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2015

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Hotels that impressed

OWNERS' PICKS 2014

FALLING IN LOVE IN LONDON AND ROME



KWEK LENG BENG

Executive chairman
City Developments Limited
(CDL), Singapore

Property of ours that was most memorable in 2014 and why Two key hotels come to mind: The Chelsea Harbour Hotel, London and the Grand Hotel Palace Rome, Italy.

We acquired the former in March. It is the only five-star all-suite hotel in London and faces the picturesque Chelsea Harbour. I fell in love with this hotel primarily for its premium location and awesome harbour views. It is situated in a prestigious riverside area that is undergoing tremendous transformation and destined to be a burgeoning holiday destination.

We acquired the recently refurbished Grand Hotel Palace Rome in October. It is M&C's (Millennium & Copthorne) first property in Italy.

I've waited 23 years to find my ideal property in Rome and this hotel's location, a stone's throw away from the famous Spanish Steps, is prime, prime, prime.

The rooms are beautifully appointed, the architecture and interior décor are magnificent, and this fully renovated hotel is in pristine condition.

Property by competitor that caught my eye in 2014 and why Some of the hotels I stayed or seen this year that impressed me included the Shangri-La Hotel, At The Shard, London and Rosewood London.

The Shard has one of the world's most spectacular city views. The hotel is a popular staycation destination for locals and tourists. Given its distinctive tower and height, the panoramic views from the rooms are simply awesome.

It is admirable that the Shangri-La brand, which was started in Singapore by the Kuok family years ago, has grown to become one of the world's most classic hotel chains.

I visited the ultra-luxurious Rosewood London on High Holborn and was impressed by this new deluxe brand. The inspirational design of the hotel's public and event spaces were quite breathtaking in my view. Sonia Cheng, the CEO, has been leading the expansion of the Rosewood



Hotel Group. I have great admiration for her as a young and dynamic hotelier. She has a good knack for the hospitality business and has created something quite unique. Under her leadership, I believe the group has good potential to grow.

Property I most look forward to in 2015 and why I am excited to see the progress of two key projects in 2015 by Hong Leong Group companies, CDL and M&C Hotels.

The Millennium Mitsui Garden Hotel Tokyo is a new hotel with great potential. The hotel is in the heart of Tokyo's Ginza 4-Chome District and will soft open on December 17. The location is superb, and its Bottega-inspired facade is striking. It is M&C's first flagship hotel in Japan, marking a definitive milestone for our group.

I have seen the development of this property from acquisition of the land site to its completion. I have witnessed the birth of a hotel in a country that is difficult for foreigners to invest in. Now we own a hotel in Tokyo.

I remember the year was 2011 when we decided to make this purchase. It was a hotly contested site, but due to the triple disasters that hit Japan – earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima – that March, sentiments among the contesters withered. But

we remained confident, and were fortunate to have won the bid in July 2011.

The second property I am looking forward to in 2015 is CDL's mega, integrated development – South Beach. Besides commercial and retail spaces, residences and a private club, South Beach – which spots a distinctive microclimatic wave canopy – will also house a 654-room hotel, which we aim to open in April next year.

South Beach Hotel, as it will be called, is not a cookie-cutter concept. You will be wowed by the 21st century design when you enter the hotel and be calmed by the minimalist style of the rooms. We decided to manage South Beach Hotel on our own and make it uniquely ours.

South Beach the development will be a 21st century landmark for Singapore. It's located in the civic district and has direct underground and bridge connection to Suntec City Convention Centre. This will mean a symbiotic link to Suntec which does not have a hotel within. South Beach is therefore well positioned for the MICE industry. It has a 500-pax ballroom, meeting facilities and integrated amenities.

I hope when the doors of South Beach Hotel open in the first half 2015, everyone will love what we have meticulously created.



MEMORABLE W SAMUI PERFORMANCE

1 SUNNY BAJAJ

Managing director
Amburaya Hotels & Resorts, Thailand

Property of ours that was most memorable in 2014 and why Although all our properties in Thailand were affected by the political unrest, they performed well against their competitors. W Retreat Koh Samui fared extremely well considering the circumstances, for sure, so this property in terms of performance was the most memorable.

Property by competitor that caught my eye in 2014 and why I take all my competitors seriously and so each of our hotels' competitive set continues to catch my eye as they are the best indicator for me personally on our portfolio's performance.

Property I most look forward to in 2015 and why ALL! As 2014 was a tumultuous year in Thailand, not allowing the hospi-

Asian hotel owners tell **Raini Hamdi** which hotel in their portfolio was most memorable for them this year, and which one by the competitor captured their imagination

tality industry to thrive as it should have, we should hopefully see a bumper year for all hotels in the country – something we all are looking forward to and deserve.

I must say it's pretty unfair of *TTG* to ask developers which of their babies they favour! May I ask in return which issue of *TTG Asia* do you think was the best in 2014 and which do you look forward to next year? (-:

BANKING ON SRI LANKA HOTEL

2 ROHIT REDDY

Managing director
Reddy Group, New Zealand

Property of ours that was most memorable in 2014 and why Tanoa Tusitala hotel in Samoa. This hotel and destination have gone from strength to strength since we opened the property in 2009. Our team has done a fabulous job in hosting numerous conferences, culminating in the hotel hosting the head of the UN and other high-level delegates in the SIDS conference where a small country like Samoa hosted over 2,000 delegates. I urge you all to come and visit Samoa and enjoy the fabulous beaches!

Property by competitor that caught my eye in 2014 and why The Grand Pacific Hotel in Suva, Fiji. This hotel was the old lady of the Pacific and has been closed for decades. It has undergone a massive multi-million dollar refurbishment and has been restored to its former glory. It is the Raffles of the Pacific! I am glad it has re-opened with high rates, allowing us to also improve our rates in Suva.

Property I most look forward to in 2015 and why Jetwing Yala in Sri Lanka. It is in the middle of a safari park where in the mornings you can see leopards outside your window. We are also an investor in this property and I am taking my family there next year for a holiday. The location and the property itself are simply amazing, with great service and fantastic Sri Lankan food; I am looking forward to some yummy Sri Lankan hoppers...

THOUGHT I'VE SEEN IT ALL – NOT QUITE!

3 BILL HEINECKE

Chairman and CEO
The Minor Group, Thailand

Property of ours that was most memorable in 2014 and why Our most memorable launch this year was Anantara Angkor in Siem Reap as it reminded me why we're in this business. This boutique retreat is a product of passion and personalisation. Resembling a grand Khmer villa, the rooms and suites overlook a beautiful courtyard and pool inspired by ancient royalty. Everyone likes an element of surprise and delight and, having been in Asia for a few years now (laughs), I sometimes think I've seen it all – well, I haven't!

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF REGENT TAIPEI



STEVEN PAN

Executive chairman
Regent Hotels & Resorts
and Formosa International
Hotels Corporation, Taiwan

Property of ours that was most memorable in 2014 and why Regent Porto Montenegro – modern architecture with timeless Venetian details. Sets a new benchmark in combining luxury accommodation seamlessly with Regent residences for sale. It's the first new hotel to be built and opened after recent European financial crisis.

Property by competitor that caught my eye in 2014 and why Andaz Tokyo – outstanding bathroom design with open flow, and great amenities and details overall.

Property I most look forward to in 2015 and why Regent Taipei – year-round festivals celebrating 25th anniversary of this iconic Regent hotel. Events include a Gourmet Gallery (a collection of signature dishes from 25 Michelin starred chefs) with celebrities and luxury brands.

Property by competitor that caught my eye in 2014 and why Paris, the city of lights, has a brand new star – The Peninsula. I recently visited the hotel and was struck by the sheer elegance of the property, superior quality service and of course the wonderful location in the 16th arrondissement. If I had my own private residence in Paris, this would be it. The Peninsula is a fantastic indulgent escape.

Property I most look forward to in 2015 and why Banana Island Resort Doha by Anantara is set to be the premier hotel in Qatar and one of the finest in the region. Set to launch by the end of the year, guests face a lot of tough decisions: Arrive by helicopter or take a 20-minute ride on a luxury yacht from the city? Retreat to Balance Wellness centre or Anantara Spa (both, I say!)? Dive or the surf pool? And perhaps the toughest decision of all – try and decide between a spot on the 800m beach, by the 100m pool, or my favourite – relax by the pool in your own private overwater pool villa. Ah, life is full of tough decisions...

RESORTS RENAISSANCE

4 THIRAYUTH CHIRATHIVAT

CEO
Centara Hotels & Resorts, Thailand

Property of ours that was most memorable in 2014 and why For me, Centara Grand Beach Resort & Villas Hua Hin because I have been involved in its revamp since we acquired this property from the state railway of Thailand. It's the first resort in Asia and has a beautiful colonial style architecture with a beautiful beach. This year, the resort won the Best Beach Resort award from *TTG Asia*.

Property by competitor that caught my eye in 2014 and why I probably don't look at competitors in the same way as a regular guest, some would say I am somewhat biased!

That said, I have a long list of admired properties and for all different reasons – the clever use of space, especially important in today's market with soaring land prices; a design concept I wish I had thought about; the ability to sell at such low prices when clearly the investment was so high!

Property I most look forward to in 2015 and why One of my nearest and dearest resorts is Centara Grand Beach Resort Samui. For many years, this resort has been welcoming guests from all over the world, many of whom are repeats year after year. This year we will make some major changes, not least a fantastic new Beach Club concept, and I cannot wait to see the work completed.

It really does start a new era for this most established Samui resort.

CAPRI, CAPRI

5 CHOE PENG SUM

CEO
Fraser's Hospitality, Singapore

Property of ours that was most memorable in 2014 and why The full renovation and conversion of an office tower in the heart of Brisbane into Capri by Fraser, Brisbane gave me immense satisfaction. The cooperation and support of the Brisbane City Council and the Lord Mayor's Office, plus bringing to life the edgy design of award-winning interior designer, Ministry of Design, make the soon-to-open property my most memorable experience of 2014.

Continued on page 6



Hotels that impressed

Property by competitor that caught my eye in 2014 and why Each time I travel, I take the chance to stay and/or visit as many different hotels and serviced residences as I can. While I appreciate edgier designs and new trends, I still inevitably go back to my comfort zone – comfortable well thought through spaces, intuitive service and, don't forget, even for me, high speed Internet access is a must! Many places fitted the bill, but I would give my vote to Les Suites in Shanghai.

Property I most look forward to in 2015 and why There are several on the horizon for us next year, but I will give a plug to Capri by Fraser, Frankfurt which will open in June. I am excited as this will be our first property in Germany, in a great location and in one of the key financial hubs in Europe. Just in case you are wondering, I am just as excited about the other properties which will open next year, from Fraser Suites Setia Budi Jakarta to Fraser Place Tianjin and Fraser Residence Kuala Lumpur.

WATCH THIS SPACE

6 KUNO FASEL

COO

COMO Hotels and Resorts, Singapore

Property of ours that was most memorable in 2014 and why There were just too many highlights in 2014 to name just one, as each of our properties achieved something very special in the last 12 months. If I have to shortlist some highlights, I would probably say the opening of Point Yamu, Phuket and Maalifushi, Maldives in the region, the launch of spectacular new rooms and restaurant at Uma by COMO Ubud, and the fact that Nahm was voted best restaurant in Asia in the prestigious 50 Best Restaurants, sponsored by S.Pellegrino & Acqua Panna.

Property by competitor that caught my eye in 2014 and why The One & Only in Hayman Island in Australia looks incredible. It is right in the middle of the Great Barrier Reef and is simply a beautiful property in a beautiful location. This year, there has been a multi-million investment

in renovations and I believe they have completely revamped the property.

Property I most look forward to in 2015 and why Keep a lookout early in the New Year for an announcement from COMO on an acquisition of a new property by our group in a market that we know and love. Also, we are very excited to be launching the Point Yamu villas, thus putting the final touches on Point Yamu by COMO, a property that will become the jewel in the COMO crown.

HYATT HAKONE IS THE ONE

7 RICCO DEBLANK

CEO

SHKP (Sun Hung Kai Properties) Hotels, Hong Kong

Property of ours that was most memorable in 2014 and why Hyatt Regency Hakone: the one place where I can go for owners' meetings and feel totally relaxed. We have 100 per cent trust in the GM.

Property by competitor that caught my eye in 2014 and why Ace Hotel Shoreditch in London: a lesson in how to attract the neighbourhood to come and enjoy your hotel.

Property I most look forward to in 2015 and why Amanresort Tokyo – just because it is Aman.

EXPECTING A BANGKOK UPSIDE IN 2015

8 BRAD KIRK

COO

Harilela Hotels, Hong Kong

Property of ours that was most memorable in 2014 and why Actually there are two. One is the Holiday Inn Golden Mile (Hong Kong) since we finally hired a great new general manager Anne Busfield – gotta be better than the last one for sure, who was me! Second is our Thompson Belgraves in London as we have such a wonderful opportunity with our London savvy new general manager, Andrew Coney, to really outperform the market with this little gem of a hotel.

Property by competitor that caught my eye in 2014 and why Not really a competitor but the Ovolo Southside (Hong Kong) has a nice vibe to it, cool rooms, a casual restaurant and great views from the rooftop bar.

Property I most look forward to in 2015 and why The Holiday Inn Silom Bangkok will have a great year due to the problems in Thailand fading away hopefully in the minds of the travellers. Great upside for 2015. Also 2015-2018 will be amazing as we will start building another hotel in Hong Kong, in Wanchai, from ground up. Stay tuned for more details in the coming months.



REMINISCING THE BIRTH OF BANYAN TREE



HO KWON PING

Executive chairman,
Banyan Tree Holdings
Singapore

Property of ours that was most memorable in 2014 and why Banyan Tree Phuket. I remember 20 years ago when Claire and I arrived at Bang Tao Bay in a jeep with no brakes. There were no roads and no electricity but what it lacked in infrastructure, it made up with a beautiful sunset and a stunning piece of land. The seed of Banyan Tree was born that day. We recently travelled to Phuket in September for our 20th anniversary celebrations. What we saw there made us feel privileged, grateful and moved, not for the successes of the group, but for what our associates have contributed to the Banyan Tree journey.

Property by competitor that caught my eye in 2014 and why There were several: The Segera Retreat in Kenya, which is part of the Wilderness Collection. Jochen Zeitz, its founder, created his own 4C philosophy – conservation, community, culture and commerce – where guests learn about wildlife conservation and how they can make an impact. This is similar to our philosophy of sustainable development.

ICE Hotel, built of snow and ice in Jukkasjärvi, Sweden. It is interesting because it is a year-round project with visiting artists and designers. The hotel is only open every December to April and then it melts

and the process begins again. I like that nature is intrinsic to their whole organisation and they take serious measures in protecting the environment. Fogo Island Inn, a project by Canadian tech entrepreneur Zita Cobb. It brings together members of the community, from artists and architects to fishermen and chefs, and they have created a beautiful hotel. The hotel has put in place a trust for Shorefast Foundation to ensure the economic well-being of the local community. I think this is a great initiative to keep the community invested in the property.

Old Mac Daddy Trailer Hotel, a collection of vintage Airstream trailers located in the Elgin Valley in Western Cape. I like the fact that all the trailers are individually designed, they are quirky and great for family get-togethers.

Property I most look forward to in 2015 and why Banyan Tree Tamouda Bay in Morocco, which will open in Q2. I am particularly excited about this property as it is a collection of beautiful pool villas facing the Mediterranean Sea. The resort pays tribute to the region's Andalusian Moorish legacy and Moroccan heritage, and you will be able to see the influences with the arched doorways, fountains and Moroccan Moucharaby wood panels that we have put in place. There is also a lot of interesting things to do including visiting the iconic blue buildings in Chefchaouen or exploring the ancient Tetouan Medina. Everyone should go.

“We recently travelled to Phuket in September for our 20th anniversary celebrations. What we saw there made us feel privileged, grateful and moved....”

Ho Kwon Ping
Executive chairman
Banyan Tree Holdings
Singapore



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CENTARA
HOTELS & RESORTS

THAILAND • BALI • MALDIVES • MAURITIUS • SRI LANKA • VIETNAM



Key representatives Mr Aloysius Lee, Chief Executive Officer of South Beach Consortium, Mr Henry Ng, Director of Sales of The South Beach, as well as Mr Anthony Ross, Executive Vice President (APMEA) and Ms Josephine Lim, Vice President, Global Sales (AP) of Preferred Hotel Group were in attendance to formalise the pivotal partnership.

THE SOUTH BEACH PARTNERS THE PREFERRED WITH STYLE

The South Beach and Preferred Hotel Group held an official partnership contract signing ceremony at the iconic War Memorial Park, where the upcoming South Beach mixed-use development adds lustre to the beautiful milieu. In commemoration of the strategic partnership with Preferred Hotel Group, a Great Gatsby themed party at the South Beach Club (formerly the Non-Commissioning Officers' Club) followed in the evening. Key invitees from The South Beach, Preferred Hotel Group and select guests from the travel trade industry were treated to an evening of scrumptious canapés while champagne toasting to the soothing sounds of live music by talented singer, Ella Chen.

The South Beach and Preferred Hotel Group

The South Beach, a 654-room luxury 'HIP' hotel impeccably located in the heart of Singapore announces a pivotal partnership with Preferred Hotel Group. This strategic partnership aims to bring competitive advantage for The South Beach through brand prestige and the global operating scale of Preferred Hotel Group that includes more than 650 independent hotels and resorts in over 85 countries. "Both The South

Beach and Preferred Hotel Group share the same commitment in providing unparalleled services, excellence and innovation in hospitality. This is a win-win partnership as we complement each other perfectly. The South Beach offers the (new) products and services that they (Preferred Hotel Group) seek after," says Aloysius Lee, CEO of South Beach Development. "We believe in surrounding ourselves with people who are going to lift us to new heights, and they (Preferred Hotel Group) are one of them,"



he added. This strategic move paves the way for The South Beach to have a global presence when it opens in 2015 by tapping into Preferred Hotel Group's almost 1.5 million *iPrefer* guest loyalty program members. Concurrently, The South Beach will be providing an additional option of a brand new hospitality experience in Singapore to the growing client base.

As part of the partnership, guests checking into The South Beach next year will also be able to benefit from *iPrefer*, which extends points, status, and early check-in/late check-out privileges among others.

Slated to open in 2015, The South Beach is a 654-room luxury HIP hotel designed by French designer Philippe Starck. With brilliant architecture by international award-winning firm Foster + Partners and leading design global firm Aedas, the hotel is the latest development by City Developments Limited (CDL) and IOI Corporation Berhad. Coupled with a private membership club, the hotel is part of a mixed-use contemporary and ecological

sustainable development – South Beach, which comprises over 34,000m² of floor area. The hotel believes the best design occurs at the intersection of old and new. The architecture cleverly integrates the heritage site formerly comprising three army blocks and the NCO Club, a favourite haunt for army, naval and air force offices famed for its Olympic-sized swimming pool. The hotel resides amidst a place of historical value, evoking a sense of pride and nostalgia. This fusion of old and new becomes essential in architectural literature. Undoubtedly, the hotel will rank among the architectural models of modern Singapore.

With emphasis on imaginative social spaces to cater to the need for 'isolated togetherness', The South Beach aims to further promote the luxury HIP (Highly Individual Places) hotel concept to the region and set new hospitality standards.

Impeccably located at the intersection of Beach Road, Bras Basah Road and Nicoll Highway, and adjacent to the Esplanade MRT Station,

The South Beach is directly connected to Suntec International Convention and Exhibition Centre via an overhead bridge on the Nicoll Highway. The hotel will definitely be adding new lustre to the impressive skyline, dotted with many of Singapore's most iconic landmarks.

THE
SOUTH BEACH

Preferred
HOTEL GROUP

Agency resolutions

IN 2015, I RESOLVE TO...



SINGAPORE

Anthony Chan, group managing director & CEO, Chan Brothers Travel

Business resolution | I want to channel all energy and resources to grow and re-invent the core business in the areas of product quality, product innovation, value pricing, marketing creativity and technology.

One aspect is elevating our service lead-

ership and enhancing the experiential aspects of our business through our Customer-Centric Initiatives, which includes tapping on the robust CRM system launched in 2014, to better manage our relationships with each individual and providing more value to our customers through targeted marketing.

We also want to grow the luxury travel market through our private tour division that offers tailor-made itineraries, high-touch and exemplary service, and a never-say-never belief to ensure customers' dream holidays come true.

Personal resolution | Plan for more personal holidays and vacations with my loved ones. For someone that helms a travel business, that should be at the top of the things I love to do, and should do more often. I would also want to take time out, recharge, refresh and invest myself with new and positive thoughts. As a wise saying goes, "If you won't invest in yourself, who else would?" It is important for me to achieve a balanced yin and yang with both my business and personal pursuits. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**



KEEP CALM
TEAMWORK
MAKES
THE DREAM
WORK

VIETNAM



Luong Thang, founder and CEO, Handspan Travel Indochina

Business resolution | The Internet has changed business so dramatically that the ways clients come to us are also different, so next year I'd give a bigger marketing focus on the Internet and technology. As clients tend to contact the service providers directly, we're investing in an 18-cabin boat in Halong Bay, plus an eco-resort in northern Vietnam, both of which will debut in 2016. We want to be a service provider to increase our chances of getting guests to come to us directly, as well as differentiating ourselves from competitors.

Personal resolution | I'd like to travel more to get a better idea of the market. We are trying to expand our outbound market and send Vietnamese tourists on cruise ships, hence I want to jump onto a cruise ship to see how the experience is like. I also want to go to South American countries like Brazil and experience the destination first before introducing them to Vietnamese. For my own pleasure, I like to travel backpacker style, with a map on a motorcycle; this is also the travelling style I would adopt in South America. – **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

JAPAN

Haruhiko Sakano, manager, inbound business, JTB

Business resolution | Keywords for 2015 will be expansion of our global network, branding, and simply, the penetration of source markets. We are trying to be a global DMC and our various acquisitions are helping us to expand in a quicker way. We need to streamline internally the standards of service and hospitality that we offer across our network.

As for branding, we presently run all the DMCs owned under the JTB group and in future we will need to consolidate them to help B2B travel consultants understand who we are. Right now, the Global Network by JTB Group sounds more like an alliance than one company. However, we're not changing the local DMCs' name.

Personal resolution | I'm aiming to balance work and my private life better, and my aim is just to be happy. I go to Hawaii every year with my wife and kids for the sun, beach and food, and the coming year will be no different. I play soccer twice a month and will keep that up. – **Hannah Koh**

MALAYSIA



Samuel Chung, managing director, Straits Central Travel & Tour Agencies

Business resolution | To increase the international profile of Borneo as a great tourism destination, I want to create a photography contest for Borneo Island, involving the two Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak and Indonesia's Kalimantan. Pictures tell a thousand words and this contest will be a great

way to create better awareness of Borneo. I haven't worked out the mechanisms yet, but I hope to run this contest from July to October as this is the European season for Sarawak.

Personal resolution | I want to start a training club for dogs in order to educate dog owners on how to handle their dogs better and not to neglect their pets. I was the former president of the Sarawak Kennel Association and I simply love dogs. – **S Puvaneswary**

With New Year just around the corner, travel agency bosses reflect on the changes they want to make in their businesses and personal lives



INDONESIA

Ratna Ning, president director, Pacto

Business resolution | Having registered a very significant growth both in revenue and net profit in 2014, in 2015 our approach will remain consistent with our vision of developing unique products delivered with exceptional quality of service at affordable rates, both for our inbound and outbound department.

Personal resolution | I will continue my contribution to causes related to the development of education in Indonesia since I believe that education is key to cope with challenges that our nation is facing now and in the future. In line with my passion for running marathons, I have been an active member of *Berlari untuk Berbagi* or Running for Sharing, a community of runners who share the love of long-distance running and the passion for charity. While running in various marathons in Indonesia and overseas, we have raised significant amount of money as well as awareness to benefit schools and children in less fortunate communities. – **Mimi Hudoyo**



INDIA

Guldeep Singh Sahni, managing director, Weldon Tours & Travels



Business resolution | We will focus on offering experiential tours like self drive, adventure sports and deep sea diving in 2015. Also, our focus will be on selling offbeat destinations for Indians like Brazil. Gone are the days when Indian

travellers were just confined to sightseeing and shopping; the new-age Indian traveller is now looking for experiential holidays.

Personal resolution | I will exercise daily and adopt a balanced diet to keep my weight under control. There are many social functions I attend personally as well as in my capacity as the president of Outbound Tour Operators Association of India, which at times takes a toll on my health as one tends to over-indulge. I will ensure that I eat at home before I head to any social function. – **Rohit Kaul**

THE PHILIPPINES

Bernie M Arnaiz, assistant managing director, Rajah Travel Corp

Business resolution | Next year ushers in our resolve, as a TMC, to consistently deliver quality services and seamless travel experience. This means adherence to established travel policies and processes to ensure that our clients are handled with utmost care. We start from the point of our client's travel queries by ensuring timely responses, followed by reservation, ticketing and back-end processing, ending with the client's feedback.

As 2015 is Visit Philippines Year, we will embark on an extensive campaign to bring in international markets to visit the country. Our goal is to introduce unexplored and unique destinations in the country through packages that highlight diverse cultures and promote ecotourism.

Personal resolution | As a travel professional, I have made it my personal mission to continue with travel consultants' education, steering them towards service excellence and work commitment. The ability to inculcate these precepts can be found through the delivery of consistent and reliable services. The management must primarily set an example to follow these principles, with actions worthy of emulation. – **Rosa Ocampo**



THAILAND

Stephen McEvoy, managing director, Asia World Enterprise

Business resolution | I plan to focus on expanding our in-house technology to offer more online services via our XML links with our clients. I want to explore more

partnership opportunities around Asia; the Philippines and Japan have already joined our network and there are other interesting possibilities. We will continue to expand our product range to include more niche market activities and be more selective on the tradeshow we attend and focus more on sales visits. We will also develop our land in Chiang Mai to create our own restaurant and cooking school.

Personal resolution | I want to reduce

my personal overseas travel, although I make this same resolution every year. And hopefully, I will get the chance to play golf more often – again, I have wished for this in the past. Plus, I want to spend more time with my sons, before the eldest leaves for university in the UK next year. – **Greg Lowe**



HONG KONG

Jason Wong, general manager, Hong Thai Travel Service

Business resolution | Cruise travel will still be the focus in 2015. In summer, *Quantum of the Seas* will come to Hong Kong and Shanghai to start the first cruise sailing in Asia, and *Voyager of the Seas* will be based in Hong Kong from June to October. As cruise demand has burgeoned in the past two years, Hong Thai will keep investing more resources in the cruise market, such as designing

thematic cruise products, recruiting more cruise specialists and offering on-the-ship staff training for cruise inspections.

As the only Hong Kong agency licensed to operate outbound group tours for China residents under the CEPA arrangement – our flagship store in Shenzhen has recorded a steady growth since its opening in September 2014 – and China's new rich becoming increasingly aware of in-depth travel, Hong Thai will explore more interesting and luxury travel destinations such as South America, Middle America, the US, Canada and the polar areas for the China markets.

Personal resolution | I wish to spend more time exploring new destinations for Hong Kong travellers. My next planned destinations might be Bolivia, Cuba, Mexico and Bhutan, as I believe the Hong Kong market needs something new and special.

Last year had been a tough year for the travel trade in Hong Kong. As a member of many trade associations, I wish to work on more collaborations to facilitate trade development. – **Prudence Lui**

NTO highlights

REFLECTIONS OF THE PA

SINGAPORE *Lionel Yeo, chief executive, Singapore Tourism Board*
Biggest challenge in 2014 Singapore's tourism sector has had to adapt to a changing profile of visitors, as more FITs and tourists are coming to Singapore on mono-desti-

nation trips. This shift has been particularly evident in our 2014 arrivals from China.

For example, the number of Chinese visitors staying at least two days from January to August 2014 jumped 21 per cent year-on-year to 631,000. The average length of stay of Chinese visitors during the same period has also risen year-on-year from 2.9 to 4.4 days.

Significant developments in 2015 Next year, we look forward to the opening of the National Gallery Singapore, Singapore Pinacothèque de Paris and Southeast Asian Games, while Royal Caribbean International will offer year-round sailings from Singapore for the first time. These add to our tourism offerings and establish Singapore as the region's leading arts, cruise and sports destination. We will also continue to strengthen our lead as a MICE city through the MICE2020 Roadmap.

As Singapore turns 50, we also celebrate our burgeoning creative scene and invite people to look at the city from a different perspective with *Singapore: Inside Out*, a multi-disciplinary travelling showcase featuring local contemporary creative talents and their works. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

MALAYSIA *Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, director-general, Tourism Malaysia*

Biggest challenge in 2014 Regaining the confidence and trust from Chinese tourists. Since MH370 went missing in March, we have lost nearly one-third of the tourists from China who cancelled or suspended their holidays up to early 2015. We hope that 2015 will see a full recovery. Tourism Malaysia has since May 2014 embarked on an aggressive mission to recover Chinese arrivals, striking up marketing partnerships with airlines and working with outbound operators in China to arrange for charters.

Most significant development in 2015 In 2015, we will launch the *Malaysia Year of Festivals 2015* campaign, a continuation of the *Visit Malaysia Year 2014*. Themed *Endless Celebrations*, the year-long campaign offers many spectacular events related to cultural festivals, arts and music showcases, food promotions, shopping and sporting events. These events include Putrajaya Skyride Festival, International Festival of Shadow Plays, Truly Asian Street Food Festival and Kuala Lumpur Lake Gardens Festival. – **S Puvaneswary**

From left: Thailand plays up its cultural strengths; Hong Kong's iconic junk boat

FITUR 2015

A reflection and response to the major challenges and trials associated with the tourism industry.

Among the tourism challenges that will find a response at **FITUR 2015** are cross-border medical assistance, reorganisation of trade, new business models and also impacts of technology. The relationship between tourism and cross-border medical assistance has much to do with the high quality of Spanish healthcare and the expertise of its professionals which will be seen at **FITUR HEALTH**, where tourism companies showcase how they can diversify their business lines, seek new opportunities, increase their visibility and generate contacts.

Another of the major trends is shopping tourism and its impact on the economy of many tourist destinations, particularly urban ones, in which some changes are needed. Visitors to **FITUR SHOPPING** will discover how this new tourism model requires some retail units to adapt and create specialised departments. In addition, for the first time, UNWTO will be organising an international conference on shopping tourism at FITUR.

Applied technology in tourism and travel planning is also growing in importance, therefore **FITURTECH** will uncover how applied technology in the industry is changing many businesses. Aside that, latest mobile devices will be showcased and a designated showroom on the tourism of the future and the emergence of these new business models will be seen at **FITURTECH**. With focus on technology and innovation, **FITUR KNOW HOW & EXPORT** also features Smart Tourist Destinations, the Tourist App Guide and the Apps Competition.

With sustainability being another of the major drivers of today's tourism, **FITURGREEN** will be sharing reflections of this topic with success cases and tools in three key areas: planning, management and promotion of tourist destinations; sustainable accommodation models; technology and innovation associated with sustainability. There will also be a FITH Network workshop on funding and public aid for sustainability in hotels.

As cooperation and international agreements are another of the major basis for boosting the tourism business, **INVESTOUR**, a forum will be opening up for the first time to all countries. African companies and other companies from all over the globe will come together to discuss about collaboration and debate over investment in human capital and the impact of Africa's brand image in foreign direct investment. Another major trend in the world is the increase in gay tourism, which is growing at a rate of more than 11% annually, more than double that of conventional tourism. This evolution will be reflected in the **FITUR Gay (LGBT)** area, which is growing in size and number of exhibitors, giving access for SMEs for the first time, boosting personal meetings and also the launch of the website, www.fiturgaylgbt.com.

Spain's importance as a receiver of tourists is growing

All these trends coincide with Spain's growing importance as a tourist-receiving country and the increase in its ability to manage large visitor flows. The knowledge acquired

by operators, the know-how amassed and the country's experience as a world power in tourism constitute as important assets for the development on the international stage, both inside and outside Spain. This ability has already been confirmed by the record arrival in 2013 of 60.6 million tourists, 5.6% more than in 2012. 62 million visitors are expected for 2014.

FITUR 2015 is organised by IFEMA and due to be staged at FERIA DE MADRID from 28 January to 1 February 2015.

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What troubled tourism bureaus this year and what developments are poised to make waves in 2015?

ST AND A LOOK AHEAD

THAILAND *Juthaporn Rergronasa, deputy governor for international marketing (Europe, Africa, Middle East and the Americas), Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)*
Biggest challenge in 2014 (Due to) the country's political unrest, we were challenged to think creatively across the board to maintain visitor confidence and ensure Thailand's brand image remains powerful and strong. Our visitor arrivals for 2014 are projected at 25.5 million, down 3.9 per cent from 2013, but we have kept our spirits up, worked closely with the private and public sectors, and made good use of social media to counter the negative images portrayed in the global media.
Significant developments in 2015 The advent of the Asean Economic Community and the new TAT marketing campaign, *2015 Discover Thainess*, which will focus on the Thai way of life, culture and experiences as well as the 12 hidden gem cities. ASEAN integration will make us stronger as a region and build on the combined strengths of 10 countries, while the *Discover Thainess* campaign will help maintain Thailand's individuality, character and identity by highlighting what makes us unique as a culture and society. We have also designed

a calendar of monthly festivals and events through 2015. – **Greg Lowe**
INDONESIA *Esthy Reko Astuti, director general of tourism marketing, Ministry of Tourism*
Biggest challenge in 2014 While regional destinations' awareness of the importance of tourism is getting better, their product development and marketing coordination with the central government are still lagging. The regency and municipal governments have the right to set priorities, however, there needs to be synergy between the central government and the regions to promote themselves (as part of Indonesia). Another challenge is for the destinations to enrich their potential products such as restoring heritage buildings, improving capacity of tour guides, etc.
Most significant development in 2015 The new stand-alone tourism ministry will offer a good chance to better develop destinations, products, people and infrastructure. In the last government we focused on 16 destinations and we are planning to add nine more destinations next year. – **Mimi Hudoyo**

VIETNAM *Le Tuan Anh, director general, tourism marketing department, Vietnam National Administration of Tourism*
Biggest challenge in 2014 Vietnam has a lot of good tourism products but arrivals are still limited. Difficulties lie in our marketing activities, which are not strong enough globally. We are getting more support from the government in recent years, but it is still small compared with neighbouring countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. Due to limited budgets, we are more focused on ASEAN, North Asia (China, Japan and South Korea) and traditional markets in Europe.
Most significant development in 2015 In 2015, we will launch the National Tourism Year with the theme of *Connecting World Heritage in Vietnam* in Thanh Hoa, a central province home to marine attractions, mountains and cultural attractions like the Ho Dynasty Citadel, which was recognised by UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage Site.
At the same time, we will continue to leverage our successful *Vietnam – Timeless Charm* slogan, launched in 2012. We're targeting more than eight million foreign arrivals in 2015. – **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**



Malaysia Year of Festivals will kick off in 2015

PHILIPPINES *Art Boncato, Jr, assistant tourism secretary, Philippine Department of Tourism (DoT)*
Biggest challenge in 2014 To accommodate the growing number of international and domestic tourists in the Philippines, there is a need to hasten infrastructure development that covers the construction, upgrade and expansion of airports, seaports and roads leading to destinations from north to the south. A successful initiative was the 30 billion pesos (US\$668 million) Tourism Road Infrastructure Prioritization Project, which saw the development of roads and improved access to existing attractions.



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NTO highlights



Diving into waters teeming with coral reefs are some of the fun activities available in the Philippines

Most significant development in 2015 It's *Visit the Philippines Year 2015*, and the DoT has put together a programme to bring in first-time and repeat travellers to the country. Major events happening all over the country from January to December are clustered under lifestyle; music, arts and entertainment; history and culture; sports, adventure and eco-tourism; and business. These events fulfil the promise of *fun* in the Philippines.
– Rosa Ocampo

HONG KONG Anthony Lau, executive director, Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB)
Biggest challenge in 2014 The HKTB had to move the venue of the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival from the Central Harbourfront to the old Kai Tak runway in just a few weeks' time, which involved re-planning and re-deploying resources in venue set-up, promotional strategies and logistics arrangements. It turned out to be a very successful event, with attendance reaching almost 180,000.

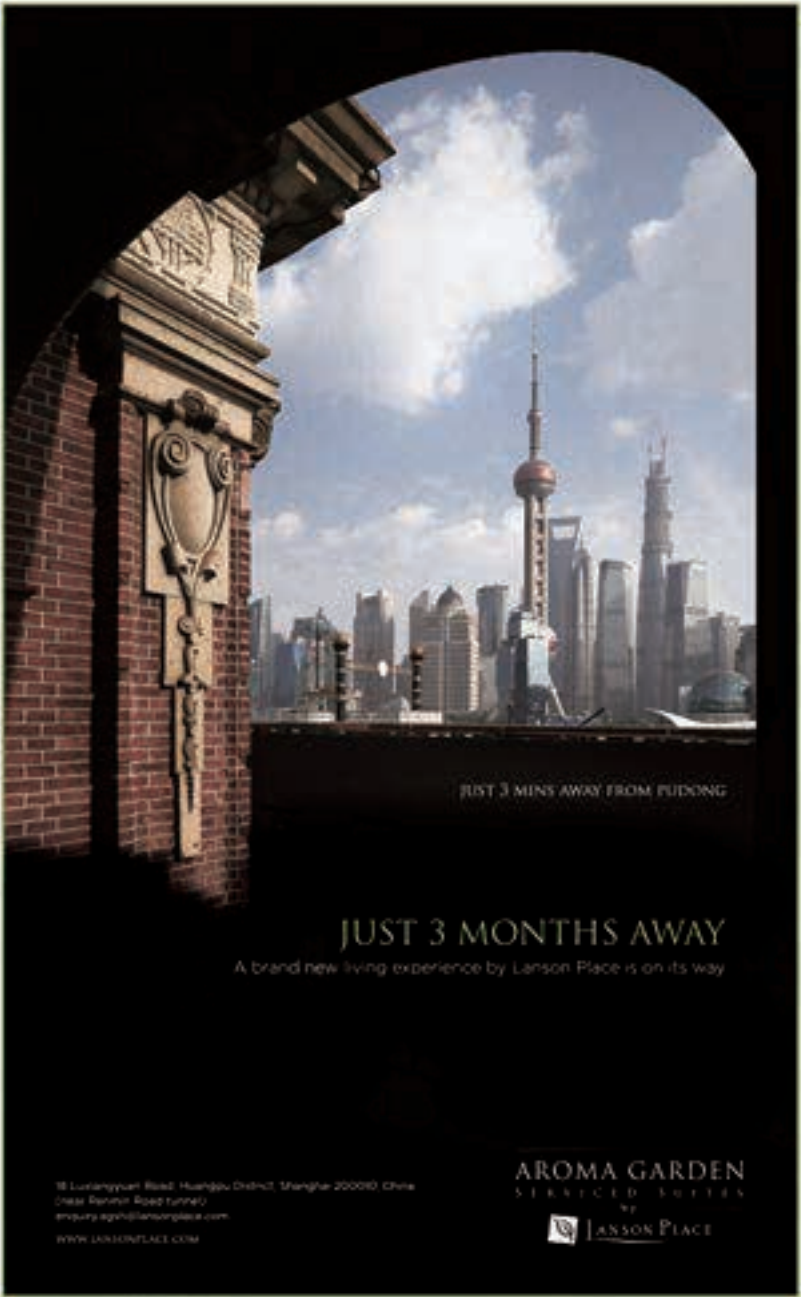
Most significant development in 2015 Given the low penetration rate of cruise travel in Asia and a fast-growing middle class, Asia's cruise market is expected to expand at a fast pace. Hong Kong can definitely be one of the region's hubs with our strategic location. To fully tap the cruise market potential, the HKTB will continue to seek cooperation with more destination ports in the region by encouraging them to participate in the Asia Cruise Fund, launched earlier this year with Hong Kong and Taiwan as the two founding members.
– Prudence Lui

MACAU Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, director, Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO)
Biggest challenge in 2014 Organising the 8th APEC Tourism Ministerial Meeting (TMM8) was among Macau's top responsibilities for 2014. The success of TMM8 was a great opportunity for Macau to showcase its tourism uniqueness and ability to organise high-profile events, and particularly special this year as Macau marks its 15th anniversary (of return to Chinese sovereignty).
Significant developments in 2015 MGTO will soon be launching an international tender for the drafting of a Macau Tourism Master Plan, which will involve not only industry stakeholders but also the whole community. Upcoming developments are the second-phase opening of Galaxy, which includes JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels with more than 1,300 keys; the Studio City, which will have a five-star hotel, shopping mall and multi-purpose entertainment studio; and the 3,000-room Parisian Macao, with recreated Parisian shopping streets and a half-size replica of the Eiffel Tower. – Prudence Lui

TAIWAN Lin Kun-Yuan, director of international affairs division, Taiwan Tourism Bureau (TTB)
Biggest challenges in 2014 The number of visitors to Taiwan reached eight million in 2013 but neighbouring destinations had introduced many special offers including visa-free entry to attract more tourists. The TTB continues to strive for visa exemption for the new developing market of South-east Asia.
We continue to focus on developing and upgrading the quality of Taiwan's tourism and products, and rate hotels and bed-and-breakfast inns under the hotel star-rating and hospitable B&B evaluation and selection system. We have expanded Taiwan tourism's international outreach through our *Time for Taiwan* brand, actively publicising our unique festivals and activities (on the global stage).
Significant developments in 2015 We are targeting 10 million visitors. We will promote regional cruise development by working with the Hong Kong Tourism Commission on the Asia Cruise Fund. We will also promote 'caring tourism' and construct obstacle-free tourism for senior citizens. We will strengthen the quality of the Taiwan Tourist Shuttle and Taiwan Tour Bus services, expand the iTravel Internet services, and implement the Taiwan Tourism Code of Ethics. – Prudence Lui

SOUTH KOREA Helen Shim, director, Singapore office, Korea Tourism Organization (KTO)
Biggest challenges in 2014 The majority of MICE events used to take place in convention centres, but with bigger incentive groups coming from the region it has become a challenge as more organisers are now seeking unique venues for their events.
Meanwhile, KTO has been trying to encourage visitors to travel out of their comfort zones and experience unique offerings in other provinces besides Seoul. For example, in June we received a 15,000-pax incentive group from Amway China. The biggest challenge was to locate the most suitable port of call for the cruise ship. The group arrived at Kwangyang in Yeosu City, where we arranged a massive welcome ceremony at the port.
Most significant development in 2015 The 85-floor Lotte World Tower will be the tallest building in the nation when construction is completed in October 2016. There will be an observatory, an art gallery, a hotel, offices, a medical centre and other amenities. The (adjoining) 11-storey Lotte World Mall will house over 1,000 local and global stores, including Lotte Mart, Lotte Cinema, Lotte Duty Free, Hi Mart and Lotte World Aquarium. – Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

CHINA Li Shihong, department of tourism promotion and international liaison head, China National Tourism Administration
Biggest challenge in 2014 We will need to



Singapore, with its ever-changing skyline, is now leveraging arts to attract visitors

do more to improve our service standards in China to project an appealing image to tourists. We are already improving that, which is a good step forward.

Most significant development in 2015 With the development of the Internet, it has become increasingly important to take advantage of new technologies to achieve the 'multiplication effect' to promote our destination. Aside from promotion via traditional media platforms, we will make better use of the new media to boost our online promotion.

– Paige Lee Pei Qi

AUSTRALIA John O'Sullivan, managing director, Tourism Australia

Biggest challenge in 2014 This year's key challenge remains the same, i.e. to stand out and cut through a fiercely competitive tourism landscape. This has been a great year so far for Australia tourism, with record international arrivals and visitor spending, and the launch of a new global campaign, *Restaurant Australia*, emphasising our country's world-class food, wine and culinary experiences.

Most significant development in 2015 We are tapping into the growing appetite amongst international travellers for great culinary tourism experiences. We want to raise the profile of our country's high-quality food and wine offerings and encourage more international visitors to come and sample these for themselves.

– Paige Lee Pei Qi

INDIA Mahesh Sharma, minister of state for tourism, culture and civil aviation

Biggest challenge in 2014 The most challenging issue was to shed the country's 'unsafe' image for female travellers and to restore confidence among foreign tourists, following a series of reported sexual assaults involving foreign female travellers that dented the image of India as a safe destination.

We will soon offer tourists the option of travelling by chip-enabled taxis from the airports, which would allow vehicle tracking and bio-data of the drivers.

Most significant development in 2015 India is liberalising its stringent visa regime by implementing the Electronic Travel Authorisation in phases. The first phase, comprising 30 countries including the US, Brazil, Japan, South Korea and Argentina, will be implemented by end-2014, and 2015 will see more countries added to the list. The Indian government is looking to extend the facility to 180 countries in the next two years.

– Rohit Kaul

SRI LANKA Vipula Wanigasekera, general manager, Sri Lanka Convention Bureau

Biggest challenge in 2014 We are concerned about the impact of mass tourism. Striking a balance between development and sustainable tourism, getting the required investment

for the sector, and promoting the country among primary and secondary markets were the most challenging tasks.

Significant developments in 2015 The speedy construction and upcoming completion of new mega hotels like Shangri-La, Sheraton, Movenpick and Marriott is eagerly awaited by

the authorities to prepare for the flow of 2.5 million tourist arrivals by 2016.

Sri Lanka will market the country aggressively to boost arrivals from China and other emerging markets. New expressways would also increase accessibility to more locations.

– Feizal Samath

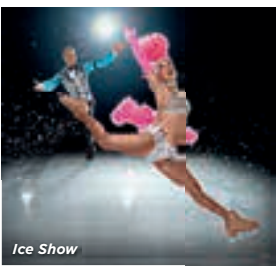


The *Restaurant Australia* campaign emphasises the abundance of fresh produce Down Under

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4-NIGHT BEST OF MALAYSIA CRUISE
Singapore Departures:
2014 Dec 15
2015 Jan 8, Feb 2
Ports-of-call: Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang)/
Penang, Langkawi

4-NIGHT ISLES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA CRUISE
Singapore Departures:
2014 Dec 22
2015 Jan 12, 26, Feb 18*
Ports-of-call: Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang), Phuket

5-NIGHT SPICE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA CRUISE
Singapore Departures:
2014 Dec 29*
2015 Jan 3, Feb 6, 22*, 27
Ports-of-call: Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang)/Penang/
Langkawi, Phuket

7-NIGHT MALAYSIA AND THAILAND CRUISE
Singapore Departures:
2015 Jan 19, Feb 11*
Ports-of-call: Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang),
Penang, Langkawi, Phuket
*Similar 7-N itinerary to Thailand and Vietnam is available.

8-NIGHT EXOTIC ASIA CRUISE
Singapore Departure:
2015 Mar 7
Ports-of-call: Xiamen, Hong Kong (overnight),
Ho Chi Minh City (Phu My), Shanghai (Baoshan)

*Festive sailing Ports-of-call differ by sailing dates. Kung Fu Panda and all related characters properties TM and ©2014. Dreamworks Animation L.L.C.



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Top of the web

What were Asian travellers searching for and booking this year? [Amos Low](#) asks four big online companies

01 Bangkok

02 Singapore

03 Hong Kong

04 Taipei

05 Kuala Lumpur

Results based on TripAdvisor sessions in the past one year from October 2013. The top four destinations are also winners in the 2014 Travellers' Choice Destinations Awards, with Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taipei placing 5th, 15th, 7th and 22nd respectively. The awards honour top travel spots worldwide based on the millions of valuable reviews and opinions from TripAdvisor travellers globally.

Wat Suhat, Bangkok

01 Bangkok

02 Hong Kong

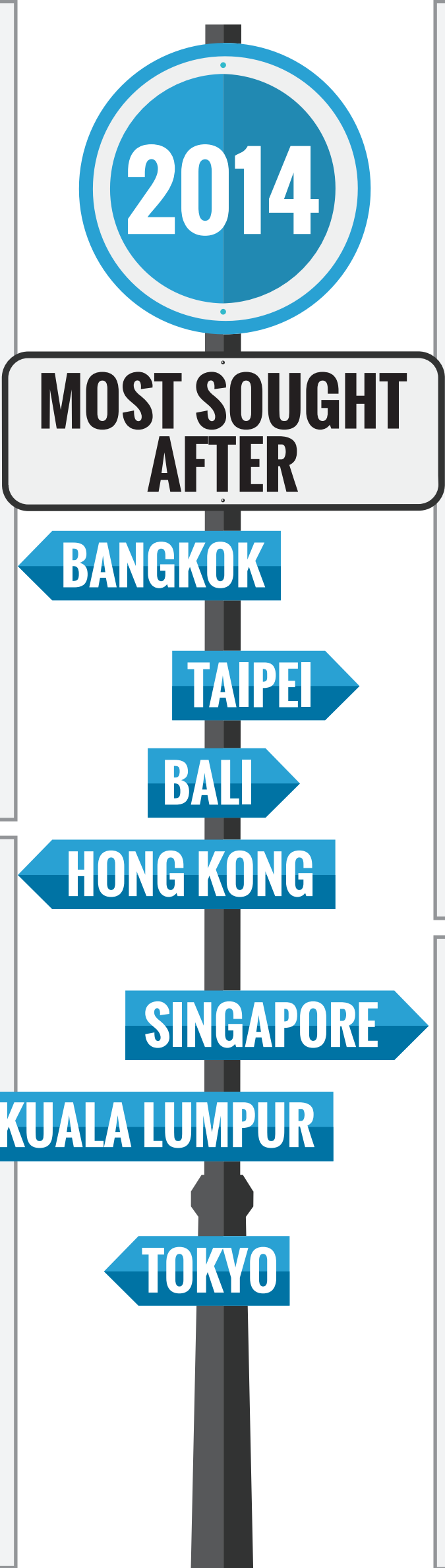
03 Taipei

04 Tokyo

05 Seoul

According to Expedia's internal tracking and confirmed bookings for Asia-Pacific market in 2014

Hennessy Road, Hong Kong



01 Singapore

02 Jakarta

03 Bali

04 Dubai

05 Kuala Lumpur

Based on results up until end-October

Joachim Holte, chief marketing officer, Wego
"It's not surprising that both Singapore and Jakarta are the top two destinations as traffic between the two cities has continued to steadily increase thanks to more competitive airfares, services and close proximity."
"Bangkok is absent from the top five this year, yet Bali lists at number three, so it's quite possible that Asian holiday makers selected Bali for their beach retreats in its place due to concerns over the political unrest earlier this year."
"It's not surprising to see Dubai creep in at number four as we've witnessed increased connectivity to Asia from the UAE, with new and additional services from the big Emirati carriers, especially from and to the Philippines."

Jakarta at sunset

01 Singapore

02 Bali

03 Hong Kong

04 Bangkok

05 Tokyo

Top destinations in Asia-Pacific (APAC) from APAC markets in terms of query volume. However, excludes traffic where destination country and user country is the same i.e. domestic travel.

Gardens by the Bay, Singapore

IT'S A WINTER

This holiday season, it's all about family fun and all-inclusive convenience at Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao. Get ready for a winter fantasy filled with exciting activities and unforgettable moments with the DreamWorks Gang. Let's move it, move it!



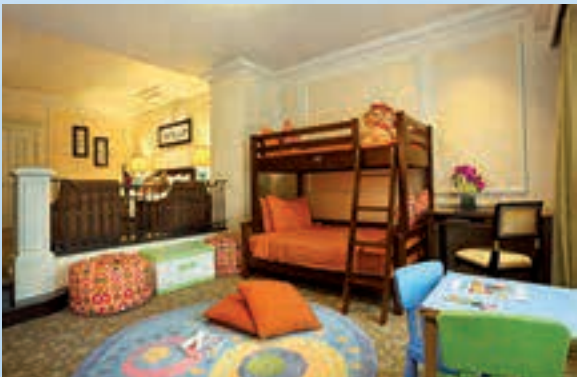
STAY

Hotel options at Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao

Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao offers more than 9,000 guestrooms and suites to suit all budgets and preferences. Among the options:

- **The Venetian® Macao** (3,000 suites)
- **Conrad® Macao, Cotai Central** (636 rooms & suites)
- **Holiday Inn Macao Cotai Central** (1,224 rooms & suites)
- **Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central** (3,896 rooms and suites)
- **Four Seasons Hotel Macao, Cotai Strip®** (360 rooms)

All hotels are linked and within walking distance of each other and all shopping, entertainment and dining facilities.



Famiglia Suite at The Venetian Macao is the best choice for families.

DO

Winter in Venice

Take a walk through a magical winter wonderland surrounding the lagoon area at The Venetian Macao, the must see-highlights of the free-admission event are the dazzling 3D light and sound spectacular **“Seasons of Wonder”**, complete with a majestic 50-foot tall **Christmas Tree**, a real **ice-skating rink** and non-stop live entertainment. Be dazzled by hundreds of twinkling lights as fluffy snow falls from the sky. Enjoy **tasty winter treats** and upload photos and videos of yourself and loved ones with free **Wi-Fi**. “Winter in Venice” is a signature event at The Venetian Macao found nowhere else in the region.

Penguins Undercover Ice World with the DreamWorks Gang!

Penguins in Macao? Yes – and it's definitely the coolest **Ice Adventure** ever with the **Penguins of Madagascar** at Asia's largest indoor ice exhibition at The Venetian Macao. Back for the fourth successive year by popular demand, the **Penguins Undercover Ice World with the DreamWorks Gang** will showcase a line-up of amazing ice sculptures, specially carved by world-renowned artists from Harbin, China. At a chilly -8°C, guests will come face-to-face with favourite DreamWorks Animation characters such as Po (Kung Fu Panda), Shrek and Toothless (How to Train Your Dragon)! Just follow the official guides – the **Penguins of Madagascar** – who will lead visitors through the 1,658 sqm exhibition made up of different zones themes such as Family, Friendship, Community and Tradition.



“Winter in Venice” with 3D light and sound spectacular.

Christmas Holiday Special 2014

EXTRAVAGANZA!



WINTER HIGHLIGHTS

at Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao

Penguins Undercover Ice World with the DreamWorks Gang

27 November 2014 – 8 March 2015
Daily 11am – 8pm
Cotai Expo Hall F
The Venetian Macao

Winter in Venice

3 December 2014 – 4 January 2015
Outdoor lagoon area
The Venetian Macao

Shrekfast character breakfast with the DreamWorks Gang

10am – 1130am (Sat – Mon)
9am – 1030am (Tue – Fri)
Urumqi Ballroom, Level 4, Sands Cotai Central
*Reservation required

Penguins of Madagascar Christmas Feast, with the DreamWorks Gang

24–26 December 2014
Urumqi Ballroom, Level 4, Sands Cotai Central
* Reservation required.

DreamWorks Meet and Greet (Free)

Daily 12pm – 2pm, 4pm – 5pm
Paradise Gardens, Sands Cotai Central

DreamWorks All Star Parade (Free)

Daily 3pm
Level 1, Sands Cotai Central



Meet your favourite DreamWorks characters.

SEE

Get up close with the DreamWorks Gang

The DreamWorks Gang will be out in force this holiday season. Everyday, the **DreamWorks All Star Parade** – a lively procession of dancing and music – will wind its way through the Shoppes at Cotai Central shopping mall. With a cast of up to 32 performers, dancers, puppets and stilt walkers who interact with the crowd, visitors can shake hands and snap a photo with their favourite DreamWorks characters. For the best photo opportunity, head over to Paradise Gardens which will be decorated in full Christmas splendour to host the **Christmas-themed Meet and Greet**.

Don't miss our other kid-friendly winter special: **DreamWorks Experience Cool Collection** where the mission is to collect DreamWorks cards from eight checkpoints to be found throughout Sands Cotai Central.

EAT

Shrekfast, Penguins of Madagascar Christmas Feast and more!

Two exciting dining programmes will fill the whole family with fun and joy this Christmas, with plenty of quality time with favourite DreamWorks characters.

Shrekfast character breakfast will introduce a new dance number for the holiday season to go with the delicious DreamWorks character-inspired menu and all-star entertainment programme. The mouth-watering **Penguins of Madagascar Christmas Feast** will feature the whole DreamWorks Gang along with a scrumptious festive buffet. Every child will get a special Penguin gift. It's the biggest Christmas celebration in town and everyone will have a blast!

That's not all. Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao offers more than **100 restaurants**, including the Michelin-starred Indian restaurant **The Golden Peacock**. From American steakhouse to Cantonese fine dining, fast food to seafood, casual cafés to food courts, there is something for everyone. For this season's special, try the Christmas Eve Set Dinner Menu at The Golden Peacock or the Christmas Day Dinner at the Italian restaurant **Portofino**. ■



It's going to be a Christmas feast!

Please visit www.cotaistrip.com for more information and hotel packages at Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao.



...and shopping too!

After all the winter activities, it's time for another highlight at Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao — shopping!

More than 600 international brands will let you shop to your hearts' content. The bonus: everything is duty-free in Macao. Head to **Shoppes at Venetian** where the Venice-theme design with a “nightless” sky is as breathtaking as the gondola ride, **Shoppes at Four Seasons** and **Shoppes at Cotai Central**.



Aviation round-up

CHARTING THE UPS AND D



FOR far too long, hotels and airlines have levied hefty charges on Wi-Fi and Internet connection. Interestingly, small hotel chains were among the first to offer free connectivity and over time, the larger ones have followed – albeit mostly for “loyal premium guests”. In commercial aviation, it is an LCC – Norwegian Long Haul AS – that has extended complimentary Wi-Fi connection to its passengers and Emirates has followed suit.

Emirates is investing US\$20 million to equip its Airbus A380s and Boeing 777-300ERs with Wi-Fi connection, and passengers will initially receive the first 10MB of data for free and a token charge of one US dollar levied on the next 600MB. But the best is yet to come – the airline’s ultimate objective is to offer unlimited Wi-Fi access to all passengers on board its planes.

Airlines that have for years been polling their passengers for hints of the service innovations they wish to see on board planes need look no further – this is it. Now that the precedence has been set by an LCC and a full-service carrier, it is about time others follow or be overlooked by the ever-so-connected customers.

<<<< >>>>

THE aviation industry has been unfairly blamed for climate change, noise pollution and other environmental issues. Great strides have been made by aircraft and engine manufacturers, and in 2014 more A380s and B787 Dreamliners have been delivered to airlines worldwide. The Dreamliner did not get off to a dream start



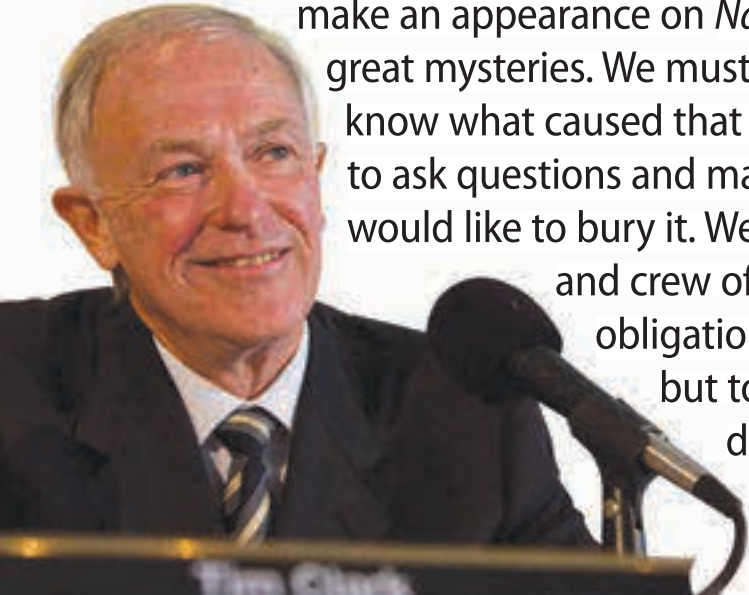
Clockwise from top: Emirates is among the first full-service carriers to offer Wi-Fi on board its planes; aviation experts believe that an Airbus A380 superjumbo is more fuel efficient than most cars; will Virgin Atlantic bring commercial space tourism to fruition?



WHO SAID WHAT

“MH370 remains one of the great aviation mysteries. Personally, I have the concern that we will treat it as such and move on. At the most, it might then make an appearance on *National Geographic* as one of aviation’s great mysteries. We mustn’t allow this to happen. We must know what caused that airplane to disappear... I will continue to ask questions and make a nuisance of myself, even as others would like to bury it. We have an obligation to the passengers and crew of MH370 and their families. We have an obligation to not sweep this under the carpet, but to sort it out and do better than we have done.”

Tim Clark, CEO of Emirates in an interview with Spiegel Online



Sim Koh Chwee offers a window seat on the airline world in 2014, tracking a year of significant breakthroughs and tumult, plus a selection of memorable quotes by outspoken industry bosses

OWNS OF AVIATION

but with most of its woes behind it, these quiet and fuel-efficient airplanes are now criss-crossing the globe and will soon be joined by the first Airbus A350s in 2015. Together with the B777-300ER, these airplanes have been instrumental in allowing airlines to retire their less efficient workhorses like the B747-400s and MD-11s.

Perhaps it is time for the aviation industry to be better at articulating the fact that it is now responsible for far less emission than ever before but continues to facilitate valuable movement of trade, commerce and people.



MALAYSIA Airlines' loss of a B777-200ER along with 12 crew members and 227 passengers on March 8 mystified and intrigued the entire world for months, and the world is no closer to finding remains of the airplane and its passengers as 2014 comes to a close. All the satellites hovering above the Earth and radars along its flight path have not been able to definitively pinpoint its location. As governments and air forces deployed assets to search for the missing plane, first in the South China Sea and then the Straits of Malacca, Andaman Sea and Indian Ocean, valuable time was lost and with each passing week, hopes of finding any debris grew more remote.

The disappearance of an airliner this size is unprecedented and even as MH370 has gained more familiarity than any other flight number in history with the exception of Pan Am 103, there is a nagging and troubling fear that it may eventually prove more convenient and less costly to simply declare this B777 as lost.

SPACE travel has in recent years generated a significant buzz with much hopes riding on Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic. Many have registered their interest and paid huge deposits to be among the first to skim the edge of Earth's atmosphere, possibly as soon as in the spring of 2015.

On October 31, the space vehicle crashed on a test flight over the Mojave Desert killing its co-pilot. Although it was believed that human error might have been the cause of the crash, investigation could take more than a year. This could derail the planned launch of space travel but more importantly, it has shaken the confidence of some who have previously signed up for this bragging right. Unless the space craft is absolved of any form of technical failure and pilots are trained to a level that bolsters the confidence of this segment's high-profile and high net worth customers, the notion of space travel could once again be just a nebulous vision.



ON July 17, the ground war between Ukraine and Russian-backed rebels took an ugly turn when Malaysia Airlines' (MAS) flight MH17 on a B777-200ER was shot down, taking with it the lives of 15 crew members and 283 passengers. Rescue efforts were hampered as the ground war continued unabated in spite of assurances that rescuers could enter the crash site to retrieve human remains and belongings. Even as late as November, retrieval of aircraft parts was ongoing.

MAS could not be faulted for flying

over Ukraine as international bodies such as the International Civil Aviation Organization and the Federal Aviation Administration have only warned of potential risks and advised airlines to exercise caution, the air route over eastern Ukraine was never closed. In the week preceding the shutdown of MH17, about 900 international flights transited above eastern Ukraine.

Following the incident, international airlines have completely amended their flight routings and skirted around Ukraine. As 2014 comes to a close, nobody is any wiser about the origin of the missile that downed MH17, and the aviation industry – and MAS – may carry this mystery into the next year.

IN recent years, air rage and assault on airline personnel and properties have become more common. Even when flights were delayed by inclement weather (in China), passengers have staged sit-ins on

board airplanes. In one instance, safety was severely compromised when passengers staging a sit-in on board an airplane in China ran onto the airport tarmac, but none faced charges and they instead received cash compensation from the airline.

In August, a United Airlines flight from Newark to Denver was diverted to Chicago after a lady passenger threw water on a male passenger behind her for using a Knee Defender, a device that enables a passenger to "lock" the seat in front and prevent it from being reclined. Both passengers were removed from the flight at Chicago and neither faced any charge as Chicago police and security agencies deemed this a "customer service issue".

And just last month, The Cranberries singer Dolores O'Riordan wearing heavy boots stamped on the foot of a cabin attendant, causing the latter's foot to swell significantly. During her arrest, she head-butted a law enforcement officer and spat in his face. The singer was subsequently released into the custody of her mother and the case is pending.

Unless governments and law enforcement agencies are more willing to exercise their vested power to protect airline employees and travellers, air rage in airports and on board planes are likely to be more common.

"Don't give up easily. Don't get intimidated. I have learnt that the competitors (airlines in India) are old-fashioned monopolists. They want to protect their turf at all possible costs. I have never seen this before."

Tony Fernandes, CEO, AirAsia

"The Knee Defender incident that caused United Airlines to divert a flight last Sunday (August 24) wouldn't have happened on low-cost-carrier Spirit Airlines because our seats don't recline."

Ben Baldanza, CEO, Spirit Airlines

2015

International Tourism Trade Fair

MADRID

28 January | 1 February

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Who's on our radar

WATCH PEOPLE

**MARIO
HARDY**



*CEO
PATA*

What he's done

Taking over from loud and unmissable Martin Craigs in November, he has – literally – big shoes to fill. Yet listening to the soft-spoken Hardy share about his plans for the 60-year-old association, one immediately comes away thinking this guy is sharp, but also extremely down to earth. In other words, he has substance. No stranger to the industry, Hardy has been working in travel for nearly 30 years, while living in Asia for over a decade.

Why he's worth watching

While one of his top priorities is to ensure the non-profit doesn't see red ink in its balance sheet for next year, more efforts will also be channelled into the online space.

Drawing from his own experience of running popular coffee blog Map2Cafe, Hardy has already gotten the ball rolling on a number of digital initiatives such as a new and improved PATA.org as well as a sustainability-focused website.

Further down the line, Hardy also wants to relook at how membership is structured, adopting a tiered model where members pay according to the benefits they get rather than what industry category they belong to. – **Gracia Chiang**

**MAHESH
SHARMA**



*Tourism minister
India*

What he's done

A doctor by profession, the first-time member of the Indian Parliament was appointed as the new minister of state (independent charge), tourism, culture and civil aviation in November.

Sharma announced soon after assuming office that the safety of tourists would be one of his priorities. As a first step, he ordered that tourist taxis must install electronic chips to track their movement. He also said that the government would introduce a helicopter service in the Buddhist circuit and facilitation centres for foreign tourists at all international airports.

Why he's worth watching

It will be interesting to see how his ministry leverages the much anticipated e-visa system that has been rolled out for citizens of 43 countries. Launched last month, the scheme is expected to simplify the visa application process, with visas being offered within five days after online submission.

Sharma is also expected to soon begin an aggressive cleanliness campaign for all tourist sites in India, as well as implement measures to promote medical tourism.

– **Rohit Kaul**

**JAIME
BAUTISTA**



*President and CEO
Philippine Airlines*

What he's done

In October, Bautista returned to Philippine Airlines (PAL) after tycoon Lucio Tan bought back 49 per cent of the flag carrier, which was sold to San Miguel Corp (SMC) two years ago.

Credited for steering PAL during its most turbulent past out of financial rehabilitation and receivership, it's going to be a bumpy ride even for Bautista who's mapping out a new direction to bring PAL back to profitability.

Why he's worth watching

Bautista's most immediate concern is the review of PAL's refueling programme which, under ex-president and COO Ramon Ang, included the purchase of at least 54 new aircraft and is likely to lead to financial losses for this year and next.

PAL is also looking for a strategic partner, preferably a foreign airline investor, to improve its cash flow.

As for network, Bautista and his team seem keen on developing the US and Middle East, but not Europe unlike the previous management. – **Rosa Ocampo**

**BENITO
BENGZON JR**



*Tourism
assistant secretary
Philippines*

What he's done

After taking primary lead on tourism marketing efforts at the Department of Tourism, Bengzon geared the department's focus on growing new country markets as head of the Market Development Group (MDG), which initially targeted three key segments: English as a second language, diving and medical tourism.

Why he's worth watching

Tourism undersecretary and MICE marketing guru Daniel Corpuz has resigned, which places Bengzon next in line.

Meanwhile, Bengzon has expanded marketing emphasis particularly on cruise destinations like Puerto Princesa, Pangasinan and Ilocos. It is also expected that MDG's efforts will pay off for more long-stay, luxury markets such as Eastern Europe, Spain, France, the UAE and Russia. – **Marianne Carandang**

**CC
ZHUANG**



*CEO and co-founder
Qunar*

What he's done

Heading one of China's most influential travel companies, Zhuang has transformed the once meta-search engine into an ecosystem that encompasses OTA, yield management and more. In 2011, Qunar had 200 employees, but today, the number has swelled to 8,000.

Applying his engineering background to the travel industry, Zhuang is a firm believer in milking all possible efficiencies from the distribution business. He makes no bones about wanting suppliers to cut commissions in order to eliminate inefficient travel distribution players.

Why he's worth watching

Expect Qunar to become China's market leader not just for flights but hotels. While it became profitable in 2011, the company has deliberately gone into loss-making mode over the last year or so as it expands in areas such as hotel sales and revenue management for airlines.

While the company claims to have 25 per cent of the domestic air market, it is behind when it comes to hotels – around five per cent. To address that, Zhuang hired nearly 3,000 salespersons this year to sign on more hotels. – **Gracia Chiang**

Remember these faces, for each of them is doing something worth taking note of in the months ahead

CLEMENT WONG



Founder & CEO
BeMyGuest

What he's done

Wong founded BeMyGuest in 2012, and has since not taken a step out of place. It secured S\$500,000 (US\$385,356) in angel funding last year and purchased Indiescapes early in 2014, before bagging a further S\$1 million in funding when it won Channel NewsAsia's Start-up Asia Competition.

Now offering over 5,000 live products, BeMyGuest has been hailed as the world's largest online booking platform for tours and activities in Asia. The company has released the world's first tours and activities mobile application for suppliers beginning with Android, with the iOS version to be released by end-2014.

Why he's worth watching

Wong has proven to be an astute businessman, and is keen to empower his suppliers and travel agency partners to make dealing online a painless process. At the same time, demand for experiential travel is skyrocketing and the need for unique itineraries has never been more pressing. *TTG Asia* wants to see what BeMyGuest will find in Naypyidaw in time for ASEAN Tourism Forum next year. —

Hannah Koh

FAISAL MEMON



Founder & CEO
Illusions Online

What he's done

Warm, effusive and a visionary in his own right, Memon wants to eradicate unnecessary complication in the travel industry through a unified technology.

Driven by a twin engine consisting of a system to streamline agency work processes and a global distribution platform, Memon is leading the charge into the Asia-Pacific region. Illusions has launched Bangkok and Sydney offices, and is planning to build a team in the Philippines to handle data.

Why he's worth watching

Key to his ambitions is the cross-selling platform iWTX that gathers inventory from DMC/tour operator users of the Illusions online system and distributes internationally, giving users more visibility. Will he turn iWTX into the Alibaba or Amazon of the travel industry? Watch this space. —

Hannah Koh

TUROCHAS FUAD



Co-founder
Travelmob

What he's done

Despite his age (40), Fuad was not afraid to take a large gamble by creating a vacation rental site for Asians at a time when no other Asian companies had ventured into this space. In 2012, he left his stable job as Skype's Asia-Pacific managing director for an unknown start-up life, convincing his pregnant wife that this was what he wanted to do.

Having raised seed funding to the tune of US\$1 million within a few months, the money was used to grow the team, expedite platform development and roll out to key markets across Asia-Pacific.

Why he's worth watching

In October, Travelmob introduced a concierge service to help travellers find ideal villas in Bali. I foresee more of such marriages between online and offline offerings, allowing the company to cater to varied travel behaviour across Asia.

There will also likely be more development on apps, considering that almost half of their users access the site through mobile devices. —

S Puvaneswary

ANTHONY TAN



Co-founder
MyTeksi

What he's done

Tan had an unselfish vision to make taxis in Kuala Lumpur safer for women and, at the same time, help taxi drivers earn extra income. Thus, a simple idea of revamping the taxi business was devised using smartphone technology. Once a booking is confirmed, the passenger get the taxi driver's name and contact details on their phone. Personally, I have benefited from Tan's innovation, as it is now easier to get a taxi during peak hours and in remote parts of the Klang Valley, away from the main roads.

Why he's worth watching

MyTeksi is expanding fast. Outside of Malaysia, it is known as GrabTaxi and is in five other countries, namely Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia.

One can expect more innovations beyond just ordinary transportation services. For example, the company has been dabbling with the idea of delivering goods to people, such as food delivery to office workers, a modern version of India's dabbawallas. —

S Puvaneswary

CLIFFORD NEO



Managing director
Dynasty Travel

What he's done

When he first joined his father's business in 2004, many wondered if a young entrepreneur without any travel-related experience could survive in a very competitive industry, but Neo has proved his doubters wrong.

Over the last decade, he has led many technology-driven initiatives, becoming the first travel agency in Singapore to launch its own iPhone app in 2012. Dynasty Travel was also the winner of *TTG Asia's* inaugural Innovator Award this year in recognition of its efforts to enhance staff mobility and efficiency.

Why he's worth watching

Among Neo's latest initiatives are iPad minis to improve productivity and increase marketing reach. Employees are now able to make live bookings for customers buying its packaged tours and promotional offers. His company has also set up an IT arm to develop its own software, and looks set to roll out new innovative products to take the industry by storm.

— Paige Lee Pei Qi

SHAFRAZ FAZLEY



Founder &
managing director
Viluxur

What he's done

It was sheer hard work and determination that led a 30-year-old Fazley to start his own travel company in 2010. A Sri Lankan national, he worked for a few years in the Maldives before launching Viluxur, eventually commanding a 20-30 per cent stake of the Chinese market to the Maldives. A few years later, he opened Viluxur's Colombo office, and helped Sri Lanka grow its number of Chinese arrivals.

Within four years, Fazley has managed to position Viluxur as a luxury brand. From just 10 employees, Viluxur now has over 100 employees in four different offices around the world.

Why he's worth watching

A GSA for many resorts in the Maldives and Sri Lanka, Fazley plans to launch one new destination a year with Mauritius, Seychelles and Bali being next on the radar. Through its Singapore-based holding company, Viluxur also hopes to create new travel brands to cater to niche markets.

What intrigues me most is that this young man is firm on timelines to reach goals like the five-year deadline (from 2014) he has set to turn the DMC into Asia's leading luxury travel consultancy. —

Feizal Samath



TTG Asia Media's Raini Hamdi and Darren Ng, together with Park Hotel Group's Allen Law and Mohd Rafin.

SPARKLE

AT CLARKE QUAY

CO-HOSTED BY  PARK HOTEL GROUP  *Publishing* **Travel Trade** 

ITB Asia 2014 Official Late Night Function
30 October 2014 | Park Hotel Clarke Quay

It was indeed the most anticipated networking event of ITB Asia 2014, with award-winning entertainment, lip-smacking canapes and beverages that sent delegates going "Ooh-Aah". Set at the gorgeous poolside of the riverside property, the night proved to be sensational as Park Hotel Group relished their TTG "Best Regional Hotel Chain" title for the 3rd year, while TTG Asia Media celebrated its 40th.



Firing up the night with a heart-thumping fire twirling act!



Stunning fiesta dancers that everyone loved and some guests even picked a few new dance moves.



Combining drums, laser and water for one award-winning entertainment act that sent our guests grooving!



Deevana Patong Resort & Spa's Tik and Groupon's Chayada Jumrean



Chimu Adventures' Greg Carter and Chad Carey



Go India's Kumar Guru and Esa Tour's Ida Robinson



JacTravel's Helen Beedle and Sally Yiu



PRM Events Limited's Glyn Abbott, Time Travel's Vivian Maar, Holiday Club's Nina Anttila and Omeir Holidays' Dinesh Nair



The Unique Collection of Hotels and Resorts' Christian Kluding and Termpong Apinopchayanan (1st from right), Hotel Nikko Hanoi's Bui Tung and Geo Media Consulting's Stefan Kraft



IFH Asia-Pacific's Lucas Peng, Park Hotel Group's Allen Law and Park Hotel Alexandra's Angeline Tan

Reporter's notebook

Covering travel trade news has its highs and lows – our team spills the beans



Raini Hamdi
Senior editor

BEST My best interview this year was with Kwek Leng Beng, executive chairman, Singapore-based City Developments Limited. I could not believe my luck that he spent nearly three hours with me and that I could ask him anything. I was even more delighted when he answered each question freely and

frankly, and nothing was off the record. In fact, it was my best interview ever. ICYMI, it was published in the February 21 issue of *TTG Asia*.

WORST My worst experience was when I was harangued by a tourism official at ITB Berlin this year after we ran a factual account of how its bad image was affecting bookings to the country. I also could not believe how one of the industry players from that destination, whom my reporter interviewed for views on the issue, stooped so low so as to turn around and deny he was interviewed after the article was published.

Karen Yue
Group editor

BEST This has been a glorious year, largely because sister publication *TTGmice* underwent a transformation to give it a fresher, more vibrant look, with new sections. The magazine is always looking to make itself more relevant to its readers and to consistently deliver the quality content it is known for, so it gave me great joy to see this dedication being acknowledged through yet another award. The cover story in the November 2013 issue won the PATA Gold Award Travel Journalism - Business Article, making it the fourth PATA Gold Award *TTGmice* has won to date. Adding to the excitement, we unveiled *TTGassoci-*

ations, a quarterly publication for association secretariats and event planners.

WORST It takes a lot to get me down and I have no terrible work experiences this year to share. However, I do wish more marketing and communications officers would understand that editorial coverage is not for sale and that we owe it to our readers to run objective and relevant content.

Gracia Chiang
Deputy group editor

BEST I had such an enjoyable first-time cruise experience on an Oceania fam trip to Greece and Turkey that I am already dreaming of my next voyage. Being the restless sort, I was pleasantly surprised that I never once felt bored throughout my seven days onboard. I saw for myself how cruising could appeal to Asian

travellers – regardless of age. What did I like? Waking up to a different gorgeous view every day, no transportation and packing hassle, and the all-inclusive fine cuisine!

WORST Being stuck in Sanya's airport for over eight hours and missing my connecting flight back home from Guangzhou. Despite being a VIP guest of China Southern Airlines for the WTTC Global Summit, I had great difficulty securing a seat on the next available flight out of Hainan after my original one was delayed.

Strangely, I also found the logistics for such a high-profile event were not well-executed. I was given incorrect and conflicting information more than once whether it was city tours or airport pickup timings. It was a harrowing trip, and also not a productive one as it was hard to squeeze in face time with top executives.

Xinyi Liang-Pholsena
Assistant editor
Thailand/
Indochina

BEST Professional PR practitioners know how to pitch a story, give reporters the independence to judge the suitability of a pitch and follow up appropriately without being too pushy. There are a couple of commendable Bangkok-based PRs, from both hotels and boutique agencies, who have left me with a good impression, as they obviously know their clients well and do a great job at assessing a particular product/news for the magazine. It makes

getting background information from them and setting up interviews such a breeze!

WORST Long flight times are starting to make me apprehensive about travelling longhaul. For a tradeshow in the US this year, I flew out from Bangkok, stopped for an eight-hour layover in Doha, followed by a three-hour layover in New York. By the time I arrived at my destination in Orlando some 36 hours later, I was so tired that I didn't experience any jet lag, which also made it easier for me to hit the ground running the following morning.

Hannah Koh
Assistant editor
TTG Asia Online

BEST At this year's PATA Travel Mart in Phnom Penh, I met Paula from Siem Reap-based Angkor Expeditions, who was introducing a river rafting experience as a new way to explore UNESCO Heritage Site. I wrote about it, and a couple days later she dropped me a note to say thank you and that she had received a number of enquiries about Float Angkor as a result. It was certainly not a big deal, but I felt that in my own tiny way I'd been able to contribute to Cambodia, a lovely country that is still grappling with its dark past. This is likely my own mes-

siah complex speaking, but humour me please!

WORST Being harassed at ITB Berlin this year by a major NTO for writing down and publishing exactly what travel consultants and even a rep from the NTO had said – also known as doing my job. If the world fails to understand that a destination is the land of milk and honey, threatening the media is the last thing that would reassure travellers your destination is a safe place to visit. Don't kill the messenger!



Paige Lee Pei Qi
Assistant editor
Singapore

BEST I will bestow this honour to Tourism Australia for the VIP treatment rendered to all guests during the Australian Tourism Exchange in Cairns this year. Just imagine: upon arrival at the airport, we were taken by surprise as the traditional Gimuy Walubara

Yidinji people danced around us as we collected our luggage. But that didn't stop there. We were even greeted by helicopters and ships cruising along the harbour that rolled out welcome banners! Now, how is that for a warm welcome?

WORST Staying in one of the hotels in Cambodia, which was undergoing renovation works. Word of advice to all hotels: Guests do not like to welcome their mornings with drilling and hammering noises at 7am.

Kathy Neo
Copy editor

BEST My five-day fam trip to Okinawa. The sponsor, Okinawa Convention & Visitor Bureau, customised my itinerary well and responded readily to my interview requests. It was also my first trip to Japan,



making it doubly memorable.

WORST Fortunately, none.



Mimi Hudoyo
Editor, Indonesia

BEST My fam trip to New Zealand. I have been to Rotorua a couple of times, but this trip allowed me to experience the destination in new ways. The cruise of Lake Rotoiti and helicopter ride, the Maori dinner, and the city walking tour covering historical areas and landmarks

have enriched my knowledge of the destination. The highlight was the Hobbiton Movie Set tour in Matamata, an hour away from Rotorua. It was like being in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* movies, and I could almost see Bilbo Baggins, Frodo Baggins and his friends there.

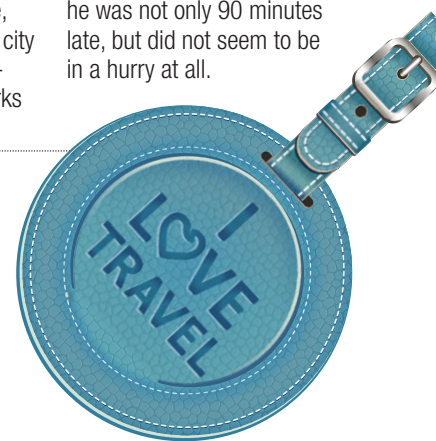
WORST I was assigned to a destination presentation by a visiting NTO, but had already accepted an invitation to a media conference by a cruise company at around the same time. To honour both, I did the interview with the NTO representative half an hour earlier and left before his presentation. I rushed to my next appointment as the PR company told me the cruise spokesperson's time was also limited. It turned out he was not only 90 minutes late, but did not seem to be in a hurry at all.

S Puvaneswary
Editor, Malaysia/Brunei

BEST A business trip I made to Langkawi for a destination report, as everything went so smoothly. I had a great interview with Langkawi Development Authority's CEO Khalid Ramli, and LADA's manager, tourism division, Rosnina Yaacob, also arranged for us to see some new attractions. We stayed at a gorgeous two-bedroom villa at The Westin Langkawi Resort & Spa, and the hospitality we received was simply amazing. I have Shirley Tan, our senior

business manager, to thank for making all the arrangements.

WORST Having to travel for an hour to get to the heart of Kuala Lumpur for a one-on-one interview with the overseas spokesperson of a shopping attraction with outlets in Europe. The morning of the interview, the PR company called me to confirm the afternoon appointment. When I arrived, I was surprised to find only the PR person there. Apparently, the spokesperson had fallen ill. When I asked the PR person why he didn't call to inform, he said: "I didn't want to disappoint you!" I was left speechless. In his defence, this PR person is new and inexperienced.



FULL MOON PARTY

Co-Hosted By



**1 October 2014 | Sofitel So Bangkok
IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2014
Official Late Night Function**

In an all SO hip fashion, IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific delegates experienced a once-in-a-lifetime Thai “Full Moon Party” that was 100% Sofitel So style. Being immersed in the pulsating beats by famous percussionist T-Bone while sipping delightful concoctions under artsy neon lights at the gorgeously funky Sofitel So Bangkok certainly rivalled any happening night out in the city. The party also saw co-hosts Sofitel So Bangkok and TTG Travel Trade Publishing come together to celebrate TTG’s four decades of success.



Happy Birthday, TTG Asia Media!

Led by its managing director, Mr Darren Ng, TTG celebrates its 40th birthday with fun-tastic co-host Sofitel So Bangkok and fun-loving delegates!



Sofitel So Bangkok's Yves Mudry and Juthamas Carranco share a toast with Bosch's Michael Beck



Swissotel Merchant Court's Rachel Ng, PC Tours & Travel's Owen Yau, Top Holidays' Elisa Ng and Marina Mandarin Singapore's Teo Chin Chin



Film&Event Media's Taryn Fowler, Mathematical Associations of Victoria's Simon Pyror and Crystal Events & Incentives' Tes Proos



Top Holidays' Kirati Latkrathum and TransHotel's Bert Goethals.



Changi Airport Group's Bob Lee, TTG Travel Trade Publishing's Jonathan Yap and Aviareps' Melvin Ng



Vacation Club Holidays' Alex Tan with the Sofitel So Bangkok team



Aviation & Tourism International's John Boyd and EventWorld UK's Michael Packford



Travel Warehouse Inc's Jordan Aquino, Heritage MICE & Travel's Stella Pham and Lam Vinh Phuc.



Sofitel So Bangkok's Nuntarat Tanapunyasiri, Shroff International Travel Care's Kristine Shroff and Rajah Travel's Joy Valiao



Fraser Hospitality's Steven Su and Swift Bridge Technologies' SK Chong



Chem Fil's Freddy Loh and Ultimate's K.S Tan



IMS Health's Prabhu Chandrashekar and TTG Travel Trade Publishing's Karen Cheung.

Reporter's notebook



Greg Lowe
Correspondent, Thailand

BEST Travelling to Egypt in January to cover the Euromic AGM in Cairo was without a doubt the highlight of the year. With three days in the capital followed by a 4D4N cruise down the Nile, taking in the splendour of Karnak, Luxor, Valley of the Kings, Edfu, Philae and Aswan was unbelievable. Yes, there were a few bomb blasts in the capital when we were there, but I never felt threatened. The guilty pleasure was

that poor tourism arrivals meant the main attractions were relatively empty. Walking through one of the birthplaces of civilization became a much more personal experience.

WORST Reporting on Thailand's protracted political crisis, especially during the early months of the year. It was a hard task getting sources to be straight about how bad the situation was. Many were reluctant to speak off record too. If you live in the country, it would have been easy to see how badly affected tourism was, yet a number of people in the industry felt the need to push their optimistic view of the situation beyond the realms of believability. Added to this problem was the fact that the Tourism Authority of Thailand was very unresponsive in the first four months of the year, taking seven to 15 days to answer questions, if any answer was given at all.

of typhoon survivors. The airline and its officers were also involved in various other activities to help Tacloban without publicity.

WORST That same AirAsia press trip returned to Manila a tad late. More accurately, the plane was already in Manila but was asked not to land because of the congested runway of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA). Flight delays were an oft-repeated scenario this year whether travelling domestic or international, underscoring the urgency of solving NAIA's runway congestion woes.

Rosa Ocampo
Correspondent, Philippines

BEST AirAsia's press trip to Tacloban, Leyte – nearly six months after it was battered by super typhoon Haiyan – opened our eyes to the airline's strong CSR culture. It raised US\$2.2 million to rebuild homes and livelihood

Marianne Carandang
Correspondent, Philippines

BEST This year, I'm pinning this on PHILTOA's 25th Philippine Travel Mart, which made a special effort to support previously disaster-stricken destinations that are back on their feet or on their way there. Places that were hit, like Coron, are back in business, others like Leyte, Capiz, Malapascua – it's important not to forget our support, even just as tourists, is needed. I also observed promotional efforts on the part of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, Zamboanga, Cagayan de Oro and Baler. It won't be long before some of these places will become new byword destinations for the

Philippines. That's my hope!

WORST I haven't had any really bad experience this year. Instead, I'd like to put forth a suggestion for local PR agencies who support the travel trade, and that is to help us spot the B2B angle more quickly for our stories as opposed to the consumer angle, as well as to provide more information on what is going to take place prior to the event. That way, expectations are met all around.

Prudence Lui
Correspondent, Hong Kong

BEST The Disney Paint the Night event in September was executed to a tee by the team from Hong Kong Disneyland. Despite a very packed schedule that included a cocktail, dinner, interviews and a preview of the newly launched night parade, there was no overrun and reporters got what they needed. It was a productive night, as I not only had a chance to mingle with the trade for

industry gossip, but also met the senior vice president of marketing Jill Estorino, who just took over the post.

WORST In August, I was invited to preview the new Stage 360 and Motion 360 at Ngong Ping 360 on Lantau. However, the cable car service was temporarily suspended due to a thunderstorm warning. After spending 25 minutes waiting, the organiser decided to replace the 25-minute cable car ride with a bus ride. It took about 45 minutes to climb up the hill, and on the return trip, another 40 minutes down. This meant I had to rush to my next event in town.

Luckily, it was an indoor event and the organiser was well prepared with many umbrellas distributed to ensure we stayed dry.

Caroline Boey
Senior correspondent, China & Special Projects

BEST When I reached out to my contacts to introduce me not only to new Chinese travel trade players but those who could understand my half-Chinese, half-English interviews, I was not sure if I would have any luck. I was glad to have found James Liang, managing director, Century Holiday International Travel Group who was featured in our Innovators column. Based in Shenzhen, Liang does not only speak fluent English, but has a rather unique story. Instead of becoming a banker like his classmates, Liang decided to stay in

the travel business after his part-time tour-guiding stint during his student days.

Today, the company has 18 branches in China, Singapore, Los Angeles and Toronto, and continues to push the B2B boundaries.

WORST I cannot say that I have encountered any bad experience since I started reporting on China since the start of the year. However, my wish is that I would be given more access to senior tourism officials. It will be a dream come true to be able to conduct a one-on-one, face-to-face interview with the chairman of the China National Tourism Administration one day.

Shekhar Niyogi
Chief Correspondent, India

BEST Attending Arabian Travel Market 2014 in Dubai. It was a busier event than last year, but the Media Centre operated really efficiently, feeding relevant data and press releases on time. The coordination for various media conferences was excellent, which gave me time for one-on-one interviews and

to walk the show floor. I managed to enhance my networking with key trade players in the Middle East at this event. Moreover, the Media Centre was located near the centre of the action unlike other events where the media rooms are located in an obscure corner of the venue.

WORST Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart was a maiden effort by the state NTO, but a cyclonic storm ripped apart the makeshift structure

Rohit Kaul
Correspondent, New Delhi

BEST The 49th convention of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Association of India was a well-organised and educational event. Having attracted a large number of key hoteliers, it not only provided good networking opportunities but a chance to be in touch with key issues facing the hospitality industry. I also had a couple of hours to explore the beautiful pink city of Jaipur, which

never fails to impress any traveller.

WORST The launch of the Comprehensive Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India for accommodation players, tour operators as well as beaches, backwaters, lakes and rivers. The event saw speakers from the tourism department and industry stakeholders explaining about the importance of sustainable tourism. However, there was nothing said about the parameters of the criteria. Plus, the tourism minister left soon after the session so there was no chance to query him about it.

Feizal Samath
Correspondent
Sri Lanka/Maldives

BEST A discussion with Dileep Mudadeniya, head of branding at John Keells, as he talked me through the group's range of specialty events lined up for 2014 including hosting the finalists of the Miss China contest; the Harley Owners Group nine-day tour of Sri Lanka with their Harley bikes being separately shipped; a unique treasure hunt in Sri Lanka for 50 travel consultants from France; and the Asian Bloggers conference.

WORST When a travel consultant who had agreed to go on record for a last-minute interview on MICE developments pulled back

when the interview was to take place. It was not only disappointing and unbecoming of a top agency, but also put the magazine and me in a tight spot. There was no apology either. Fortunately, with many contacts at hand, I was able to call another friendly source, and rush through the interview and story to meet the deadline.



In celebration of 40tude



LOOKING GOOD AT

40

1. In April, we unveiled a fresh look for *TTG Asia*, which is now packed with thoughtful analysis alongside insightful features 2. Our well-received anniversary issue reflected on 40 years of Asian travel and tourism, plus looked at what lies ahead 3. Sister publication *TTGmice* was also redesigned this year 4. Toasting to the success of our revamps and introducing latest baby *TTGassociations* 5 & 6. Rounding up the industry for a fit and fun Run in Wonderland event at Gardens by the Bay 7. Have you downloaded the *TTG Asia* app yet? Readers can now access an interactive version of our publication through phones or tablets – no tiny fonts we promise 8. Our good friends at PATA surprised us with a birthday cake at the TTTG Travel Awards 9. Celebrating our anniversary during a late-night party at the hip Sofitel So Bangkok 10. As part of our 40th birthday, we gave away a 40tude Innovator Award to a deserving travel agency at our technology conference at ITB Asia 11. *TTG Asia Luxury* had not one, but two issues this year. Gracing one of our covers was none other than the inimitable Kwek Leng Beng 12. *TTGmice* clinched its 4th PATA Gold for travel journalism, upholding our tradition of producing award-winning work 13. TTTG connects travel buyers and sellers in a new way through the launch of B2B portal Roomonger



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

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

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

TTG Asia Media is pleased to announce that it is setting up a virtual TTTG 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.



We had a successful year, as we celebrated our 40th anniversary with launches, revamps and events that brought the industry together. A big thank you to our readers for supporting us







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