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TTG Asia rolls out 40th anniversary initiatives

Fresher layouts and stronger content will greet readers of *TTG Asia* and *TTGmice* in the first half of 2014 as TTG Asia Media celebrates its 40th anniversary this year.

These initiatives are among many others that the company will roll out throughout the year, and they include a more engaging and mobile-optimised ttgasia.com, an additional issue of *TTG Asia Luxury* and the debut of *TTGassociations*, a quarterly publication designed to engage regional associations on meetings and events.

TTG Asia Media will also extend its reach in the online sphere with Travel Trade e-Space, a virtual B2B travel mart whose inaugural edition will launch in Q1. Roomonger, a B2B e-commerce portal offering real-time room bookings with instant confirmation, will also be revived. Details of these online services were unveiled at the recent

ASEAN Tourism Forum in Kuching.

As with all celebrations, there will be plenty of activities year-long for travel trade friends to enjoy, from parties to fun runs, all under the theme, 40tude, which conjures the keywords, 'fortitude' and 'attitude'.



We built this City

City Developments Limited turned 50 last year, powered by its executive chairman, Kwek Leng Beng, whose appetite for hotels and indefatigable energy for hard work remain strong. **Raini Hamdi** talks to the Singapore tycoon – see pages 6-7

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The making of halal travel experts

Real expertise is needed to handle the Muslim travel market. The momentum to provide it is rising, **Raini Hamdi** reports

* Additional reporting by Mimi Hudoyo in Jakarta and S Puvaneswary in Kuala Lumpur

It's a market waiting to be served. Many are bothering to, seeing how halal travel demand is growing and how real value add is required.

Kuoni Group Travel Experts (GTE) now moves as many as 150 Muslim-only tour groups a year from key Asian markets to European destinations and, increasingly, destinations in the Middle East and the US. These are small families, government groups or large MICE movements with up to 1,000 travellers. Kuoni GTE's head of MICE Sales Asia, Reto Kaufmann, estimates that annual growth could be as high as 30 per cent, with the MICE market increasing fastest.

Last year, the company saw double-digit increases in room nights booked by group travellers from Indonesia and India, while those from Bangladesh quadrupled. China, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand also offer significant numbers of potential Muslim travellers. China, with a Muslim population of 23 million, recorded a six per cent rise in room nights booked with Kuoni GTE last year.

According to a Pew Research Centre forum, 72 countries today have a million or more Muslim inhabitants and 60 per cent of them live in Asia-Pacific. Catering to Muslim travellers beyond *haj* and *umrah* pilgrims seems a no-brainer, with rising disposable income and a younger demographic among them. But the fact that it's still a novelty shows how fraught it is with challenges.

Agencies that have already dipped their toes in the water know that pork-free is not necessarily halal. Try explaining that to a restaurant tucked in the alps of, say, Switzerland. Finding halal restaurants and Muslim-friendly facilities remain the fundamental challenge – even in countries such as India, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China, which have recognised the importance of Muslim travellers, “only parts of the programme comply with Islamic rules,” said Dannie Soesilo, commissioner of an Indonesian agency, Sakinah Nurhidayah.

Not all countries have halal

certification bodies and in fact rely on travel consultants to develop halal products, added Garuda Indonesia Holidays' COO, Widjaya Hadinukerto. Accreditation is therefore becoming important, Widjaya said.

But being halal, like eating organic, can be expensive, and agency heads like Adam Kamal, general manager of Rakyat Travel Malaysia, expressed angst over operators who keep costs down by taking clients to pork-free restaurants whereas his agency uses only halal-certified ones. “Meals at these restaurants are more expensive and may be out of the popular tourist spots. Thus there is additional transportation cost incurred,” Adam said.

For agencies handling MICE groups, finding halal restaurants that can cater to big groups is a struggle. Cooper Huang, CEO, Harmony Tours & Travel, Malaysia, sometimes works with hotel ballrooms but outsources

launching this month. The tours cover five European cities – Paris, London, Rome, Berlin and Geneva – and are aimed at Muslim MICE and family groups from Asia and Europe.

“Our rating enables travellers to understand clearly to what degree their needs will be met with respect to availability of halal food, prayer facilities, service during Ramadan and level of non-halal activities and amenities in the hotel (for example, alcohol served in the hotel, separate pool and spa facilities, etc),” said COO, Dany Bolduc.

Asked what criteria it uses to accredit travel agencies, Bolduc said: “Three main criteria: They are an accredited agency with the local authority, preferably with IATA membership; have staff who have participated in our training workshop; and sell Muslim travellers only packages that comply with Crescentrating criteria.”

“We have our own brochures with halal-certified restaurants. I think Malaysian consumers will trust us more than they trust Kuoni.”

Adam Kamal, GM, Rakyat Travel Malaysia



the cooking to chefs from halal restaurants. For FITs, he provides his clients with maps where they can find halal restaurants.

Wide open space

The field to dig the halal travel goldmine is therefore wide open. Last December Kuoni GTE tied up with Crescentrating, a Singapore-based company barely five years old, whose primary business is to help the travel industry cater to Muslims through consulting, workshops and market research. It also rates hotels' halal-friendliness and is now moving to accredit more than 100 travel agencies over the next 12 months. Most of these agencies will be from South-east Asia, the initial target market for the first eight curated Muslim tour packages which the partnership is

Although Crescentrating has its own portal with a booking engine, halaltrip.com, Bolduc said this until now serves only individual and small group travel. Over 50 per cent of Muslims travel in family and/or multi-generational groups, which is why it needs Kuoni.

“Offering tour packages requires expertise in the logistics of transporting and managing large groups of people; a channel of DMCs who are experts in local sights and attractions, and have deep relationships with hotels and restaurants that can offer great quality at an affordable price. Kuoni is a world leader in tour packages,” Bolduc explained.

Kuoni in turn needs Crescentrating's expertise on and commitment to halal travel to



A halal partnership. Left, Bolduc aims to create a TripAdvisor-like halal travel portal. Right, Kaufmann aims to educate European travel trade about Muslim travel market and needs

further bolster its credibility and value-add among Muslim clients. Added Kaufmann: “Part of it is helping to educate Europe's travel trade about halal food expectations, family-friendly environments, making allowances for religious practices and gender-related nuances, and that an increasing demand exists.”

“We are sourcing those hotels and restaurants that can meet not only the needs of large groups of people, but also are willing to go the extra mile and offer added value. European suppliers know that if Kuoni is investing in Muslim-specific tours, we've done our homework and there's a definite market here.”

Going the extra mile

Kuoni itself goes the extra mile by ensuring, say, itineraries allow for the regular prayer times daily. It arranges joint prayer sessions or exchanges that can enhance the destination experience with the local communities.

Asked what he'd wish destinations, airports and other tourism providers would do for halal travel, Bolduc said: “The availability of halal food is critical. Airports need to have halal-certified concessions. Restaurants and food suppliers in destinations would also be well-advised to offer more halal food choices in their establishments.”

“Prayer facilities are also important while travelling. Governments have a role to play by raising the awareness of this

untapped market to the tourism service sector and encouraging local business to cater to the unique requirements of Muslim travellers.”

In its rankings, Malaysia has consistently ranked as the most Muslim-friendly travel destination under the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Co-operation) category. Kuala Lumpur International Airport was also ranked as the top airport in 2013. For non-OIC countries, Singapore and Thailand's Suvarnabhumi International Airport were ranked as the top destination and airport respectively, in 2013.

“This year's ranking of destinations should be very interesting as a number of countries are making significant inroads in developing infrastructure and services to attract Muslim travellers,” said Bolduc.

Japan, for instance, is seeking to create more user-friendly airports for Muslims, with prayer rooms, ablution facilities, halal food, etc, in the lead up to the 2020 Summer Olympics.

Meanwhile, a US\$170 million resort built on Islamic principles will open in the Maldives in October. A joint venture between Maldives' ADK Group and Turkey's Capris Gold Group, it will offer Muslim-friendly services such as a separate beach for ladies only, certified halal buffet in all restaurants, family-friendly facilities.

Needless to say, no alcohol or pork is sold in this resort.

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Tourism Data

Singapore Changi Airport sealed its status as a major aviation hub in Asia-Pacific, breaking its yearly, monthly and daily passenger arrivals records in 2013. It handled a total of 53.7 million passengers in 2013, displaying five per cent growth year-on-year; 5.1 million passengers in December; and 191,800 passengers and 1,100 flights on December 21

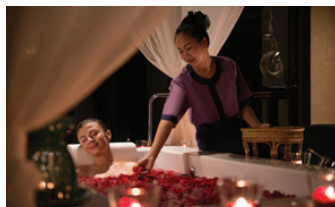


Mystery Shopper

Although Reli Tours and Travel enjoys an enviable location at the Mall of Asia, this Manila-based travel agency needs to boost its aesthetical appeal by sprucing up its office, suggests Rosa Ocampo

Hot Deals

Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit has devised the *Exclusive Industry Traveller 2014* offer specially for travel professionals, with rates starting from 3,000 baht (US\$93) net per room per night. Bookings end March 31; Banyan Tree Lang Co's *Romantic Getaway* package for two includes daily breakfast, dinner by the beach, a lantern-making workshop, and spa treatments, etc. Open for booking until June 30



Don't remind me of your crisis



While I do understand the need to give clients accurate information in a crisis, I don't understand why there needs to be an update every other day if a crisis has no real impact on tourism operations.

Raini Hamdi
Senior Editor

Every other day since November, I have been receiving 'Bangkok Demonstrations' update from Bangkok-based DMC Destination Asia and regular 'Situation Update: Thailand Political Developments' from Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Newsroom in my mailbox.

The gist of the updates is, the anti-government protests are largely peaceful and contained in certain areas, aren't harmful for tourists/clients and aren't affecting day-to-day operations and transfer services.

On January 17, Destination Asia wrote: "Without sounding too repetitive with our daily updates, it seems we may have to grin and bear these demonstrations as they look set to be part of daily life here in Bangkok as Thailand works out its path to democracy. The protest sites remain peaceful and calm and continue to have a carnival atmosphere, it's fiesta time with smiles and whistles and red, white and blue on the streets. And this being Thailand you are never too far away from street vendors selling T-shirts, food, ice cold drinks, and foot massages! Oh and don't forget the live bands! On a serious note though late last evening and in the early hours of this morning there were reports once again of a few minor sporadic incidents near to the protest areas so we again emphasise that all visitors should stay clear of blocked intersections and areas of demonstrations, especially during the night hours."

While I do understand the need to give clients accurate information in a crisis, and applaud such an effort, I don't understand why there needs to be an update every other day if a crisis has no real impact on tourism operations. Isn't it time to go into a tactical mode to bring back the tourists? The peak Chinese New Year season is lost, so are MICE bookings; what a big loss – isn't it time to stimulate a rebound?

Situational updates have become the standard

practice since they were advocated by crisis management experts when Asia proved not immune to terror, health, political, nature, and man-made upheavals. The problem with standard practices, however, is you stop thinking about them. On an auto mode, they become inane statements that, worse, only serve to remind people that a destination has a problem. Every other day, I have to grin and bear these emails, though I noted a few DMCs, like Diethelm Travel, stopped theirs around mid-January.

Branding and advertising gurus shudder at what they believe are political statements at best that clients can see through quickly (see Analysis, *How to rebuild a destination*, page 5). They just want to jump out of the window at what they believe are opportunities lost – the opportunity to turn a negative into a positive; the opportunity to evolve a destination's brand that is weak to begin with or whose catchphrase is rendered ridiculous or, worse, takes on a completely new meaning in the face of a crisis – *Amazing! Incredible! Fun?*; the opportunity to re-ignite pent-up demand for a popular destination through tacticals and other positive campaigns rather than reinforce a crisis through sending out all's-really-fine updates. If all's really fine, what are you waiting for?

These experts have a point of course. *Incredible India*, for example, is conspicuously present by its absence after a series of rape cases that have many clients – lots of them females – recoiling at the thought of visiting India. Beyond reaching out to protestors to prop up low occupancies, there is nothing that suggests Thailand is concerted in launching a campaign to woo back tourists – in fact, whispers are, how much more can Thailand push its luck?

I'd say, it's time to think of crisis management as more than just effective communications, which is but a branch of an entire discipline.

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Hong Kong, Macau woo trade as Singapore arrivals dip

Belt-tightening by corporates and high weekend hotel rates have resulted in Singapore contributing less traffic to Hong Kong and Macau last year, but NTOs from both territories are taking steps to attract tourists back. Said Samsoun Woo from Macau: "Trade/corporates should take advantage of the subsidy scheme offered by the Macau government, which presents great value for those hosting an event in Macau."

India offers VoAs for 180 countries in game-changing move

India this month announced that it will extend visas on arrival (VoAs) to 180 countries and implement an online system for visa issuance. Welcoming the sweeping change, Ian Hume from Goa: "Great news about VoAs. The airports need to increase staff numbers to deal with VoAs, otherwise it will mean even longer delays on arrival and departure. (Goa International Airport) has to be one of the world's worst, (waiting times can go) up to 3.5 hours at departures and two hours at arrivals."

Macau lays out strategies to cope with tourist deluge

Booming arrivals to Macau – 29 million in 2013 – are vexing the city's tourism infrastructure. Steve Pearce from Vancouver questioned: "A true icon of tourism success for East Asia? I don't think so – at least not yet. They're certainly seeing volume due to the casinos but they desperately need a master plan to cope with the stresses on infrastructure and local quality of life. Macau has the potential to mitigate these impacts but will require strong leadership and an inclusive process."



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40th Anniversary
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MICA (P) 145/10/2012
PPS 619/02/2013(022926)
Printed by Times Printers Pte Ltd
16 Tuas Avenue 5, Singapore 639340

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- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)

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



Disaster recovery

So, how do we rebuild a crisis-hit destination? Raini Hamdi asks brand and communications experts

Typhoon Haiyan robs the Philippines of its *Fun*. Thailand's anti-government 'shutdown' gives *Amazing* a different meaning. Serial rapes render *Incredible India* impotent.

As any branding or communications guru will tell you, all it takes is a crisis to annihilate a destination's image. As Asia evolves economically, socially and politically, and as natural disasters become a staple diet, more crises can be expected.

So, what's an affected destination to do? Should it replace its branding? When arrivals are down due to an 'unsafe' label and travel advisories, can branding and advertising bring back the numbers? Are daily updates designed to give clients 'the facts' effective, or do they go straight into spam or, worse, serve only to remind clients of a crisis?

Turning negative into positive

When the 2004 Asian tsunami hit Thailand, Patrick Gauvain, founder and managing director of Bangkok's oldest design and communications agency, Shrimp Asia, had just launched for the JW Marriott, Bangkok a new Japanese restaurant which his agency branded as *-Tsunami*.

"Marriott called a crisis meeting and wanted to change the name (it had just spent three million baht, or US\$91,352, on a promotional campaign) and I suggested not to do this, but to turn a negative into a positive.

"The Tsunami restaurant then announced that a percentage of its revenue would be donated towards the Tsunami Relief Fund. It raised quite a lot of money, and more brand awareness from its good deed," Gauvain recalled.

"Something similar could be done with the Philippines. For example, Fly to the Philippines with Philippine Airlines (PAL) and 10 per cent of your airfare will go towards Haiyan. The destination could amend its ads/commercials and even make a PR/online campaign out of it. PAL is government-owned anyway, so it should help support the cause and encourage the private and domestic airlines to do the same."

When a disaster hits, the last thing a destination wants to do is do nothing, said branding experts, consultants and communicators.

"All brands are fragile, none more so than countries or destinations in crisis. Most destinations react with silence and in each case, they do irreparable



Gauvain: TAT's situational updates are "trying to justify the situation, not put out the fire".



Keen: "All brands are fragile, none more so than countries or destinations in crisis."



Scott: "The impact of Haiyan was beyond what the Philippine authorities were prepared for."

damage to their brand, said Quo Global's CEO, David Keen.

There is much to be done; indeed, crises are "opportunities for destinations to invigorate their perception", he said (see box below).

Bill Barnett, managing director of C9 Hotelworks, points to India as an example of a brand that has "gone into hibernation".

"India has not done anything to address the rape issue, which has stunted tourism growth. Zero. The past few years *Incredible India* was one of the best tourism campaigns anywhere, but it has lost the plot and gone into hibernation," said Barnett.

But even if they are not silent, few countries actually get it right in rebuilding the destination. The reasons run the gamut: bureaucrats running tourism making a corporate decision on a crisis management branding or situational awareness; changes in manpower in bureaucracies; lack of alignment between public and private sectors; absence of a single tourism agenda and single voice; private sector players' apathy and bottomline first priority; lack of budget or budget foolishly spent; appointments of agencies that are not based on merit

but corruption and cronyism – in some parts of Asia where these are rampant, this interlinked, complex ecosystem that enables effective branding and communications can be nothing short of dysfunctional.

'Not in the thick of things'

Asked to rate how Thailand and the Philippines have managed their respective crises (at press time in late January), Barnett said: "So far, they have not been in the thick of things. In either case, what we're missing are tourism or hotel brands in leadership roles. Barnett pointed to Bali and the Bali Hotel Association as a good example of leadership over the years when terrorism struck the island. "There was clarity as there's a large organisation speaking for tourism. This is key. In so many other cases, tourism ranks far below other sectors and what comes out are political statements."

Ken Scott, managing director, ScottAsia Communications, agreed. "The Philippine authorities were slow off the mark. The impact of Haiyan was beyond what they were prepared for – politically, physically, and psychologically.

"Thailand's political situation

has been an on-off issue over the last eight years, more a condition than a crisis. But at the moment things are veering towards crisis and the tourism authorities should have their crisis scenario preparations made," he said.

Shrimp Asia's Gauvain said TAT's situational updates on the anti-government protests "are trying to justify the situation, not put out the fire".

"They (TAT) should downplay the protestors. They should be using Facebook, Instagram, Line; create competitions where participants can win awards like a weekend in Phuket, free flights and meals, etc, sponsored by the private sector. When someone 'Likes' something on these apps, they disseminate that information to their friends – the tourist takes ownership of the brand and becomes your ambassador," said Gauvain.

Scott however thought TAT's updates were "good", "frequent" and "information rich", although he too noted they should be more prominent on the home pages of tatnews.org, tourismthailand.org and na.tourismthailand.org.

He acknowledged the now-standard reaction by NTOs and DMCs to send out regular updates when a disaster strikes

could be counter-effective by drawing attention to a negative, but "on the principle of one step back two steps forward, it has to be done".

"Stakeholders are intelligent people. They appreciate being informed so they don't unwittingly put their clients into harm's way due to ignorance," said Scott.

Stimulating a rebound

A crucial aspect of disaster recovery is stimulating a rebound, especially when recovery these days tends to be "quicker", according to Barnett, who traced crisis-hit Asian destinations in recent history and noted a three- to six-month recovery timeframe.

"Unfortunately the first business to go is longhaul corporate and MICE, which is high-yielding, so you can't replace long lead time business. You have to simply fill the rooms on ad hoc strategies and what hurts the most is room rates. Thankfully with the LCCs it's much easier to turn on the tap," he said.

However, LCCs, while fuelling travel among Asians, also open up a multitude of destination choices for them. This is why there needs to be "a real promotion by the private sector, with the support of the NTO, to entice them back," said Gauvain.

"For the Asian market it's psychosomatic. Give a Chinese mainland a discount opportunity and they will be there like a shot," he said.

UK clients would too, said David Kevan, director, Chic Locations UK, offering a tour operator perspective on whether advertising/promotion works in a crisis. "At the risk of sounding callous and cynical, it is now accepted that many clients in the UK, and probably in most other countries, can be opportunistic hyenas. So today's disaster area can be tomorrow's holiday bargain. In many cases, there could be clients who feel by returning quickly to a destination they are benefiting the local economy. But it is the thought of a reduced price and a holiday bargain that is the main stimulation," he said.

"With the right offer – usually significantly reduced rates, free nights, etc – a destination can start to see tourists returning quicker than anticipated.

"This particularly applies in a destination that was enjoying good popularity and then was impacted by political or natural events. It is much more difficult to rebuild a destination that was in decline anyway as, even at rock bottom prices, it is unlikely you can stimulate demand."

Turning brand crisis into opportunity

Crises are "opportunities for destinations to invigorate their perception", said Quo Global's CEO, David Keen.

"Should the Philippines stop marketing the destination in light of (Haiyan)? No, it should never stop marketing the country but it has to evolve the current perception because it does not talk to future investors and belittles the country's image when there's a natural disaster.

"The government should align itself far more closely with the vibrant private sector and evolve the perception of the country accordingly," he said.

Keen's point is *It's More Fun in the Philippines* is "myopic" to begin with.

"One can reasonably argue that any beguiling tagline may be rendered ineffective after a natural catastrophe, but surely a tagline that talks to the credibility, opportunity, personality and particularly, in the Philippines' case, investment, would be taken more seriously and would bring significant long-term benefit to the country?

"Today Palawan is gearing up to position itself as the next Bali, Phuket or Samui. The entrepreneurial governor has taken the view that Palawan needs to form a powerful independent brand to attract foreign investment. The new brand is intended to draw on the magnificent beauty of the province and the natural attraction of the people in the province to create desire from the biggest tourism players in the industry. Does *It's More Fun in the Philippines* talk to that aim?"

Right: Philippines' tagline "myopic"





Kwek Leng Beng Executive chairman City Developments Limited

The 'City' he built turned 50 last year – richer, greener and peppered with hotels. At 72, the Singapore tycoon has more indefatigable energy than ever, discovers **Raini Hamdi**

You've just hired the first CEO for CDL, Grant Kelley. What would you like him to do?

He is a private equity man who knows how to invest in real estate, from Japan, China, Australia to the UK and the US. He also has experience with hotels, which will help, as CDL has a big subsidiary hotel group. We have not yet extracted the full potential (of Millennium & Copthorne [M&C]) in terms of earnings, assets and value creation. Private equity people are good in controlling costs and improving the value of a property.

How would you like to see M&C grow and strengthen?

We have been growing. We've just acquired the Wyndham (Grand London) Chelsea Harbour (and at press time, the Novotel New York Times Square).

But there aren't many assets coming into the market. In any case, hotel capital values worldwide, Singapore including, have gone up a lot, but earnings have not caught up. In Singapore, a three-star hotel was recently sold at S\$900,000 (US\$710,000) per key, which was unheard of before. Grand Park Orchard fetched S\$1.4 to S\$1.5 million per key, even though the rooms are small. Construction and land costs have gone up.

The New York Palace was sold in 2010 for only US\$400,000 per key. Today, anything less than US\$2 million (per key) will not buy you a five-star deluxe hotel in New York.

What about emerging markets

or buying another chain, like the Copthorne Hotels that you bought?

We are looking at emerging markets, but there's always a priority. We also looked at buying another chain over a year ago, but there were few opportunities in that chain that we could work upon and the financials didn't work. Today one also competes with many private equity firms, all flushed with funds. So the whole dynamics have changed. I tried to repeat what I did in the early days when I first started to buy hotels – it's too late now, unless you're willing to pay blindly.

Don't you wish you had bought more?

Of course, but don't forget, at the time, that kind of money was big, also I didn't want to put all my eggs in one basket. I had a policy to diversify, into global markets and into different sectors, so if one sector goes bad, it will be balanced by another. Look at SARS, when occupancies dropped to zero in Singapore and East Asia hotels. But in Europe and America, business was strong.

So what to do, if there isn't a lot to buy?

You continue to have the vision to buy, search. Meanwhile, you add value to your existing hotels. With the right concept and proper renovation, you might be able to increase your rates by 30-50 per cent. That's as good as buying or building another hotel, where you have a gestation period of two to three years (for hotel construction) in which there is no income. Then, when the cycle is up,

you can sell it if you like.

Do you see yourself as a hotelier or a real estate player?

You can say both, and add being a financial man too. Hoteliers might not be real estate people; they are also generally not financial people. They don't necessarily see things the way I do. I have come across GMs or even more senior management staff who say, 'We must give good service.' But what's the use of giving six-star service and charging four-star rates?

Hoteliers can be dreamers. They are polite and articulate. Even if their hotel occupancy is low, they will give a long speech on how good the occupancy is.

This is why if things don't work out (with people), I have a policy that we must be brave enough to change them. People try to advise me, 'Don't change or else no one would dare to join you.' When I interview senior people, some of them have asked me, 'I hear you have a revolving door practice?' I reply, 'If you are suffering from cancer, should you not seek treatment?'

You are in the hotel industry, you should know how good they are. In fact though, at M&C, we have had only one CEO who was with us for six months only. (The others served an average of five years, the longest serving being Richard Hartman). In the US today, if you're no good, you get chucked out pretty quickly.

So it's not that you're tough, but they are weak?

Exactly. Business is business. If

you are frightened, don't join me. If you're a (weakling), I will find out.

It is hard to find a good CEO and it's getting harder, isn't it?

Yes, the world is seeing a lot of hotels being built. The greatest problem facing the industry is talent. You have a lot of people who are willing to work, but they are not up to the mark. And the good ones get poached frequently.

International chains earn big money through management/franchise fees. Why is this a small part of your business?

To a large extent, it's because of a shortage of talent. It is true one's brand will be enhanced with more management contracts/franchises, so it is something we should do more. But it's not a priority.

I'm big in management contracts/franchises in the Middle East (including 25 contracts), with 40 more in the pipeline. We have a good partner there who's aggressive and hands-on. But overall, we prefer not to be too involved (in this area). I use the rule of thumb that, in terms of income, one hotel you own equals



We built this C



20 management contracts. The fee is based on percentage of turnover and GOP, but do you realise how many people and how much infrastructure you must have? If you have 10 good hotels, why would you want to manage other people's hotels and earn so little? So, our priority is our own hotels.

So why do the other chains want to be asset light?

They get better returns because they have critical mass. But they don't appreciate there's a lot of capital value to be harnessed (from owned hotels). My Orchid Inn (Singapore) used to make less than S\$10 million a year. At the right time, I pulled down the aged building, had planning approval to

build a condo and sold the units I developed. I announced a profit that would take me 30-40 years to make if it were a management contract.

How much of your success is luck?

Luck plays a part, especially these days, when the world is so uncertain. But some calculated risk and foresight are necessary. My strengths are, I can analyse and I have some foresight. I always go with one fundamental pro and con and not with the whole host of pros and cons that can make me unable to make a good decision in the end. I always believe, if you can solve that one fundamental issue, the rest will in turn be solved.

This is why I have bought hotels within 24 hours of being offered. I made quick decisions because I was confident they were good buys.

While hotel operations contribute nearly half of City's revenues, at the end of it, the profit contribution is not even 20 per cent.

Hotels don't make as much as property development. Also if one does not control costs one will not make much money. But we are making strong progress. We now have training programmes and are raising the standards of certain services and giving new amenities. Over time, these costs will be absorbed.

But yes, even my son once commented to me, that with hotels, one faces management issues every day in every department. But in property, there are only three chapters, so to speak: you buy land, get planning approvals then sell. Yet even he feels that the property business is not challenging enough and prefers to be in biotech. In biotech he can make a lot of money if he identifies the right biotech. He said, 'I don't want to work so hard like you!'

If you ask me, if I were to be reborn would I go into hotels? I would say no. Too much work for too little profit and by the time you make a profit, you need to channel it back to keep up with the trends.

But you have fun with it.

Yes, but up to a certain point.

You travel so much that you suffer from jet lag. Everywhere I go, I don't see the country's sights, but I try to see the latest trends at places I travel to. I check what are people doing there that is so good? Can we think of something better or modify what they've done?

Are you a connoisseur of luxury hotels?

I once asked my late father, 'Why don't we position ourselves as a deluxe developer?' He said, 'Why be so silly? You should do whatever that can make money – deluxe, middle, lower end – cast your net wider.'

This is the right strategy. Some people focus on luxury only because they want to create a statement for themselves. But the trick is, a three-star makes more money than a four-star, a four-star more than a five-star. Pick your choice. I choose to cast my net wider so I have better profits and spread my risk.

So you're not keen to build your own luxury brand, even with your South Beach project in Singapore?

What's the objective? To make money or to create a statement? I don't need to create a statement. I think I'm already known in the hotel world, maybe better known in the hotel world than in the real estate world. When I bought The Plaza New York, people said, 'Who's this Singaporean in New York buying The Plaza?'

Why did you tender for South Beach about five years ago?

Initially, I was not interested. One day, I went to the DTZ office at Shaw Towers along Beach Road, from where I could see the new developments in the city's financial district. I had unobstructed views. Location and the priceless views were the deciding factors. South Beach is just across the road from the convention centre, Suntec Singapore. That's why several international chains have knocked on our doors to manage South Beach. But we haven't made a decision on who will manage South Beach.

Are you inclined to outsource or self-manage?

Sometimes, after calculating

management fees, I feel you can be better off managing the hotel yourself. One can't assume that international management will perform better. They may get you a higher rate (because of the brand), but if the hotel management group has five hotels in Singapore and each day they have 500 rooms to fill, how much is your share of the business?

What is the one thing international management companies have not learnt through all these years?

Some are living on past glory or the perception that their brands can drive a lot of business. It was true perhaps in the early days.

After the (former) Westin (Plaza & Stamford), which had 1,500 rooms, left Singapore, we brought in The St Regis brand for our hotel. How many Westin customers shifted to St Regis? Not many. (Both brands are owned by Starwood Hotels & Resorts.)

Also, even though chains love to talk about consistency, and try their best to achieve it, their products are not always consistent. I can assure you that many a four-star hotel in London is only as good as a three-star here.

What's your vision for South Beach? And why Philippe Starck?

I want to create a hotel that is not a cookie cutter. Something that is both lifestyle and luxurious, that will make you go 'waaah' when you see the lobby and, by the time you reach your room, your mind is no longer so jumpy; you just want to relax.

So we thought of Philippe Starck. His design is more down-to-earth now. Previously, his concepts at times were edgy, like Alice in Wonderland (jokes).

People don't like cookie-cutter products. When I built my Studio M, the first loft hotel in Singapore, people loved it. Singaporeans do staycations at the hotel. It attracts the hip crowd, who party there over the weekends. The occupancy and rates have been high from day one.

I understand you're creating another M – M Social.

I'm trying to create another lifestyle category, this time for young people who want to so-

cialise and interact with one another, use technology, want to see and be seen.

Is there any other gap left?

One day I would like to build a two-star hotel, but one that will have a strong talking point.

Growing up, did you tell yourself, 'I'm going to be the second richest man in Singapore?'

(Laughs) First, I want to make a correction. Nobody actually knows how rich a person is. One can only speculate. Do you think Forbes is accurate? Forbes gives you a rough idea of the wealth of a person in its publications. Most times, they take into account the market capitalisation in the person's equities portfolio, which may not be the true or full figure.

A lot of Asians are private people. Why should they want to reveal their assets? It's not like we want to be subjected to probity checks.

Do you like such rankings?

It's fun to read.

What does 'rich' mean to you?

I've always said, someone worth \$100 million may have a higher standard of living than a person worth \$1 billion.

I do not spend money carelessly. I used to enjoy super cars. I like to stay in nice hotels, not necessary six-star but ones that make me feel good, comfortable and, most importantly, happy.

What motivates you now?

It has always been, and still is, about being passionate about what I do. If you're not, at best you will be a mediocre performer. And what a waste, if you have the knowledge and experience, not to contribute or pass that on to others. I learnt years ago that by working, you keep your mind active. It's like driving a car – you don't want to apply the brakes, which make the car falter, you keep going till it's over.

So retirement is not on the cards?

I don't think about it. I feel young at heart. I feel I can contribute to the business and society. I've seen friends retire at 35 and are bored after two years of going round the world.

ity



Common mistakes that owners make

Not knowing the ins and outs of the hotel business is suicidal for owners, says **Michael Luible**, executive director of Vive Hospitality, which provides bespoke white label services for hotels, resorts and residences. Vive aims to elevate the positioning and image of the property to maximise the value of the asset

In the past, hotel and resort owners had largely relied on acquiring a brand and available management models to differentiate their properties and build their reputation. While the benefits are well known, an ever-growing glut of brands is creating brand apathy among consumers who are seeking more individuality.

A hotel opinion survey carried out by Burba Hotel Network in April 2012 about preferences of hotel guests around the world, discovered that brands are indeed less relevant than expected. The first consideration for travellers (61 per cent) was location, followed by price (18 per cent), brand affiliation (17 per cent) and finally, amenities (five per cent).

As owners recognise this changing nature of guests and the opportunities it creates, they increasingly consider devel-

oping and investing in their own brand, maintaining their independence and adding a local flavour.

This, however, comes with its unique challenges, as the hotel business is a different beast altogether and underestimating the task ahead or not doing the homework can come at a high risk and cost.

Often the fundamentals of a thorough market research and financial feasibility and sensitivity analysis are omitted either due to negligence or cost containment. Established companies such as Horwath HTL or C9 Hotelworks provide most valuable statistics and reports to give directions and are probably one of the best investments. Not knowing the market, its dynamics, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, is frankly suicidal.

An unrealistic budget consisting of devel-

opment, furniture, fixtures and equipment; operating supplies and equipment; IT and AV; pre-opening budget (including branding, PR and sales and marketing) as well as working capital to structure financing is another pitfall.

The unbiased advice of a quantity surveyor is paramount. Many first-time owners are understandably not familiar with the unique features and dynamics critical to support an effective and efficient hotel and resort operation, and find themselves in dire straits when underestimating the related costs.

Finally, the ideal positioning of the property, depending on location, room size, facilities, supply and demand as well as target audience. This can vary from standard to high end, from conventional/traditional to unconventional/avant-

garde/experimental, influencing average room rates and revenue per available room.

The positioning needs to be supported by strong branding and PR campaigns. As most of today's bookings are generated through the hotel website or online travel agencies, a compelling and user-friendly website is paramount. The best branding, however, is worthless if the guest experience at all touch points does not deliver on the promise. Guests' expectations are ever raising and service delivery must be timely, defect free and caring within a property which is immaculate at all times.

Given the uniqueness and the many unknown specifics and dynamics of the business, owners are well advised to obtain professional assistance from reliable hospitality experts providing tailor-made services and solutions.

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Case study

Deks Air Singapore's mobile app

WHO Established in 1975, Deks Air Singapore is under the Deks Air Group. It is a GSA for Kenya Airways, Kuwait Airlines, Royal Jordanian and Vietnam Airlines.

While its core business remains in sales and promotion of the airlines, it has ventured into packaging tours to Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Jordan, Kuwait and Kenya.

WHAT Launched in October, the Deks Air Mobile App provides an additional online platform to float special deals and obtain bookings for worldwide hotel accommodation, rail passes and travel insurance. Quotes and itineraries for best-selling destinations such as Vietnam and Kenya are also offered on the app.

The app's USP is its ability to enable booking of rail passes and point-to-point tickets, according to Vivien Ou Yong, director of Deks Air Travel & Tours, which is part of Deks Air Singapore. These rail tickets are applicable for BritRail, DB Bahn, Eurail, Japan Rail (Japan East and Kyushu), North America and Australia.

She said: "Besides helping users book their rail tickets, we can also help if they need to change their bookings, which is not possible when you go through the rail website.

"And with our app the ticket will be

issued immediately; they do not need to wait for several days," she said.

Available for free download in the App Store, the app works on mobile phones and tablets.

WHY Highlighting that consumers are always on the move today, Ou Yong said: "Everyone is going mobile and it is important to keep abreast of the competition; otherwise, we will lose out."

She revealed that the exclusive hot deals on the app are at least S\$100 (US\$80) cheaper in order to attract mobile traffic.

However, Ou Yong said walk-ins and direct bookings with sales consultants would continue to be important.

"There will still be many who will prefer making a face-to-face, email or phone transaction but we want to ensure we do not lose those who want to try mobile bookings," she added.

TARGET Built with the younger generation in mind, Ou Yong said the app would appeal to tech-savvy travellers seeking convenience on the go. This is likely to be mainly FITs who are travelling to niche destinations like Vietnam, Jordan and Kenya, and those who are making rail bookings.

The target is for at least 1,000 downloads this year. — **Paige Lee Pei Qi**



Experience is everything

Customers want holidays to be hassle free from start to finish. **Mimi Hudoyo, Paige Lee Pei Qi, Shekhar Niyogi** and **S Puvaneswary** look at how agencies are achieving this



From left: a beach dinner at Centara Grand Island Resort and Spa Maldives; game drive in Tanzania; SEA Aquarium's shark encounter in Resorts World Sentosa

The client wants to watch the sunrise from the 110th floor of Burj Khalifa when it is not open yet. Another wants to exchange rings underwater among the corals in Great Barrier Reef. A third wants to be photographed with the sharks in an aquarium without it being apparent that it is an aquarium. Such requests are increasingly de rigueur for travel companies, whether an owner-driven boutique agency or a large tour operator.

To cater to special interest customers seeking customised travel programmes, outbound agencies are investing more time to tailor their offerings according to requests.

Anthony Chan, group managing director, Chan Brothers Travel Singapore, said: "Planning, sourcing and quoting for customised tours can be extremely resource draining and time consuming."

"The complexity of customisation, which usually requires detailed and lengthy elaboration from a face-to-face personnel, makes this a challenging product to be offered online."

Likewise for Clifford Neo, managing director of Singapore-based Dynasty Travel, the challenge lies in having to manage variable components such as airfares and hotels.

He said: "We are able to work on economies of scale for special hotel rates as we do have volumes for certain hotels with our big groups and incentive tours as well."

Promotional airfares are also utilised to keep costs down. Neo explained: "For us to enjoy higher profits, we may suggest to customers to travel during low season. We will work out the cost savings and value-adds for customers when they choose to travel during low season."

For Panorama Tours Indo-

nesia, groups of small sizes are booked through the GDS at rates offered, while requests for group rates are made to suppliers for bigger numbers, said its managing director, travel management, Hellen Xu.

She added: "The advantage of being a big company is that we can negotiate prices based on total production as a group in a year; this way, we can keep prices down."

"To ensure profitability, we mark up the price to cover operational costs and get some profit, and in cases of big volume, we obtain kickbacks when we achieve a certain target."

High expectations come at a price

Dynasty Travel's Neo pointed out that a customised tour package can be up to 40 per cent dearer than run-of-the-mill products. They usually include private car transfers, minimal shopping stops, and exclusive food and tourist attractions based on client preferences.

Thus these high-end programmes are often sought by those with deeper pockets.

Valmiki Hari Kishan, managing director, India-based Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions, said: "Clients who request customisation of tour itineraries are frequent travellers who want experiential holidays that are off the beaten track and will cater to their preferences in every way. They are affluent and have sufficient time to indulge themselves."

However, not all travellers may be realistic in their demands, say agencies.

Apple Vacations & Conventions Malaysia's MICE manager, Queenney Lew, observed: "Clients may have a small budget but expect to stay in a five-star hotel and eat at fine-dining outlets. To prevent misunderstanding, we

always get them to sign an agreement before departure for the tour details we proposed based on their budget."

"For best tour package fares, the client should give us a lead time of at least three months. If it is a last-minute booking, we will not be able to negotiate with hotels and airlines for the best prices."

"We do our best to accommodate the clients' needs, which sometimes can be complicated, but they are not always ready to pay a high price," added Panorama's Xu.

Staff knowledge is key

As such, it is crucial for travel consultants to give the right advice to clients, Xu pointed out.

Sanjay Kothari, managing director, Just Holidays India, said: "I have demarcated my staff as per their expertise, e.g. island holidays, where they are expected to know the difference between beaches in Seychelles and those in the Maldives."

"I also train my staff region-wise and based on the character of the destination. For instance one person for Australia and New Zealand, another for Turkey and Greece and yet another who knows the difference between different game reserves in Africa."

Smailing Tours Indonesia also has dedicated staff for its Signature Products division, which offers customised travel programmes with culinary, sports and shopping themes.

Signature specialists go on fam trips and participate in trainings on upmarket travel products organised by NTOs, said spokesperson Putu Aristyadewi.

"The specialists will then conduct training for travel consultants on the products, so that they are aware and can give preliminary information to customers and refer interested clients to the

specialists," she explained.

At Apple Vacations, its customised travel team often holds regular meetings where tour leaders share with the operations team about their recent experiences. Frontliners who are new to the industry will also accompany senior tour leaders on tours to gain experience, said Lew.

Travel consultants selling customised programmes must have passion, patience and persistence in order to successfully create unique tour packages, opined Valmiki Travel's Kishan.

Dynasty Travel's Neo added: "This is a personalised service that requires in-depth destination product knowledge. The Internet is a base for customers to get information and, as a travel agency, we need to assist to sieve out the information and advise them accordingly."

Others like Ankur Khanna, managing director, Tristar Holidays India, believe in interacting with his high net worth clients personally for all their customisation needs. "They trust my experience and my knowledge. Often I tell them not to go somewhere with good reason and they take my advice. With such clients, the interaction is relationship-based."

Reliable partners needed

Strong support from ground operators is critical in helping agencies meet their customers' demands.

"We value knowledgeable and innovative operators who are willing and able to go beyond off-the-shelf programmes to offer bespoke experiences and uncharted territories despite the smaller group sizes," said Chan Brothers' Chan.

Tristar's Khanna added: "My relationship with my suppliers is dependent upon mutual understanding that we are providing exclusive concierge services

to very select clientele whose continued relationship with us is crucial for our success. Word of mouth is invaluable."

Besides having the right expertise, overseas land operators also "need to have 'muscle' or connections in negotiating good rates," said Dynasty Travel's Neo.

"We need suppliers to be more flexible in their policy and also help us by giving suggestions on how to maximise clients' time and money," said Panorama Tours' Xu.

Timeliness is also crucial. Apple Vacations' Lew said: "Clients wish for a really hassle-free holiday. Our customised tours are also flexible with our driver and guide on stand-by. Based on experience, we know there will always be clients who will make last-minute changes to their bookings and tour itineraries."

"Our customers expect us to respond quickly to their requests. Hence it is imperative that we establish a good working relationship with our suppliers."

"Operation wise, suppliers such as hotels, ground operators and airlines should respond quickly when we request for change of dates and alternative arrangements... We filter our ground operators and work with those who give us good support."

Dubai's famed Burj Khalifa



Tailored to a tee

From health-conscious wanderers to those travelling with little tots, tours are being created to meet needs of all kinds

Eat your way through Asia

Having found success in offering foodie experiences to visitors to Malaysia, Discovery Travel & Cuisine is now in the midst of developing outbound culinary tours to Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, South Korea, Japan and China.

"The strategy to tweak our inbound travel business with food and culinary experiences has worked profitably for us, recording an increase in demand and sales from year to year," said director Lee Choon Loong, who claims the tour and travel company is the first and only licensed one in Malaysia to have 'Travel & Cuisine' as part of the company name.

"We are applying for an outbound licence to market outbound culinary tours targeted at the youths in the 18-35 age group, who are more adventurous and Internet savvy. This provides us with the opportunity to tap social media," he said.

"We are currently developing our website with enticing images of food and compelling stories about food culture, culinary styles and gourmet destinations with the help of national tourism offices in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and the Philippines."

On why the above countries were chosen, Lee explained: "We prefer to develop culinary tours around destinations which are rich in culture and food resources but somehow lacking in built attractions. Food culture then becomes the unique selling point of the destination."

Clients will get to discover local produce and learn how to savour exotic food like raw prawns with pepper-calamansi sauce on the banks of the Mekong River in Laos or enjoy stir-fried flower crabs with Kampot pepper, which originated from a local fishing village in Cambodia.

He added: "Food is not fun without

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Connecting

Attempts have been made to bridge the divide between one-on-one travel consultation and the lack of customisation available on online portals.

Hello Travel in India, for example, analyses the requirements of online travellers and finds travel agencies whose expertise will match their requests. Clients then get multiple itineraries and personalised suggestions from travel consultants.

Such websites allow companies to enrol with them, then purchase leads and execute itineraries. These leads are paid

the right company, and we only develop customised tour programmes for like-minded travellers with the same interest and passion for food culture. – **S Puvaneswary**

Kids can have fun, too

Introduced last year, the *Little Tots Can Fly* programme by Chan Brothers Travel Singapore incorporates child-friendly itineraries for families with children as young as two years old.

Currently available for itineraries in Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan, these programmes are designed around fulfilling the requirements of toddlers from two to six years old. Arrangements include more conducive daytime flights, later morning calls, extended meal duration at kid-friendly restaurants, a more relaxed pace of travel and family photography sessions by professionals.

Jane Chang, marketing and communications manager, said: “This series helps to plug the market gap for parents of young toddlers who wish to travel but have their own set of unique travel requirements. Response for this series is encouraging and we are expecting significant growth this year.” – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

In tip-top shape

Panorama Tours Indonesia launched medical tourism packages in 2013, with Malaysia as its initial destination.

Hellen Xu, managing direc-

tor of travel management, said: “Medical Check Up is a new product we launched last year and the result so far is so-so. This year we are planning to promote it well as we believe the market is there; we just need to tap it. Our target market is A- and B-class clients above 35 years old.”

Starting with basic check-up programmes, Panorama works with hotels and hospitals in Kuala Lumpur and Penang.

A three-day package in Kuala Lumpur starts at US\$289 and US\$285 for Penang. This excludes airfare but includes two-night accommodation, a medical check-up at Gleneagles Hospital and airport transfers.

The medical check-up in Kuala Lumpur includes a physical examination, ECG, lung function test, chest X-ray, blood and urine test, as well as review of reports. In Penang the package includes physical examination, visual acuity test, chest X-ray, ECG, body fat measurement and a laboratory test.

Asked if more extensive medical packages would be offered, Xu said that these are available on request, but could be developed into ready-made products should the market grows.

“Indonesians usually look for references from friends when it comes to treatments – which doctor, which hospital – and they go to travel agencies for hotel and transport arrangements, and sometimes optional tours,” she said. – **Mimi Hudoyo**

Make the most of weekends

Long weekend holidays are usually planned late and the runway within which all bookings need to be firmed up are excruciatingly short. Most of such requests come from clients who are well travelled and usually decide on the spur of the moment, or are unaware if they will be available on a specific date and so cannot plan ahead.

In response, Thomas Cook India launched 48H holiday packages a year ago, where the entire trip from ticketing and hotel bookings to ground transportation and excursions can be booked and delivered to the client within 48 hours of receiving the request.

“Many clients used to ask for domestic destinations as they thought that we had too little time to offer outbound holidays within such a short time frame,” said Madhav Pai, COO of leisure travel (outbound).

A range of destinations are offered, including Ireland, Jordan, Ecuador, Cyprus, Mexico, Seychelles, Thailand, Indonesia, Turkey, Hong Kong and Macau.

Ankur Khanna, managing director, India-based Tristar Holidays, said: “It is easy to create and confirm these packages if the destination offers visa on arrival to Indians.” He added that the price of these holidays could be 10-20 per cent more than usual as the bookings are last minute, but this did not faze any of his clients. – **Shekhar Niyogi**



From left: Cooking classes in Thailand; Taiwan's Lefoo Resort Guanshi in the *Little Tots Can Fly* programme; medical check-ups on the go

agencies to customers

for on a unitary basis and the contract may be for a set duration.

However, according to trade players, any such model leaves gaps in credibility and durability of such contacts.

Anil Gupta, managing director, Anjali Tours & Travels India, said: “This sort of market intelligence does not give me the connections I need. Moreover, it is possible that the same leads may go to my competitors too, diluting my sales effort.”

Other companies like Internet Moguls are trying to close this chasm in a more holistic manner by offering turnkey solutions. It has created a website that will enable B2B as well as B2C interface, management of social media to get more responses, execution of the marketing plan and realistic projections of outcomes.

If the travel consultant signs up for a three-year contract, Internet Moguls works for zero retainer and charges a 15 per cent commission

on incremental business beyond US\$1 million based on a performance guarantee of its marketing plan.

Avijit Arya of Internet Moguls said: “Long-lasting connection with consumers is not a simple task. We advise, plan and guide our clients to end solutions that result in a much larger client base for them, helping their clients perform and stay with them if they are satisfied with the service.” – **Shekhar Niyogi**

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America is a vast country, however. Look more closely and you’ll find a huge and surprising variety in our cities: the eclectic music scene of **Austin**, the easy-going charms

of historical **Savannah**, the eco consciousness of **Seattle**, the free-spirited **Portland**, the magnificent waterfront of **San Francisco**, and the captivating cultured old quarters of **New Orleans**.

Discover the buzz of our cities, where the skyscrapers, celebrities and shopping strips are as big as each other and all of which is just a short drive from national parks, mountains, ocean, river or desert, and each has uniqueness to experience. You can see it in our architecture; experience it in our cosmopolitan malls, shops, theatres and bars; taste it in our local food and wine; hear it from the people that live there and feel it in our great cities.

We welcome you to our cities to enjoy the well-known American lifestyle – from dawn til dusk, and nightlife after.



Some Key Facts

- Experience the icons from the inside. Many of our postcard locations, such as the **Statue of Liberty**, can be seen from the inside and will give you a different view of the famous buildings and structures you instantly recognise as being American
- **Boston** built the first subway system in the United States in 1897
- The first US capital was **New York City**
- **Chicago's** nicknames include: The Windy City, the City of Big Shoulders, the Second City, and The City That Works
- **Greater Miami** is the only metropolitan area in the United States whose borders encompass two national parks - Everglades National Park and Biscayne National Park
- In approximately 440 miles (a little over 7 hours of driving) you can travel from **Boston** to **Washington DC** and pass by **New York City, Philadelphia** and **Baltimore**
- **Central Park** in New York City is 843 acres and completely man made; it is visited by over 37 million people every year
- Explore our cities on some unusual transportation. Take a guided tour on the back of a **Harley Davidson**, hire a yacht and explore the stunning coastlines or take a scenic flight in a **helicopter** for an entirely different perspective from above
- Our cities are **shop-till-you-drop** destinations and there are many world renowned American goods to consider for your shopping list
- **San Francisco Bay** is considered the world's largest landlocked harbor



Chicago

GREAT OUTDOORS

The United States of America's all-encompassing Great Outdoors offers myriad experiences. Across this huge and varied land, visitors will come across a diverse country like never before that is just waiting to be explored; from **national parks** to **scenic byways** and from spectacular **sun-drenched coastlines** to awesome **snow covered mountains**.

Explore the national, state and local parks to discover America's varied landscapes – perfect for a leisurely walk or a more challenging hike in and many of which with the knowledge of a local guide. Experience endless skies and camp out under the stars, or hit the road and take your time enjoying an iconic road trip.

Enjoy the journey. This is a country of

road trips and great open spaces; where four million miles of highways lead past red-rock deserts, below towering mountain peaks, and across wheat fields that roll off towards the horizon. Take your time traveling through rolling countryside and along sparkling coastlines giving you plenty of opportunities to take both classic routes and roads less traveled and to meet the locals along the way. Traveling by **train** is another great way to traverse the USA and enjoy the jaw-dropping scenery.

Spend some time in the sun playing a relaxing round of **golf** on one of the many courses or **ski** in one of the USA's numerous resorts. Skiing is possible in over 30 U.S. states and resorts offer unique locations, such as lakeside or under the Northern Lights. Across

the country, you'll find many places offer snow, slopes, and stunning scenery. On holiday here you'll find it almost compulsory to take a break from your usual world, to meet a **winemaker**, go **fishing** or explore beautiful **gardens and arboretums**.

The USA has some of the world's most distinctive and diverse natural environments, with unique wildlife and spectacular landscapes, including many national parks and **World Heritage sites**.



Some Key Facts

- The USA has nearly **400 National Parks** to which we welcome over 275 million visitors each year
- **Yosemite National Park** is the oldest national park in the world
- The wettest place in the world is **Mountain Waialeale** in Hawaii
- **Maine** sees the sunrise before the whole continental USA
- The very middle of the USA is in the town of **Castle Rock** in South Dakota
- The Grand Prismatic Spring in **Yellowstone National Park** is the third largest hot spring in the world
- There are nearly 3000 (2917) miles between **New York** and **California**, slightly less than the distance from New York to London (3400 miles)



Glacier National Park

CULTURE

From theatre to literature, Americans have long had a love affair with the arts. The world's third-largest nation has made tremendous contributions to the arts. Georgia O'Keeffe's wild landscapes, Robert Rauschenberg's surreal collages, Alexander Calder's elegant mobiles and Jackson Pollock's drip paintings have entered the vernacular of **modern 20th-century art**. Cities such as **Chicago** and **New York** have become veritable drawing boards for the great architects of the modern era, and the USA's cities abound with **art galleries and museums** – a must-visit during any holiday.

Our cities play host to a huge array of cutting-edge **cultural festivals**, and offer music, theatre and dance performances and art exhibitions every day of the week. Get involved in **traditional American Indian events** and enjoy taking part in a Pow Wow's musical and cultural events. In smaller towns you can catch performances by local musicians and see hand-made art and craft.

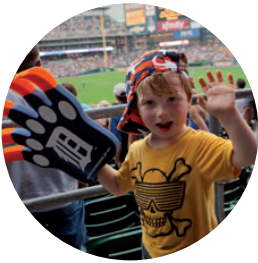
Think America and many people think **sports**. It's no secret that America is a country of sports. There are hundreds of national and thousands of local, regional and state sporting organisations across professional and college levels.

The nation's four most popular team sports all developed in North America: **American football** (NFL), **baseball** (MLB), **basketball** (NBA) and **ice hockey** (NHL) and the fun and games go on all year round. In spring and summer there's baseball almost daily; in fall and winter football takes the stage, while in winter

nights there's plenty of basketball to enjoy. All enjoy huge exposure and are considered the preeminent competitions in their respective sports in the world.

Formula 1 has revved up recently in the USA, and finds itself growing in popularity alongside **Nascar racing**, as the Circuit of the Americas hosts events in Austin and New Jersey.

Sport draws Americans together and for visitors getting tickets to a sporting event is the perfect way to get involved in the American way of life, so grab a beer and a hot dog, get behind your team and enjoy the game.



Some Key Facts

- **Houston** is second only to **New York City** when it comes to the number of **Broadway** shows
- **New Orleans** is the birthplace of jazz and also known as America's first city of opera
- In **Nebraska**, you can still see the tracks of **wagons** from over 100 years ago
- **The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum** and the **Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History** in Washington, D.C. are the world's second and third most visited museums, behind only the Louvre in Paris
- **Iolani Palace** in Honolulu, Hawaii, is the only royal palace used by a monarch in the USA
- **Kansas City** has more fountains than any other city in the world, except Rome
- **Austin**, Texas, is considered the live music capital of the world
- The first person to personally receive a star on the **Walk of Fame** in **Hollywood** was actress **Joanne Woodward** in 1960
- **The Palace of the Governors** in New Mexico is the oldest continuously occupied public building in the USA



American Indian Child

INDULGENCE

America knows how to indulge and gives a wow-factor to any holiday. Ideal for a fun-filled family holiday, no other country does theme parks quite like the USA. From the famed **Universal Studios** and **Walt Disney World** in Florida and its sister **Disneyland Resort** in California, to the enormous **Schlitterbahn Waterpark** in Texas and the 364-acre **Cedar Point** in Ohio, there is no comparison when it comes to family holidays. In addition, there's nowhere quite like the neon lights of **Las Vegas** for a different kind of playground.

From gaming to luxury spas and resorts, it starts in America. We lead the way when it comes to innovative and unusual new treatments which can be enjoyed in the likes of a mountain retreat or a luxurious beachside resort. From spa retreats to American Indian treatments, the country's spa experiences are recognised as among the best in the world. Here, you can find the perfect resorts in idyllic locations; so if you're looking for a massage, it's all at your fingertips.

Cuisine is another way of highlighting the indulgent American experience. From the East Coast to the West Coast and everywhere in-between, the USA has a varied and famed food scene. Expect to see **thick barbecue ribs** and **smoked brisket** delivered piping hot at a Texas roadhouse; watch talented chefs blend **organic, fresh-off-the-farm produce** with Asian twists at award-winning West Coast restaurants; get your fix of fresh bagels and lox at a **century-old deli** in Manhattan's Upper West Side, or indulge in plump pancakes, fried bacon and eggs over easy under the clatter of cutlery at a **1950s-style diner**. Steaming plates of fresh lobster are served at the waterside in Maine, while oysters and champagne are quaffed in fashionable city wine bars, and beer and pizza are served at an authentic Midwestern watering hole. Whatever your taste – there's no shortage of ways to dine à la Americana.

Whatever you're having, enjoy it with a glass of locally produced wine or microbrew and some indigenous toe-tapping tunes.

Musically speaking, America has few peers on the world stage. From the **soulful blues** born in the Mississippi Delta to the **bluegrass** of Appalachia and Detroit's **Motown** sound, plus **jazz, funk, hip-hop, country**, and **rock and roll** – America has invented sounds that are integral to modern music across the globe and which resonate across our lifestyle.



ENTRY INFORMATION

Are you a Visa Waiver Programme traveler? If you're planning a trip to the United States, make sure you get your travel authorisation first. The ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation) application process is fast, easy, costs only US\$14 and is valid for up to two years or until your passport expires. Apply for your ESTA and learn more on the only official website: esta.cbp.dhs.gov.

Before entering the country, make sure you know what items you must declare. Educate yourself on U.S. travel regulations for a quicker, simpler entry process, whether you're coming home or taking a holiday with family and friends.

What are the rules regarding large amounts of money?

Anyone traveling with \$10,000 or more in cash – whether it's in U.S. Dollars, another currency or any other monetary instrument – you must declare it.

What may I bring in duty-free?

- No more than 200 cigarettes and 100 cigars per individual 18 and older
- Up to one litre of alcoholic beverages per individual 21 and older
- Gifts and purchases valued at a maximum of \$100 total

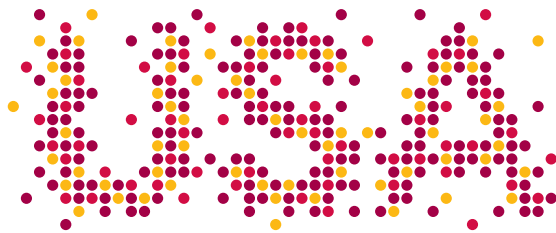
We look forward to welcoming you to the United States. Make your trip easier by visiting www.cbp.gov/travel

BRAND USA CONTACT **Reene Ho-Phang**, Managing Director, Taiwan & Hong Kong | Email: reene@brandstory.asia | Website: www.thebrandusa.com



Some Key Facts

- **Ohio's Cedar Point** in Sandusky packs more thrills per square foot than anywhere else on the planet
- **Finger Lakes** in New York State is second only to California in terms of wine production
- **Las Vegas** has the most hotel rooms and the majority of the largest hotels in the world
- **Orlando** attracts more visitors than any other amusement park destination in the United States
- **Hershey**, Pennsylvania, is considered the Chocolate Capital of the United States
- **Coca-Cola** was invented in May 1886 by Dr. John S. Pemberton in Atlanta, Georgia
- **New Jersey** has the most diners in the world and is sometimes referred to as the diner capital of the world



DiscoverAmerica.com



Best Western Adds International

Spread across more than 7,000 islands, studded like jewels in the tropical waters of the Pacific Ocean, the Philippines is one of most culturally rich and diverse countries in the world.

From the pristine beaches that wrap around much of the country's 36,000km of coastline, to the verdant jungle-clad volcanic hills, the Philippines offers an incredible array of natural wonders. And in the bustling capital Manila, with its soaring skyscrapers and colorful 'Jeepnie' buses, it has one of Asia's new mega-cities - a rapidly-expanding metropolis that is becoming a key center of trade and commerce in the region.

Currently, there are seven Best Western hotels covering five unique destinations in the Philippines. In Manila, the 50-room **BEST WESTERN Hotel La Corona Manila** is set in the heart of the city's main tourist belt, while across in the new Makati City business district, the 210-room **BEST WESTERN PLUS Antel Hotel** and 140-room **BEST WESTERN Oxford Suites Makati** offer a superb mix of midscale and upscale hotel rooms and long-stay apartments.





BEST WESTERN PLUS Lex Cebu



BEST WESTERN Boracay Tropics Resort

Additional Comfort to Fantastic Philippines



BEST WESTERN The Mint

In the emerging hub of Angeles City, **BEST WESTERN The Mint Hotel** features 52 modern rooms and a range of international facilities, while on the island paradise of Boracay, the **BEST WESTERN Boracay Tropics Resort** offers 50-room close to some of Asia's most stunning beaches.

Finally in Cebu City, the 58-room **BEST WESTERN Cebu Sand Bar Resort** and 83-room **BEST WESTERN PLUS Lex Cebu** give travelers a choice of city and resort-style accommodation, in one of the Philippines' foremost provincial hubs.

All seven of these internationally-renowned, well-positioned properties offer Best Western International's global brand promises, including complimentary Wi-Fi and excellent service.

And that's not all! In the coming months and years, Best Western International is planning to open at least five new hotels across the Philippines, including midscale BEST WESTERN properties in Cebu and Angeles City, a stunning upscale BEST WESTERN PLUS hotel on the popular island of Palawan, and the Philippines' first ever luxury BEST WESTERN PREMIER hotel, also in Angeles City.

So wherever guests choose to travel in the Philippines, Best Western will have a hotel designed to suit the growing needs of our clientele.



BEST WESTERN Cebu Sand Bar Resort

For more information on our hotels in Asia, visit www.bestwesternasia.com

[facebook.com/BestWesternAsia](https://www.facebook.com/BestWesternAsia)

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Budget airlines have enjoyed a stellar rise since their emergence in South-east Asian skies a decade ago. Will these carriers go the distance over the long haul? Analysis by **Sim Kok Chwee**

Change appears to be the only constant in ASEAN’s budget aviation landscape in 2013 as LCCs pursue ambitious expansion plans, carving out a bigger share of the passenger throughput at the region’s main hub airports.

With the launch of Golden Myanmar Airlines in early 2013, LCCs are now based in seven out of the 10 ASEAN member states. Only Brunei, Cambodia and Laos are without their own homegrown LCCs.

A constant state of brand evolution

As 2013 rolled out, several LCCs in ASEAN began to tweak their brand names and this is none more apparent in the Philippines than elsewhere in the region. AirPhil Express, a subsidiary of Philippine Airlines, was rebranded as PAL Express while Zest Air merged with Philippines AirAsia to operate as AirAsia Zest.

SEAir became known as Tigerair Philippines, a name that might change again as Tigerair has sold its 40 per cent stake in Tigerair Philippines to Cebu Pacific Air – the latter will initially just add its own title to the airplanes of the former’s small fleet. Tigerair and Cebu Pacific Air will also co-operate on their services between the Philippines and Singapore.

In Singapore, Tiger Airways rebranded itself as Tigerair in July 2013, adopting a new logo that resembles a tiger’s tail.

Soaring expectations

A clear sign of strong optimism in their growth performance ahead, eight of the LCCs (see table) covered in this report have more airplanes on order than they have in their current fleet.

AirAsia continues to be the cherry on the cake for Airbus with more than 240 delivery positions – although it should be noted that some of these are slated for its operations in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines (and possibly in India). AirAsia X is re-committed to returning to Europe with a reportedly more efficient Airbus A330 and is on the brink of replicating its blueprint in Thailand with Thai AirAsia X.

Indonesia’s Lion Air is the next most aggressive LCC, taking a leaf out of AirAsia’s book to roll out Malindo Air in Malaysia and Thai Lion Air in Thailand. In an about-turn of its long-term strategy however, the airline has also cancelled its outstanding order for five Boeing 787-8 Dreamliners – initially destined for its premium subsidiary Batik Air.

Not to be outdone, Singapore’s Tigerair has entered into a minority partnership with Taiwan’s China Airlines to establish a new Taipei-based LCC that is likely to carry the Tigerair branding.

Thailand’s Nok Air has also entered into a joint venture with Singapore’s Scoot to establish NokScoot to operate medium

and longhaul services out of Bangkok’s Don Mueang Airport – a clear response to the ‘invasion’ of Thai AirAsia X and, to a lesser extent, Thai Lion Air. According to an industry source, NokScoot will start up in early June 2014 with a couple of Boeing 777s likely to be sourced from Singapore Airlines with destinations in China, Japan and South Korea on its radar. To leverage on the partnership synergy, Scoot’s Singapore-Bangkok service is expected to fly into Don Mueang Airport instead of Suvarnabhumi Airport from May 2014.

A push for wider horizons

As Cebu Pacific Air started operating A330-300s and extended its network to Dubai, PAL Express too received an A330-300 from its parent company – Philippine Airlines – and launched its own five-times-weekly services to Dubai.

Thai AirAsia X will begin operations with A330-300s in 1H2014, while Scoot too will be in a position to launch new longhaul routes when it receives its first B787-9 Dreamliners in 2H2014. Jetstar Asia will also take delivery of its first B787-8s later this year but there is yet any indication which routes these will be deployed.

Lion Air will turn Batam – located just south of Singapore – into its second hub to initially serve as a nexus for east-west domestic travel. Over time, Lion Air hopes to increase Batam’s domestic destinations

from its current 15 to 20, and add international links to Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Jeddah, New Delhi and Mumbai.

Reaching out globally through GDSs

More LCCs have turned to global distribution systems (GDSs), making it easier for travel consultants to access their content and drive sales. By end-2013, the services of 26 LCCs worldwide are bookable via Abacus, which expects to grow this by 10 per cent in early 2014.

Amadeus Asia Pacific’s executive vice president, airline commercial, Hazem Hussein, said: “The competition among LCCs in South-east Asia is tough, and airlines need to evolve to get ahead. LCCs that tap our extensive travel agency network can reach new customers and improve their yield.”

Sabre Travel Network’s vice president and general manager Asia Pacific, Hans Belle, said: “LCCs in Asia are evolving their merchandising strategies to differentiate, compete and extend their reach into new customer segments. Our global travel marketplace allows airlines to promote, personalise and sell their seats to 400,000 travel (consultants) around the world, and tap into data-rich solutions that give insights on customer shopping and booking trends, resulting in better yields and more personalised customer service.”

Airline	Main operational base	Fleet	Destinations	Distribution channels
INDONESIA				
Citilink Express	Jakarta – Soekarno-Hatta Airport	Current: 24 x A320, 5 x B737-300 On order: 17 x A320, 35 x A320neo	Ambon, Balikpapan, Bandung, Banjarmasin, Batam, Bengkulu, Denpasar, Jambi, Kuala Namu, Kupang, Lombok, Malang, Medan, Padang, Palembang, Pangkalpinang, Pekanbaru, Semarang, Solo, Surabaya, Tanjung Pandang, Ujung Padang, Jogjakarta	Amadeus
Indonesia AirAsia	Jakarta – Soekarno-Hatta Airport	Current: 30 x A320	Jakarta, Medan, Balikpapan, Banda Aceh, Bandung, Denpasar, Makassar, Medan, Padang, Palembang, Pekanbaru, Semarang, Solo, Surabaya, Jogjakarta, Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Phuket, Bangkok, Singapore, Darwin, Perth	Abacus, Amadeus, Navitaire
Lion Air	Jakarta – Soekarno-Hatta Airport	Current: 2 x B747-400, 2 x B737-300, 4 x B737-400, 20 x B737-800, 68 x B737-900ER On order: 12 x B737-800, 92 x B737-900ER, 201 x B737MAX-9, 53 X A320, 109 A320neo, 65 x A320neo	Ambon, Banda Aceh, Balikpapan, Banjarmasin, Batam, Bengkulu, Denpasar, Fak Fak, Gorontalo, Jakarta, Jambi, Jayapura, Kaimana, Kandari, Kupang, Makassar, Manado, Mataram, Medan, Padang, Palembang, Palu, Pekanbaru, Pontianak, Semarang, Solo, Sorong, Surabaya, Ternate, Tual, Jogjakarta, Ho Chi Minh City, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Singapore	Sabre
Tigerair Mandala	Jakarta – Soekarno-Hatta Airport	Current: 9 x A320 On order: 3 x A320	Bandung, Denpasar, Jakarta, Lombok, Pekanbaru, Surabaya, Jogjakarta, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore	Amadeus, Navitaire, Travelport
Wings Abadi Air	Jakarta – Soekarno-Hatta Airport	Current: 20 x ATR72-500, 7 x ATR72-600 1 x MD-80 On order: 29 x ATR72-600	Links from key Indonesian cities to secondary destinations throughout Java and Sumatra	
MALAYSIA				
AirAsia	Kuala Lumpur International Airport	Current: 68 x A320 On order: 78 x A320, 264 x A320neo	Kuala Lumpur, Alor Setar, Bintulu, Johor Bahru, Kota Bahru, Kota Kinabalu, Kuala Terengganu, Kuching, Labuan, Langkawi, Miri, Penang, Sandakan, Sibul, Tawau, Bangalore, Chennai, Kochi, Kolkata, Tiruchirappalli, Guangzhou, Guilin, Hangzhou, Hong Kong, Kunming, Nanning, Shenzhen, Macau, Taipei, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Hat Yai, Krabi, Phuket, Siem Reap, Vientiane, Yangon, Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Singapore, Banda Seri Begawan, Banda Aceh, Bandung, Denpasar, Jakarta, Lombok, Makassar, Medan, Padang, Palembang, Pekanbaru, Semarang, Solo, Surabaya, Jogjakarta, Manila	Abacus, Amadeus, Navitaire

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Continued from page 18

Airline	Main operational base	Fleet	Destinations	Distribution channels
MALAYSIA				
AirAsia X	Kuala Lumpur International Airport	Current: 14 x A330-300 On order: 45 x A330-300, 10 x A350-900	Seoul, Busan, Osaka, Tokyo, Beijing, Chengdu, Hangzhou, Shanghai, Taipei, Adelaide, Gold Coast, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney, Colombo, Jeddah, Kathmandu	Abacus, Amadeus, Navitaire
Firefly	Kuala Lumpur – Subang Skypark	Current: 12 x ATR72-500, 1 x ATR72-600 On order: 22 x ATR72-600	Alor Setar, Ipoh, Johor Bahru, Kerteh, Kota Bharu, Kuala Terengganu, Kuantan, Langkawi, Penang, Banda Aceh, Batam, Medan, Pekan Bahru, Singapore, Bangkok, Koh Samui, Phuket	
Malindo Air	Kuala Lumpur International Airport	Current: 6 x B737-900ER, 5 x ATR72-600 On order: 1 x ATR72-600	Johor Bahru, Kota Bharu, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching, Langkawi, Penang, Sibu, Bangkok, Dhaka, Denpasar, Jakarta. Operations to India (New Delhi, Tiruchirapalli) commenced in December 2013 and January 2014, while Mumbai flights will take off in February, and Kochi in April	Abacus
MYANMAR				
Golden Myanmar Airlines	Yangon International Airport	Current: 2 x A320	Yangon, Mandalay, Naypyidaw, Bangkok, Singapore	
THE PHILIPPINES				
Cebu Pacific Air	Manila – Ninoy Aquino International Airport 	Current: 10 x A319, 26 x A320, 2 x A330-300, 8 x ATR72-500 On order: 15 x A320, 30 x A321neo, 5 x A330-300, 1 x ATR72-500	Bacolod, Butuan, Cagayan de Oro, Camiguin, Cauayan, Caticlan, Cebu, Clark, Coron, Cotabato, Davao, Dipolog, Dimaguete, General Santos, Iloilo, Kalibo, Laoag, Legazpi, Masbate, Naga, Ozamiz, Pagadian, Puerto Princesa, Roxas, San Jose, Siargao, Surigao, Tacloban, Tagbilaran, Tawi-Tawi, Tuguegarao, Virac, Zamboanga, Singapore, Banda Seri Begawan, Siem Reap, Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Xiamen, Bangkok, Phuket, Denpasar, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Kota Kinabalu, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Busan, Seoul, Osaka, Hong Kong, Macau, Dubai. Services to Nagoya and Tokyo are planned for end-March 2014	Amadeus, Navitaire
PAL Express	Manila – Ninoy Aquino International Airport	Current: 13 x A320, 4 x Dash 8-300, 5 x Dash 8-400, 1 A330-300 (transferred from Philippine Airlines)	Bacolod, Busuanga, Cagayan de Oro, Calbayog, Cotabato, Cebu, Clark, Davao, Dumaguete, General Santos, Iloilo, Kalibo, Laoag, Legazpi, Masbate, Naga, Puerto Princesa, Surigao, Tagbilaran, Hong Kong, Dubai	Abacus, Sabre
Tigerair Philippines	Manila – Clark Airport	Current: 2 x A319, 3 x A320	Bacolod, Cebu, Clark, Davao, Iloilo, Kalibo, Manila, Puerto Princesa, Tacloban, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong, Singapore.	Abacus, Amadeus, Navitaire, Travelport
AirAsia Zest	Manila – Ninoy Aquino International Airport	Current: 4 x A320	Manila, Bacolod, Cagayan de Oro, Cebu, Davao, Iloilo, Kalibo, Puerto Princesa, Tacloban, Tacbilaran, Kota Kinabalu, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai, Seoul	Amadeus, Navitaire
SINGAPORE				
Jetstar Asia/Valuair	Singapore Changi Airport	Current: 17 x A320 On order: 1 x A320	Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Denpasar, Jakarta, Lombok, Medan, Surabaya, Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Yangon, Bangkok, Phuket, Ho Chi Minh City, Guangzhou, Haikou, Hangzhou, Hong Kong, Shantou, Taipei, Tokyo, Osaka	Abacus, Amadeus, Navitaire, Sabre
Scoot	Singapore Changi Airport	Current: 6 x B777-200ER On order: 20 x B787-9 Dreamliner	Gold Coast, Perth, Sydney, Nanjing, Qingdao, Shenyang, Tianjin, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Taipei, Tokyo, Seoul	Abacus, Amadeus
Tigerair 	Singapore Changi Airport	Current: 25 x A320 On order: 18 x A320	Bandung, Denpasar, Jakarta, Lombok, Surabaya, Jogjakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Langkawi, Penang, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Hat Yai, Krabi, Phuket, Phnom Penh, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Yangon, Cebu, Manila, Taipei, Guangzhou, Haikou, Hong Kong, Lijiang, Macau, Ningbo, Shenzhen, Dhaka, Male, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kochi, Tiruchirapalli, Tiruvanathapuram, Perth	Amadeus, Navitaire, Travelport
THAILAND				
Nok Air	Bangkok – Don Mueang Airport	Current: 14 x B737-800, 2 x ATR72-500 On order: 2 x Dash 8-Q400, 8 x B737-800, 7 x B737-MAX8	Amnat Charoen, Buriram, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Chumphon, Hat Yai, Hua Hin, Krabi, Loei, Mae Sot, Mukdahan, Nakhon Phanom, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Nan, Phitsanulok, Phrae, Phuket, Phang Nga, Ranong, Roi Et, Sakhon Nakhon, Surat Thani, Trang, Ubon Ratchathani, Udon Thani, Vientiane, Yangon	Navitaire
NokScoot	Bangkok – Don Mueang Airport	Proposed: 2 or 3 B777-200ER	Japan, South Korea and cities in Northern China	
Orient Thai	Bangkok – Suvarnabhumi Airport	Current: 2 x B747-300, 2 x B747-400, 2 x B767-300, 4 x B737-300, 2 x B737-400	Phuket, Hong Kong 	
Thai AirAsia	Bangkok – Don Mueang Airport	Current: 35 x A320 On order: 1 x A320	Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Khon Kaen, Krabi, Nakhon Phanom, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Narathiwat, Phuket, Surat Thani, Trang, Ubon Ratchathani, Udon Thani, Mandalay, Naypyidaw, Yangon, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Singapore, Denpasar, Jakarta, Surabaya, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Hong Kong, Kunming, Macau, Shenzhen, Wuhan, Xi'an, Chennai, Kolkata	Abacus, Amadeus, Navitaire
Thai AirAsia X	Bangkok – Don Mueang Airport	Proposed: 2 x A330-300	Cities within eight hours' flight time from Bangkok, with Australia, China and North Asia being considered	Amadeus, Navitaire
Thai Lion Air	Bangkok – Don Mueang Airport	Current: 2 x B737-900ER	Chiang Mai, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur	
Thai VietJet	–	–	–	Planned start-up in early 2014
VIETNAM				
Jetstar Pacific	Ho Chi Minh City – Tan Son Nhat International Airport	Current: 5 x A320	Buon Ma Thout, Danang, Hai Phong, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Phu Quoc, Vinh	Abacus, Amadeus, Navitaire, Sabre
VietJet Air 	Hanoi – Noi Bai International Airport	Current: 10 x A320 On order: 7 x A320 (to be leased), 14 x A320, 42 x A320neo, 7 x A321	Buon Ma Thout, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hue, Qui Nhon, Bangkok	

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Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing





Progression in the arts

Singapore continues to grow its premium offerings on all fronts. By **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Arrivals Singapore welcomed 15.4 million international visitors last year, marking a year-on-year growth of 6.7 per cent, according to data published on the Singapore Tourism Board's (STB) website.

Based on STB's latest report from January to June 2013, Singapore drew S\$11.3 million (US\$8.9 million) in tourism receipts, a two per cent decline from the same period the year before. Indonesia, China and India were the top three tourism revenue generating markets during 2Q2013, accounting for 57 per cent of overall receipts. Of the top 10 markets, China, India and Japan saw the fastest growth in tourism receipts, compared with the same period last year.

According to the report, double-digit growth was recorded for visitor arrivals from China (27 per cent), Taiwan (21 per cent), Hong Kong (16 per cent) and Australia (15 per cent).

Growth in these markets was boosted by increased twinning traffic with regional markets, particularly Malaysia, while the surge in Australian arrivals was driven by the rise in air capacity as more LCC flights were introduced.

Products Come 2015, Singapore will welcome the opening of two new visual arts institutions, lifting its status as an international arts hub.

The 60,000m² National Art Gallery, which is housed in the former City Hall and Supreme Court buildings, will feature two permanent core galleries dedicated to Singaporean and South-east Asian works.

Pinacothèque de Paris – the largest private art museum in the French capital – will also launch its first venue outside of Europe at Singapore's Fort Canning Centre.

According to Yvonne Low, executive director, The Traveler DMC, the media buzz surrounding the two attractions has already generated enquiries from some of her clients in markets such as France, Romania and Spain. She believes that longhaul travellers – Europeans in particular – are potential targets.

Access Singapore Changi Airport will undergo a massive facelift over the next decade with the addition of a mixed-use development – code-named Project Jewel – and two



"With room inventory on the rise, ageing properties may utilise external strategies such as holding or reducing room rates. However, well-maintained or quality assets may gain rate growth."

Antony Page
General manager
Singapore Marriott Hotel

more terminals.

To be constructed on the 3.5-hectare carpark site fronting Terminal 1 (T1), Project Jewel will feature a large-scale indoor garden with a waterfall, aviation and travel-related facilities, retail outlets and leisure attractions. T1 will also be expanded to allow more space for the arrival hall, baggage claim areas and taxi bays.

The upcoming Terminal 4, which has a planned capacity of 16 million passenger movements a year, will increase the airport's annual passenger handling capacity to 82 million when completed in 2017.

Construction of Terminal 5 and the airport's fourth runway should be completed by mid-2020s, doubling the airport capacity.

Meanwhile, seven new Chinese destinations were added to Changi's network last year – namely Guilin, Jinan, Lijiang, Nanchang, Nanning, Ningbo and Wuxi – while Mandalay (Myanmar), Kalibo (the Philippines) and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) are also now accessible.

Hotels Singapore continues to enjoy a burgeon-

ing supply of hotels, with some 11,000 rooms expected to enter the market in the next four years, according to a report by CBRE Global Research and Consulting.

Despite stiffer competition, hoteliers in Singapore remain confident of good business and a stronger average daily rate (ADR).

Arthur Kiong, CEO, Far East Hospitality, said: "We are expecting a positive outlook for the industry in 2014 especially with the staging of the Singapore Airshow and the Food & Hotel Asia exhibition."

Singapore Marriott Hotel general manager, Antony Page, agrees that the two major events will "provide spikes of demand and contribute to ADR growth".

"Our ADR should rise by more than six per cent in 2014," he added.

Cheryl Ong, director of sales and marketing with The St. Regis Singapore, also predicted a "marginal upward shift" in room rates this year, "in line with the rising inflation rates due to increases in costs of labour and supplies".

Likewise, Austin Watkins, director of marketing at Four Seasons Hotel Singapore, expects "luxury hotels to increase rates moderately".

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Lion City kicks tourism ambitions up a notch

The state-of-the-art venue will strengthen Singapore's grip as a sporting events destination. By **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

The Lion City's ever-expanding skyline is set to welcome a new icon when the Singapore Sports Hub opens its doors in April.

Located on a sprawling 35-hectare site in Kallang, this S\$1.3 billion (US\$1 billion) development will debut the world's largest free-spanning domed roof measuring 310m wide.

With its variety of sports, entertainment and lifestyle facilities, the hub will "take sports to the next level in Singapore", said Mark Collins, managing director of Singapore Sports Hub.

"It is a special place for companies to capture a unique experience for attendees," he added.

Jean Ng, director, F1 & sports, Singapore Tourism Board (STB), agreed: "The Sports Hub will enable Singapore to secure more high-signature sporting events, which will further augment our events calendar and help generate tourist expenditure and visitor arrivals to Singapore."

STB is working with public and private agencies to develop content that can complement



Singapore Sports Hub

The Sports Hub will have two stadiums, an aquatic centre and more

Singapore's unique sporting and lifestyle offerings to enhance the city's visitor experience and destination attractiveness, Ng shared.

World Sport Group, the exclusive commercial partner of Singapore Sports Hub, is currently developing a line-up of sports events encompassing football,

cricket, rugby and athletics, alongside major concerts for the 55,000-seater National Stadium centrepiece.

Some 140 events will be staged at the stadium each year, bringing in a projected two to three million visitors. The sports hub will host the Women's Tennis Association Championships every

October from 2014 until 2018.

According to Collins, Singapore Sports Hub will help travel consultants to work with event promoters to build tour packages and special offers around events taking place at the facility.

He said: "Singapore already appeals to international audiences willing to travel to (the city for) major international sporting events such as the Singapore Grand Prix and Barclays Singapore Open...and now new top-tier events will play a large part in boosting sports and events tourism (to Singapore)."

Inbound tour operators are also looking forward to the stronger destination appeal the new development will bring to Singapore.

Selina Chavry, regional director, Singapore & Malaysia, Pacific World, said: "World-class sports events will enhance Singapore's appeal on a global level and this will definitely boost tourism in the long term and expand tourism spending."

"With this sports hub, the

tourism industry will enjoy economic benefits from inbound travellers, from the sportsmen and performers to fans and show visitors," she added.

For Diethelm Travel Singapore, which has been leveraging the F1 races to package its tourism offerings, managing director Manfred Kurz sees opportunities in other sporting events.

"Until now, it was mainly the F1 event, but that can change fast for crowd-pulling events like tennis or football," he said.

"The sports hub actually caters for a larger crowd so this will help to boost the demand for hotel accommodation as well in Singapore."

Likewise, Dennis Law, managing director of Star Holiday Mart, believes there is the potential to roll out "world-class sports travel packages" for visitors enticed by renowned events taking place in Singapore.

He said: "We can have targeted packages to attract supporters to support the teams if there is interest."

Checking in

The Westin Singapore



Kathy Neo soaks in the sumptuous views and amenities at this upscale hotel perched atop a skyscraper



a view, plus a separate toilet with shower spaces.

For safety's sake, the bathtub could do with a grip around the edge or a non-slip mat on the floor. The hairdryer could only be plugged in at the workdesk where there was no mirror, and the short cord threatened disconnection at a slight tug.

The hotel's energy-saving efforts wins hands down, as the lights, TV and air conditioner automatically turn on and off with each room entrance or exit.

F&B Seasonal Tastes, the all-day dining restaurant on the 32nd floor, features five interactive kitchens. The breakfast spread comprises Western varieties such as made-to-order eggs, waffles and sausages, as well as local choices such as congee and fried *bee hoon* (vermicelli). Fresh fruit juices were available for a healthy start to the day, but the aromatic black coffee most enticed me.

On the same level, the cosy Lobby Lounge is an ideal spot for afternoon tea and drinks. Gastro bar Cook & Brew offers pub classics and local comfort food, while Daily Treats on the ground floor allows guests to pick up breads, sandwiches, coffee and fruit juices.

Name The Westin Singapore
No. of rooms 305
Rate From S\$345 (US\$272) per room night
Contact details
Tel: (65) 6922-6888
Email: res.westinsingapore@staystarwood.com
Website: www.starwoodhotels.com

FACILITIES Recreational facilities include a fitness studio, the Heavenly Spa, which offers five single rooms and one couple's room, and the outdoor infinity pool on the 35th level overlooking Singapore's southern coast.

The hotel also boasts a 600m² Grand Ballroom that can seat up to 300 people, 10 meeting rooms and a business centre. Wi-Fi may be chargeable, depending on the room or meeting package.

SERVICE Warm smiles greeted me every corner I turned; guests were not left helpless or unattended even for a minute. The reception's spontaneous and eager attention to my feedback was much appreciated.

VERDICT Nothing else beats the hotel-wide attentive service, which makes my repeat stay at The Westin a likely possibility.

Silver spoon

Ristorante Da Valentino



This Italian restaurant has all the ingredients to make dining an unforgettable moment, says **Raini Hamdi**

LOCATION Out of town, in the race course area in Bukit Timah. But Valentino could well be in Mars and still pull a crowd.

AMBIENCE/SERVICE It is not just a restaurant; it's a story played out in the grand theatre of Valentino and, like all good stories, it is designed to satisfy – in this case, making diners feel they are not clients but family.

The main protagonist is chef/founder Valtulina Valentino, who set up the restaurant in Singapore nine years ago in another location, then brought his family over – Papa, Mama, sister Perla, who is pastry chef, and her husband Alberto. Together they run the show, winning over customers with their charm and inimitable Italian quirks.

Real money was spent in creating Valentino in this new location. Papa was so proud; the first thing he wanted to show me was the toilet! Indeed, the powder room is so pretty, comfortable and clean, you can have your coffee/dessert there. He pointed to the Italian bricks used on the wall, which help create a rustic ambience. He shook his head that the designer originally proposed *aluminium* doors.

No wonder the new Valentino looks so settled rather than new, like stepping into a home in an Italian countryside. Yet, it has modern trappings. I did not feel any air-con draft. These crafty Italian restaurateurs had placed the AC units *on the floor* in strategic locations, instead of on the ceiling as many restaurants do. That's the extent of their love for their restaurant.

MENU/PRICING Oh yes, they can cook. The menu brims with 'comfort' picks, reaffirming the down-to-earth approach of Valentino. My penne with veal ragout (S\$32.90 or US\$26) and osso buco using Mama's recipe (S\$42.90) were simply delicious.

MICE The main dining seats 95 pax, the private dining 50 pax and the alfresco 30 pax (50 pax buffet). You can do a car launch as doors from the alfresco can be opened to let the car into the main dining. The private room, with its stone-clad walls and Italian fittings, is a natural set for small themes or corporate dos.

Name Ristorante Da Valentino
Location 200 Turf Club Road #01-19 Singapore 287994
Opening times 12pm-2.30pm (last order); 6pm-10.30pm (last order)
Contact details
Tel: (65) 6462-0555
Email: ristvale@singnet.com.sg

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Hanoi's West Lake will be developed into a cultural and spiritual attraction



Hanoi banks on West Lake

The Vietnamese capital plays to its cultural strengths in and around the city. By **Greg Lowe**

Arrivals Hanoi received more than 2.6 million international arrivals last year, up 12.2 per cent over 2012, reported the city's Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism. China, Japan, South Korea, the US and France were the top five source markets.

Growth in foreign visitors also outpaced that of domestic tourists, which increased by 11.3 per cent year-on-year to 14 million.

Edouard George, president of Phoenix Voyages, said: "Hanoi (along with Ho Chi Minh City) has benefited from short-haul visitors and those looking for city experiences in two/three-day visits, while the rest of the country is still suffering from a drop in tourist arrivals."

NTO Vietnam's National Administration of Tourism and local authorities are planning to enhance the city's offerings over the next 12 months.

Last December, they announced Hanoi's West Lake, which is already home to more than 21 pagodas, shrines and other buildings, will be developed into a cultural and spirit-

ual tourism site that will also feature restaurants and other leisure activities.

In the coming months, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism is also due to launch tours to six selected artisan villages around Hanoi where locals produce traditional arts and crafts, such as Van Phuc silk, Bat Trang pottery, Quat Dong embroidery and Ngo Ha mother-of-pearl inlay. The strategy will then be rolled out to another 14 such villages in the area.

According to the department, some 60,000 domestic and international tourists visit Bat Trang pottery village alone each year, generating 200 billion dong (US\$9.5 million) in revenue, a testament to the potential of these attractions.

Hotels Occupancy continues to drive RevPAR across Hanoi's hotels as rates in the city's properties declined for a second consecutive year last year, based on STR Global data.

Occupancy as of November 2013 was 67.6 per cent, up 4.4 percentage points, while ADR fell 2.5 percentage points to US\$110. This generated RevPAR of US\$74, an increase of 1.8 per-



"Hanoi (along with Ho Chi Minh City) has benefited from short-haul visitors and those looking for city experiences, while the rest of the country is still suffering from a drop in tourist arrivals."

Edouard George
President
Phoenix Voyages

centage points over the same period a year earlier. While RevPAR has been on the rise since 2011, ADR continued to fall short of the US\$116 achieved that year.

Supply growth remained relatively flat over the past year, with the greatest increase recorded in the luxury sector, which saw the addition of one new property and 365 rooms, bringing the total to four properties and 1,032 keys. Upscale properties experienced the second highest rate of growth in rooms, up 2.9 per cent to 2,242 rooms with the addition of one property to 12 in total. Upper upscale and upper mid-scale remained effectively flat with a combined total of 3,630 rooms across 25 properties.

Among last year's openings, JW Marriott Hanoi launched in October, marking the brand's debut in Vietnam and the city's marquee opening for the year. The 450-room property located in Tu Liem district is the first five-star property to open in Hanoi in seven years. Its arrival has given the city's MICE capabilities a significant shot in the arm with the addition of up to 3,600m² of events space, said general manager Bob Fabiano.

"Until recently, there hadn't been a hotel that can accom-

modate large MICE events and provide accommodation, F&B and meeting space for groups that require 400 or more rooms," he said.

"Such event organisers could only come to Hanoi if they were willing to use multiple hotels, which is a meeting planner's nightmare."

Access There has been little change in air access to the Vietnamese capital over the past 12 months in terms of capacity from international carriers, according to CAPA - Centre for Aviation.

"Domestically VietJetAir has been expanding across Vietnam," said CAPA analyst Brendan Sobie. "There have also been some (flight) increases by Vietnam Airlines in the international market, primarily to North-east Asia, in line with their overall expansion."

"The only upcoming new service is ANA's, from Tokyo's Haneda. This is part of ANA's overall Haneda international expansion plan, using newly available slots there."

ANA's daily service using Boeing B767-300ER aircraft to Hanoi commences March 30.

Strong Asian business backing

Shorthaul markets perform well, but more needs to be done to prime Vietnam for tourism. By **Greg Lowe**

Vietnam’s tourism industry is growing and remains in a relatively healthy state, according to travel specialists. However, factors such as a faltering recovery in key source markets, poor human capital and a lack of promotional campaigns to develop new destinations within the country continue to limit the industry’s potential.

The country welcomed 6.9 million international visitors in the first 11 months of 2013, up 10.2 per cent year-on-year, according to the Government Statistics Office.

Tourism accounted for just under two-thirds of total arrivals, or 4.2 million people, followed by 1.1 million business travellers – representing increases of 12.1 per cent and 8.3 per cent from the previous year respectively.

Steady business from South-east Asia and robust growth from China and Russia have softened the downturn in bookings from traditional markets such as Europe and the US, leaving inbound players generally upbeat about the industry’s current state of play.

“The industry has healthy growth numbers, especially from Asia – China at 34 per cent; Thailand, 18 per cent; and Russia, 64 per cent – while numbers for longhaul markets such as Australia, the

US and Europe should remain stable,” said George Ehrlich-Adam, general manager of Exotissimo Travel Vietnam.

“The key challenges remain building an understanding of the importance of tourism for an economy in the long term, developing the skills necessary for the service and hospitality industry, and making travel to Vietnam easier and more flexible.”

Edouard George, president of Phoenix Voyages, agrees that more needs to be done to position tourism as a key driver of Vietnam’s economy, adding that he had a more cautious 10 per cent growth forecast for the sector’s performance this year.

“The inbound market, especially long-haul, is still affected (by economic issues) and I don’t see a strong recovery before fall 2014,” he said. “The challenge now is to maintain Vietnam as a competitive destination and strictly control attempts to increase prices.”

Nguyen Thuong Giang, general manager of Asialink Vietnam Holidays, said state agencies must also do more to develop and promote the country and its destinations.

“Vietnam National Administration of Tourism and Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism have some yearly campaigns, but these are just within the country and



A floating village in Halong Bay

mainly focus on the domestic market, sometimes the wider Indochina market,” she said. “There are also no campaigns to bring together related sectors such as airlines, hotels and tour agencies to collaborate (on major promotions).”

Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi remain key destinations, followed by Danang and Hoi An in Central Vietnam which continue to grow, thanks to recently improved air access.

“The upgraded Da Nang International Airport is beginning to catch up from an inbound perspective and is the best direct gateway to Central Vietnam,” said Zosimo Jimeno, area director of sales and marketing for Vietnam at Minor Hotel Group, who forecasts 15 per cent growth this year.

“Hoi An is no longer just a stopover during a touring itinerary but is now considered a destination in its own right.”

Banyan Tree’s integrated resort, Laguna Lang Co, is also injecting more buzz into Central Vietnam. Building on the success of its 20-year-old sister event in Phuket, the Laguna Lang Co Triathlon will be held for the second time on March 29, 2014.

In January, the resort also launched a 10,000m² organic farm near its golf course, focusing on crops such as mushrooms and berries, and will expand to include wild pigs and bee hives for honey production. Sitting alongside horse stables, there will be special farm tours that show how the farm sustains its production and scenic rides along the coastline.



Checking in

JW Marriott Hanoi

Greg Lowe explores the new five-star property which opened last October and is impressed by its unique architecture and up-to-par facilities and services

Name	JW Marriott Hanoi
No. of rooms	450
Rate	From US\$165
Contact details	
Tel:	(84-4) 3833-5588
Fax:	(84-4) 3833-5599
Website:	www.marriott.com

LOCATION JW Marriott Hanoi is located next to Vietnam National Convention Center in Tu Liem district, a stone’s throw from the city’s new business hub.

Hanoi’s thriving Old Quarter and historic centre is about 25 minutes’ drive in good traffic. Noi Bai International Airport is about 30km to the north.

ROOMS The hotel claims to have the largest number of double-bedded rooms (175) for any property in Hanoi with another 275 king-bedded rooms including suites.

There is ample space in the well-appointed open-plan rooms featuring a decent-size work area and desk with plenty of sockets for laptops, tablets and smartphones. The espresso machine complete

with a complimentary supply of coffee is an added bonus, plus plenty of tea and herbal drinks.

Each room offers an uber-comfy bed and plethora of pillows to ensure a sound night’s sleep, while the Bose TV and sound system includes an iPhone dock for those who want to bring their own music. Sliding doors section off the bathroom, which features a marble bath, rain shower, sinks and toilet.

It’s definitely worth asking for a room facing the adjacent convention centre’s landscaped gardens and lake, as the wall-to-wall windows provide an excellent view.

F&B JW Cafe offers buffet-style all-day dining in spacious surrounds. Food is prepared in small quantities at a number of

open-kitchen stations to ensure freshness. A range of Asian and international cuisines, including Italian, Korean, Japanese, Chinese and Vietnamese, is available.

The Lounge is a more casual setting serving breakfast, shared dishes and snacks. It is ideal for small groups holding informal business meetings over a meal. French Grill also offers another open-kitchen experience with a choice of seating at a private booth, long table or bar.

The Chinese Palace features six private dining rooms, while Antidote Bar provides the perfect place to wind down after a day of meetings or sightseeing. The bar

has a solid selection of wines, single malt whiskies and other quality spirits and cocktails. Upbeat tunes are played nightly by the in-house deejay.

FACILITIES While the property includes a spa, fitness suite and suspended swimming pool, what really makes it stand out is its MICE facilities. It features 2,400m² of flexible meeting space all on one floor. Venues range from two seven-metre tall pillarless ballrooms, with 1,000m² and 480m² of space, to eight other smaller rooms for smaller groups or as breakout rooms. An additional 1,200m² of outdoor event space is also available.

VERDICT The hotel offers world-class facilities and excellent service. Its stunning architecture with a contemporary design based on the coiled body of a dragon – a national symbol of Vietnam – makes for an impressive arrival. While it may be a little far from town for people who want to wander the streets of Hanoi at night, its location next to the convention centre gives the venue a boost while helping to position the city as a regional MICE destination.



Pattaya Variety

Chonburi Thailand

Night

22 January 2014

Party Pattaya Style!

Co-hosted by Chonburi Provincial Administrative Organization, Pattaya City, Tourism Authority of Thailand: Pattaya Office and TTG Travel Trade Publishing, Pattaya Variety Night brought ATF 2014 delegates highlights of the exciting Thai Beach City! The glamorous Alcazar Cabaret troupe and the bass-fuelled DJ performance were an absolute hit and definitely a topic-starter for delegates to mingle the night away.



Ronakit Ekasingh, Deputy Mayor of Pattaya City, Michael Chow, Group Publisher of TTG Travel Trade Publishing, U Htay Aung of Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Thawatchai Aranyik, Governor of Tourism Authority of Thailand



Woranetr Damrongjitsanguan and Sunantha Papim(right) of Nong Nooch Garden & Resort, Rajendra Dhumma of Classis Travels & Tours, and Shreyash Shah of Royal Cliff Hotels Group



Dominic Andrew and Laura Tommy of Travelogue Asia, Ian Goh of Exotic Borneo, and Daniel Doughty of Rapidea Solution Sdn Bhd



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Auttaphol Wannakit, Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand: Pattaya Office, Michael Chow of TTG Travel Trade Publishing, Ronakit Ekasingh, Deputy Mayor of Pattaya City, Thawatchai Aranyik, Governor of Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Pattaya Team



Michael Chow from TTG Travel Trade Publishing, Donny Ewe and Cillia Khoo (right) of Eastern & Oriental Berhad, and Mohamad Halim Merican of Seri Pacific Hotel Kuala Lumpur



Stella Konti and Panagiotis Panousis (3rd from right) of Paradise Vacation Club, Stratis Voursoukis from Argo Travel, Mario Anthony of Al Shafq Tourism, Philip Johnson of Bukit Gambang Resort City, and Nalan Yesilyurt from DEMCo



Memories of ATF 2014



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Singapore Tourism Board's Lionel Yeo (centre) and his team give ATF 2014 a thumbs up



Langkawi Development Authority's Nasriah Binti Nusrul, Sharudin Bin Hassan, Khalid Bin Ramli, Rosnina Yaacob and Mohamad Zuhri Bin Abd Rashid



Accor Indonesia's Sophia Altamirano (front row, second from left) and her team



Bintan Resorts International's Asad Shiraz, Mozaic Hotels & Resorts Singapore's Henry Ng and Fiona Neo, and Bintan Resort Ferries' Sebastian Koh



The Philippine contingent of sellers, led by Department of Tourism's Melissa Ong (standing eighth from left) and Tourism Promotions Board's Tess H Mauricio (standing seventh from left), show that it's more fun with them



Indonesia rolls out a warm welcome, with Ministry of Tourism & Creative Economy Indonesia's Nia Niscaya (front row, third from left) leading the contingent



Tourism Malaysia's Mirza Mohammad Taiyab (centre) and his team are ready to share the destination's myriad charms



Silka Maytower Hotel & Serviced Residences Malaysia's Michelle Cheang, Dorsett Singapore's Frankie Lam and Dorsett Hospitality International Malaysia's David Teoh



Carlton City Hotel Singapore's Cecilia Wong and Wenddie Teo



The Jayakarta Palembang's Ramlan A Harahap, BTA Ukraine's Vadim Grabarchuk and The Jayakarta Lombok Beach Resort & Spa's Cherry Abdul Hakim



Park Hotel Clarke Quay Singapore's Dino Lim, Grand Park City Hall Singapore's Elinda Ong, Park Hotel Group Singapore's Mohd K Rafin, Pauline Cheung, Michelle Wong (right) and Grand Park Orchard Singapore's Joanne Chan (second from right)



Meritus Pecatu Bali's Wayan Sukasih, Mandarin Orchard Singapore's Adeline Loh, Asia Reps Germany's Maja Geldner, Meritus Hotels & Resorts Singapore's Paul Stocker, Meritus Pelangi Beach Resort & Spa Langkawi's Stacy Lee and Marina Mandarin Singapore's Hawk Tan

Activities Hosted by TTG Travel Trade Publishing

1. ATF Friendly Golf on 20 January 2014



2. Lunch for Buyers and Media on 22 January 2014



3. Late Night Function: Pattaya Variety Night on 22 January 2014

Co-hosted with Chonburi Provincial Administrative Organization, Pattaya City and Tourism Authority of Thailand: Pattaya Office



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