want our clients to have a more convenient avenue for making their travel dreams come true.”

TARGET Rajah Travel plans to expand its clientele by focusing on the technological aspects of the business. Improving the website’s accessibility will attract travellers, a growing number of which are more digitally inclined.

In the pipeline is the further enhancement of the website by allowing mobile bookings as well as the addition of the Souvenir Shop, which will allow travellers to purchase Rajah-branded travel accessories online, shared Clemente.



WHO GETS THE BOOKING?

My parents were thinking of taking my grandparents on a cruise, so I looked at Chinese OTAs for a round-trip sailing from Shanghai in June. I decided to pick a cruise going to two South Korean ports, in spite of Japan’s popularity, to avoid the complicated visa* paperwork. By **Li Xu**



Sapphire Princess / Princess Cruises

* At press time, Japan has waived visa requirements for cruise ship passengers from China

Ctrip.com

SEARCHING EXPERIENCE The webpage (cruise.ctrip.com) was metasearch-friendly. After selecting the port of departure, cruising region and departure date from the drop-down menus, I was sent to the initial search result, and was able to filter my search further. The eye-catching itinerary maps highlighted the routes clearly with simple, but effective graphics.

PRODUCT There were four available products from the *Royal Caribbean*, *Costa Cruises* and *Princess Cruises*. All three cruise lines would stop in Jeju and Busan, but *Costa* also provided a Jeju-Incheon/Seoul route with three departure dates. *Princess* offered four excursion packages: sightseeing with mall visit; shopping only; family fun; or sightseeing only. The latter two would require extra payment.

EASE OF BOOKING There were clear explanations for expenses, purchase rules and the visa application process, but these were presented in one long page, making it tedious to read through thoroughly. Non-Ctrip members were allowed to book without registration. Although the online instant customer service was only available for members, the call centre number was visible throughout the booking process. An immediate alert would pop up if rooms were sold out.

PRICE All the products would cover excursion fees, port taxes and fees, and visa expenses. The regular price for a standard oceanview room ranged from RMB3799 (US\$610) to RMB4999 per person. Paid excursions and third-party insurances could be purchased along with the cruise tickets.

VERDICT I would purchase the cruise product on Ctrip. Not only did it offer more products and better prices, it also did not require membership registration. As there were almost no itinerary and facility differences among the cruise products, prices and hidden expenses such as onboard service fees would weigh the most on my decisions.



Lvmama.com

SEARCHING EXPERIENCE The homepage (lvmama.com/youlun) had only one search box for entering cruising region, cruise line or cruise ship, which would be confusing for cruise novices. Only after typing in “South Korea” did more filters appear, letting me choose the port of departure, cruise line and departure date. The product list was unimpressive as the pictures on display were small and of low quality.

PRODUCT Lvmama offered two products operated by *Princess* and *Costa*, each with one departure date. Both going to Busan and then to Jeju, one would dock in Jeju in the early morning and the other in the afternoon, for the same length of six hours. *Princess* allows its passengers to choose different excursions for each port of call, and clearly stated the driving time from the sightseeing and shopping locations.

EASE OF BOOKING The multi-tab design made the booking page very smooth to toggle between the cruise ship introduction, customer reviews and the necessary booking information. The details of special discounts were shown before the room choices, which helped me quickly locate the rooms with better value. Membership registration was required right after the room decision.

PRICE In terms of the cruise lines, cruise ships and departure dates, Lvmama offered the same products as Ctrip. However, its prices were RMB500 higher for the same oceanview rooms, with no additional services available.

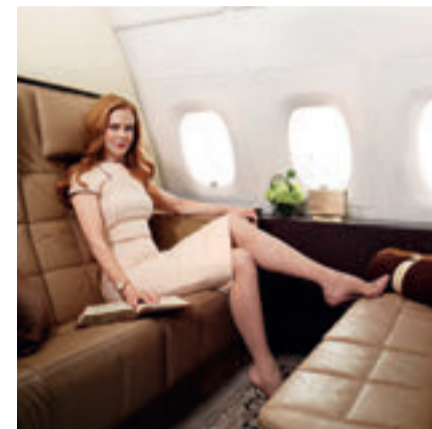
Social



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

GALLERY *NICOLE KIDMAN TAKES TO THE SKIES WITH ETIHAD*

Etihad Airways has been imbued with a touch of Hollywood glamour, now that screen icon Nicole Kidman has become the face and narrator of its new *Flying Reimagined* campaign, which was filmed on board the airline's new flagship Airbus A380 and various locations around the world. The premiere in Abu Dhabi was attended by (from left to right) the airline's senior vice president executive affairs, Hasan A Saleh Al Hammadi; COO, Peter Baumgartner; Kidman; president and CEO, James Hogan; and senior vice president government and aeropolitical affairs, Khaled Almehairbi.



TRADE CALENDAR *SEE YOU AT...*



PATA Annual Summit

April 23-26, Leshan, Sichuan

Hosted by the Leshan Municipal People's Government, this year's conference is themed 'New Dimensions of Heritage and Culture Tourism' to explore the challenges of tourist growth and preservation of heritage sites.



Trendz

May 17-20, Rotorua, New Zealand

Bringing together international travel sellers and buyers, New Zealand's premier tourism event finally returns to Rotorua after eight years to take place at Rotorua Energy Events Centre in 2015.



Thailand Travel Mart Plus

June 3-5, Bangkok

Organised by the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the annual B2B event is expected to be attended by more than 400 sellers across Thailand, Myanmar and the Greater Mekong Subregion countries this year.

PATAcademy
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"Human Capital Development - This Decade's Tourism Challenge"
June 2-4, 2015
PATA Engagement Hub, Bangkok, Thailand

The 4th PATAcademy-HCD, a pillar of PATA Human Capital Development, is designed for rising stars in the travel industry who want to broaden their practical experience, engage with leading speakers, and learn from their peers. The PATAcademy-HCD aims to educate, provide job skills training and increase the creativities of the participants.

"Human Capital Development (HCD); this decade's largest challenge! By now we all know that Tourism is growing globally at a rapid rate and the demand for skilled talent in the sector is far exceeding the supply.

- How will we cope with this phenomenal growth?
- How can we get the current and future generation of University Graduates interested in our sector?
- How can we retain our current talent within our sector?
- Do our current leaders have a well-planned succession plan?
- What are the expectations of Generation X and Y? Do we have the right framework to keep them engaged?

These are just some of the questions that we will attempt to answer at this June's PATAcademy-HCD; so please come and join us. Learn from leading experts and have fun practising your presentation and public speaking skills with a top leading coach!"

High-level industry speakers include:



Mario Hardy
CEO, PATA



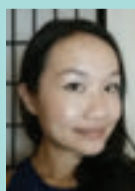
Prof Dr Walter Jamieson
MCIP
College of Innovation,
Thammasat University, Thailand



Jonathan Low
CSP (NSA) PCC (ICF) MBA (RMIT)
Certified Speaking Professional /
Professional Certified Coach
Managing Partner, PowerUpSuccess
Group of Companies
International, Malaysia



Claude Colombie
Director, Sala Bai
Cambodia



Susan Chen
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Author and Coach, Visa Worldwide,
Singapore



Ben Montgomery
Chairperson, Pacific Asia Travel
Association (PATA) Thailand
Chapter and Director of Business
Relations Management, Centara
Hotels & Resorts, Thailand



Veera Pardpattanapanich
Rector, Dusit Thani
College, Thailand



Andrew Chan
CEO
ACI HR Solutions (ACI)
Singapore

Registration fee for PATAcademy-HCD is
US\$1,028 for PATA members, **US\$1,235** for Chapter members and **US\$1,543** for non-members. All inclusive of credit card fee.

To register visit www.PATA.org

VIE Hotel Bangkok is the Official Accommodation Partner for PATAcademy-HCD and will host the final farewell cocktail party. **Bangkok University**, School of Humanities and Tourism Management will host welcome dinner and site visit on June 2.

Shop

Need ideas on what to buy? Take your pick and load your cart with the array of new products showcased on this page

HOTELS



HOTEL INDIGO BANGKOK, THAILAND

InterContinental Hotels Group's first Indigo hotel in South-east Asia has landed in Bangkok with the launch of the 192-room Hotel Indigo Bangkok Wireless Road. The hotel boasts an infinity pool, 24-hour gym access, complimentary Internet and three F&B outlets – the signature dining venue, Char, is slated to open in Q3.



NICCOLO CHENGDU, CHINA

Opening its doors on April 15, Niccolo Chengdu is located within the International Finance Square Shopping Mall in the centre of town. The 230-room hotel is furnished with a gym, pool and sauna, while F&B options at the hotel include the Tea Lounge, Niccolo Kitchen, Yue Hin Chinese restaurant and The Bar, in addition to the Niccolo Ballroom, Conservatory and a host of function venues.



VIB SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

Best Western International's first Vib hotel is expected to debut in Seoul's Gangnam district in 2017, featuring 150 rooms, a bar, F&B outlets and a swimming pool. Conceptualised as an urban boutique hotel, the Vib (pronounced "vibe") concept features vibrant and modern design with a focus on convenience, technology and social engagement to appeal to Millennial travellers.



NEW WORLD GRAND BALI, INDONESIA

Opening in 2017, the 328-key luxury resort will be part of the Pecatu Indah Resort development on the southern Bukit Peninsula. Amenities at the 10.8ha resort include a swimming pool with a 1,580m² viewing deck, spa, fitness centre, four restaurants, a rooftop destination lounge, a 1,100m² ballroom, four meeting rooms, as well as a wedding chapel.

TRANSPORTATION

BUENOS AIRES FLIGHT, AEROLINEAS CODE-SHARE OPENS SOUTH AMERICA TO AIR NZ



On December 1, Air New Zealand is due to start a thrice-weekly direct flight linking Auckland to Buenos Aires on Boeing 777-200 aircraft, taking passengers from New Zealand to Argentina in under 12 hours.

Air New Zealand is also tying up with Aerolineas Argentinas beyond Buenos Aires to Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo in Brazil in a codeshare agreement, which will see the latter place its flight code on selected Air New Zealand's services to Sydney and Melbourne.

TIGERAIR MAKES LEAP TO MALAYSIA'S IPOH

Tigerair will launch a four-times weekly service from Singapore to Ipoh from May 29 on an Airbus A320 aircraft, operating on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays.

The outbound flight will depart Singapore at 16.00, landing in Ipoh at 17.20. The return flight will leave Ipoh at 18.00 and reach Singapore at 19.20.

TECHNOLOGY

ROYAL CARIBBEAN BREWS A NEW RESERVATION SYSTEM WITH ESPRESSO

Royal Caribbean Cruises has launched its new Espresso reservation system for travel consultant partners selling Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises, Pullmantur, Azamara Club Cruises and CDF Croisieres de France.

Optimised for tablet devices, Espresso features a new simplified interface that reduce the number of steps to make a reservation – from seven to five – and assemble the most important and frequently used functions upfront, making it easier for travel consultants to instantly access the resources and information when servicing a client.

Consultants can contact their business development managers to schedule a personal training session or use the virtual training tool on www.espresso.cbt.com. More information about Espresso can be found at www.bookespresso.com.

The new Espresso reservation system replaces Cruise-Match, which will continue to be accessible to consultants until August 3, 2015.



ACTIVITIES



NEW HELICOPTER TOURS LIFT OFF FROM KUALA LUMPUR, LANGKAWI

Kuala Lumpur-based AsiaHeli.com has rolled out luxury helicopter tours for Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi Island, together with exclusive chartered flights to several popular tourist destinations around Malaysia.

The tours include narration from the pilots. In Kuala Lumpur, customers may choose from 30-, 45- or 60-minute tours, with prices starting from RM1,105 (US\$299) per person for a 30-minute flight. In Langkawi, options of six-, 15-, 20- or 30-minute tours are available, with a six-minute flight costing RM185 per person.

There are also charter flights available from Kuala Lumpur to popular tourist destinations around Malaysia, including Tioman Island, Malacca, Cameron Highlands, Penang, Langkawi and Pangkor. Charter services to Singapore are also available.

AsiaHeli.com works with travel consultants and will discuss the commission structure upon enquiry.



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EXPLORE THE WORLD
WITH BEST WESTERN

Report Integrated resorts

It's full-fledged war in Asia's integrated resort scene as new players get into the game and existing properties up the ante with fresh attractions. By S Puvaneswary, Paige Lee Pei Qi, Prudence Lui and Marianne Carandang

RAISING THE STAKES FOR PROSPERITY



Above: Home to ritzy casinos and big hotels, Macau is often dubbed the 'Las Vegas of the East'; left: Nickelodeon Lost Lagoon at Sunway Lagoon



the increasingly important mass market segment. The innovative offerings will achieve diversification and cater to a broad range of customers in Macau."

Welcoming the

additions to Macau's IR landscape, Gray Line

Tours, managing director,

Andy Wu, said: "With more

new players, we don't lose customers

to other destinations that have IRs.

These new developments definitely help boost Macau's appeal because they bring new elements that enrich the city's offerings. This may generate new source markets as well as win back the Hong Kong market as they always look for new stuff."

The Philippines has also mounted a serious challenge with a clutch of new IRs along Manila Bay.

Solaire Resort & Casino completed its Phase 1A expansion last November to unveil a new Sky Tower with a 312-suite hotel, 10 gaming salons, a 1,760-seat theatre and a 2,000m² meeting facility.

In February, Melco Crown Entertainment launched the US\$1.3 billion City of Dreams Manila with 930 rooms, 380 gaming tables, 1,700 slot games and 1,700 electronic games.

Melco will tap its Macau VIP database

and a "net of prospects" in South-east Asia and Australia, said co-chair and CEO, Lawrence Ho.

"Ultimately, what we think will underpin this property is first and foremost the domestic market," he added.

Open since 2009, Resorts World Manila will add 227 rooms and a grand ballroom at Marriott Hotel Manila in its phase-two expansion, plus the extension of Maxims Hotel and the construction of Hilton Manila and Sheraton Hotel Manila in its third phase.

Meanwhile, sister property Resorts World Bayshore is scheduled to open in 2018 to feature 1,200-1,500 keys across four brands (Genting Grand, Crockfords, Westin and Okura).

In Malaysia, Resorts World Genting (RWG) also announced in 4Q2013 a RM5 billion (US\$1.4 billion) investment over 10 years to enhance the 50-year-old hilltop gaming resort, a reflection of the diversification drive that regional IRs are undertaking to broaden their appeal and market reach.

In the first phase of the revamp, 1,286 rooms will be added to First World Hotel to bring its inventory to 7,345 rooms. Supply at RWG stands at 9,858 rooms, comprising budget, four-star, five-star and two luxury properties, Crockfords and Maxims.

RWG will also develop Twentieth Century Fox World, a 10.1ha theme park featuring 25 rides and attractions from Fox's films including *Ice Age*, *Rio*, *Alien* and *Night at the Museum*. A stone's throw

away, Sky Avenue will comprise 165 retail and F&B outlets and a new cable car station.

Sunway Group has entered a strategic collaboration with Viacom International Media Networks Asia in April 2014 to introduce Nickelodeon Lost Lagoon at Sunway Lagoon. Due to debut in mid-2015, the RM100 million park will mark Asia's first Nickelodeon-branded destination starring SpongeBob SquarePants, Dora the Explorer and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Commenting on the evolving IR scene in Malaysia, Sunway Lagoon general manager, Sean Choo, said: "It is crucial to perform upgrades within the theme park every now and then...The fact that Sunway Lagoon also introduces new rides and thrills every year to continue attracting visitors, not just locally but on an international level, is a clear indication of how competitive the industry has become."

Arokia Das, senior manager at Luxury Tours Malaysia, said the closure of Genting Outdoor Theme Park in 2013 had resulted in a significant drop in business from the Indian sub-continent, Thailand and Vietnam, so he hopes the new attractions will enable Malaysia to "compete with the likes of Universal Studios Singapore and Tokyo Disneyland".

South of Singapore, the 1,300ha mega IR development Lagoi Bay has elevated the allure of Bintan island with its highly anticipated crop of resorts and lifestyle attractions.

The 30-key Sanchaya luxury retreat officially launched in January, while the 196-room Swiss-Belhotel Lagoi Bay and Plaza Lagoi shopping mall opened in March. A 100-year old museum ship turned hotel, Doulos Phos, is expected to open this Christmas, following the launch of Bintan Marketplace in 2H2015.

Bintan Resorts also expects to open its own international airport in early 2017.

When asked if Singapore's high-profile IRs are rivals to Bintan, Bintan Resorts International director of marketing, Asad Shiraz, said: "Bintan prefers not to compete with Singapore, as Bintan was conceived to complement the offerings of Singapore without obvious overlaps or duplication.

"Singapore is a modern, built-up metropolis with exciting events, shopping and man-made attractions; Bintan, on the other hand, is a tranquil tropical island getaway," he added.

Furthermore, Bintan can be packaged as a twin destination with Singapore to offer "greater dimension, depth and variety", Asad opined.

So concurred CEO of Singapore-based GTMC Travel, Samson Tan, who has just started focusing on the India & China markets: "(Bintan) will be an option to combine with Singapore as (the demand for) mono Singapore from the region seems to have slowed down. We need to make transfers (immigration and transport) from Singapore to Bintan an even smoother process in order to increase more visitors."

Bintan Resorts earlier partnered the Changi Airport Group to emphasise the twin-destination concept, especially to the India market. Visitors from India to Bintan Resorts can now enjoy a S\$30 (US\$22) voucher while on transit at Changi Airport, along with a free Mangrove Discovery Tour.

Despite the growing number of rivals in the region, Macau, the world's biggest gaming destination, is now gearing up for another wave of integrated resort (IR) openings this year, with most of the new additions emphasising non-gaming elements developed by existing players.

This May, Galaxy Entertainment Group will launch the expansion of flagship property Galaxy Macau and the new Broadway at Galaxy Macau, while Melco Crown Entertainment is set to open Studio City, its second IR in Macau after City of Dreams, in 3Q2015 (see page 24).

A Melco Crown Entertainment spokesman commented: "The Hollywood-inspired Studio City is designed to capture



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OPENS IN SINGAPORE 2015

The South Beach is a H.I.P. (Highly Individualised People and Places) hotel that aspires to Create Infinite Experiences for you, with you. With commanding views over the Lion City's skyline, the hotel fuses contemporary ecological architecture with restored heritage buildings from its past life as a military camp. Standing as a gateway to Singapore's thriving city centre and historic Civic District, the hotel is walking distance from MRT stations, shopping malls and places of interests including art & history museums and the Esplanade Theatres. The hotel is also conveniently connected to Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre via an aerobridge.



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Report Integrated resorts

WHAT ELSE IS ON THE CARDS



Australia Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort

The yet-to-be-constructed A\$8 billion (US\$6 billion) Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort is set to be a game changer for Cairns' tourism industry. To be located on 314ha of land north of Cairns near the Great Barrier Reef, this mega-resort and casino will become the largest in the world with 7,500 rooms across eight luxury hotels. It opens in 2018.

South Korea Incheon Airport project

To be modelled after Resorts World Singapore, Incheon Airport has announced a tourism project to build a new foreigner-only casino, shopping mall and hotels to attract Chinese visitors by taking advantage of the city's geographical proximity to Beijing and Shanghai.

Set to be completed by 2019, the Incheon Airport project is expected to cost between five to six trillion won (US\$4.5-5.4 billion) and will be developed on a 327ha plot of vacant land near the second passenger terminal. Three other IRs are also being built near the airport as part of the South Korean government's plans to imitate Macau's cluster of IRs.

Macau The Parisian Macao

The US\$2.7 billion Parisian Macao (below) is expected to open in 2016 and feature more than 3,000 hotel rooms and suites, some 45,500m² of retail space, F&B offerings, meeting and convention facilities, and a half-sized replica of the Eiffel Tower.



Australia Queen's Wharf Brisbane

The city of Brisbane wants to attract Asia-Pacific's gamblers with a 'Singapore-style' IR, which will be constructed on prime waterfront land at the Queen's Wharf precinct to the tune of A\$1 billion. The resort, which Queensland's department of state development said draws inspiration from Singapore's Marina Bay Sands, will include luxury hotels, function centres, F&B outlets, residential units and a pedestrian bridge, as well as gaming facilities.

Philippines Manila Bay Resorts

Owned by Universal Entertainment chairman Kazuo Okada, Manila Bay Resorts' future is less certain than that of other Philippine IRs. Even though resort construction has begun, state-owned Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation has stated it would not issue a gaming licence or allow the commencement of casino operations until land ownership allegations have been addressed.

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Betting on a growing middle class



While IRs' multiple activities are a pull factor for the Indian market, theme parks are a stronger draw for Indonesian outbound travellers, especially among families with children during school holidays and the Lebaran period.

Agustinus Pake Seko, director of Bayu Buana Travel Services, said: "Parents nowadays listen to their children when it comes to picking a destination for their holidays, therefore theme parks play an important role in this."

Ivone Valentine, tour counter supervisor of Dwidaya Tour, said: "We take into consideration theme parks when creating holiday season packages for families."

Having established names like Resorts World, Disneyland and Universal Studios in a destination or the addition of well-known characters into theme parks also play a significant role in promoting an IR.

Agustinus said: "The opening of the Wizarding World of Harry Potter in Universal Studio Japan, for example, has managed to attract both new and repeat family travellers to the country." – additional reporting by Rohit Kaul and Mimi Hudoyo

With most IRs in Asia-Pacific geared towards foreign tourists, especially China's booming middle class, it is not surprising that the anti-graft crackdown by the Chinese government has had a cooling effect on casinos across the region, with Macau the most affected.

Casino revenue in the former Portuguese colony declined for 10 consecutive months to MOP21.5 billion (US\$2.7 billion) in March, down from MOP35.4 billion a year earlier, according to data released by Macau's Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau.

"There is still a huge market outside of China that we have yet to tap into," said Irene Wong, executive director of sales & guest services and hotel operations, MGM Macau. She added that the company has embarked on a strategy to broaden its customer base by offering diversified non-gaming experiences to "accommodate the transformation that Macau is going through".

Industry players also urge Macau's IRs to adopt a different game plan to stay competitive. EGL Tours Macau's general manager, Sabina Iong, said: "As Chinese traffic has dropped recently, (Macau) hotels have now switched to wooing markets like Taiwan and South Korea with attractive hotel rates. IRs should boost (marketing) efforts in South-east Asia as (Macau's) rate are reasonable and no longer jacked up by the Chinese."

The Chinese visitor slump has also hit the Philippines, although the business models of Philippine IRs have made them less reliant on the China market than their peers.

"We have to admit we're all looking forward to getting a good slice of the outbound market from China...we haven't seen as many Chinese casino players as we would like," said Francis Hernando, vice president for gaming licensing and development at Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation. "But we are not looking at players only; about 90 per cent of (IR) space is not devoted to gaming."

Mint Leong, managing director at Sunflower Holidays, a Malaysian inbound firm specialising in the China market, said that only a small percentage of her Chinese clients visit Resort World Genting, the only IR in Malaysia with casinos, attracted by curiosity rather than the desire to gamble.

She said: "Most first-time visitors want to see what Genting is about. For repeat visitors to Malaysia, Genting is no longer a must-visit destination, thus the Chinese government's anti-gambling declaration will have no impact on demand for the resort."

Meanwhile, India outbound players are witnessing a good demand for IRs in destinations like Macau, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the Maldives.

"Indians looking to indulge in casinos used to head to Goa and Nepal. IRs in Macau like The Venetian Macao opened up the concept of multi-dimensional resorts in India. However, IRs in other destinations like Marina Bay Sands in Singapore are also finding many takers in the Indian market. Segments including leisure, MICE and honeymooners are fuelling the demand for IRs," said Ashutosh Rawal, general manager, Fun Holidays.

"A lot of these IRs are now investing in the Indian market through activities like roadshows, which have enhanced the trade's knowledge of these products and the promotion of IRs among their clients," said Rajji Rai, chairman, Uniglobe Swiftravel.

Several consultants share that the myriad options offered under one roof has been a critical reason why Indian tourists are attracted to IRs.

"Resorts World Sentosa in Singapore, Genting Highlands in Malaysia and Laguna Phuket in Thailand have emerged as major attractions for Indian travellers. Bintan Resorts in Indonesia is also growing in demand – we are seeing a year-on-year growth of six-10 per cent, said Rajesh Bhalla, manager sales-India, GTMC.

Universal Studios Japan's new Wizarding World of Harry Potter is an attraction for Asian families

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Guide Serviced residences

WHERE THE BRIGHT SPOTS ARE



Choe Peng Sum
CEO, Frasers Hospitality

Where are your serviced residence development hotspots in Asia-Pacific?

The emerging hotspots are Chengdu, Wuxi and Tianjin in China, where Frasers Hospitality has established a presence and is planning continued growth.

Why are you focusing on these cities?

China's burgeoning second- and third-tier cities are new areas that are experiencing rapid growth, as demonstrated by the influx of FDI and demand for travel accommodation. This is driven by rising business and leisure travel, due to the proliferation of high-tech and industry parks in these cities and a growing segment of middle-class consumers contributing significantly to the increase in leisure travel.

More business travellers are choosing to stay in serviced residences even on leisure trips, and leisure travellers are more aware of the benefits serviced apartments offer.

These high-growth second- and third-tier cities are key growth areas for Frasers Hospitality. Our China expansion strategy works on the strong demand for our serviced residences, as reflected in high occupancy rates since we set foot in the country and the numerous industry awards the brand has garnered in the region.

How are you expanding in these cities?

We plan to open the 192-unit Fraser Place Tianjin by 2015; the 307-unit Fraser Suites Tianjin, the 180-unit Fraser Place Chengdu; the second Modena by Fraser Wuxi with 120 units by 2017; and the 200-unit Fraser Suites Wuxi by 2019.



Dean Schreiber
Managing director,
Asia-Pacific, Oakwood
Worldwide

Where are your serviced residence development hotspots in Asia-Pacific?

Besides China and India, current hotspots in Asia-Pacific include Brisbane in Australia, Colombo in Sri Lanka and Yangon in Myanmar.

Why are you focusing on these cities?

In Australia, serviced apartments are in high demand and short supply – a trend that shows no sign of slowing. The demand for quality accommodation is rising nationwide, Stimulated by growth in agriculture, telecommunications and construction.

Colombo is currently undergoing a dramatic transformation. Driven by Sri Lanka's economic growth and infrastructure development, there has been greater urban migration towards Colombo, while a number of wealthy Sri Lankans are moving back to the city following the end of the country's civil war, leading to demand for both luxury and affordable housing.

Myanmar is the other fast-growing South-east Asian state with a lot of strong initiatives championed by the government. The current shortage, along with the weak supply pipeline of serviced residences in Yangon, will pose challenges for new inbound expatriates. As the government grants more foreign business licenses, expatriate accommodation requirements will persistently rise amid limited quality housing options in the city.

How are you expanding in these cities?

We are constantly taking on projects in

areas where there are aggressive developments initiated by both the government and private sectors. We look to double our existing portfolio in the near future and these markets will be the key thrusts in our business development.



Tony Soh
Chief corporate officer,
Ascott

Where are your serviced residence development hotspots in Asia-Pacific?

Ascott has 21 new cities in our serviced residences portfolio, and we plan to open over 20 serviced apartment properties in Asia this year.

We recently opened our first serviced residences in Sriracha, Thailand and Haiphong, Vietnam. Our first properties in China's Wuxi, Ascott Central Wuxi and Somerset Wuxi, are also slated to open later this year.

Why are you focusing on these cities?

Ascott is the first international serviced residence operator in Sriracha and Haiphong.

Citadines Grand Central Sri Racha is close to industrial estates where many MNCs are based and is also near Pattaya. Situated in Vietnam's third-largest city, Somerset Central TD Hai Phong City is in the new CBD where we foresee strong demand for quality accommodation.

Wuxi's economy is growing steadily and its GDP exceeded RMB807 billion (US\$130 billion) in 2013. With more MNCs and large local enterprises setting up in Wuxi, we expect healthy demand for our serviced residences by expatriates and local business travellers.

How are you expanding in these cities?

We have four properties in Sriracha, Haiphong and Wuxi so far, and we are open to opportunities. We will expand through investments, management contracts, strategic alliances and franchises.



Markus Aklin
Vice president of
development,
Onyx Hospitality Group

Where are your serviced residence development hotspots in Asia-Pacific?

We are looking to expand our serviced apartment brands – Shama, which is well established in Hong Kong and China, and the Amari Residences in Thailand – not only within existing markets but also beyond new markets, which we feel will have a growing demand for this type of accommodation. Currently, we are looking at India, Indonesia and Malaysia as areas of expansion.

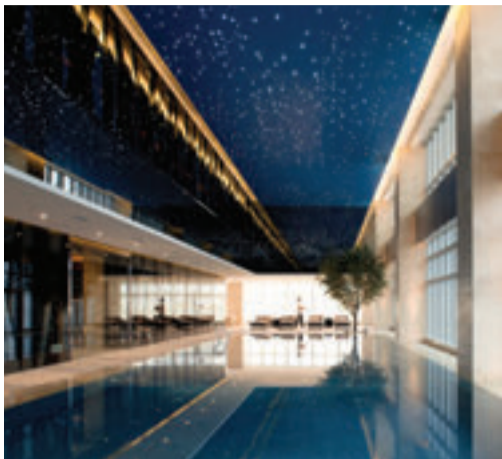
The specific cities include Jakarta in Indonesia, and Kuala Lumpur and Iskandar in Malaysia. At this point we are looking for both brown-field and green-field opportunities, and we plan to announce new projects soon.

Why are you focusing on these cities?

We are now looking into India, Indonesia and Malaysia because of the existing strong demand for corporate long-stay clientele – these are the key consumers of Shama and Amari Residences.

We have also seen a shift in the demand from long to short stays in residence-style accommodation, especially among families who are looking for more space and have (lower) priorities for (on-site) F&B facilities.

As the momentum of business investment and infrastructure development shifts beyond traditional economic centres in Asia-Pacific, serviced residence operators are seeing opportunities in new hotbeds of activity, discover [Paige Lee Pei Qi](#), [Greg Lowe](#), [Xinyi Liang-Pholsena](#), [S Puvaneswary](#) and [Mimi Hudoyo](#)



Clockwise from left: Serviced residences are in short supply in Brisbane; Fraser Suites Chengdu's swimming pool; an apartment at Aston Marina Jakarta



How are you expanding in these cities?

The Shama brand includes three tiers: Shama, the core brand providing luxury serviced apartments; Shama Luxe, the brand's more premium tier featuring more spacious layouts with tailor-made furnishings and appliances; and Shama Lite, which was introduced in 2013.

Shama Lite is geared towards mid-market profiles with more compact units and are often located in residential areas, appealing to business travellers and families, whereas residences under the Amari

brand present more facilities, including F&B, which is not typically available at Shama properties.

In the key areas of India, Malaysia and Indonesia, the location will dictate the brands we choose to introduce. For instance, as part of our recently announced expansion plans to India, we will be introducing the first Amari Residences at GIFT city in Gujarat, featuring 120 residences, one restaurant, a swimming pool and a fitness centre. After studying the market, we discovered that this product caters to the demands of guests, as they expect more facilities and services to be available, especially F&B. The number of keys will also depend on the space available, as we are looking at both green-field projects or existing structures.



Kem Siew

Vice president of sales and marketing, Swiss-Garden International (SGI) Hotels, Resorts & Inns

Where are your serviced residence development hotspots in Malaysia?

Kuantan, Malacca and Kota Bharu.

Why are you focusing on these cities?

These destinations attract tourists and corporates, which are our target markets. Choosing a location is important, as the serviced residences have to appeal to both corporate clients (for long stays of more than a month) and the tourists (for those staying for at least a night).

Swiss-Garden Hotel & Residences Malacca is located close to the historic core, and the Malacca Industrial Park is targeted mainly at tourists visiting Malacca for leisure or business events. The hotel has a large ballroom which can accommodate 840 guests in banquet seating and the serviced residences provide one, two- and

three-bedroom options.

Swiss-Garden Resort Residences Kuantan is strategically located within the Malaysia-China Kuantan Industrial Park to attract mainly corporate clients and leisure tourists. Having the in-house Underwater City of Teruntum mini water theme park attracts families with young children and even extended families.

How are you expanding in these areas?

Expansion is through property management. For example, SGI is managing two new serviced residences – the 179-unit Swiss-Garden Resort Residences Kuantan with a mini water theme park and Swiss-Garden Hotel & Residences Malacca, with 484 serviced apartment units in one tower and 306 hotel rooms in another tower. Both properties opened in January 2015.

SGI will also manage its first serviced residence property in Kota Bharu with the opening of Pavilion Garden Suites in 1Q2017. This managed property will also be part of a mixed development.



Norbert Vas

Vice president business development & operations, Archipelago International

Where are your serviced residence development hotspots in Indonesia?

Definitely the top five cities of Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, Bandung and Makassar; but the greater Jakarta area is really where most of the action is and will be.

For Archipelago International, however, Balikpapan is another success story. The city has a lot of demand from expatriates working in the oil and gas industry.

Why are you focusing on these cities?

Jakarta-based developers are more sophisticated and so are the clients; the market is

mature and competitive, and the demand is there. Jakarta developers are aware of the pull a brand can bring to a residential project or serviced residence, and 20 to 30 per cent of the premium buyers are willing to pay.

There are also a few successful high-end luxury branded residences already in the market, so the next trend will be that more mainstream, upscale and mid-market brands like Aston are getting into the serviced residence markets.

How are you expanding in these cities?

We operate serviced residences in various cities across Indonesia, with the most successful ones located in Jakarta and Balikpapan. We currently have projects in Karawaci (west of Jakarta), the southern part of Jakarta and Surabaya.



Ascott Somerset Central TD Hai Phong City

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Destination China

THE LEISURE SIDE OF G

Guangzhou is China's third-largest city, an important centre of foreign commerce in Southern China and the cradle of Cantonese culture – all signs pointing to a strong tourism sector.

Three million international visitors came to Guangzhou last year, according to the Guangzhou Hotel Association, a 7.6 per cent increase over the 2.8 million in 2013.

The city is also the third most-visited destination on mainland China after Shanghai and Beijing, says the China National Tourism Administration, though the city's image as a commercial and industrial centre has persisted.

Exo Travel China believes in the potential and "pulling power" of Guangzhou. Managing director Olivier Marchesin said: "People consider Guangzhou in general as a big industrialised place with possibilities for doing just a little more than half-day tours around the historic Shamian Island...but Guangzhou is much more than that."

Marchesin pointed out that many of the city's attractions are easily covered on walking tours, while heritage attractions including Hakka villages and the well-preserved Diaolou watchtowers at Kaiping city are accessible from Guangzhou.

"This place just needs (tour operators) to promote it better. But please, let's keep Guangzhou a place for FITs but not mass tourism," urged Marchesin.

Echoing this was Century Holiday International Travel Group's Guangzhou branch office general manager, Creamy Chen, who remarked that Guangzhou is home to many historical relics, some dat-

Guangzhou still has many unexplored pockets such as traditional markets hawking local produce



Viewpoints

What is needed to grow the FIT market for Guangzhou?



Vico Wei, chief inspector, Guangdong China Travel Service

International promotions need to be stepped up as Guangzhou has much to offer like Hakka culture, dining and the 'Gold Coast'. Not many people are aware of our extensive coastline.

Ronnie Cheng, general manager, Langham Place, Guangzhou

There is still room for improvement when comparing Guangzhou's level of cleanliness to other international cities. The government should step up on public hygiene. It would be nice to see more new attractions, but there is also a need to maintain existing ones such as Lizhi Wan, Guangzhou Tower and Haixinsha Park.



TRIED & TESTED

Hotel Nikko Guangzhou

Prudence Lui checks in at Hotel Nikko Guangzhou and gets a taste of the famed *omotenashi*, or Japanese hospitality

pin plugs, but the writing desk was not big enough for me. The lack of high-rise buildings around the hotel meant that I had a panoramic view of the surrounding greenery through big windows.

FACILITIES Dedicated MICE facilities on the first and second floors cater for medium- to large-scale events, with a maximum capacity of 1,000 guests. Although a business hotel, it also has a kids' corner stocked with toys on the ground floor, while the Okura Garden outside Café Verano can be turned into a big playground for families.

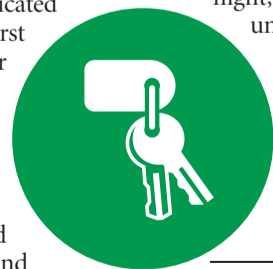
F&B The hotel has six F&B outlets, namely Café Verano, Toh Lee, Benkay, Lobby Lounge, Fountain Steak & Bar and Cake Room by Nikko. Toh Lee, which serves

fusion Cantonese cuisine, is worth a try. Additionally, the Fountain Steak & Bar opened last month.

SERVICE Staff are mostly helpful and responsive. When I requested a pencil at night, housekeeping staff delivered it in under 10 minutes. The hotel has also published its own map with useful information like the hotel location, a metro guide and the city's key attractions.

VERDICT An excellent choice for business travellers.

Name Hotel Nikko Guangzhou
Rates RMB780 (US\$125) for a Deluxe room, plus 15 per cent service charge
No. of rooms 400
Contact details
Tel: (86) 20-6631-0011
Email: sales@nikkogz.com
Website: www.nikkogz.com



The local trade wants to prove that Guangzhou is more than just a busy transport and commerce hub, with plenty of attractions that will be of interest to FITs, reports Prudence Lui

UANGZHOU

Destination in numbers

3 million

International arrivals to Guangzhou in 2014, up 7.6 per cent over 2013's 2.8 million, according to the Guangzhou Hotel Association

RMB784.70

Average room rate of the city's 23 five-star hotels in 2014, equivalent to US\$126

62.5%

Average occupancy rate of Guangzhou's 41 four-star hotels last year

128

The number of three-star hotels in the city. Average occupancy was 57.5 per cent, while rates stood at RMB301.60

ing back 5,000 years.

Wholesale markets are popular among South-east Asians who snap up leather, fabric and electronic products made locally; and the Guangzhou Tower, built for the 2010 Asian Games, is now another drawcard for tourists, she said.

"Guangzhou is the gateway city to the Pearl River Delta and our rail network makes it easy for FITs to travel to all the main destinations," Chen added. "Moreover, high-speed rail now connects Guangzhou to Zhangjiajie, Xiaogan, Wuhan and Guizhou, which may draw additional overnight stays to the city."

Further improvements in transportation are also underway. Guangdong China Travel Service's chief inspector, Vico Wei, elaborated that a high-speed train from Guangzhou to Guizhou was launched in late 2014, China Southern Airlines added a San Francisco link in December, while Baiyun International Airport's third runway was launched in February.

"In 2013, we became the third city in China to introduce 72-hour visa-free transits. That was a good start, but we're finding it too short for longhaul visitors who must adjust to local time, so we hope it can be stretched to five days," he said.

Aloft Guangzhou Hotel University Park, which opened last year, also has its sights set on FITs. Said hotel manager, Sophia Wong: "We have observed that increasing numbers of FIT travellers are coming to the city, especially families during long holidays. The tourist scene has transformed dramatically since the successful hosting of the Asian Games, with a slew of international hotel brands also helping to lift the city's image."



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Destination China

How to sell



Lingnan Impression Park

DO Go low-carbon on **Guangdong Greenway**, which has created 10 themed cycling routes around Guangzhou. Downtown routes such as the *New Central Axis of Guangzhou* cover iconic landmarks like the Guangzhou Opera House and Guangdong Provincial Museum, whereas the *Guangzhou New Highlights* takes you to Guangzhou Tower and Pearl River-InPub International Beer Museum.

SEE Situated in Guangzhou Science City, **Lingnan Impression Park** boasts one of the best spots to learn about the 1,000-year-old Lingnan culture. Traditional Lingnan architecture and free live performances are on view for visitors. The riverside attraction offers a combination of sightseeing, recreation, entertainment, restaurants, shopping and accommodation.

EAT Situated right above Shipaiqiao Station of Metro Line 3, **TaiKoo Hui** in Tianhe district was developed by Swire Properties. The stylish complex features a shopping mall with a slew of eateries, many with roots in other cities and making their debut here. The Food Garden on Level MU is home to Guangzhou's first food court and surrounded by other affordable eateries, while the Garden on Level 3 offers six different cuisine choices.

STAY International brand hotels have entered Guangzhou over the last 10 years. Newer choices include the 500-room **Langham Place, Guangzhou** and the 263-room **Mandarin Oriental, Guangzhou**.

MY WAY

What do you do in your free time?

I love eating and always patronise food outlets with positive reviews. My favourite cuisine is Cantonese and I rely on word-of-mouth referrals or WeChat groups, which I feel are reliable sources of information. I recommend the high-end Ping Sing Restaurant for its fresh sashimi!

How do you spend your weekends?

I enjoy driving, so I explore suburban areas outside Guangzhou like Songhua and Zengcheng. It takes no more than 40 minutes to access rural villages and parks. Apart from hiking, I usually visit local farms for farm-to-table dishes like seasonal vegetables and roasted spring chicken. I also enjoy the hot springs in the area.

Where can one go to see the old and new Guangzhou?

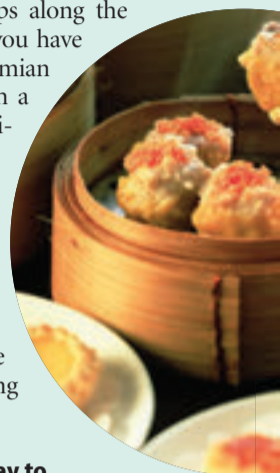
I suggest the little known, older parts of Guangzhou like Xiguan. Once a filthy canal, Lizhiwan Chung was cleaned up

in recent years and transformed into a beautiful water passage for river cruises with snack shops along the banks. Make sure you have dim sum there. Shamian Island is also worth a visit for the historical buildings.

For new Guangzhou, venture into Zhujiang New City district in the city's eastern side and enjoy a river cruise along the Zhujiang River.

What's the best way to explore Guangzhou?

Hire a car and tour guide to take you around at your own pace. This option offers a more relaxed and safer experience, and better service. Travelling on public transport is not easy, even if you are used to it.



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What souvenir items would you recommend to first-time travellers?

Try traditional Guangzhou snacks like *lo por bang* (wife cake) and chicken cookies. These are popular picks for overseas Chinese visitors, who buy them from established, well-reputed shops in Liwan district such as Lin Heung Lau and the main branch of Guangzhou Restaurant at Wenchang Road.

Creamy Chen
Guangzhou branch
office general
manager,
Century Holiday
International
Travel Group

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 DoubleTree by Hilton in Guangzhou Science City

The second DoubleTree by Hilton hotel in Guangzhou has brought forward its opening date from October to late June. A 40-minute drive from Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport and adjacent to the Huangpu District Government Administration Office, the 314-room hotel has four F&B outlets, a 24-hour fitness centre, heated outdoor pool, rooftop garden, 1,000m² pillarless ballroom and seven other meeting rooms.

2 G Bar

Grand Hyatt Guangzhou's stylish G Bar was repositioned as a cocktail bar last year and will undergo major refurbishment this month. The revamp will include new furniture and interior decor for a trendier feel. The resident band from Ukraine plays a range of tunes from jazz to pop rock.

3 Guangzhou-Nyingchi flights

China Southern Airlines has commenced a thrice-weekly Guangzhou-Nyingchi (Tibet) flight from March 19, marking the airline's second



ond destination in Tibet after Lhasa. Departing on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 06.15 from Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, the flight returns to Guangzhou at 10.25 on the same day. The direct service is operated on Airbus A319 aircraft.

4 Jiuyuan Airlines

Guangzhou welcomed its first home-grown LCC – Jiuyuan ('nine dollars') Airlines. Based out of Baiyun International Airport, the airline's maiden flight to Zhanjiang took off in December 2014 and Harbin is its newest destination.

TRIED & TESTED

Aloft Guangzhou University Park

Dog lovers rejoice! **Prudence Lui** finds Aloft Guangzhou University Park to be a buzzing, pet-friendly hotel for leisure and business travellers alike

LOCATION It took me about 20 minutes by car to reach the hotel, located within a low-density residential neighbourhood in the Guangzhou University City south-east of the CBD. As a centre for higher education, the university city is home to no fewer than 10 local higher education institutions, most of which are minutes away from the hotel on foot.

For the business traveller, the hotel is only a 20-minute drive to Guangzhou International Convention and Exhibition Center and 50 minutes from Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport.

ROOMS My 32m² room was bright and airy, thanks to 3.2m-high ceilings and big windows. Working on the long desk set by the window was comfortable because of the natural light and picturesque river views. There are many plugs on both sides of the bed but only one at the writing desk.

Thumbs up to the plush platform bed and the use of space – a sliding door ensures privacy for the toilet and shower cubicle while the vanity unit is located in an open plan design.

FACILITIES Stepping into the lobby, I could sense the vibrance promised by Aloft's brand concept. For instance, unlike the traditional long reception desk, the reception's circular design allows guests to approach from different directions, and there are plenty of seating areas in the



public areas where people can meet and mingle. There are four meeting rooms and a dedicated entrance on the ground floor. Bicycle rental services are available.

F&B The hotel provides an array of culinary experiences. For instance, w xyz bar is more than a watering hole and offers recreational amenities such as billiards and table tennis. One night during my stay, I watched a live music performance by a band from Beijing – regular showcases of up-and-coming music acts are part of the Aloft brand. Those who fancy a proper meal can go to the café on the ground floor or to the Chinese restaurant for Cantonese fare. For people in hurry, the 24-hour grab-and-go concept at Re:fuel by Aloft definitely helps.

SERVICE Staff were friendly and responsive to all my requests. The good news for pet lovers is that this hotel is the first and only hotel in Guangzhou to offer a pet-friendly programme for dogs under 18kg. Staff will arrange an Aloft-branded bed and bowl, plus treats and toys for your furkid.

VERDICT The green and tranquil hotel environment makes Aloft Guangzhou University Park an excellent escape for young families and pet lovers.

Name Aloft Guangzhou University Park

Rates From RMB428 nett (US\$69)

No. of rooms 272

Contact details

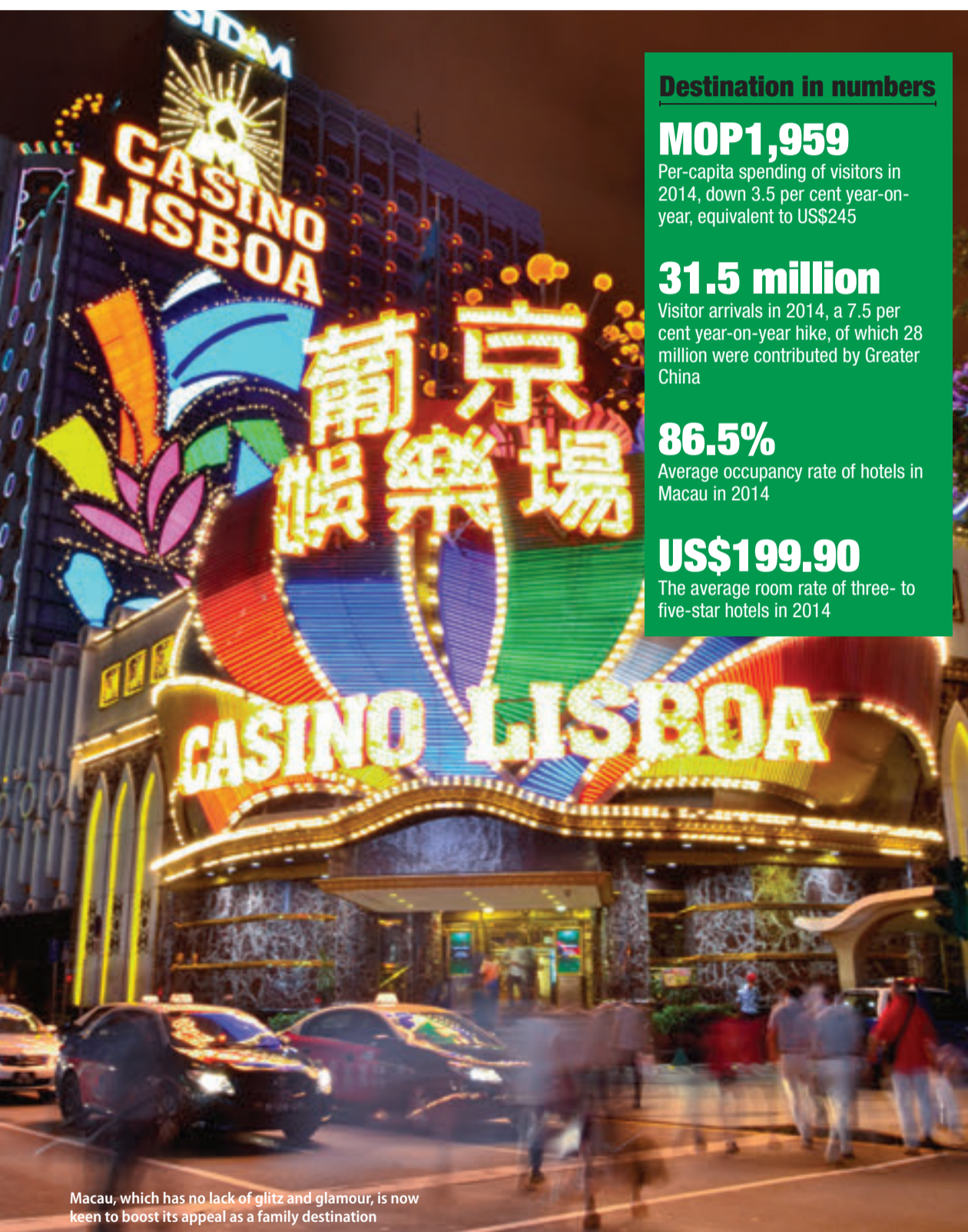
Tel: (86) 20-3100-0888

Website: www.alofthotels.com/guangzhouuniversitypark

Destination Macau

As recent negative revenue growth at its casinos spark concerns about the end of Macau's gold rush, trade players are waiting with bated breath to see if the territory's new non-gaming attractions will pay off. By Prudence Lui

ROLLING THE DICE ON DIVERSIFICATION



Destination in numbers

MOP1,959

Per-capita spending of visitors in 2014, down 3.5 per cent year-on-year, equivalent to US\$245

31.5 million

Visitor arrivals in 2014, a 7.5 per cent year-on-year hike, of which 28 million were contributed by Greater China

86.5%

Average occupancy rate of hotels in Macau in 2014

US\$199.90

The average room rate of three- to five-star hotels in 2014

Macau, which has no lack of glitz and glamour, is now keen to boost its appeal as a family destination

With new integrated resorts (IRs) coming online this year, industry stakeholders and tourism experts in Macau are hoping that the wave of fresh attractions and non-gaming elements, and not the baccarat, will be the territory's prime attraction.

Developers on Macau have already unveiled a flurry of new entertainment and leisure offerings (see page 12 and next page).

Institute for Tourism Studies, Macao (IFT) lecturer and member of IFT Tourism Research Centre, Patrick Lo, believes Macau's destination potential will be boosted as a result. "We hope these new developments will stimulate visitors of different demographics to come, particularly families and the booming (middle-class) population of South-east Asian countries."

MV Destination, general manager, Clemson Lo, said: "Macau has done a very good job changing its image from a gambling city to a meeting and exhibition, and even leisure and family travel, destination. Clients' impressions are now beyond gaming, which helps me in presenting the city positively."

"Macau has never been short of rooms. With new IRs descending in the next few months, the additional meeting spaces certainly will help in selling conferences."

China International Travel Service Macau, manager, Cooper Zhang, concurred: "These new offers help me push this (MICE) segment because the increased room supply will (exert a downward pressure on) prices."

DOC DMC Macau's managing director Bruno Simões expects Galaxy expansion will provide an alternative to Sands China, currently a dominant player on Macau's MICE scene.

Meanwhile, MCI Macau sees the opportunity to offer more exciting corporate incentive programmes or new events locations. Managing director Peter Hassall said: "We will also be encouraging previous clients to return to Macau to experience what's new. Macau can be a challenging destination for some industries because of the gaming component."

"However, Macau's diversification, while slow, is making the destination more appealing to a broader audience and we are seeing a rise in MICE enquiries across a wide variety of industries."

"We are already working with the new (IRs) to understand what the new venues offer and how to add a point of difference...We can't wait to get out and sell 'the new Macau.'"

However, other trade players feel that it is still too early to evaluate if Macau's diversification strategy is successful.

Simões said: "So far, Macau diversification has been very slow. Other key success factors such as accessibility, unique venues and attractions are basically the same. The destination can be improved if all parties work hard."

Zhang added: "There are only a handful of family products right now. In short, diversification is not yet successful as the gaming elements still dominate and we long for more family products."

Said IFT's Lo: "Whether (Macau) will attract more of the current segments or an entirely different group remains to be seen. Any step, however small, toward diversification is favourable."

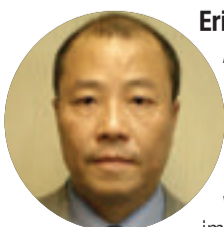
Furthermore, Air Cruise Travel's executive director, Eric Chang, pointed out: "New attractions do drive the tourist traffic, but unless they are something unusual that can wow the world, they won't attract longhaul visitors from the US and Europe. "There is no change in the way I sell Macau because our high-end clients put more emphasis and time on China's destinations while both Hongkong and Macau are treated in the usual way. I haven't heard much from these new IRs so I don't know what surprises they have in store yet."

Viewpoints What else is needed for Macau's diversification drive to be successful?



Cooper Zhang, manager, international department, CITS

Hardware infrastructure. As gaming plays a key role in Macau tourism, the market doesn't have many activity options for families. Meanwhile, all large events can only go to Cotai Strip given their large capacity, resulting in pricey charges as meeting facilities in five-star hotels in the Macau Peninsula cannot take big groups. I also hope hotels and MGTO step up promotions to showcase their unique offerings.



Eric Chang, executive director, Air Cruise Travel

(Macau's) tourism marketing and promotion directions need to be changed as a majority of resources are channelled to China where it's easy to sell and the impact is immediate. More Chinese traffic will hurt us as international visitors will find it (too crowded). The government has done a good job in shifting tourists' preference from luxury to local culture like exploring the city on walking tours.



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Destination Macau

How to sell

DO Have a sky-high adventure at **Macau Tower**, which offers activities such as a stroll around the outer rim of the Adventure Deck, climbing 233m up or a free fall at 200km/h down the tower.

SEE Grab a copy of the *Macao Cultural and Creative Map* to explore lesser-known areas of the city. There are five districts to choose from, namely **St Anthony Parish, Our Lady of Fatima Parish, St Lawrence Parish, Cathedral Parish** and **St Lazarus Parish**, where a number of contemporary art galleries and studios as well as storytelling venues are housed.

EAT Instead of Michelin-starred restaurants, opt for a meal at one of the city's two training restaurants – the **Educational Restaurant** run by the Institute for Tourism Studies or **The Seasons** at the Macau University of Science and Technology. Both restaurants offer experiential learning environments for young professionals, and visitors' patronage will contribute towards the refinement of their skills.



Sky drumming atop Macau Tower

STAY The newly refurbished **Grand Coloane Resort Macau** (formerly The Westin Resort Macau) at Coloane Macau, next to a golf course, offers an escape from Macau's gaming environment.

MY WAY

What do you enjoy doing in your leisure time?

I like to bike or walk among nature and breathe some fresh air. In Macau it is really a challenge, as the only place suitable is Coloane Island – either the trails, beach or Coloane Village. At home, my favorite activities are cooking and making handicrafts.

How do you relax after a day's work?

A glass of red wine with classical music, opera or a movie.

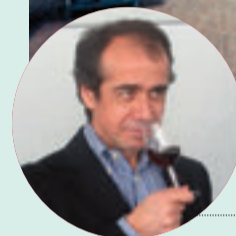
What's your favourite restaurant in Macau?

My favorite Portuguese restaurant is the Military Club, which has the best balance of food, price, service and atmosphere. For a more relaxed ambience, it is Miramar. For dim sum, head to Kwun Hoi Heen at Grand Coloane Resort.

Where do you hang out on weekends?

On weekends I spend most of my time on Coloane Island. The central point is Grand Coloane Resort, a green gem and probably the best-kept secret in town. I appreciate quiet places and nature, so I avoid shopping malls and hotels.

How can repeat travellers experience the lesser-known sides of Macau?



Bruno Simões
Managing director,
DOC DMC Macau

My favorite area is the old Chinese Bazaar, between Senado Square and Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16. Rua dos Ervanários and Rua de Cinco de Outubro represent the old Macau with traditional arts and craft shops, teahouses, lots of locals and no tourists. The temple of Hong Kong at Largo do Pagode do Bazar is in the heart of this area.

Finish at Casa Garden and visit this heritage house built in 1770 to view interesting art exhibitions. Enter Camões Garden and exit from the back, to arrive at the real Macau.

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 New role-play theme park

Planet J will open the world's first-ever Live-Action-Role-Play indoor theme park in Sands Cotai Central this summer.

Set against a backdrop of the Magic Stone Kingdom, visitors can act out the fantasy characters and interact with other players within a virtual setting. Each player is also accompanied by a 'magic book' – a personalised mobile gear connecting with over 200 whimsical games.

The players' game progress will be recorded on Planet J's system and can be reactivated on subsequent visits, enabling them to move ahead with tougher challenges to come.

2 Macau Open Top Bus

The Macau Open Top Bus launched a new route in March, extending from Macau Peninsula to Taipa and Cotai Strip, with a longer journey time of 100 minutes per trip, up from the regular 75 minutes.

Visitors can hop on and off to explore local areas or visit attractions like Macau Fisherman's Wharf and Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16. New stops include Hotel Taipa, Rua Da Cunha, Galaxy Macau, City of Dreams, The Venetian and Cotai Central.

Involving three buses and 16 stops, the new route starts and ends at Macau Ferry Terminal. Ten departures



3 Galaxy Macau

On May 27, Galaxy Macau will launch two new developments – Broadway at Galaxy Macau and the flagship hotel's Phase 2 development.

Formerly the Grand Waldo Complex, the Broadway was acquired by Galaxy Entertainment Group in 2013 to be transformed into the 320-room Broadway Hotel. Facilities will include the 3,000-seat Broadway Theatre, plus a vibrant street and entertainment district showcasing local creativity and artistry with hawker-style vendors and entertainers.

Phase 2 will also see the addition of the 1,000-room JW Hotel Marriott Macau and the 250-suite Ritz-

tures are scheduled daily between 09.20 and 16.05.

4 Studio City Macau

Situated next to the Lotus Bridge immigration point, the US\$3.2 billion cinematically themed gaming, entertainment and leisure destination resort, Studio City, is due to open mid-2015.

Entertainment options include the DC Comics' Batman Dark Flight offering digital rides with a virtual-reality Batman experience; the Golden Eye boasting a 130m ferris wheel; and a 5,000-seat multi-purpose entertainment centre with live magic shows at the House of Magic.

Other offerings include a 1,600-



room hotel, a 300-seat live-audience TV broadcast studio, Pacha Nightclub as well as retail and F&B outlets.

5 Crowne Plaza Macau

Scheduled to debut in 2Q, the 208-room Crowne Plaza Macau located at Areia Preta (Hac Sa Wan) in north-east Macau, a stone's throw from Macau Ferry Terminal and China Zhuhai Border Gate.

Besides offering a non-gaming environment, guestrooms at this seaside hotel feature views of Zhuhai and the South China Sea, a flat-screen TV, an ergonomic work desk and high-speed, wireless Internet.

Facilities include a Chinese restaurant, lobby lounge, 700m² grand ballroom and five function rooms.

We talk so the world will listen.



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Global Summit: Madrid, Spain, 15-16 April 2015

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To understand our research, watch and take part online in our live debates, and to find out more about the Council's work visit www.wttc.org



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Destination Philippines

Banking on its fun factor and opportunities for voluntourism, the Philippines is embracing youth travellers with open arms, reports **Rosa Ocampo**

Destination in numbers

4.8 million

International arrivals for 2014, 3.3 per cent higher than 2013

5.5 million

Targeted tourist arrivals in 2015

2.2%

Year-on-year increase in ADR to 5,450.80 pesos (US\$122) for January to October 2014, according to STR Global

Swimming with whale sharks in the Philippines

CALLING FOR THE YOUNG ONES

The Philippines is trying to gain a foothold in the youth market, which is increasingly leaning towards experiential journeys and voluntourism.

One of the pioneers of such inbound travel is non-profit Gawad Kalinga (GK, meaning 'give care'), which achieved unprecedented success in harnessing Filipino and foreign volunteers from North America, Europe and Asia.

From initially helping to build houses for the poor, this was swiftly extended to other community-based projects and then to GK Enchanted Farm in Angat, Bulacan that nurtures social entrepreneurs and develops sustainable livelihood projects. Its *Mabuhay* programme has also evolved into a social enterprise creating tour packages for volunteers in GK communities.

At WTM London 2014, the Philippine Department of Tourism (DoT) signed a pact with STA Travel Group to bring in young travellers and promote the destination in the UK, Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria and Australia, giving a much-needed push to this segment.

Still, youth travel remains largely untapped and, recognising the gap in the market, Rajah Travel is developing specific programmes for educational trips.

General manager inbound Alberto Santos said such programmes are sustainable as they appeal to schools whose curriculum requires overseas travel.

Route +63 Travels Philippines, formed two years ago, attests to the growing niche of youth travel. From a couple of foreign clients in 2012, this grew to about a hun-

dred in 2013, enticed by programmes like the seasonal Bataan sea turtle conservation, Sagada coffee and ecotour, and Banaue cultural and volunteer tour.

COO Florence Adviento said the company has a deal with AIESEC, the world's largest youth-operated organisation for student exchange programmes, and is collaborating with NPO Kaya to tap the Filipino diaspora market.

It is also eyeing international ecotourism volunteer groups. "There are so many of them but the Philippines is not yet in the roster of their destinations," observed Adviento.

Inspired by the outpouring of international support for victims of typhoon Haiyan, I Can Fly Travel & Tours was formed a year ago.

Noting that travel agencies are not making themselves relevant to young, Internet-savvy travellers, marketing director Romina Nanagas said the company is lining up unique, experiential vacations like a yoga retreat with mountain or beach settings, which can be more cost-efficient than flying to the Maldives or Costa Rica.

It is also looking at homestays in areas where there are not enough hotels and where tourists can volunteer in local communities.

The DoT too, is developing the home-stay market in areas like Bohol, Aurora and Negros Occidental. In Negros Occidental, for instance, foreign students stay for up to 21 days and experience life on sugar plantations and organic farming communities, etc.

However, industry players opined that

there needs to be more targeted efforts to grow the market, be it youth-specific programmes or incentives.

More digital marketing is also needed nearer home – in the sizeable Hong Kong market for example, and to students who have returned after completing their studies overseas.

Another hurdle is the misperception that the Philippines is not safe, exacerbated by media hype and travel advisories against the entire destination.

Rajah Travel's Santos found this out the hard way when, in trying to sell General Santos in Mindanao, he realised there was a misperception about this beautiful

destination.

He suggested that the DoT issue an official advisory that will lend credence to the safety aspects of the Philippines.

Route +63's Adviento said her company avoids places that locals feel are unsafe. "We make sure trips are coordinated with the community so the locals can vouch for their safety", she said, noting that accidents usually happen when the advice of the locals and guides is not followed.

She added that safety measures include allowing school groups to bring their own police and nurse as well as increasing the ratio of tour guides to travellers.

Viewpoints

What can the Philippines do to attract young travellers?

Jordan Colt Aquino, business development officer - inbound, Travel Warehouse

The Philippines should offer more affordable accommodation and develop more adventure packages and activities. Our vibrant nightlife needs to be further promoted, and accessibility to information and social media can be improved.



Hanna Padilla, personal travel coordinator, RDV Voyage

The Philippines is full of places with fun youth activities, but these need more advertising. Transport and lodging should be economical and convenient. Finally, both private and public companies should be working together to bring a greater value proposition.

Destination Philippines

NEWS IN A MINUTE

- 1

City of Dreams Manila

Located within the Manila Bay area, Melco Crown Entertainment's integrated resort commenced operations in December 2014 and celebrated its grand opening earlier this year.

Already operational are mass gaming areas, the 365-room Hyatt hotel, and a number of F&B and retail areas. It will also be home to the 321-key Nobu Hotel and six-star, 260-key Crown Towers as well as DreamPlay, an educational theme park featuring characters from DreamWorks movies including *Kung Fu Panda*, *Madagascar* and *Shrek*.
- 2

Ascott Bonifacio Global City Manila

Ascott has soft-opened 220 serviced apartment units at Bonifacio Global City Manila and will launch in 2015 Citadines Millennium Ortigas Manila for the growing market of expatriates and business travellers. Last year, it also opened the 215-unit Citadines Salcedo Makati.
- 3

Sky Tower debuts at Solaire

Solaire Resort and Casino has unveiled its lavish Sky Tower leisure complex, which boasts a 312-key hotel with suites ranging from 124m² to 936m². Guests can also catch performances at The Theatre, a 1,760-pax venue with top-notch acoustics and lighting.
- 4

Visit Bohol 2015

Visit Bohol 2015 relaunches the province as a major tourist destination after it was hobbled by a strong earthquake more than a year ago.

The campaign, which includes attractive discounts in accommo-



modation, tours and lowest possible airfares to Bohol via AirAsia, also launches new products and attractions such as the white-sand beaches of Anda; Lamanok Mystical Island's burial caves; Banacon, Asia's largest mangrove forest; geo-science tours; music and dive festivals; and an international triathlon.



PWD Tours feature historical areas like the walled city of Intramuros and a day tour to the highlands of Tagaytay. Suppliers including hotels, restaurants and operators have been carefully assessed as suitable for PWD travellers.

- 5

Disabled-friendly tours

Local DMC Blue Horizons Travel and Tours has partnered Wheel Mobile – a transport service for persons with disability (PWD) – to launch tour packages tailored to the needs of PWDs, a first in the Philippines.

Wheel Mobile's vans can carry two persons in wheelchairs, two additional lightweight wheelchairs that can be folded and secured, and two companions/caregivers.

Itineraries of the 4D/3N Manila:

How to sell

DO Embark on a **Bacolod city tour** tracing the city's past grandeur as the bastion of wealth and high society. Explore local attractions ranging from the heritage houses of Silay; muscovado mill operations at a sugar mill; artisanal shop of mask maker Jojo Vito; a rich collection of textiles from various countries at Museo Negrense; and the Ruins of a mansion whose history is intertwined with that of Negros.

SEE Held every October, **MassKara** is easily the best executed and most entertaining street festival in the Philippines. It can be traced back to 1980 when Negros reeled from the double tragedy of declining world prices of sugar – its main crop – and the collision of an inter-island ship and a tanker that claimed the lives of 700 Negrenses. Since then, locals don smiling masks each year to symbolise the lifting of human spirit when confronted with life's challenges.



EAT To indulge in Bacolod's best snacks or bring some home, go no farther than the ubiquitous stores at **BongBong**. Their easy-to-carry boxes can pack *piaya*, round unleavened bread with molasses filling; toasted muffins called *biscocho*; tarts and stuffed *empanadas*; biscuit rolls of *barquillos*; sesame cookies; plus a lot more other pastries.

STAY L'Fisher Hotel, the biggest and oldest hotel in Bacolod, recently introduced its little brother, the 49-key **L'Fisher Chalet**, which is more budget-friendly and has rooms for families. L'Fisher Chalet is connected to Tower 1 of L'Fisher Hotel by the ballroom and foyer area.

MY WAY

What outdoor activities do you enjoy?
I enjoy the sea, beaches and being in the water so I have to go with island hopping, scuba diving and snorkelling among beautiful coral reefs.

Which are the top dining spots in Manila?
Bonifacio Global City in Taguig has lots of good restaurants with the newest and most innovative ones appearing almost on a regular basis. Maginhawa and Malingap streets in Quezon City have a wide selection of restaurants to try.

Tagaytay, although not in Manila, has restaurants worth taking the 1.5-hour journey to.

What are the best hangouts in Manila for music lovers?
I would recommend saGuijo Café + Bar in Makati for Filipino alternative rock, 70s Bistro in Quezon City for

folk music, The Roadhouse in the Mall of Asia for jazz and rock, and Resorts World Manila for a variety of musical shows from local and international acts.

Name three places first-time travellers to the Philippines should visit.
To experience a variety of landscapes, culture and people, I would say Metro Manila, Puerto Princesa in Palawan, and Dumaguete City and its environs.

What is a must-do or must-see?
Snorkelling to see the underwater world. The Philippines is in the Coral Triangle – the centre of marine biodiversity in the world!

AA Yaptinchay
General manager,
Kirschner Travel
Manila



TRIED & TESTED

Best Western Plus Lex Cebu

Rosa Ocampo was nothing short of impressed by the hotel's standards of affordable comfort and luxury

LOCATION Sitting in the heart of up-town Cebu, the hotel is 14.1km from Mactan Cebu International Airport.

ROOMS All I wanted was a hot shower and to catch some sleep after a day of traipsing through the streets of Cebu straight off a flight from Manila.

I got both – and more – in the superior room I booked the week before. For a fraction of the price, the room offers comfort and luxury found in five-star hotels: a memory foam king-sized bed, goose feather pillows and the softest duvet.

Ditto the spacious bathroom, which

came with rain and bidet shower, digital weighing scale and amenities that women travellers would appreciate.

Being a new boutique hotel, everything in the room was fresh and clean, and in mint condition. It also had a working desk with even an iPod dock. Wi-Fi was fast and stable in my room and in public areas.

F&B There was only one café-restaurant on the ground floor. The free breakfast was value for money – the buffet spread offered got me through to lunch.

FACILITIES The lobby, with its high ceil-

ing and glass-clad walls, gave an impression of space. But it was also bland and anonymous, bereft of decorations except for the buntings on the ceiling. Adding a bit of decoration and colour would add personality to the lobby and inject some homeliness.

But making up for it was the inviting infinity pool on the roof deck. With a 360° view of the city, it is perfect for catching the breeze, enjoying sunset cocktails and of course, for relaxing. I made a mental note to lounge by the pool and try out the adjoining gym on my next visit. I had no need for the business centre but it was fully equipped, with full secretarial support. There was also a small ballroom, two meeting rooms and a boardroom.

SERVICE Great – the first thing that comes to mind is the doorman who was as quick with a smile as he was in opening the door and hailing taxis for me.

VERDICT This hotel is for those who want comfort and a bit of luxury without breaking the bank. The superior room gets a high score from me.

Name Best Western Plus Lex Cebu

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Connect

ICYMI: Tune in to what’s been going on at ttgasia.com and the social media space

HEADLINES

THAI TRADE FEARS IMPACT OF ICAO AUDIT FAILURE AND CALLS FOR ACTION

Japan and South Korea have prohibited Thai carriers from mounting new flights to their respective countries after Thailand failed an ICAO audit, sparking concern from the Thai trade that the move will impact outbound travel right during peak season.



BRUNEI OPENS MARITIME MUSEUM IN THE CAPITAL

A 3.5ha museum has opened in Brunei, dedicated to showcasing the country's historical maritime artefacts and technologies from different eras.

OBITUARY

SINGAPORE TOURISM SECTOR PAYS TRIBUTE TO LEE KUAN YEW

The travel industry in Singapore joined citizens in mourning the death of its first and longest-serving prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, on March 23. The senior statesman had a hand in shaping the nation's tourism sector. Tributes came from players like Changi Airport Group, which said in a statement online: "To begin to understand Mr Lee's contribution is to celebrate his political leadership, foresight and commitment to global aviation. His courage, vision and dedication to building Changi Airport remains unsurpassed and will never be forgotten."

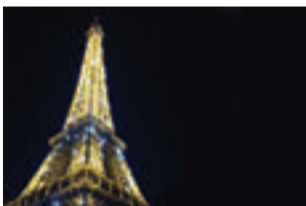
Travel Revolution 2015, a B2C travel fair organised by the breakaway faction from NATAS, and the launch event for Asiatravel.com's Roadundee mobile travel agency, were both scheduled to take place during the week-long mourning period but deferred out of respect.



Changi Airport Group

WHO'S SAYING WHAT

Instagram



Bonsoir from the City of Lights! #TTGAsia is in town for a MICE update, coinciding with yesterday's 126th anniversary of the Eiffel Tower's public opening!



Also this week: we are proud to announce that TTG Asia publisher Michael celebrates being 60 years young with much of the good humour and generosity he is known for. Happy birthday Michael and remember, life starts at 60!



This week, top executives from Best Western International and partners like Agoda, Ctrip and UnionPay gathered in #Bangkok to raise a glass to the launch of Vib brand and their newly forged partnerships. Here's a toast to new beginnings and the end of the work week!

Most commented

AIRASIA ASEAN PASS GOES LIVE

"For me and many other travellers, the ASEAN Pass has been a big disappointment. The pass has limited routes but you cannot check which routes are available for use with the pass until AFTER you purchase it...This is totally unacceptable. On top of this, it took us hundreds of tries to redeem the credits for flights.

"I understand that this is a difficult time for AirAsia, but launching a half-baked programme like the ASEAN Pass (that seems more like a scam than a deal) is not going to make the company look any better in the public's eyes." – Joseph Wyckoff



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TRAVEL PURSUITS

Compiled by The Fox

QUIZ

- Which airline is to be relaunched this year?
- True or false: Hilton was created by TWA Airlines, InterContinental by Pan Am, Westin by United
- Pick the odd one out: American Express, Carlson Wagonlit Travel, Thomas Cook?
- History: The Furama hotel in Hong Kong was an InterContinental as well as a Kempinski. What other brand-name hotel occupied the same plot?
- Outside Asia: Who is selling its 40% share in the Eurostar Brussels/Paris-London train service?

HUMOUR

...If Small Luxury Hotels of the World signs up a hotel in Macau, would we call it a Small-Mac?

...If SilkAir, Scoot and Tigerair formed a fast-transfer service, would it be named SST – Super-Sonic Transport?

...If MI (SilkAir) introduced a strong alcohol drink on its Taipei route, would it be a MI-Tai?

...A Brunei/Singapore tourism promotional venture failed badly, would it be a BruSin?

...A Peninsula hotel opened in Papua New Guinea, would its nickname be PG-Pen?

Answer: (1) Malaysia Airlines. A new CEO is due to start this May, with a relaunch possibly this autumn. (2) False. Hilton was founded by Conrad Hilton in 1919, who sold its international division to TWA in 1967. InterContinental was founded by Pan Am in 1946, which sold it in 1981. Westin was founded in the 1930s and bought by United in 1970, which sold it in 1970. CWT, it is privately owned by the Carlson Group. Thomas Cook is quoted on the stockmarket, as is the parent of American Express Travel. (4) The Ritz-Carlton in Central on Hong Kong Island. It shut down in 2008. (5) The UK government, for US\$1.2 billion; other shareholders are the state-owned rail companies of Belgium (5%) and France (55%).



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

- Singapore Airlines (2002)
- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Hertz Asia Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Abacus International (2009)
- SilkAir (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)

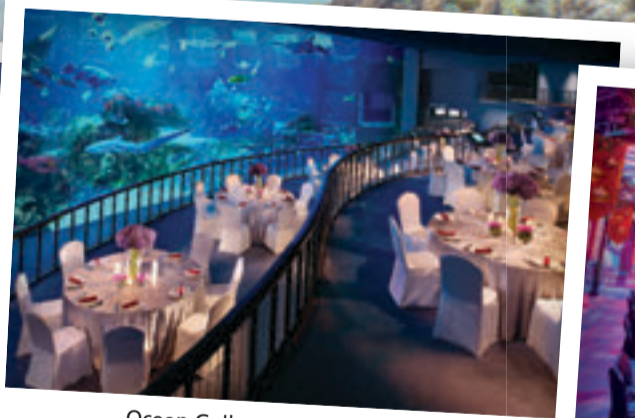
TTG Asia Media is pleased to announce that it is setting up a virtual TTG Travel Hall of Fame, which will enable us to showcase the accolades, artefacts and memorabilia of the region's most exceptional travel organisations in a far more effective way and to a global audience.



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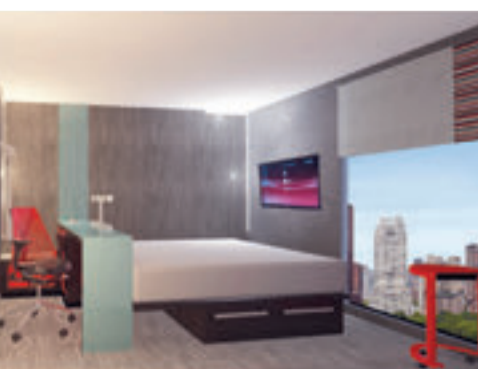
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