

## VIEW FROM THE TOP

Kuoni Travel Holding CEO, Peter Meier, tells [Raini Hamdi](#) that 'focus' is the key to triumph in a fast-changing environment, which is why the group is lopping off its tour operating division and concentrating on two other core divisions



## FIXING THE LABOUR CONUNDRUM

Amid a tightening labour market, Singapore's hotels are striving to balance booming business with manpower shortage



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## HARVESTING THE SEA'S BOUNTY

Water, water everywhere – Indonesia wants to milk every drop of its extensive coastal resources by embracing a robust marine tourism policy

# PRAYERS FOR THE VALLEY

The world is crying with Nepal. But far from being a valley of lost hope, a new Nepal could rise from the ashes of the monster earthquake – see page 4





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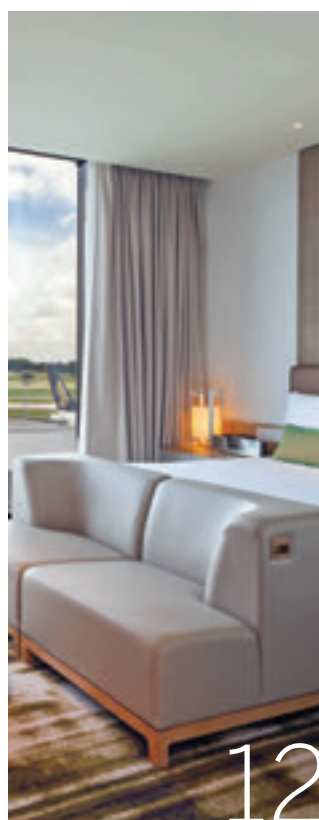


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I want to forget we ever said 'so glad we went' and look to the day when I can say, 'so glad we are back' in a stronger Nepal...

## WHEN 'GLAD WE WENT' FEELS SAD

**The last time I was in Nepal was two years ago.** I left with the distinct impression the country was worse off than when I visited it before the 1996-2006 'People's War'. The capital Kathmandu painfully reflected an economy trying to rebuild itself. Aside from many unfinished projects and roads, litter and pollution were a real problem. But the sights – the historic monuments, the winding alleys of homes and shops, and the beautiful people – were worth it.

Following the earthquake, I found myself saying 'so glad we went' with great sadness. The finality of those words is based on reality: Nepalese officials reportedly said 90 per cent of the country's UNESCO-listed heritage sites had been damaged or destroyed by the quake.

I count myself lucky to have seen them several times, yet it's a gratitude that feels hollow – because I want my son, my other family members and my friends who have not yet seen them to also enjoy those sights. This is why travel is so desirable; it satisfies the basic need of humans to share – why do you think social media is such a hit?

Even if they restore, can it ever be the same? Can it be done in the first place, considering the millions of dollars required, by one of Asia's poorest countries? How long will it take? Even now, when we're talking about saving lives, never mind monuments, the UN humanitarian chief has come out to say she is "extremely concerned" about foreign aid getting stuck at Kathmandu's small international airport or even turned back at the border with

India by customs officials – the all-too-familiar signs of the bureaucracy and the political rivalries that have long plagued the country.

I can only hope that Nepali authorities will be driven by the fact tourism is the country's number one revenue earner, thus rebuilding and restoring the country's infrastructure and its national treasures are critical. And, as highlighted in our Analysis (see page 4), this effort must be done with real vision and leadership.

I wish with all my heart they will recognise the earthquake is an opportunity to build a more resilient Nepal for its people, and a more effective infrastructure for Nepal tourism which will enable the country gain much more income from the industry, which it deserves. Restoring heritage monuments is one huge task; the other is upgrading tourism infrastructure, be it hotels, vehicles, roads, airports, basic facilities for adventure tourism, etc.

I want to forget we ever said 'so glad we went' and look to the day when I can say, 'so glad we are back' in a stronger Nepal, one that is a torchbearer of how a developing country turns a tragedy into a model for a safer seismic future. That, is the biggest monument it can build for the victims of April 25, 2015.

**Raini Hamdi**

Senior Editor

[raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com](mailto:raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com)

[twitter.com/rainihamdi](https://twitter.com/rainihamdi)

### COMING UP

**NEXT ISSUE:**  
**JUNE 19, 2015**

**MALAYSIA** Kuala Lumpur hungers to position itself as the gastronomic capital of South-east Asia

**DESIGN HOTELS** Red, Venu, CitizenM – will a new crop of lifestyle brands enrich or dilute the design hotel market?

**AIRLINE FLEETS** More airlines are rolling out premium economy products in their pursuit of the revenue sweet spot

### WE LIKE



While not as iconic as Singapore Airlines' *sarong kebaya* outfit, SilkAir's new cabin crew uniform is a refreshing ensemble of aqua-blue or plum-red colours, matched with an asymmetric neckline and seagull-patterned georgette bow. Plus, it's definitely a cut above its previous incarnation of the pale green and terracotta wrap dress.







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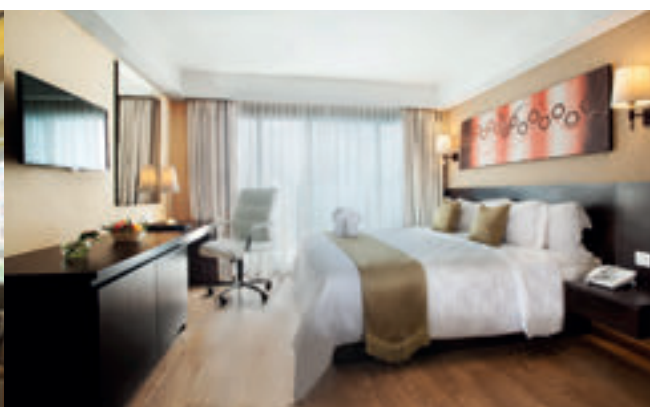


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## Analysis

# PRAYERS FOR THE VALLEY

**I**N the face of a tragedy that looks hopeless and desperate, industry members are envisioning a new Nepal rising from the ashes of the 7.8-magnitude earthquake that struck an area between the capital Kathmandu and the city of Pokhara on April 25, the worst since the one that hit Nepal in 1934.

As the world watched in horror at the mounting loss of lives and crumbling heritage monuments, industry players said humanitarian aid is of course the top priority, but believe the disaster is an opportunity for Nepal to rebuild itself later.

As a destination, Nepal was seeing growth. Adventure tour operator Intrepid Travel was enjoying a rise in bookings every year since peace was declared with Maoist insurgents end-2006, said co-founder Darrell Wade. When the quake struck, it had 160 clients either in Kathmandu or on mountain treks, and counts itself lucky the travellers and staff were safe, as getting them back to Kathmandu then home was a feat due to disrupted telecommunications and road/air services.

Likewise, Nepal was doing “extremely well” this year for Marco Polo Reisen, after the long-awaited return of wide-body longhaul flights from Europe by Turkish Airlines. The study tour operator had various small groups strolling through the city at the time of the quake, which made it more difficult to locate them all. Fortunately, a number of the clients had given Marco Polo their mobile numbers before the trip and the operator was able to gather all of them at an agreed meeting place. “Until their departure they stayed in the ground floor of the hotel and finally left the country as planned on Monday evening. The most difficult thing throughout these days was keeping the contact with our local partner due to the non-functional landlines,” said Marco Polo’s managing director, Holger Baldus.

Political stability and arrivals growth gained the attention of foreign investors and, according to Nepal’s Department of Industry, foreign investment commitments in the tourism sector rose a whopping 389 per cent to Rs1.75 billion (US\$26.8 million) in the first five months of the current fiscal year over the same period in 2013/14. Commitments were received for 50 tourism projects from investors from 22 countries, twice as many the 23 projects pledged in 2013/2014 fiscal year. The investors were from 22 countries, including Asia-Pacific countries such as China, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Malaysia and South Korea. Among the projects were hotels, casinos and adventure tourism activities.

But what Nepal needs, even before the earthquake, are the ‘basics’ – proper roads, vehicles, toilets, etc, which rotted over the years as tourists stayed away due to its political instability, said industry players. This is why they are pinning hopes on a rebuilding effort “with a vision”.

“Infrastructure has to be restored as soon as possible – but with a vision!” said

Baldus. “This catastrophe has to be seen as an opportunity, as (poor) transportation has always been critical, even on the main trunk routes. Flight safety and road safety have to be improved, not only for tourists but for every single person in Nepal.”

David Keen, CEO of Quo Global, a branding agency, called for a “leader” in the rebuilding effort.

“It is critical for the government to repair quickly the damage to base camps at Everest. Adventurers understand the risks with mountaineering but require basic facilities that can be repaired and even improved upon for the next climbing season. I believe this is an opportunity and a marketing opportunity for the country.”

“The tourism industry demands a leader who will be able to turn the destruction into a road to recovery and eventually an opportunity. I would think that leader could well come from outside of Nepal,” said Keen, adding that one of the tragedies is the government, and par-

**The tourism industry demands a leader who will be able to turn the destruction into a road to recovery and eventually an opportunity.**

**David Keen**  
CEO  
Quo Global

ticularly the tourism authority, are ill-equipped to deal with the extensive crisis management required for the industry. Yet, unless Nepal reacts quickly, its image will have a longterm association with tragedy, which will make the recovery period longer, said Keen.

“The loss of World Heritage Sites in Kathmandu is irreparable and so heartbreaking. Yet the magic that is Kathmandu and Thamel will sustain. Ironically it is most likely the hardy backpackers – the original founders of tourism to Nepal – will return quickly and the perception of the country and its recovery will be reflected through them. Very important, therefore, for Thamel to be restored as efficiently as possible as this will be the source of both income and perception in the near future,” Keen said.

PATA CEO Mario Hardy added that Nepal must not let up on marketing and be forgotten. “The first priority is for Nepal to focus its attention on the basic humanitarian help, then rebuild its infra-

The world is crying with Nepal. But far from being a valley of lost hope, a new Nepal could rise from the ashes of the monster earthquake, **Raini Hamdi** writes



A rescue nightmare at Manju Shree Park

structure and hopefully find some external assistance to rebuild its historical sites. Despite these tragedies, and the financial burden they may bring to the nation, it is important for Nepal to continue to market the destination and be present at trade shows. Often we see a destination cutting its marketing spending after a tragedy, which is the wrong approach. It needs to carefully think about the messaging, but relations with the media is also key.”

At press time, *TTG Asia* could not get through to Nepal tourism industry players. PATA, too, was not able to get any feedback from its Nepal chapter members due to a challenge with communications.

Humanitarian aid has been forthcoming, with some US\$21 million raised globally as of April 29. The tourism industry has not shied away: Intrepid, for example, started an appeal on Day 2 of the disaster and raised A\$208,000 (US\$167,000) within 36 hours, and growing. The amount raised goes directly to Nepal, with Intrepid paying for all the administration costs, apart from contributing significantly itself.

PATA Foundation has established a Nepal Earthquake Tourism Recovery Fund, to which it has contributed US\$10,000. “Without question, we anticipate a great need for reconstruction of iconic heritage and culture sites as well as interventions to help people and organisations rebuild their tourism businesses,” said PATA Foundation chairman Peter Semone.

Quo Global was exploring the possibility of helping to create a brand initiative to bring back tourism to the country.

Said Intrepid’s Wade: “As an industry and a travelling public, we have a responsibility to pitch in when destinations need assistance. Apart from being a normal humanitarian response, we also have a vested interest to help each other out. If we act together in our support it’s like a built-in insurance policy – you never know when you’ll need that support yourself.”

Added Marco Polo’s Baldus: “We should not leave Nepal alone. Although the quake will have its impact on the rest of the season, the country and its people deserve our full support. Tours to Nepal, especially to Kathmandu Valley, may look different in the future, but Nepal remains a fascinating country worth visiting. Consequently help has to come from all possible sides.”

Keep faith, said Brett Tollman, CEO, The Travel Corporation, pointing to how Japan, for example, recovered faster than expected from the tsunami.

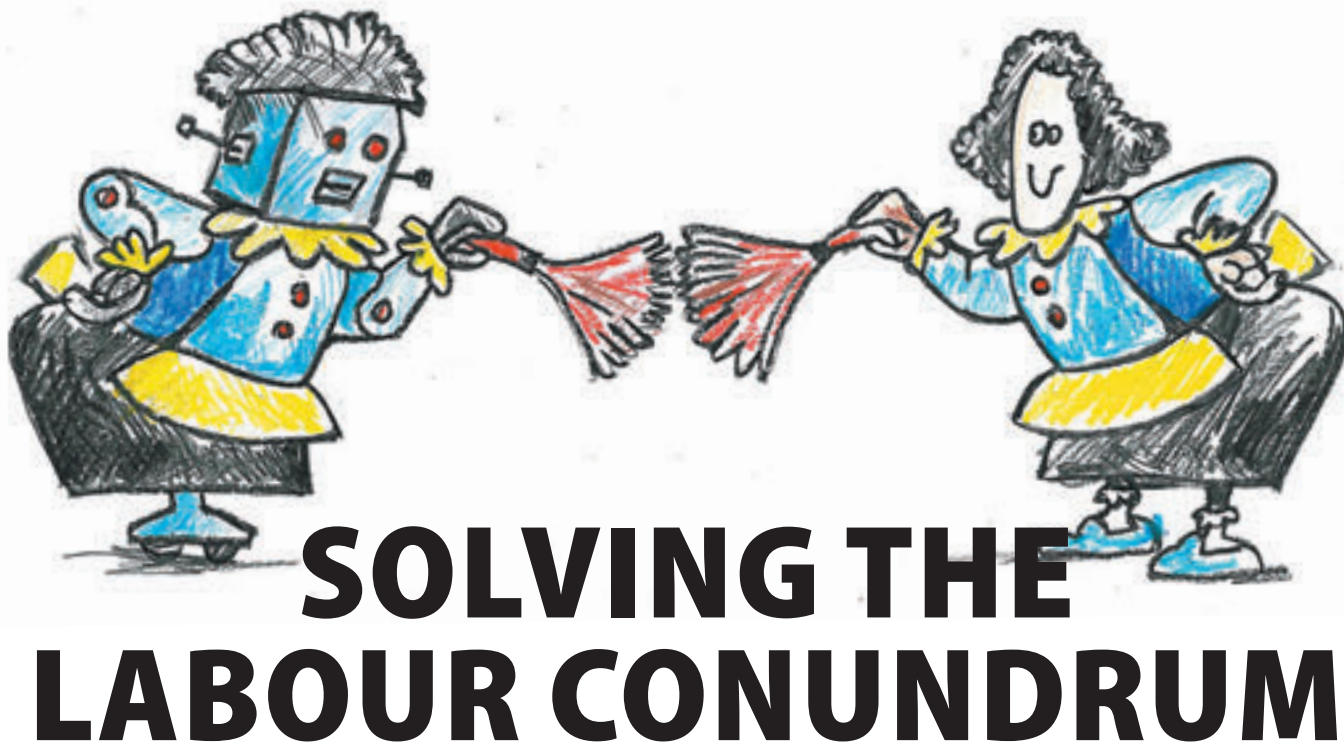
Said Tollman: “We need to keep faith in the great capacity of the human spirit and heart to grieve, recover and then move on, stronger and more resilient than before.”

“If we look back on some of the awful natural disasters of just the past 10 years, in almost every case much recovery has been achieved, and tourism has slowly but surely recovered and returned. Just look at Japan and how the recovery happened faster than expected, in many cases without government involvement as the locals got on with it. Today, inbound tourism is as strong as ever, and one hears of capacity problems with hotels, airlift and more.”



# Analysis

As Singapore's thriving hospitality sector grapples with a tightening labour pool, hotels are embracing technological solutions to overcome manpower shortage. **Paige Lee Pei Qi** reports



**D**espite Singapore's land constraints, new hotels continue to pop up on the city's hospitality scene, sending hoteliers scrambling to innovate their services to balance the labour equation.

According to a CDL Hospitality Trusts report, more than 3,200 new hotel rooms will come online in Singapore this year, and a total of 8,703 new rooms are expected to become available from 2015 to 2017. It added that new room supply will likely grow at a compound annual growth rate of 4.9 per cent from 2014 to 2017.

New hotels that debuted in Singapore last year include the 250-key One Farrer Hotel & Spa, the 134-key Sofitel So Singapore, as well as the 502-key Hotel Jen Orchardgateway Singapore.

Major openings this year include the 654-room South Beach hotel, the 500-room Genting Hotel Jurong, the 300-room Park Hotel Farrer Park and The Patina, Capitol Singapore with 157 rooms.

This begs the question of how hoteliers are coping with manpower shortage, an urgent issue that has plagued the industry over the past few years.

To tackle this, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) recently launched the Hotel Productivity Centre (HPC) in March to help the hospitality sector achieve productivity-driven growth.

Set up as a dedicated competency centre within the Singapore Productivity Centre (SPC), the HPC is designed as a one-stop resource to help hotels address challenges through productivity and innovation solutions.

The HPC seeks to benefit hotel industry through applied research (prototyping and evaluating new technologies, services and solutions); consultancy (diagnosing and solving targeted challenges faced by hotels); benchmarking (comparing Singapore's hotel industry against international standards); training; and sharing of best practices (educating industry on innovation and productivity best practices).

STB assistant chief executive, Yap Chin Siang, said: "Singapore's hotel industry is at a critical juncture currently. With rising competition, labour constraints and changing workforce aspirations, hoteliers are facing more pressure than ever to innovate. It is thus timely that an independent, dedicated resource is launched to for-

mulate sustainable growth solutions."

To kickstart the HPC's programmes, SPC – which has experience and expertise in implementing productivity initiatives across the retail and F&B sectors – will also work with Republic Polytechnic to bring to the table expertise in capabilities and innovation.

Urging hoteliers to make use of the new HPC, Yap said: "The launch of the HPC is also a key milestone on the hotel productivity roadmap as we strive to foster a culture of innovation, and transform the industry through systematic improvements in productivity."

"We hope that hotels will fully tap on this resource to prototype new technologies and solutions," he added.

For its first project, the HPC is working with Millennium & Copthorne's Studio M hotel to devise a sustainable solution to overcome the hotel's front desk and housekeeping service challenges, and roll out service innovations to enhance the overall guest experience.

Several hotels have already invested in technological innovations to reduce their dependence on workers.

Arthur Kiong, CEO, Far East Hospitality, said: "We must obviously look to technology to improve productivity. (However), this is much easier (to implement) in our new hotels that are currently in the design stage."

With six hotels scheduled to open over the next three years in Singapore, Kiong said: "We are leveraging on our scale to streamline back end operations and processes. Technology adoption is done strategically and never piecemeal."

"To achieve the required productivity, innovation must start from the customer profile, expectation, product design and finally, the guest experience that we conceptualise," he added.

Meanwhile, the Crowne Plaza Changi Airport has already started to replace part of its manual labour with new equipment since 2012 and automated some labourious cleaning work, which have since shaved 40 per cent off in time taken to perform related tasks.

For example, the hotel now uses ride-on scrubbers to substitute the manual task of mopping corridors and outdoor floors, as well as scrubbers to replace the task of cleaning toilet floors in guestrooms.

Housekeeping staff are also provided with personal digital assistants loaded with information on rooms to clean for the day.

Dina Chong, Crowne Plaza Changi Airport's director of human resources, said: "This is not just a more efficient way of working but also provides our staff with

relevant skills training and knowledge.

"We now face an improvement in terms of our workforce and have sufficient manpower which is on par with what we have budgeted. There are still gaps to fill, but manpower supply is healthy across departments," she said.

Ibis Singapore on Bencoolen has last year implemented a new mobile concierge system for guests to access easy self-help solutions.

As 73 per cent of front-desk questions are regarding local recommendations and information such as weather and flight information, front-desk receptionists are often tied up with answering such questions from guests.

Said Jade Stunden, executive assistant manager at ibis Singapore on Bencoolen: "With this mobile concierge, (guests) can find all the information they need just by using this system and can take their time to also browse local eateries and attractions."

However, Stunden emphasises that the option of approaching their hotel service staff remains available, as not every guest is tech-savvy.

She said: "As long as the guest has the choice of technology or people then you cannot go wrong. Removing all reception staff and having only automated check-ins, for example, would kill the industry."

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Mixed fortunes for Asian airlines

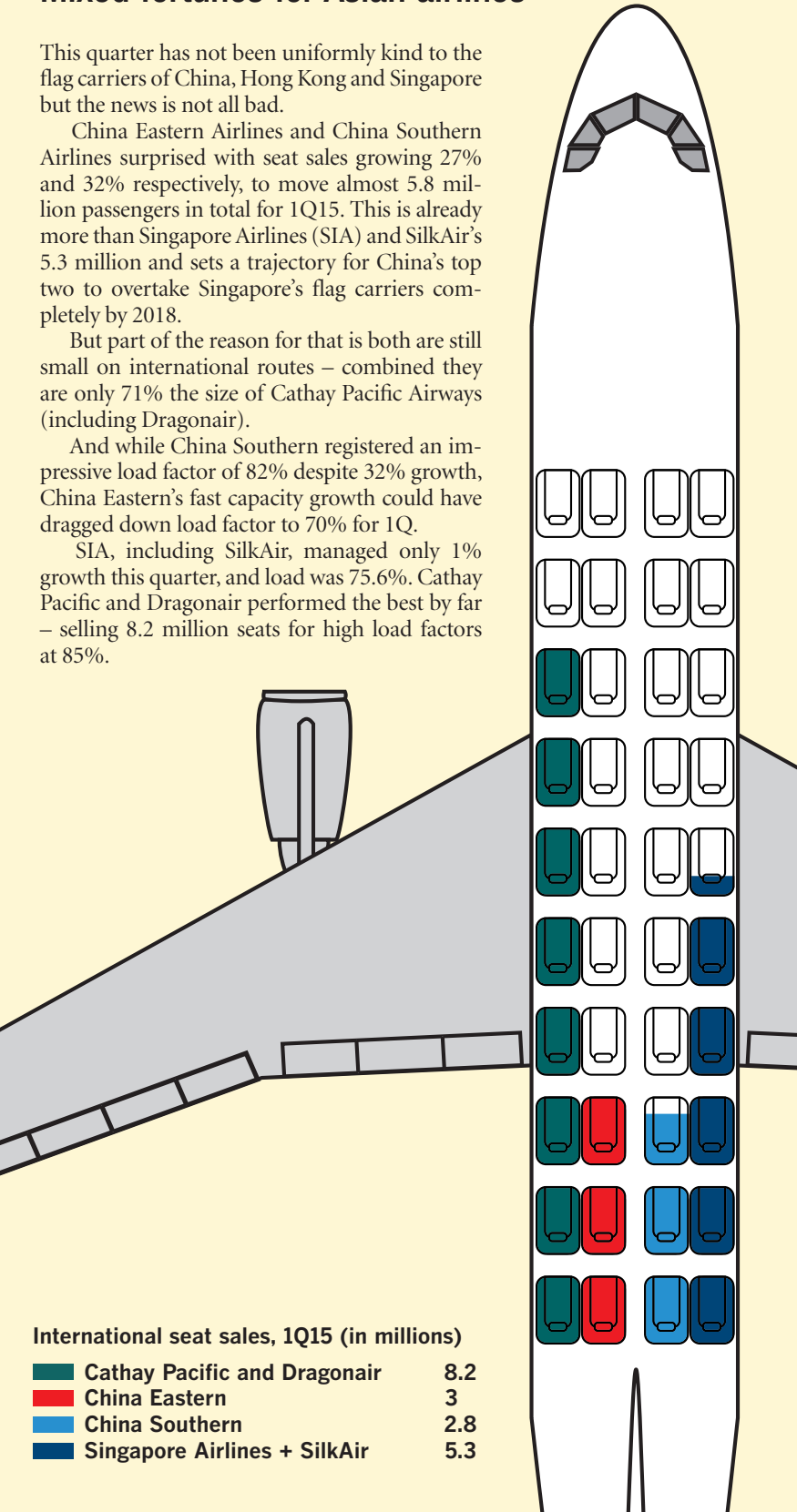
This quarter has not been uniformly kind to the flag carriers of China, Hong Kong and Singapore but the news is not all bad.

China Eastern Airlines and China Southern Airlines surprised with seat sales growing 27% and 32% respectively, to move almost 5.8 million passengers in total for 1Q15. This is already more than Singapore Airlines (SIA) and SilkAir's 5.3 million and sets a trajectory for China's top two to overtake Singapore's flag carriers completely by 2018.

But part of the reason for that is both are still small on international routes – combined they are only 71% the size of Cathay Pacific Airways (including Dragonair).

And while China Southern registered an impressive load factor of 82% despite 32% growth, China Eastern's fast capacity growth could have dragged down load factor to 70% for 1Q.

SIA, including SilkAir, managed only 1% growth this quarter, and load was 75.6%. Cathay Pacific and Dragonair performed the best by far – selling 8.2 million seats for high load factors at 85%.



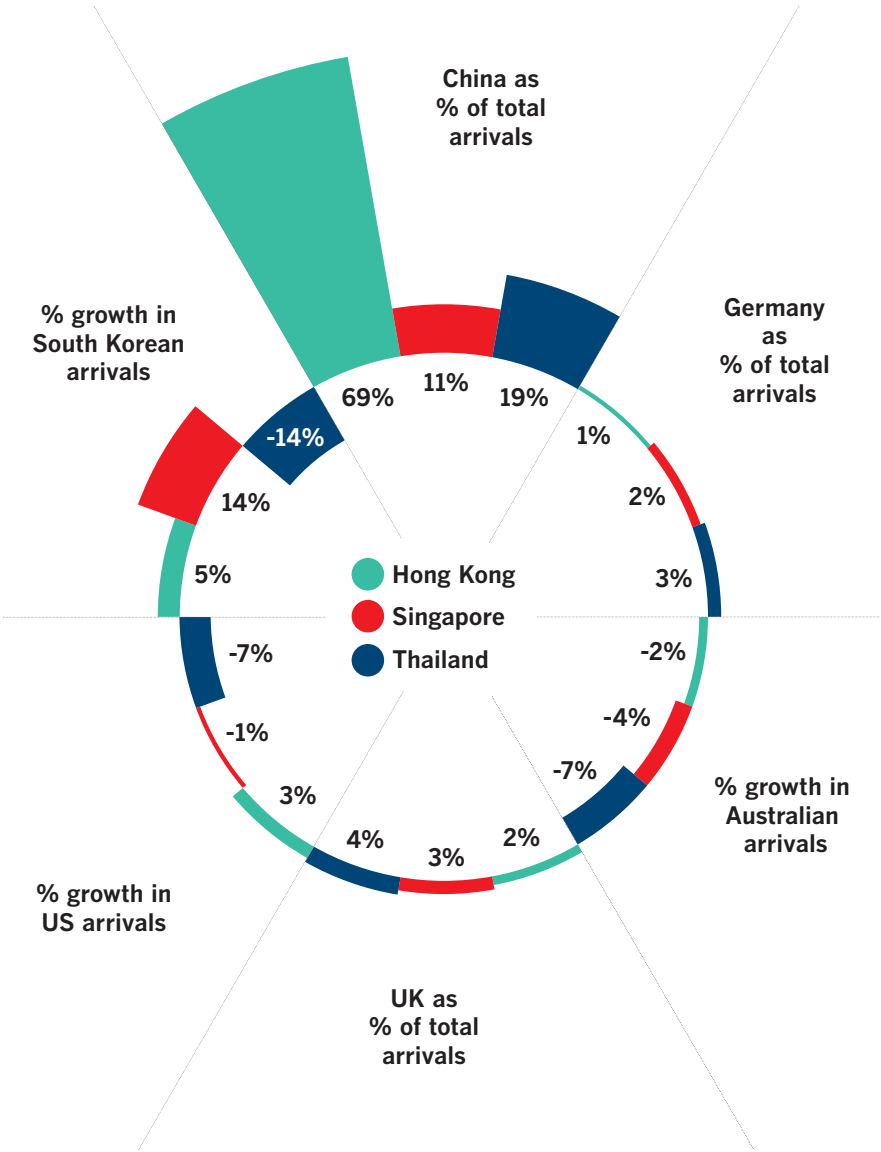
Source market health check 2014

Data on three of Asia's biggest destinations, Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand, for 2014 show some important trends (though there are risks\* in comparing visitor counts between destinations).

China was the biggest source market for all three, though South Korea was a

new star that made its presence felt as a top 10 market.

Germany was no longer the darling of longhaul, and long-time faithful market Australia tumbled from grace. The UK faded and was hanging by a thread. US the strong? Not quite. See below.



\*There are risks in comparing visitor counts because of different methodology as well as geography. For instance, despite the importance of the leisure tourism, Thailand still separates its visitors by passports rather than country of residence.



HOTEL BAROMETER

More heads in beds but less money in the till

In the first month of the year, more rooms were filled but fewer dollars were in the bank. Blame that mainly on the strength of the US dollar.

Still, results could have been lower in Beijing, Hong Kong and Singapore considering that the Lunar New Year boost came in February instead of January as it did in 2014.

Across Asia-Pacific, occupancy increased 2.3 points to 75%, though average room rate slid 5.8% to US\$146, pushing RevPAR down 4.8% to US\$107.

Elsewhere in Asia-Pacific (not in table):

Jakarta's average room rate dropped 15% in US\$ though only 5% in rupiah. Occupancy in the Maldives fell 5%, registering 72% for January – not good for the high season.

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

Hotel operating results in selected centres, January 2015

Location	Occupancy, %	Growth, %	ARR, US\$**	Growth, %
Bangkok	65.4	21.3	113	-2.7
Beijing	65.5	19.4	91	-1.8
Ho Chi Minh City	69.3	-0.1	125	6.2
Hong Kong	83.5	-1.4	222	-4.2
Melbourne	83.1	-0.6	180	-11.3
Singapore	80.3	-2.3	170	-7

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



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## View from the top

Kuoni Travel Holding CEO, Peter Meier, tells Raini Hamdi that 'focus' is the key to triumph in a fast-changing environment, which is why the group is lopping off its tour operating division and concentrating on two other core divisions

# KUONI'S SALE LOGIC

**In selling your tour operating businesses because you want to focus on the divisions that have 'attractive longterm potential' – isn't that admitting there's little future in tour operating?**

That's not our message. Tour operating has a bright future. A lot of the business we want to focus on serves tour operators. GTD (Global Travel Distribution, a B2B provider of accommodation and land components, ie, GTA) and GTS (Global Travel Services, comprising Group Travel and Destination Management Specialists) have tour operators as customers, so we absolutely believe in that business model.

**So why exit tour operating?**

We believe that in a fast-changing environment, we're better off focusing on the global B2B businesses where we have a leading position. It does not mean we're becoming a single leg company: GTD, GTS and VFS (Visa Facilitation Services) are all different businesses. But selling the outbound units (Kuoni Switzerland, UK, Benelux, Scandinavia/Finland, Hong Kong/China and India) reduces complexity for us. It does not mean they are bad or there is something wrong with them. It's like having children... or say, even for you as a journalist, can you can follow one,

two, three companies? Yes. But can you follow a thousand?

**But you don't have a thousand, only a handful of divisions.**

Yes, but they are all very different businesses. Kuoni Switzerland for example operates in a mature market, while the tour operating model is different in the Nordics. Those six units don't buy or sell together, so we have six IT systems, six ways of distribution, etc. And that's only tour operating. Now add the GTD, GTS and VFS businesses, and the question becomes, can you handle that complexity?

Our conclusion was, sure we could develop the tour operating side, but if we develop everything at the speed of 40 while the world is changing at 50, we would be in deep trouble with all the businesses.

**So you pick the few you can focus on and go at a speed of 50.**

60! (laughs)

**And you chose the ones with the most upside.**

Yes, from our perspective, the growth in travel is clearly going to come from Asia, where the middle class is rising. We want to focus on businesses where there is more growth potential than those outbound units which are dominated by Europe, a mature market with limited prospects.

**That's the thing – so why should anyone buy them?**

We're not looking for someone who will have to fix a troubled child, but someone who can take the business to the next level.

It's different back in 2012 when we exited some of our loss-making tour operating businesses in Europe, ie, Kuoni Italy, Spain, our activity in Russia, etc. In our view, they were far too small, did not have good standing in the market and would not make sufficient money even in good times. So we said at the time we'd either find new owners or close them.

## 10 NEED TO KNOWS ABOUT PETER MEIER

- **Who's in your family?** I'm married and have two children
- **What do you do for fun?** I have a broad interest and like to do different things, from cultural or sport events, to eating out or just be together with family and friends
- **Your ideal vacation?** To be with my family on a trip we have never made before
- **How do you book your own leisure trips?** First we dream about it, then use the experts of the Kuoni group to make it happen
- **What are you reading right now?** *Kindeswohl* by Ian McEwan
- **How do you stay healthy?** I aim to do some sports
- **Favourite food?** I do like all kinds of food, particularly Asian food
- **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Checking my smart phone
- **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Queuing for security check at the airport, but I know it is important
- **Most people don't know that...** I enjoy reading comics

In this case, the businesses are money-making. Sure, the business in the Nordics last year was not money-making for certain reasons, including a super perfect weather in the Nordics, but it was money-making for 10 consecutive years. Overall, the businesses have a certain size and position in their markets.

**How much upside do they have?**

There is a lot but of course it depends on the market. If you take the smaller markets such as Benelux or Hong Kong, of course it's fair to say the upside is limited even though they have good market positions. If you take the larger markets like the UK, where the market is large and the brands are premium, the potential is good. We started some years back doing our own retail stores in the UK; we have a partnership with John Lewis (chain of department stores throughout Great Britain) and all this paid off.

When we informed the local management in the UK about the sale, they were not unhappy actually. They had seen in, say, budget discussions, when they wanted to open a couple more stores and we said, OK, you could do half, we like your plan – but your sister or brother has a better and more attractive plan. We're not helping them at all and so it's a big opportunity for them if an owner comes along and really focuses on that business – they can grow much faster than if they are second priority in the Kuoni group.

**So who will buy you think?**

I believe companies who have a similar

agenda to us – they want to focus. They are already playing in those markets and they want to grow the business even more by buying something that has the same synergies or can be vertically integrated.

**When you choose children to give away, does it hurt?**

It is emotional, particularly Kuoni Switzerland – the mother of all our activities. But when we were in decision mode, the emotion had to stay outside of it. It is our job as managers to go by the facts, though it is important we respect those emotions. Investors could see the story but for those in Kuoni Switzerland, it was tough and they had a double shock as, the next day, the Swiss National Bank decided to give up the peg to the euro.

**How do you continue operating something you know would be sold?**

It's important people don't think once we've made the announcement, we put the brakes on the outbound businesses or hold back doing something thinking 'maybe the new owners would not like it'. No, we continue with the plans and activities for all the divisions, including outbound, that have been defined in the budget we want to achieve this year. All the MDs report to Rolf (Schaforth), who is not at all involved in the sale.

**What's your plan for the 'new' Kuoni?**

GTD, which is managed by Ivan (Walter), knows where it wants to run and will run fast. Similarly, VFS; I was in Dubai and again I saw how innovative they are. The new area is GTS; we want the Group Travel and Destination Management Specialists units to come together but this is something we can build on only after we have progressed with the sale of the outbound units.

**With the proceeds from the sale, will you be on a buying spree to strengthen your GTD and GTS divisions or even create another new core business?**

For this year, our priority is to find new owners of the outbound units. Once we've done that, we will look at what the potential avenues are.

...sure we could develop the tour operating side, but if we develop everything at the speed of 40 while the world is changing at 50, we would be in deep trouble with all the businesses.



# Agency

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## INNOVATORS

### WALKING OFF THE BEATEN PATH

By Julian Ryall

**WHO** Set up in 1992, Walk Japan was the pioneer in hiking tours to some of Japan's most rarely ventured parts and today escorts small groups on journeys the length and breadth of the country.

"We saw an opportunity because Japan at that time was still a relatively unknown tourism destination and there was lots to explore," said Paul Christie, CEO of Walk Japan.

**WHAT** Other than operating scheduled hiking tours throughout the year, Walk Japan leads around 100 bespoke private trips for school groups from outside Japan.

Tour groups are a maximum of 12 people, headed by leaders with a deep knowledge of the hiking route and its history, as well as of Japan and its customs.

Many of the routes follow ancient pilgrimage routes or post

roads through the mountains, including the Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage and the Nakasendo Way.

This year, the company branched out to provide a range of new experiences, including a water-based tour of Okinawa that incorporates ocean and river kayaking, paddleboarding and snorkelling.

Another addition to its prospectus is Elegance Japan, a seven-day tour exclusively for women that focuses on urban luxury in modern and sophisticated Tokyo and traditional and refined Kyoto.

**WHY** While the Okinawa tour might appear to be a departure from the company's present operations, Christie perceives this trip as "walking on water".

He said: "There is not a great deal of good walking in Okinawa, but we are able to explore some

sub-tropical jungle, do some snorkelling and surf-paddling."


Likewise, the women-only vacations are customised tours that take a more in-depth look at subjects that are of interest to women, including fashion, the arts and cuisine, and both additions to the Walk Japan portfolio have attracted a lot of interest, Christie said.

"The travel market in Japan has been very lopsided in its development and vast areas are not being used by the industry at all," he added. "We see these as opportunities to develop our business."

**TARGET** The company has definite plans to include more off-the-beaten-track trips. Christie is playing his cards close to his chest when it comes to the specifics, but he revealed that he is adding more staff to the operation.

Paul Christie (right), CEO of Walk Japan, takes hiking groups on the road less travelled, shying away from the typical tourist haunts.



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## HOTELS



### MERCURE MALDIVES KOODDOO RESORT, THE MALDIVES

The 68-villa Mercure Maldives Kooddoo Resort, slated to open in 2016 in Gaafu Alifu Atoll, will be the only Maldivian resort directly accessible by domestic plane without the need for an additional speedboat journey thanks to the upcoming Kooddoo Airport. Facilities will comprise an all-day restaurant, a sunset bar, spa as well as a range of watersports including a dive centre.



### FOUR SEASONS HOTEL SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

Four Seasons Hotel Seoul will debut later this year, marking the first Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts property in the country. Located on Sejongro Square in Seoul's CBD, the hotel offers 317 guestrooms, an exclusive "speakeasy" bar and several high-end restaurants. It will also have a selection of meeting rooms, a saltwater swimming pool and a state-of-the-art fitness centre.



### LEXIS HIBISCUS PORT DICKSON, MALAYSIA

Situated along Port Dickson's Pasir Panjang beach, the resort has soft-opened on April 1 with 100 rooms, with a grand opening scheduled in 4Q2015. Once fully operational, it will be home to 639 pool villas, with every unit equipped with its own dip pool. The Hibiscus Grand Ballroom seats up to 450 pax in banquet style, in addition to 10 function rooms of varying sizes, a boardroom and a VIP holding room.



### GENTING HOTEL JURONG, SINGAPORE

Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) recently launched the 557-room hotel in Singapore's Jurong Lake District, with a free shuttle bus service operating 24/7 to ferry guests between the hotel and RWS. Three room types varying between 18m<sup>2</sup> and 54m<sup>2</sup> are available, and each room is equipped with free Wi-Fi and a flat-screen TV. The hotel also offers a pillarless 427m<sup>2</sup> ballroom, meeting rooms and a rooftop sky lounge.

## ACTIVITIES



### FESTIVAL VACATION CRUISE TAKES TO THE HIGH SEAS IN 2016

An experiential 5D4N festival vacation cruise, Shipsomnia, will take place aboard the *Costa Victoria* when it set sails from Singapore on January 2, 2016, cruising to Phuket and Langkawi before turning back to Singapore on January 6. Themed *Search for Lost Rhythms*, the journey will feature some 30 DJs from around the world, multi-city Asian club collaborations, plus artists and stage production teams from Belgium and South Africa. Organised by Mad Fresh Events at a cost of about US\$2.5 million, the festival is expected to draw some 2,400 people from around Asia-Pacific and beyond. Prices (excluding taxes and fees) start from US\$699 to US\$1,199 per pax, depending on the choice of cabin. Early reservations for Shipsomnia will begin from May 23 to June 14 on [www.shipsomnia.com](http://www.shipsomnia.com).

## TRANSPORTATION

### NEW SCOOT SERVICE TO TAKE OFF FOR KAOHSIUNG

Scoot will add a second Taiwanese destination, Kaohsiung, to its network from July 9 this year. Flights between Singapore and Kaohsiung will operate three times per week on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday on Scoot's new Boeing 787 aircraft, offering streaming movies and in-flight Wi-Fi. Flights to Kaohsiung will depart Singapore at 07.55, while return flights will depart the Taiwanese city at 21.30.

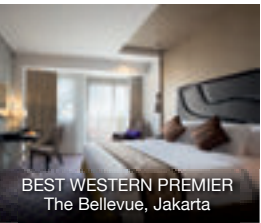


### DIAMOND PRINCESS BOASTS JAPANESE-THEMED MAKEOVER

Princess Cruises' *Diamond Princess* returned to the water last month after a US\$30 million facelift that saw the addition of new amenities ahead of its 2015 Japanese season. Designed to appeal to those keen on experiencing a Japanese-themed voyage, the ship features Japanese-inspired facilities including an 818m<sup>2</sup> Japanese bath as well as a new restaurant, Kai Sushi Bar. Guests can also take part in Japanese cultural programmes on board, including traditional storytelling, tea ceremonies and ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arrangement. It will homeport in Yokohama from April 29 to September 6 for a season of sailings to destinations in Russia, Taiwan, South Korea, in addition to 14 ports across Japan.



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# Report Airports



Crowne Plaza Changi Airport (below) features a striking three-dimensional lace screen facade. Clockwise from right: Regal Airport Hotel in Hong Kong; pod beds at nine hours Narita Airport; contemporary artwork on display at Langham Beijing Capital Ballroom.

## NOW ARRIVING: A NEW GENERATION

One are the days where airport hotels are viewed as staid, characterless properties that generate business from flight crew, early fliers or stranded passengers. In the past decade, airport hotels have undergone a dramatic transformation, carving out a new accommodation style that caters to the bleisure-seeking corporate warrior on the road as well as leisure travellers drawn to its life-style and tech-savvy amenities.

### A destination in its own right

With global business and leisure air travel set to soar, many airports are now spearheading redesign projects to expand their itinerant roles into the retail and lifestyle sectors, and this increasing focus on the destination experience has propelled a makeover of accommodation in the proximity of these transportation hubs too.

Best Western International (BWI), senior vice president of brand management & member services, Ron Pohl, noted: “This (airport hotel) trend matches the evolution of airports themselves. Many modern airports have turned into shopping and entertainment hubs, so travellers may prefer to stay at a nearby hotel to give themselves more time to sample these facilities.”

Ivan Tan, senior vice president, corporate & marketing communications, Changi Airport Group, said: “As the airport grows in capacity, the airport hotel is an essential offering that a discerning traveller would expect. This is especially so for a hub airport like Changi Airport. Not every passenger who arrives at Changi is visiting Singapore; about 30 per cent of Changi’s passengers are en route to another destination.

“Being directly connected and conveniently accessible, a passenger’s experience begins the moment they arrive. Being located in the vicinity of the airport means more time to rest and rejuvenate for passengers, making the overall airport experience even more enjoyable and memorable, easing the stress of travel.”

With Regal Airport Hotel, Hong Kong SkyCity Marriott Hotel and Novotel Citygate Hong Kong already in its vicinity, Airport Authority Hong Kong has planned more airline hotels in the pipeline “to capture the continuous growth of airport users as well as the commercial opportunities presented by the opening of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge”, a spokesperson revealed.

As well, Asia’s booming budget aviation scene has fuelled the entry of the no-frills airport lodging in Japan.

“The emergence of domestic LCCs (in

Japan) in 2012 has diversified the styles of travel,” Ayako Homma, a research analyst for Euromonitor, told *TTG Asia*. “To target such passengers, new concepts of hotels are entering the airport market, such as capsule hotels (see page 14).

“These capsule hotels are designed to provide hourly or overnight accommodations with basic amenities at more economical prices versus regular airport hotels,” said Homma. “Their concept attracts both leisure and business travellers, especially those who are waiting for connecting flights and/or early morning flights.”

### From pit stop to full stop

Amid intense competition in the hospitality sector, airport hotels have been reinventing the cheerless layover stay experience, rolling out a full suite of services and activities to drive more room nights and meetings business.

Sunshine Wong, general manager at Crowne Plaza Changi Airport, observed: “(Airport hotels) were previously conceptualised out of practicality and used to serve a strictly functional purpose: providing travellers with a place to rest in between longhaul flights. This has changed as more airlines, flights, apps and services make travel even more accessible and affordable.”

Patrick Basset, COO for Accor Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and the Philippines, said:

“Airports hotels have evolved beyond their functional role of convenience. Today, they offer many of the amenities and comforts traditionally limited to city hotels and resorts; these include dining, fitness, spas and swimming pools. Guests now want to find complete leisure and business facilities at an airport hotel, expecting their experiences to mirror those of a city hotel or resort.

“We’ve also gained increased revenue from businesses located near the airport. Guests are willing to spend a bit more for the convenience of an airport hotel as they offer less risk. Their proximity decreases the likelihood of missing a flight, yet they offer the same facilities and comforts as city hotels and resorts,” he added.

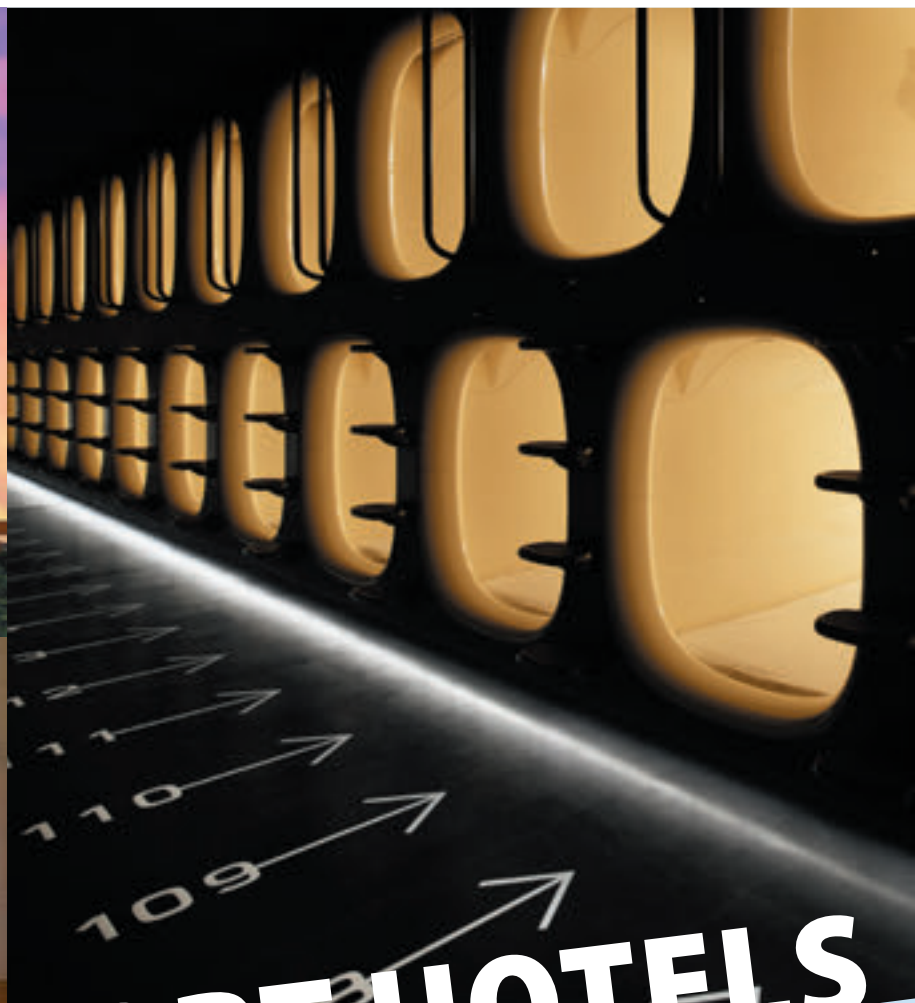
Michael Gnaegi, general manager, Langham Place, Beijing Capital Airport, agreed: “We also have regular family guests. As most Chinese families travel by agencies with limited flight choices, these families will stay at our hotel the night before and enjoy a relaxing dinner at our Ming Court Chinese restaurant with views of the runway and lake. They are able to have a good night’s rest, park their car at the hotel garage and leave at their leisure to catch their flight instead of camping at the terminal.”

More airport properties are also playing up the wellness card, mirroring the growing wave of health-consciousness among travellers.

Citing Best Western Premier Amaranth Hotel Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok



A new breed of airport hotels are evolving in parallel with the next-gen airports, shedding their utilitarian image in favour of sleek design, innovative services and lifestyle amenities. By Raini Hamdi, Xinyi Liang-Pholsena, Paige Lee Pei Qi and Julian Ryall



# RATION OF AIRPORT HOTELS

as an example, Pohl commented: “This luxury resort offers multiple options for leisure travellers, including a spa, sauna an outdoor pool, and is close to local golf courses. This (property) has turned into more than just a one-night stopover for travellers – it has become a destination in its own right.”

Similarly, the JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, which opened in April 1km from the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport, is the second property worldwide to feature the brand’s new Spa by JW concept with Ayurvedic, steam, make-up rooms and Jacuzzis.

John Alexander Girard, vice president development, area general manager, Regal Hotels International Hong Kong and general manager, Regal Airport Hotel Meeting & Conference Centre, highlighted the need for airport hotels to be “truly 24 hours in operation in all areas”, be it all-day dining or offering workout rental gear for guests to continue their healthy exercise practice any time during their stay.

According to Basset, The Novotel Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport has developed concepts such as the 24 Hour Flexi package, which allows guests to stay for a 24-hour duration irrespective of their check-in time, as well as the Flexi Meal programme that enables guests to choose the meal for which they wish to redeem their breakfast voucher.

## Connecting the business, MICE crowds

More airport hotels are training their sights on the business and meeting crowds, as a sizable number of corporate travellers are increasingly keen to fly in, meet and fly

home, instead of spending time to get to crowded downtown districts.

Langham Place, Beijing Capital Airport’s Gnaegi added: “We have regular business travellers flying from different cities in China to our hotel...(they) have business meetings such as signing of a contract within one hour, then take a return flight back to their own cities, saving time and cost.”

Sharing similar observations, Accor’s Basset added: “The rise and ease of regional air transport has led to more intra-regional meetings organised at airport hotels. People take an early morning flight, arrive for a full day of meetings and then fly out in the evening. Companies are able to bring together participants from the region for a one-day meeting, while saving on accommodation costs.”

Meeting facilities have become an important aspect of the business for Crowne Plaza Changi Airport, which often hosts trainings, seminars and events of companies located in its vicinity, shared Wong.

“Where we see great opportunity is in the niche market of meetings and events with attendees of up to about 100 to 120 people. We are looking at events held by Singapore-based MNCs here which require their delegates, representatives or clients to fly in,” he added.

“We do have corporate business and, contrary to popular belief that not many people would book or hold events at airport hotels unless they are on transit, we see more than 150 wedding events in our function spaces a year.”

Unlike downtown locations, which usually bustle with activity, airport hotels’ quieter atmosphere offers less distractions,

which could be a benefit for meeting planners, added Wong.

The advantages of being located near Hong Kong International Airport are likewise apparent to Regal Airport Hotel. Said Girard: “MICE contributed to our room revenue with robust growth (in 2014), and remains the key driving factor...In the past two months, we got a few major MICE conferences in-house and experienced high traffic of check-in due to exhibitions and trade shows at AsiaWorld-Expo convention centre nearby.”

## A transient or permanent trend?

While a new wave of airport hotels have brought out the design bells and gustatory whistles, some trade players point out that not all travellers are biting though, as a portion of their clientele seeks only a clean bed and easy access to their departure gates.

Acknowledging the more comprehensive service offered by a new crop of airport hotels, Destination Asia group business development director, Victoria Sertic, noted that airport accommodation is still perceived as a “functional choice” among her clients in the region.

“For early morning departures and sometimes arrivals, airport hotels are requested by our clients, but most clients would not choose to stay for long periods of time in an airport hotel,” she remarked. “Traffic and proximity to the airport in many countries is not an issue so both leisure and meetings clients and incentives opt for non-airport hotels.”

Jane Le Gall, product & marketing leader at FCm Travel Solutions Singapore, opined: “It really depends on the length of the layover, not many routes now have overnight layovers. The transit times have been drastically reduced by

airlines. The First, Business and airport lounges now offer full shower and changing facilities, so business travellers will utilise these services.

“A traveller who is meeting another party whilst in transit would make use of an airport hotel from a meetings perspective. Often a business traveller might take an air route that factors in a longer layover in order to maximise his business travelling time to meet with a customer or company counterpart en route to his main destination,” she added.

However, the value of airport hotels remain underappreciated, several industry members remarked.

Todd Arthur, managing director, Asia-Pacific at HRS - The Hotel Portal, said: “The real value of airport hotels has long been underestimated by (travel) agencies and MICE planners – it is no doubt that the biggest advantage of airport hotels is convenience. Travellers can simply relax more easily and travel with far less stress.”

He continued: “Besides, being connected to the terminals, these hotels provide direct access to public transport services, which save the travellers from long taxi queues should they wish to visit local office or sightseeing.”

Go Vacation Thailand director business development, Tobias Fischer, believes that hotels in the neighbourhood of international aviation hubs, such as the recently launched Le Méridien Suvarnabhumi, Bangkok Golf Resort & Spa, which offers a golf course and proximity to the Bangkok International Trade & Exhibition Centre, has potential to attract FITs and groups.

“When people hear ‘airport’ they generally think the location is far with limited facilities, which is not true,” remarked Gnaegi, who pointed out that the Langham Place Beijing Capital Airport has over 400 pieces of contemporary artwork within its premises.



# Report Airports

## New hotels on the radar

### Pullman Sydney Airport

To be developed in Mascot, near Sydney Airport, as part of a new mixed-use hotel, commercial and retail precinct, Pullman Sydney Airport will feature 229 rooms and suites, a restaurant and bar, conference facilities, gymnasium, and an executive

lounge. The expected opening date for Pullman Sydney Airport is May 2016.

Accor Pacific COO, Simon McGrath, trumpets the new A\$100 million (US\$77.6 million) project as “the first internationally branded five-star hotel serving the (Sydney Airport) precinct”.

### Crowne Plaza Singapore

Consistently racking up some of the industry's highest accolades, the 320-room Crowne Plaza Changi Airport will boast a new 10-storey, 243-room extension in 2016. Together with the new wing, the hotel – which opened in 2008 – will feature 563 rooms, conference facilities for meetings and events, a business centre and round-the-clock business services. F&B outlets in the hotel span Azur, the all-day dining restaurant; a specialty restaurant; a lobby lounge bar; and a warm and cool bar. Leisure facilities include a pool, health club and spa.

### Yotel Changi Airport Singapore

Known as an innovative hotel chain that operates largely in airports, including London's Gatwick and Heathrow, and Amsterdam Schiphol, Yotel has announced its inaugural airport hotel in Asia within the upcoming mixed-use Jewel.

The 130-key Yotel Changi Airport Singapore will feature Premium, Family and Shower cabins, all of which come with the brand's space-saving convertible bed, monsoon rain showers and techno wall with flat-screen TVs. Due to open in end-2018, the hotel will house a Club Lounge overlooking the Forest Valley that will come with a

co-working space and Internet stations, and will serve light food and drinks.

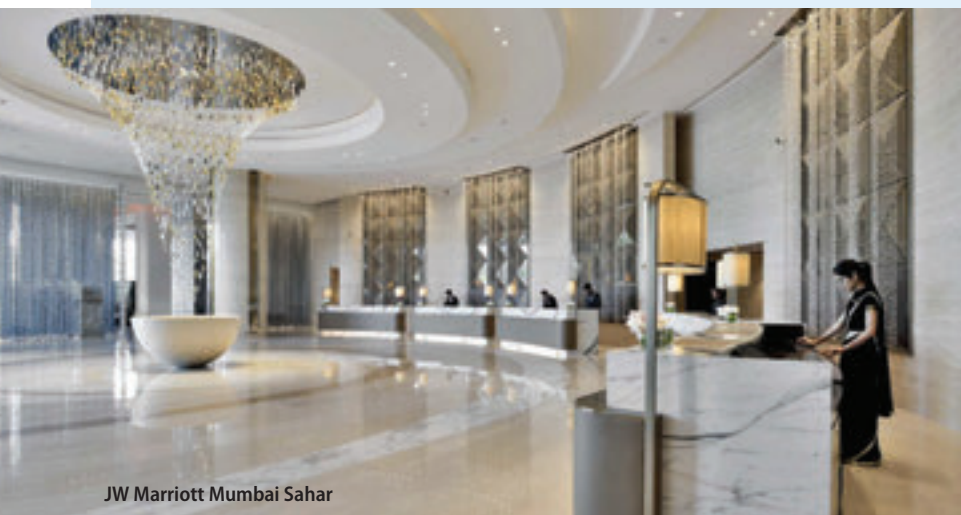
### JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar

Located just 1km from the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport Mumbai, the 585-room JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar offers a vast array of luxury amenities at its six-hectare expanse, from a 930m<sup>2</sup> pillar-less ballroom and 11 meeting rooms to the seven-room Spa by JW to a 24-hour fitness centre. Dining options consist of the all-day dining JW Café, the Italian Romano's, JW Lounge and JW Baking Company.

### new Narita Airport

In a significant deviation from airport hotels that are positioning themselves as a lavish one-stop sanctuary, this futuristic capsule hotel instead targets budget travellers and early fliers with its no-frills hospitality approach.

Launched last year and nestled within Narita Airport's Terminal 2, each sleeping pod is fitted with a comfortable mattress, and each guest will be given a bag of amenities and a key to lockers to store their belongings upon check in. Overnight stays are priced from a mere 3,900 yen (US\$32.50).



JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar



# BEAUTIFUL CHINA

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# Guide Ports of Call

New and bigger ports are in the works in East Asia, while the rising middle class in South-east Asia is driving the region's booming cruise market. By [Julian Ryall](#), [Prudence Lui](#), [Li Xu](#), [S Puvaneswary](#), [Paige Lee Pei Qi](#), [Mimi Hudoyo](#) and [Rosa Ocampo](#)



Hong Kong's Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (above); Osanbashi Yokohama International Passenger Terminal, Japan



## FULL STEAM AHEAD



**Hong Kong | Kai Tak Cruise Terminal**  
Jeff Bent, managing director, Worldwide Cruise Terminals

**What are the latest plans for expansion and development?** Our retail shops, main restaurants and banqueting facilities, which opened in September 2014, now host some 20 events per month and cater to 4,000 people per day.

Later this year, the government will auction a plot for a 500-room hotel adjacent to the cruise terminal. We expect work to begin on a new dual two-lane road.

**What's the passenger volume and growth in 2014, as well as expected figures in 2015?** The passenger throughput is expected to grow from 100,000 in 2014 to 220,000 in 2015. The figure may even grow to 310,000 in 2016.

**What's the number of ships calling**

**and homeporting in 2015 and 2014? Are there any new ships homeporting for 2015/2016?** We had a total of 28 ship calls (in 2014), of which 17 were homeporting or turnaround calls. In its second full year of operation in 2015, the number of ship calls will grow to 56, of which 44 will be homeporting or turnaround calls.

**What are the top challenges as a cruise terminal operator in the current climate?** The top challenge is still visa restriction, although this continues to improve incrementally as more countries grant Chinese travellers visa-free access.

While 170 countries and territories currently have visa-free access to Hong Kong, it is encouraging that now US and Canadian citizens can receive 10-year visas to visit China. To spur growth from overseas source markets, we hope that the Chinese ports can offer 72-hour visa-free access for (more) nationalities, similar to what is available at many Chinese airports.

**Any strategies to woo cruise ships?** Our current focus is to continue to edu-

cate cruise lines on the potential of nearby source markets.



**China | Shanghai Wusongkou International Cruise Terminal**  
Wang Younong, general director, Shanghai Wusongkou International Cruise Port Terminal Development

**What are the latest plans for expansion and development?** The second phase of Wusongkou Port expansion is underway: one 100,000- and one 160,000-tonnage berth will be added to the current two berths. When completed by end-2016, four cruise (ships) will be able to berth at the same time.

We are also developing a Smart Port mobile app to enhance cruise embarkation, disembarkation and pre-cruising experiences. Through the app, guests can read pre-trip instructions, check real-time port information including the surround-

ing traffic and parking situations, and take a virtual tour of the cruise ship before boarding.

**What's the passenger volume and growth in 2014, as well as expected figures in 2015?** 2014 was another record-breaking year – Wusongkou welcomed 1.1 million visitors on 216 docked cruise ships. In 2015, 288 cruise ships are scheduled to dock in Wusongkou and over 1.5 million visitors are expected.

**What's the number of ships calling and homeporting in 2015 and 2014? Are there any new ships homeporting for 2015/2016?** In 2014, five homeporting cruise ships made 205 departures, while 11 cruise ships called on Wusongkou. During the 2015 season, three more cruise ships, *Costa Serena*, *Skysea Golden Era* and *Quantum of the Seas* chose Wusongkou as their homeport; a total of 280 docks has been scheduled.

**What are the top challenges as a cruise terminal operator in the current climate?** The fast-surging cruise demand in Yangtze River Delta area excites and challenges us to improve our infrastructure, facilities and services to better serve cruise lines and passengers.

Our latest VIP express programme is designed to engage the surrounding Baoshan District community into the development: passengers staying in selected hotels in Baoshan District can check into cruises at their hotels.

**Any strategies to woo cruise ships?** We are offering soft incentives by providing quality services and leveraging the local development policies into our port development. For example, we are currently facilitating the collaboration between cruise companies and supply companies in Shanghai Pilot Free Trade Zone. Hopefully homeporting cruise ships can soon start fast, cost-effective provisioning operations at Wusongkou.

### Japan | Osanbashi Yokohama International Passenger Terminal

Masa Enari, manager for cruise promotion, Port and Harbour Bureau, City of Yokohama

**What are the latest plans for expansion and development?** We are planning to remodel both the Shinko Pier and the Daikoku Pier to attract more cruise ships to Yokohama Port. The new terminals are scheduled to open in 2018.

**What's the passenger volume and growth in 2014, as well as expected figures in 2015?** Our terminal handled about 172,000 passengers in 2013 and 226,000 passengers in 2014. We are expecting a similar number of passengers in 2015 (as 2014).

**What's the number of ships calling and homeporting in 2015 and 2014? Are there any new ships homeporting for 2015/2016?** The number of cruise ships that called at Yokohama was 152 in 2013 and 145 in 2014. We anticipate a similar number as 2014 for this year.

Yokohama has been the home port for the *Aska II* since 2006 and the *Diamond Princess* started her turnarounds at our port and arrived here more than 20 times



# Guide Ports of Call



Kaohsiung Port, Taiwan

in 2014. The *Diamond Princess* is expected to make turnarounds in Yokohama at least 10 times in 2015.

**What are the top challenges as a cruise terminal operator in the current climate?** The cruising market is booming in Asia, so the competition among domestic ports has become increasingly keen.

**Any strategies to woo cruise ships?** We offer discounts on port charges and subsidies – 500,000 yen (US\$4,172) each

time for foreign cruise ships of more than 50,000 tons docking at the port.



**South Korea | Busan International Cruise Terminal**  
Junwoo Choi, director of global marketing team, Busan Port Authority

**What are the latest plans for expansion and development?** The terminal will be

closed from 2016 to 2018 to carry out expansion work and permit vessels with a gross tonnage of 220,000 to dock.

**What's the passenger volume and growth in 2014, as well as expected figures in 2015?** Some 244,935 passengers transited through Busan port in 2014, a 21.9 per cent increase from 2013. We are expecting 280,000 passengers in 2015.

**What's the number of ships calling and homeporting in 2015 and 2014? Are there any new ships homeporting for 2015/2016?** There were 110 ships in 2014 and 109 in 2013, and we are expecting around 134 in 2015. Ten ships used Busan as their homeport (including partials) in 2014, but there were none in 2013. We are expecting four vessels to homeport in Busan in 2015, including partials – the *Costa Victoria* will be using the port for turnarounds and the *Diamond Princess* for partial turnarounds.

**What are the top challenges as a cruise terminal operator in the current climate?** High costs. As the size of vessels

get bigger – and which shows no signs of slowing – we need to continue to make huge investments in infrastructure.

**Any strategies to woo cruise ships?** Busan port offers 30 per cent discounts on port dues for cruise vessels and there are some incentives from the local government for travel agencies, but this varies according to different circumstances. There are also several services for passengers, such as shuttle buses from the terminal to the city centre, tour guides and so forth.



**Taiwan | Port of Kaohsiung**  
Huang Kuo-Ying, president, Port of Kaohsiung, Taiwan International Ports Corporation

**What are the latest plans for expansion and development?** A 15-storey passenger terminal building is being constructed at Kaohsiung Port Pier 19-20. This 80,000m<sup>2</sup> floor area also features two basement



## THE RISING T ASIAN CRUISE

South-east Asia's fast-rising middle class, which has fuelled a boom in budget air travel, is likely to lift the tide for the region's fledgling cruise industry too.

The most popular routes among South-east Asian cruise travellers, especially among first-time cruisers and travellers with small budgets or limited time, are regional routes plying around Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Tina Cortez, president, TravelPeople Philippines, said: "Asia is really the sweet spot now. A lot of tonnage has been diverted to Asia and most of the cruise brands are now here. There are also more choices of ships and programmes to choose from."

Wally Cervantes, vice president and general manager of Manila-based Arpan Air, attributes the "surge in demand for Asian cruises" to the affordability of travel driven in part by LCCs, which help to defray costs for cruising too.

Cooper Huang, CEO of Malaysia's Harmony Tours & Travel, said: "It is easier to sell Asian cruises to the masses because it is more affordable. Malaysians find the food on board Asian cruises more palatable compared to European food."

Singapore is a popular homeport for first-time cruise travellers from Malaysia, as the city-state's proximity makes travel affordable. Said Lim Chee Tong, managing director of Kuala Lumpur-based Jebesen Travel & Tours Services: "You can drive, take a bus or fly on a budget airline. It won't

cost as much as taking a flight to North Asia or to Europe to take a cruise."

Furthermore, the affordability of regional cruises have ensured its popularity among Asian families too.

Alicia Seah, director of marketing communications at Dynasty Travel Singapore, notes that the family market makes up the majority of the bookings, especially during the year-end holiday season. "Hence homeport sailings are more popular, and Royal Caribbean, Princess Cruises and Costa Cruises are own main cruisers for the year end," she added.

Cruising interest among the Indonesian outbound market has grown significantly in the last couple of years, thanks to the aggressive promotion of the cruise liners and the country's burgeoning middle class.

While classic shorthaul itineraries like Singapore-Port Klang-Phuket may not be new destinations, it's the experience on board cruise ships that is novel for Indonesians and attracts them, observed Dharmawan Rahardja, managing director of Genta Tours Jakarta.

### Japan, South Korea top for East Asia

Like its South-east Asian counterparts, intra-region cruises are favoured by cruise travellers in East Asia, with industry watchers keeping a close eye on the lucrative and thriving outbound market of China.

Along with Japan's recent lifting of visa regulations for Chinese tourists on board

selected cruise ships that homeport in China, short-term cruise products calling on both Japan and South Korea ports are the most popular in the China market.

"This year's keyword search volume for Japan/South Korea routes has increased 300 per cent compared to last year," said Jenna Qian, spokesperson of Qunar.com, which has nearly 1,000 agencies selling cruise products.

According to Qian, South Korea's Jeju, Seoul and Busan, as well as Japan's Fukuoka and Nagasaki, are the most preferred ports of call for the "mass" cruise itineraries in China, which typically last four or five nights to accommodate most customers' limited holiday entitlement.

"Four-night products count for 80 per cent of our sales for Shanghai as homeport," said Zhang Ji, cruise product director at Tuniu.com. "Shanghai-Jeju-Fukuoka-Shanghai is the best seller at the moment."

Many cruise lines have changed their South-Korea-only routes with Japanese ports to attract more guests, Zhang added.

Meanwhile, Taiwan, Okinawa and Kyushu are listed among Hong Kongers' favourite cruise destinations, shared Jeff Bent, managing director, Worldwide Cruise Terminals. "I believe the local source market is starting with shorter sailings close to home, and will soon venture into longer cruises in medium to longhaul destinations, after they have taken to cruising."

Japan, in particular, is tipped to be a

hot cruising destination this year given the depreciation of the yen.

Said Westminster Travel, cruise general manager, Edmond Tsu: "For the very first time, a liner (Royal Caribbean's *Voyager of the Seas*) offers a Japan/Jeju journey from Hong Kong, which will certainly draw some longhaul cruise passengers to give this route a try. It's also good news for elderly passengers, especially those on wheelchairs, who want to visit Japan without going through the hassles of air travel."

Wing On Travel CEO Lanny Leung notes that fly-cruise sailings are still not mainstream and that the mass market prefers journeys of under 10 days in South-east and North Asia.

Likewise, fly-cruise holidays have yet to pick up momentum in Japan. "The core of our customers are older people and they like to join a Japanese cruise ship where they can enjoy Japanese food, the same language and the *omotenashi* service we find in Japan," Minehiro Toyoyama, manager of public relations, sales planning division, NYK Cruises, told *TTG Asia*.

Mariako Kobayashi, manager of PR and marketing for Carnival Japan, added: "Cruise passengers are staying closer to home, with cruises around Japan and short trips the most popular."

### Longhaul cruising retains allure

As much as shorthaul sailing has been making inroads in Asia's cruise market, longhaul



floors for parking. The project plan started in 2000 and will be completed in 2017. The total cost is NT\$4.5 billion (US\$146 million).

Once completed, this will expand existing space by joining Pier 18 and Pier 21 to offer 575m in length and 10.5m in depth, making it suitable for mega vessels of 225,000 tons like *Oasis of The Seas*.

In return, this will elevate service quality with handling capacity per hour to reach 2,500 passengers and foster the city's goal to develop as a homeport for international cruises.

**What's the passenger volume and growth in 2014, as well as expected figures in 2015?** In 2014, Kaohsiung Port received 133,789 international passengers (in and out) and the figure is expected hit 150,000, demonstrating 15.2 per cent growth.

**What's the number of ships calling and homeporting in 2015 and 2014? Are there any new ships homeporting for 2015/2016?** In 2015, we expect to welcome 53 ship calls this year, up from 46 last year.

#### Any strategies to woo cruise ships?

We'll enhance our berthing and immigration facilities to improve the efficiency, so visitors may spend more time on sightseeing and travel. If (satisfied) visitors share positive feedback with others, more cruise companies will be attracted to Kaohsiung.

#### What are the top challenges as a cruise terminal operator in the current climate?

Constructing a cruise terminal and passenger immigration facilities is very costly, and operators need to figure out how to leverage the port image and the city's offers to generate more economic

returns – this is our current challenge.

As the cruise pier is right next to our general and bulk cargo dock area, this causes traffic issues when coach buses and lorries proceed in and out simultaneously and the traffic exerts pressure on cargo operations and passenger transportation.

# DE IN NG

destinations remain the most sought-after for experienced cruise travellers, with Alaska and the Mediterranean high on the cruise bucket list, observed outbound agencies across the region.

"We still have a big percentage of the market cruising longhaul," said Cervantes.

Seah said: "Alaska appeals to the affluent and well-heeled customers, comprising mainly elderly couples who have the money as well as time to travel out in sea."

Lim points out that longhaul cruises to European destinations are frequented by the Malaysian upper-middle segment who would usually extend their stay with a cruise. "Their primary reason for visiting Europe may be to visit their children who are studying there, or they have business or own properties in Europe," he said.

Interest for Greece's Santorini, Delos and Mykonos are on the rise for Indonesians this year, remarked Johnny Judianto, cruise consultant of Cruise Centre in Indonesia.

On the other hand, the Black Sea is seeing a dip in cruising demand as many cruise lines in Europe have stopped making Sochi and Ukraine – main highlights of this region – as ports of call due to the political unrest there, according to Lim.

Also selling less is the Caribbean, Florida, Bahamas and Mexico, as most travellers who have been to Philippine beaches think local beaches are more beautiful, said Noriel Veslino, sales and marketing representative at Cruise Professionals.

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# Destination Indonesia

## HARVESTING THE SEA'S BO

The Indonesian government under president Joko Widodo is focusing on maritime development, leveraging the archipelagic country's extensive 80,000km coastline and vast 3.1 million km<sup>2</sup> of sea.

Said Arief Yahya, Indonesian minister of tourism: "Marine tourism is one of the leading and priority programmes in developing national tourism, focusing on diving, surfing and cruising as well as supporting the campaigns of preserving the marine ecosystem and improving cultural marine tourism."

Marine tourism, he said, contributed one million arrivals in 2014.

To achieve its target of 20 million arrivals by 2019 and US\$4 billion in tourism receipts, the Ministry of Tourism has singled out marine tourism as an important sector and recently rolled out plans to develop the market.

It will set up 25 national marine tourism strategic areas including Raja Ampat, Togean and Sabang, and plans to build 100 marinas, 10 more cruise ports to receive 800 calls a year in total, and develop 45 diving destinations, all within the next five years.

"This means that not only the Ministry of Tourism but other related government agencies will also support these developments," Arief said.

The expanding cruise market is naturally getting more attention from market stakeholders and the number of international cruise liners to Indonesia has been growing significantly in the last few years.

Data from the Ministry of Tourism show 350 ships making 395 calls in Indonesian waters with 216,660 passengers in 2014, compared with 309 cruise calls with 159,579 passengers in 2013.

The number of ports of call also increased from 113 points in 2013 to 135 in 2014.

I Ketut Sedia Yasa, general manager for Indonesia, Destination Asia, shared: "(The cruises we handled) in 2014 called on 75 points, big growth compared with the previous years."

He added that apart from the rising number of big luxury ships, Destination Asia has also seen significant growth in expedition cruises frequenting off-the-beaten-track areas such as Maluku and West Papua.

"The fact that small ships (maximum 125 pax) do not need a (specific) port and visit areas that are difficult to reach (by other means) has aroused greater interest among cruise travellers."

Meanwhile, domestic travellers are showing stronger demand for cruises in Indonesia, according to local cruise companies.

In December last year, state-owned Pelni Shipping Agencies – a new entrant into the domestic cruise market following its diversification into the tourism business – launched tour packages to Raja Ampat and Wakatobi.

Pelni's senior manager Buddi Santoso was quoted by local media as saying that these tour packages were targeted at Indonesian travellers, and the company has

The pristine waters of Raja Ampat are a draw for marine tourists



unif/123RF.com

witnessed good demand from the domestic market. The company's Raja Ampat packages were sold out within two weeks of their launch. Pelni is also planning to promote cruises to other remote destinations.

Garuda Indonesia, which in the last couple of years has been expanding its network to eastern Indonesia, is meanwhile working on a deal with Pelni to support its cruise plans.

Handayani, Garuda's executive vice president marketing and sales, said: "The plan is for Garuda to bring passengers to a destination where they can then board the cruise ship."

"Pelni is keen on preparing the ship and services, such as developing an F&B menu to be on a par with Garuda services," he revealed.

Apart from developing the cruise market, the ministry is working on increasing yacht arrivals to Indonesia. Indroyono Susilo, coordinating minister of maritime affairs, said: "The plus point of developing yacht tourism is that yachts can visit the more remote destinations and offer marine activities such as sailing, diving and fishing, without having to depend on the availability of nearby airports or seaports."

Yachts need government-issued permits to enter Indonesian waters and the government's shortening of application-processing time to one week since December has been a boost to this segment. This took three months previously.

### How to sell

**DO** **Water rafting on Ayung River** in Bali makes a safe, fun and breathtaking experience for all visitors. Grab your oars and partake in an exhilarating rafting adventure as you navigate through 33 class II and III rapids along a 9.6km stretch of the Ayung River against a backdrop of wild, unspoiled rainforest, towering gorges and magnificent rice paddy terraces. The two-hour journey by Bali Adventure Tours is followed by a hot shower and buffet lunch at a private restaurant.

**SEE** **Taman Nusa** in Bali's Gianyar hills is a 15ha cultural park displaying various traditional houses from around Indonesia as well as museums, in a tropical setting. The park offers comprehensive information on the culture and customs of various ethnic groups in attractive and interactive ways. The cultural village displays more than 60 traditional houses, some of which are hundreds of years old, taking visitors on a historical journey from the prehistoric to early-Indonesia era.

**EAT** **Café Degan**, located on Bali's Jalan Petitenget, serves up popular Indonesian specialties and an assortment of Thai favourites in a traditional Javanese *joglo* house. Recommended items include *soto*

*ayam*, a popular Indonesian chicken soup, and *ikan panggang kemangi* (below), slow simmered fish with ginger, chilli, tamarind and lemongrass.



**STAY** Park Hotel Group's first resort in Indonesia, **Park Hotel Nusa Dua Bali**, is scheduled to open in 3Q2015. Nestled on 3.4ha of land, the resort has 152 guestrooms and suites with room sizes ranging from 25m<sup>2</sup> to 209m<sup>2</sup>. It also has 39 villas, comprising 35 one-bedroom and four two-bedroom units, each with a private swimming pool and a traditional Balinese pavilion set in a lush tropical garden.



# UNTY

## Destination in numbers

### 1.5 million

Arrivals to Indonesia from January-February 2015, up 3.7 per cent year-on-year

### 48%

Average occupancy rate across 27 Indonesian provinces for the January-February period

### 60%

Bali's average occupancy rate for January-February, highest among the 27 provinces. It is followed by Central Kalimantan at 56 per cent and Banten at 55 per cent

## Viewpoints

What needs to be done to boost the cruise business in Indonesia?



**I Ketut Sedia Yasa,**  
general manager for  
Indonesia,  
Destination Asia

Coordination among the authorities. For example, *Celebrity Millennium* had its call at Benoa cancelled due to a

clearance problem. When cruise companies have to cancel at the last minute, finding a new port of call is a problem and it tarnishes Indonesia's credibility as a port destination.

**Elly Malaihollo,** general manager and operation director, Panorama Prestige Indonesia Cruise Specialist

Start with optimising existing ports, be it the service or facilities. Secondly, set competitive prices for cruise ships wanting to enter the port; and thirdly, provide cruise lines with an up-to-date marine map.



## MY WAY

### What do you do during your free time?

I like shopping, especially for traditional cloths like batik. There are now many consumer arts and crafts exhibitions in Jakarta, usually on weekends. This is heaven for me. I enjoy picking my favourites out of the various batik motifs from around the country, and also learning about the craftsmanship, meanings and stories behind them. I also like the reflexology services at Kokuo (reflexology centre), which I get done in between meetings. Instead of meeting friends for lunch, I invite them to meet at Kokuo for a change.

### What is your favourite holiday destination?

Being an archipelago, Indonesia has many beach destinations to choose from and Lombok is my favourite. It has beautiful, uncrowded, white-sand beaches, where I can get some me-time.

### Where in Jakarta do you take your guests for local food?

Jakarta has a variety of Indonesian cuisines, so where I take my guests depends on their preferences.

For a high-end setting, I recommend the Ninty Nine Restaurant at Grand Indonesia shopping mall, while for a more local atmosphere, Sate House Senayan is my choice. It offers not only Jakarta food like *soto betawi* (beef soup), but also popular cuisines from other parts of Indonesia like satay and *nasi goreng* (fried rice), at a reasonable price.

Seafood lovers should go to Pondok Sedap Malam and Bali Jimbaran Jakarta Seafood Restaurant that offer fresh seafood, Indonesian style. More adventurous guests who want to sample local street food, Mangga Besar and Gang Kelingi in Passer Baroe are the places to be.

These are stalls selling Indonesian-Chinese Peranakan food like fried *kwetiau*, *bakmi goreng* (fried noodle) and *bakso* (meatball).

### What would you recommend to travellers who have 24 hours in Jakarta?

A city tour can be enjoyable in a group. Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Mini Indonesia) is the place to see Indonesia in a day for first-time visitors, and also worth a revisit for the new museums there.

Otherwise there is also shopping, spa treatments and massages, and reflexology services in the city's prominent shopping malls.

**Pauline Suharno**  
Managing director,  
Elok Tour



## TRIED & TESTED

# Turi Beach by Nongsa Resorts

Mimi Hudoyo unwinds at the Batam resort's newly refurbished Riani Wing

boarding, river cruises or fishing trips, and land activities like boardwalking and hiking. For the more adventurous, there is jungle-trekking, paintball and a climbing wall, just to name a few.

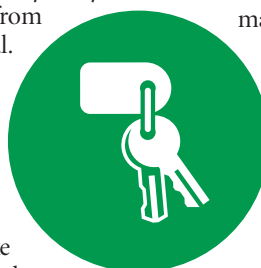
Meeting facilities total five meeting rooms catering for groups of 25-350 pax in theatre style. I had a massage at the Sea View Rumah Spa, where the skillful masseuse and beautiful environment were really relaxing.

**F&B** The 24-hour Taming Sari Cafe was buzzing with families and couples on the weekend. Cinta Manis Restaurant upstairs served Indonesian food, while Nogusaya Teppanyaki & Grill opens nightly except Mondays. One can choose from three bars to chill in, including The Island

Bar which offers 360° views of the sea and resort. Generally, there was a good variety of cuisines and food was acceptable.

**SERVICE** I arrived on the weekend, but my check-in and check-out were speedy. Staff are efficient and friendly; from the frontliners to the gardeners, they always greeted me with a smile.

**VERDICT** A nice getaway from the daily grind, for both the active and the lazy (me).



**LOCATION** The resort is located in one of the best locations on Batam, Nongsa. It is 35 minutes from Singapore by ferry and a few minutes' drive from Nongsapura Ferry Terminal. By car, the resort is 15 minutes away from Hang Nadim airport, 25 minutes from Batam Centre and 40 minutes from Nagoya Town.

**ROOMS** My 42m<sup>2</sup> Deluxe Beachfront bungalow, in the newly renovated Riani Wing, came with a spacious bedroom and dressing area, and a large bathroom with a shower.

The room looked fresh with its white-and-beige interior. I appreciated the bright lighting for reading at night, and the natural daylight coming through through the glass windows. The second door fitted with mosquito screens allowed the room cottage door to be left open on a cool, breezy day.

The cottage has a wide verandah with a daybed. I liked spending the late afternoon and early morning sitting here sipping my coffee and enjoying the stunning beach view, taking pictures and uploading them onto social media.

**FACILITIES** The resort boasts three golf courses nearby and has an array of water-related activities like jetskiing, wake-



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# Destination Indonesia

## NEWS IN A MINUTE

### 1 New railway and toll roads

Jakarta is developing more infrastructure to ease its notorious traffic situation. The Jakarta Mass Rapid

Transit project will stretch over 108km, including 21.7km for the North-South Line and 87km for the East-West Line. The first phase is

scheduled to be ready by early-2018.

The city is also planning to build six toll roads totalling 69,770km in three phases, with the first one

starting in early-2015 and ending in 2018. Work on the second and third phases will begin in 2018 and 2020 respectively.

### 2 Hello Kitty adventure

Indonesia's first Hello Kitty attraction has debuted at Ancol Dreamland, Jakarta. Called Hello Kitty Time Travel, the 1,150m<sup>2</sup> attraction brings travellers through 14 interactive games. Take the Magic Apple time capsule and travel around the world to places including Jakarta and Bali in Indonesia, Japan, the US, UK, Egypt, the North Pole and Greece.

Earlier last year, the Jakarta theme park added Ice Age Arctic Adventure in cooperation with the *Ice Age* filmmaker, 20th Century Fox. Sid's Arctic Tour, an eight-minute dark ride, takes visitors through the jungle, mountain and the melting iceberg depicted in the *Ice Age* films.

### 3 Raffles Jakarta

The luxury hotel opened on March 16, the first Raffles Hotels & Resorts property in Indonesia. The 173-key property pays homage to the iconic Indonesian artist Hendra Gunawan, and guests will find his works incorporated into hotel décor in both guestrooms and public areas.

Raffles Jakarta features three restaurants and three bars, banquet and meeting facilities, including a ballroom with capacity for 3,500 guests, three breakout rooms, a boardroom and a library.

### 4 The Ritz-Carlton, Bali

The Ritz-Carlton, Bali opened on February 2, marking the brand's return to the island. Located in Sawangan, Nusa Dua, the resort is set on 12.7ha of beachfront and cliff-top land. With 313 hotel rooms, including 34 cliff top and ocean view villas, the luxury resort offers 180° unobstructed views of the Indian Ocean and a 70m high glass elevator providing guests with access to the beach.

The Ritz-Carlton, Bali has six restaurants and lounges, a kids' club, a wedding chapel and a soon-to-open spa.




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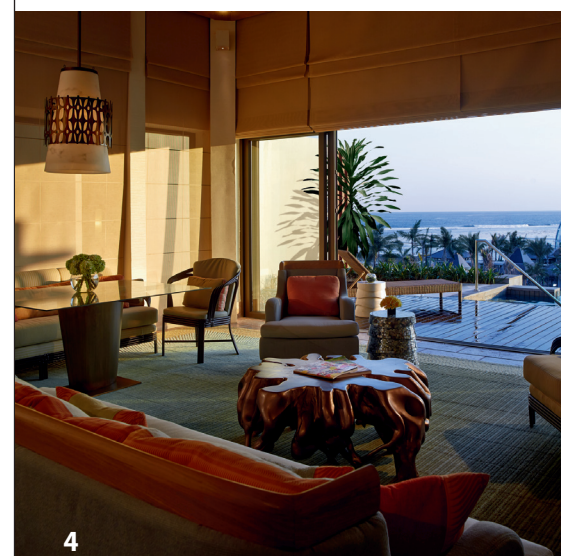
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# Destination Vietnam

Niche areas like food and adventure could strengthen Vietnam's appeal to visitors and shake off its image as a one-time destination, writes Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

Travel operators see great potential in attracting visitors to Vietnam through the country's lively street dining scene

## Destination in numbers

### 2 million

The number of international visitors recorded in 1Q2015, down 13.7 per cent year-on-year

### 40.4%

The year-on-year decline in the number of Chinese visitors in 1Q2015, a staggering drop for Vietnam's top source market

### 2.7 million

The average daily rate in Vietnamese dong (equivalent to US\$125) of Vietnam hotels in 2014, a year-on-year rise of 1.8%, according to STR Global

# A GROWING TASTE FOR CULINARY TRAVEL

Despite being blessed with over 3,000km of coastline, a bounty of breathtaking natural attractions and an impressive cultural heritage, Vietnam has not been able to attract hordes of repeat visitors each year the way its regional rivals have.

Jack Bartholomew, regional director Indochina, Khiri Travel, said: "Vietnam has an issue as a destination in that it's not a big draw for returning customers. Our travellers tend to visit Vietnam only once, whereas we see in our other destinations more repeat clients; they visit and then come back to see the country and their local friends, guides, etc, again."

Anton Jurgens, general manager, Exo Travel Vietnam, agreed: "Until recently most visitors have seen Vietnam as a one-time destination, which is evident in the number of itineraries that encompass the entire country. Most inbound DMCs offer the standard Hanoi/Halong/Hue/Hoi An/Ho Chi Minh City package with small variations on theme."

However, he was positive that the situ-

ation would change, especially as airport and road infrastructure development, as well as growing accommodation choices, improve accessibility throughout the country and give Vietnam more prominence among travellers.

Jurgens added: "There are now more choices, and travellers realise they cannot do it all in one trip. Furthermore, we are seeing an increase in feedback indicating that people would prefer to stay longer and explore the culture deeper. Multi-country itineraries are growing in popularity, which often only give a glimpse and encourage repeat visits. Investment into beach holidays and adventure will be sure to attract more repeat business."

While adventure remains a strong segment for Exo Travel, Jurgens has also noticed growth in culinary-focused requests.

Carving out niche segments like food and adventure tourism could therefore help strengthen Vietnam's destination branding amid stiff regional competition, said local travel operators.

"Culinary tourism is obviously a niche

market Vietnam should promote due to the rich culture of its 54 minorities," commented Thang Luong, CEO & co-founder, Handspan Travel Indochina.

"We have not yet promoted Vietnam's culinary attractions. However, we have listed a few short tours including street food tours on our website, and more FITs interested in such tours are sending us requests."

Pham Ha, CEO of Luxury Travel, whose company has also observed an uptick in demand for food tours, concurred: "Vietnam should highlight culinary tourism as its marketing niche, as Vietnamese food – with influences from India, China, France and the US – is different from (the food of) Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore and the rest of Asia."

"With four million Vietnamese abroad and (many) running successful restaurants, they are great ambassadors for Vietnam tourism, introducing travellers to Vietnamese food and making them consider cuisine as one of the main reasons to visit the country."

On the other hand, HG Travel product manager Alexander Leven opined that Vietnam need not position itself in a niche. "While more refined strategies and diverse products might work on a B2B level or with clients familiar with the destination, in order to attract consumers from new markets we should use our biggest USP – people," he added, suggesting that meet-the-local encounters be promoted.

The identification of niche areas aside, the greatest bugbear for industry stakeholders still lies in the lack of international promotion for Vietnam.

Lac Hong Voyages' business development director, Tan Robert, said: "Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) should do more global publicity and participate in more global trade shows, just like (the NTOs of Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand), unlike now where each tour operator is left to promote Vietnam alone. Uniform materials on all places of attraction should also be given to all tour operators to enable them to promote better."

## How to sell

**DO** **Hanoi Cooking Centre**, located on 44 Chau Long Street at the edge of the city's famous Old Quarter, offers hands-on cooking classes and market tours designed by chef Tracey Lister, co-author of *KOTO – A Culinary Journey Through Vietnam*. Courses are available for corporates as well as for kids.

**SEE** Hanoi's **Old Quarter**, which dates back some 2,000 years, is a warren of 36 streets organised according to produce, where shops of the same kind can be found on the same lane. Notable streets include Hang Bac, which specialises in gold and silver jewellery; Hang Ma, famed for its paper products; and Luong Ngoc Quyen, an avenue lined with food stalls.

**EAT** A Vietnamese institution popular among locals and tourists alike, **Nha Hang Ngon** draws crowds with its meld of street food-meets-colonial chic ambience, serving up a diverse array of Vietnamese specialties from around the country. Diners can opt to sit indoors in the beautifully restored French villa or outdoors in the frangipani-lined courtyard.

**STAY** Opened in September 2014, the 318-room **Lotte Hotel Hanoi** is home to F&B options such as Top of Hanoi, an open-air rooftop brasserie; Tim Ho Wan, Vietnam's first Michelin-starred dim sum house; and Pharaoh's Bar & Upper, which offers cocktails and views of the city on floors 63 and 64.

## Viewpoints

What is most needed for Vietnam's tourism development now?



**Pham Ha, CEO, Luxury Travel**

Gourmet cuisine can be leveraged as strong national tourism branding for Vietnam, whereas the country should adopt freer visa (rules) like Thailand or at least (provide) easier visa on arrival or e-visa. Another top priority is for human resources development to conform with the mutual recognition arrangement on tourism at the end of this year. The central government must create the most favourable conditions for tourism investments.

**Alexander Leven, product manager, HG Travel**

I hope for an improved budget in our international branding. Currently Vietnam Airlines is doing most of the promotion for the country and VNAT is trying its best. In Vietnam we don't have the 'amazing' visitor numbers of Thailand, the 'incredible' economic development of India or 'truly' high income from oil like Malaysia, so we have to work on a smaller scale in comparison with our competitors.





# Destination Vietnam

## MY WAY

### What do you like to do in your free time?

I like running in the park in the early morning to get ready for the new day and do a bit of dumbbell exercises to clear up my mind after work. I exercise around four times per week.

### What are your recommended spots for authentic Vietnamese food in Hanoi?

The *pho cuon* (fresh spring rolls wrapped in uncut pho sheets) shops on Truc Bach Island. It is a great place to see the real city and enjoy what Hanoi does best – simple, tasty and fresh spring rolls! We love the place so much that we included it in our new Hidden Hanoi Local Life Tour. It is great to share the amazing food culture of the city with friends from around the world.

### What can repeat visitors do to experience the lesser-known sides of Hanoi?

Hanoi is one of Asia's last 'old' cit-

ies so there is a lot to discover for second-time visitors. I always recommend people explore the boulevards of the French Quarter, south of Hoan Kiem lake. The architecture and atmosphere make you feel like you have stepped back in time. Most people come back to Hanoi for our amazing food so I would recommend spending an evening eating your way around the Old Quarter on a street food tour – there are enough choices to last a lifetime!

### What's your favourite destination in Vietnam and why is that so?

I love the Mekong Delta – the people, scenery and way of life are very special. When you travel out to Chau Doc you are well and truly off the beaten track and can discover villages, monasteries and landscapes that haven't changed much over the years. I also love cycling and there is no better place to get away from things than in the paddy fields surrounding Nui Sam Lodge. This is a big reason we have set up an opera-



tions base here – it is everything we love about Vietnam!

### What's the best souvenir to bring back from Vietnam?

Vietnam has so many interesting souvenirs it is hard to pick just one, but I always think the best souvenir should have some meaning. The fabrics of the Black H'mong peoples of Sapa are colourful, beautiful and unique, and as part of our new trips in the region we support a local initiative that

**Tran Gia Bach**  
Regional general manager, Vietnam,  
Cambodia & Laos, Buffalo Tours

empowers local women through traditional handicrafts. Our guests have the chance to try their hand at batik painting and keep their creations. It isn't always beautiful but it reminds you of a unique experience and has a great story attached to it!

## NEWS IN A MINUTE

### 1 Hotel Royal Hoi An

The fourth and latest addition to Accor's MGallery Collection in Vietnam, the 119-room Hotel Royal Hoi An, draws its architectural and design influences from Vietnamese, Japanese and European cultures.

Located by the banks of the Thu Bon River, the hotel features F&B venues such as the all-day Faifo Café, Japanese-food outlet Wa Ka Ku and the poolside River Bar. Other facilities include the Thu Bon Ballroom, which can accommodate up to 250 guests, a spa and a fitness centre.

Until September 2015, Hotel Royal Hoi An is offering a special launch promotion with rates starting from 2,600,000++ Vietnamese dong (US\$121) per room per night, including daily breakfast for two and free Wi-Fi Internet access.

### 2 Grain by Luke Nguyen

Renowned Vietnamese-Australian chef Luke Nguyen has opened a

cooking school in Ho Chi Minh City to offer participants a hands-on Vietnamese culinary experience.

Located on the third floor in the same building as Xu Restaurant Lounge, facilities include a fully stocked Market Place Pantry that allows participants to learn how to select ingredients, while the studio is home to two fully equipped cooking rooms with 18 and 40 cooking stations respectively. In addition, the Grain Store features Nguyen's selection of cooking tools, dinnerware, personally signed cookbooks and recipe cards.

Grain by Luke Nguyen is open from Monday to Saturday with two cooking classes daily. Each class is three hours long and led by a professional instructor, with group classes priced from US\$65 per pax. Also available are private classes as well as customised sessions conducted by Nguyen himself, which make ideal teambuilding and corporate events.

### 3 Eastin Grand Hotel Saigon

Absolute Hotel Services Group (AHS) has expanded its flagship Eastin Grand Hotels brand into Vietnam with the rebranding of an existing property in Ho Chi Minh City since April 1.

Located on 253 Nguyen Van Troi Street, Eastin Grand Hotel Saigon offers 268 deluxe rooms, local and international dining options, large conference and meeting facilities, an executive lounge, pool and gym.

Eastin Grand Hotel Saigon is AHS' third Vietnamese property, with another eight properties in the pipeline for the country.

### 4 VietJet adds frequency to Bangkok, Singapore

VietJet will increase its Bangkok-Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) service to thrice daily from May 18, raising the capacity on the route to 7,560 seats weekly. The new schedule will see flights depart from HC-

MC's Tan Son Nhat International Airport at 08.30, 11.15 and 14.15, while return flights will depart from Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport at 11.30, 13.50 and 19.55 respectively.

From May 30, VietJet will offer 5,040 seats weekly on the Singapore-HCMC route, with daily flights departing Singapore Changi Airport at 13.50 and 18.00 and HCMC at 08.55 and 14.00 respectively.

### 5 Alba Spa Hotel

Launched in Hue since March this year, the 58-room boutique resort is home to the 270m<sup>2</sup> Alba Spa, which is outfitted with five treatment rooms and offers a range of therapies; an outdoor pool; a Jacuzzi filled with natural mineral water sourced from nearby hot springs; a meeting venue that can accommodate up to 160 guests; plus Madame Chau, a 100-seat restaurant serving Western and Vietnamese cuisine.





TTG TRAVEL AWARDS 2015



Cast Your Vote Now!

# You Decide Who Receives The Industry's Highest Honour!

TTG Travel Awards, Asia-Pacific travel trade's most anticipated and pinnacle awards, is back for its 26th installment to celebrate and honor the industry's best and brightest for their achievements, dedication and contributions that propelled the industry to greater heights.

Vote now and help your favorite travel suppliers and agencies bring home the title of being the best in the travel industry.

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

**Closing Date: 3 July 2015**

An event by:



Organised by:



Supported by:



TTGmice



TTGassociations





Award Categories

1. Travel Agency Awards  
Winners in this category are decided by votes from industry suppliers.

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

2. Travel Supplier Awards  
Winners in this category are decided by votes from travel consultants and experts.

Airline Awards

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

Hotels, Resorts, Serviced Residences & Spa Awards  
HOTEL Chains

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

HOTELS – Individual Property

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

RESORTS – Individual Property

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

SERVICED RESIDENCES

- Best Serviced Residence Operator

SPAS

- Best Spa Operator

BT-MICE Awards

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

Travel Services Awards

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

3. Outstanding Achievement Awards  
The winners in this category are decided by the TTG Asia team.

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

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

Inducted Travel Hall of Fame honoraries are:

- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Singapore Airlines (2002)
- Hertz Asia-Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Abacus International (2009)
- Silkair (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)
- Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts (2015)
- Regal Airport Hotel (2015)

VOTING INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES

For Travel Agency and Travel Supplier Awards

1. Please use the correct voting form.

Voting Form A: Travel Agency Awards

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

Voting Form B: Travel Supplier Awards

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

Online Voting Forms

You can also opt to vote using our online form [www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards](http://www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards).

2. Voting Criteria

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

3. Voting Rules

- i. Only one voting entry per person is allowed – using the voting form or online voting.
- ii. All votes are confidential.
- iii. Voting forms are published in selected TTG Travel Trade Publishing print titles and issues and are also available online at [www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards](http://www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards)

- iv. No responsibility will be accepted by the organisers for voting forms lost, delayed or damaged in the post.
- v. There are no pre-nominated contenders for any voting awards.
- vi. The results for TTG Travel Awards 2015 are final and no correspondence will be entertained.
- vii. Voting forms will be tabulated and evaluated by an independent auditor in Singapore.
- viii. The closing date is 3 July 2015.

4. Voting Form Submission

Completed voting forms are to be returned to:

SINGAPORE

**Ms Lina Tan** (TTG Travel Awards 2015)  
TTG Asia Media  
1 Science Park Road #04-07 The Capricorn  
Singapore Science Park II  
Singapore 117528  
Tel: (65) 6395-7575 Fax: (65) 6536-0896

HONG KONG

**Ms Carol Cheng** (TTG Travel Awards 2015)  
TTG Asia Media  
Unit 3003, Office Tower, Convention Plaza  
1 Harbour Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong  
Tel: (852) 2237-7272 Fax: (852) 2237 7227

VOTING FORM A: TRAVEL AGENCY AWARDS

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

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

Criteria

Best Travel Agency in its respective category in terms of:

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

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

- 16. Best Online Travel Agency  
Best online-based travel agency offering the most user-friendly and effective interface to meet client needs. This online travel agency must also boast the best sales and marketing network in terms of service innovation.

VOTER INFORMATION

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

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

VOTING CLOSES  
3 JULY 2015



# VOTING FORM B: TRAVEL SUPPLIER AWARDS

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

## Airline Awards

- Criteria**  
Best airline in its respective category in terms of:
- Providing the best service, network and schedules.
  - Most agent-friendly in terms of reservations, confirmations and commission payments.
  - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas, incentive programmes and servicing.
17. Best **North American** Airline  
Best airline based in North America operating Asia-Pacific routes.
18. Best **European** Airline  
Best airline based in Europe operating Asia-Pacific routes.
19. Best **Middle Eastern** Airline  
Best airline based in Middle East operating Asia-Pacific routes.
20. Best **South-east Asian** Airline  
Best airline based in Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand or Vietnam operating Asia-Pacific routes.
21. Best **North Asian** Airline  
Best airline based in South Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei, Macau or Hong Kong operating Asia-Pacific routes.
22. Best **China** Airline  
Best airline based in China operating Asia-Pacific routes.
23. Best **Pacific** Airline  
Best airline based in the Pacific operating Asia-Pacific routes.
24. Best **Regional** Airline  
Best airline based regionally operating Asia-Pacific routes.
25. Best **Asian Low-cost Carrier**  
Best airline based in Asia-Pacific that operates on a low-cost strategy.

## Hotels, Resorts, Serviced Residences & Spa Awards

- Criteria**  
Best Hotel Chain in its respective category in terms of:
- Most consistent in products and services.
  - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas, incentive programmes and servicing.
- Best Hotel/Resort/Serviced Residence/Spa in its respective category in terms of:
- Best services and facilities.
  - Best range of value-added benefits.
  - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.
- HOTEL CHAINS**
26. Best **Global** Hotel Chain  
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties globally.
27. Best **Regional** Hotel Chain  
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties in the region.
28. Best **Local** Hotel Chain  
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
29. Best Hotel **Representation Company**  
Best company providing the most agent-friendly products and services and showing the best marketing effort in generating sales for member hotels via agents.
30. Best **Luxury** Hotel Brand  
Best hotel chain operating a network of luxurious properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
31. Best **Mid-range** Hotel Brand  
Best hotel chain operating a network of mid-range properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
32. Best **Budget** Hotel Brand  
Best hotel chain operating a network of economical properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.

- HOTELS – Individual Property**
33. Best **Luxury** Hotel  
Best hotel catering to the upmarket traveller. This hotel must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting upmarket status.
34. Best **Mid-range** Hotel  
Best mid-range hotel catering to the traveller who seeks three- to four-star quality and comfort.
35. Best **Budget** Hotel  
Best hotel catering to the budget traveller.
36. Best **Independent** Hotel  
Best non-chain (ie not part of a network of properties) hotel.
37. Best **Boutique** Hotel  
Best small, fashionable and unique hotel.
38. Best **City** Hotel – **Bangkok**
39. Best **City** Hotel – **Delhi**
40. Best **City** Hotel – **Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City**
41. Best **City** Hotel – **Jakarta**
42. Best **City** Hotel – **Hong Kong**
43. Best **City** Hotel – **Kuala Lumpur**
44. Best **City** Hotel – **Macau**
45. Best **City** Hotel – **Manila**
46. Best **City** Hotel – **Seoul**
47. Best **City** Hotel – **Singapore**
48. Best **City** Hotel – **Taipei**
49. Best **City** Hotel – **Tokyo**
50. Best **New City** Hotel  
Best city hotel that opened in 2014/2015
51. Best **Airport** Hotel  
Best hotel – located within the vicinity of an airport – that caters to travellers in transit.

- RESORTS – Individual Property**
52. Best **Beach** Resort  
Best resort located by a beach. This resort must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting local flavour.
53. Best **Resort** Hotel (Non-Beach)  
Best resort not located by a beach. This resort must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting local flavour.
54. Best **New Beach** Resort  
Best beach resort that opened in 2014/2015
55. Best **Integrated** Resort  
Best hotel offering comprehensive accommodation, shopping, dining, entertainment and sports.

- SERVICED RESIDENCES**
56. Best **Serviced Residence** Operator  
Best serviced property catering to mid- and long-term staying guests.

- SPAS**
57. Best **Spa** Operator  
Best managed and operated spa or network of spas in the region.

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

## BT-MICE Awards

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

## Travel Services Awards

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

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

VOTING CLOSES  
3 JULY 2015



# Social

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

## GALLERY

### WTTC GLOBAL SUMMIT 2015

Into its 15<sup>th</sup> year, the annual WTTC Global Summit once again united travel and tourism leaders from all over the world, bringing them together to Madrid, Spain from April 15 to 16. Top representatives from the public and private sectors, including travel associations and the media, congregated in a two-day networking and discussion forum.



Clockwise from above: (from left) WTTC's David Scowsill, UNWTO's Taleb Rifai and IATA's Tony Tyler speaking in 'one voice' for the betterment of the travel & tourism industry; Ibex Expeditions' Mandip Singh Soin (left) catches up with an old friend, AJ Singh of Michigan State University's School of Hospitality Business; PATA's Mario Hardy (centre) and wife Rouma (left) with Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group's Inge Huijbrechts; Kuoni Group's Peter Meier being interviewed by TTG Asia Media's Raini Hamdi



## APPOINTMENTS



Paul Cunningham



Nongluck Narkman

**TUNCAY BOCKIN**  
**NOW** General manager, Holiday Inn Singapore Atrium  
**THEN** Area general manager for North Vietnam and general manager for Crowne Plaza West Hanoi

**PAUL CUNNINGHAM**  
**NOW** General manager, St Regis Macao, Cotai Central  
**THEN** General manager, St Regis Tianjin

**BRYAN CHIU**  
**NOW** Director of events, InterContinental Hong Kong  
**THEN** Executive assistant manager, InterContinental Hong Kong

**NONGLUCK NARKMAN**  
**NOW** Director of sales & marketing, The Westin Grande Sukhumvit, Bangkok  
**THEN** Director of sales & marketing, Sheraton Hua Hin Resort & Spa

**BRETT MODEL**  
**NOW** Resort manager, Six Senses Qing Cheng Mountain  
**THEN** Led the rooms division at The Grand Ho Tram Strip (formerly MGM Grand Ho Tram Beach Resort) as part of the pre-opening team

**CARLA PETZOLD-BECK**  
**NOW** General manager, Resort Nihiwatu  
**THEN** General manager, Belmond La Residence d'Angkor

**SARAID CAREY**  
**NOW** Executive assistant manager – sales & marketing, Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok  
**THEN** Executive assistant manager – sales & marketing, Grand Hyatt Melbourne

**MORTON JOHNSTON**  
**NOW** General manager, The Chedi Muscat  
**THEN** General manager, The Regent Taipei

**TONY CHISHOLM**  
**NOW** General manager, Pullman Bangkok Hotel G  
**THEN** Led the pre-opening team at Sofitel So Singapore



Brett Model



Carla Petzold-Beck

## TRADE CALENDAR *SEE YOU AT...*



### ILTM Asia

June 1-4, Shanghai

Now entering its ninth year, ILM Asia is the leading luxury travel event for Asia-Pacific and will take place at the Shanghai Exhibition Centre, featuring educational sessions and three days of pre-scheduled appointments and networking events.



### Seatrade Cruise Asia

June 11-12, Busan

Combining Cruise Shipping Asia-Pacific and the Seatrade All Asia Cruise Convention, this annual cruise industry event will be held at Busan Exhibition and Convention Centre, where speakers will discuss Asia's growing cruise industry and its potential.



### ITE & MICE Hong Kong

June 11-14, Hong Kong

Held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, the 29<sup>th</sup> annual travel fair is expected to attract 650 exhibitors and draw 12,000 visitors this year. It will highlight travel themes including overseas weddings and honeymoons.



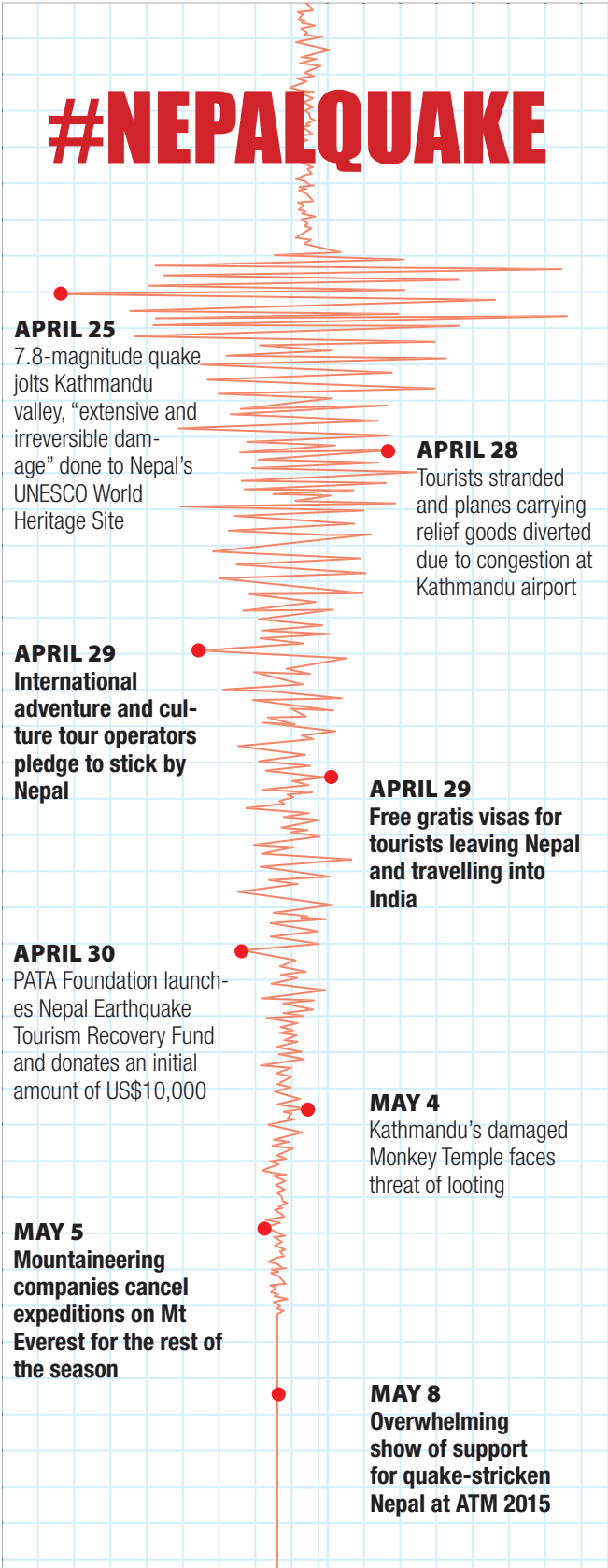
### Australia Tourism Exchange

June 21-25, Melbourne

Australia's biggest annual travel event has this year attracted 100 new local tourism products participating in the event for the first time – more than twice the previous two editions.



TIMELINE



Sources: *TTG Asia e-Daily*, AFP, BBC, The Hindustan Times  
\*Image is not based on actual April 25 richter scale reading

WHO'S SAYING WHAT

Instagram



Love those hand-painted murals that line the walls of Penang's George Town? Catch the genius behind them in action, here at the Ritz-Carlton Millenia Singapore. Ernest Zacharevic will be working his magic live in the hotel lobby from now till April 20, 2.30pm to 5.30pm. He is one of five artists involved in the hotel's ongoing art project.



After a US\$30 million refurbishment, Princess Cruises' Diamond Princess is the only cruise ship outfitted with Japanese baths. We could totally get on board with that.



A chocolate spread worthy of Willy Wonka at the IT&CM China opening press conference at the Shanghai Marriott Hotel Parkview. Pass the spoon, please!

Most commented

SAME-DAY BOOKING GAINING POPULARITY AMONG TRAVELLERS

"Doesn't come as a surprise. Many of my friends switched from Agoda to HotelQuickly, simply because the product is so much better suited to their needs." – Ying Tan



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[TWITTER.COM/TTG\\_ASIA](https://twitter.com/ttg_asia)

[INSTAGRAM.COM/TTGASIA](https://www.instagram.com/ttgasia)

TRAVEL PURSUITS

QUIZ

- Genting Hong Kong is buying another cruise company. What is its name?
- True or false: AirAsia is planning or has started AirAsia China, AirAsia India, AirAsia Japan.
- Which is the odd one out – Mumbai, Saigon, Yangon?
- History: When did Hong Kong count its first 5 million visitors in one year – 1985, 1987 or 1988?
- Outside Asia: Which well-known tour wholesaler in Europe has put that business up for sale?

HUMOUR

...If a MUC (Munich) promotional programme in the US gets blocked, we could call it a MUC-US?

...If Le Méridien chooses Italy for an incentive trip, would that be a Mer-IT award?

...If a Myanmar company agrees to a joint venture with Le Méridien to develop hotels in the country, would it be named MyanMer?

...If Diethelm Travel Group arranges a culinary programme in Thailand, would that be a Thai Diet?

...If the Peninsula Beach Resort Bali introduced a guest-writing tablet in its rooms, would it be a BalPen?

**Answer: (1)** Crystal Cruises, in a US\$550 million deal, Genting already owns Star Cruises and part of Norwegian Cruises (which, despite that name, operates mainly in the Caribbean). **(2)** False. AVL has started. AAL, the second attempt, is due to start this summer. There is no AAL. **(3)** Saigon, whose new name is Ho Chi Minh City. Mumbai used to be Bombay, and Yangon was formerly Rangoon. **(4)** 1988 – 5.6 million. **(5)** Kuonit. It plans to keep its groundhandling and inbound services.



TTG Travel Trade Publishing is a business group of TTG Asia Media

EDITORIAL

- Karen Yue** Group Editor  
[karen.yue@ttgasia.com](mailto:karen.yue@ttgasia.com)
- Xinyi Liang-Pholsena** Assistant Editor, TTG Asia  
[liang.xinyi@ttgasia.com](mailto:liang.xinyi@ttgasia.com)
- Hannah Koh** Online Editor  
[hannah.koh@ttgasia.com](mailto:hannah.koh@ttgasia.com)
- Paige Lee Pei Qi** Assistant Editor, Singapore  
[lee.peiqi@ttgasia.com](mailto:lee.peiqi@ttgasia.com)
- S Puvaneswary** Editor, Malaysia/Brunei  
[puvanes@ttgasia.com](mailto:puvanes@ttgasia.com)
- Mimi Hudoyo** Editor, Indonesia  
[imfasia@cbn.net.id](mailto:imfasia@cbn.net.id)
- Kathy Neo** Copy Editor  
[kathy.neo@ttgasia.com](mailto:kathy.neo@ttgasia.com)
- Sim Kok Chwee** Correspondent-at-large  
[aviasian.images@gmail.com](mailto:aviasian.images@gmail.com)
- Greg Lowe** Correspondent, Thailand  
[ttg@thegreglowe.com](mailto:ttg@thegreglowe.com)
- Oliver Slow, Sid Dhartha** Correspondents, Myanmar  
[oslow99@gmail.com](mailto:oslow99@gmail.com), [siddhartha.ttgasia@gmail.com](mailto:siddhartha.ttgasia@gmail.com)
- Rosa Ocampo** Correspondent, The Philippines  
[rosa.ocampo@gmail.com](mailto:rosa.ocampo@gmail.com)
- Prudence Lui** Correspondent, Hong Kong  
[prului@yahoo.com](mailto:prului@yahoo.com)
- Caroline Boey** Senior Correspondent, China & Special Projects  
[caroline.boey@ttgasia.com](mailto:caroline.boey@ttgasia.com)
- Julian Ryall** Correspondent, Japan  
[jryall2@hotmail.com](mailto:jryall2@hotmail.com)
- Rohit Kaul** Correspondent, New Delhi  
[rohit.kaul@ttgasia.com](mailto:rohit.kaul@ttgasia.com)
- Feizal Samath** Correspondent, Sri Lanka/Maldives  
[feizalsam@gmail.com](mailto:feizalsam@gmail.com)
- Redmond Sia, Goh Meng Yong** Creative Designers
- Jerlene Ng** Editorial Intern
- Lina Tan** Editorial Assistant

SALES & MARKETING

- Michael Chow** Group Publisher  
[michael.chow@ttgasia.com](mailto:michael.chow@ttgasia.com)
- Shirley Tan** Senior Business Manager  
[shirley.tan@ttgasia.com](mailto:shirley.tan@ttgasia.com)
- Karen Cheung** Senior Business Manager  
[karen.cheung@ttgasia.com](mailto:karen.cheung@ttgasia.com)
- Jonathan Yap** Senior Business Manager  
[jonathan.yap@ttgasia.com](mailto:jonathan.yap@ttgasia.com)
- Cheryl Tan** Corporate Marketing Manager  
[cheryl.tan@ttgasia.com](mailto:cheryl.tan@ttgasia.com)
- Stephanie Toh** Marketing Executive  
[stephanie.toh@ttgasia.com](mailto:stephanie.toh@ttgasia.com)
- Cheryl Lim** Advertisement Administration Manager  
[cheryl.lim@ttgasia.com](mailto:cheryl.lim@ttgasia.com)
- Carol Cheng** Assistant Manager Administration and Marketing  
[carol.cheng@ttgasia.com](mailto:carol.cheng@ttgasia.com)

PUBLISHING SERVICES

- Tony Yeo** Division Manager
- Haze Loh** Senior Creative Designer
- Lynn Lim** Web Executive
- Carol Wong** Senior Circulation Executive

TTG ASIA MEDIA

- Darren Ng** Managing Director  
[darren.ng@ttgasia.com](mailto:darren.ng@ttgasia.com)
- Raini Hamdi** Senior Editor  
[raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com](mailto:raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com)

OFFICES

- SINGAPORE** 1 Science Park Road #04-07 The Capricorn,  
Singapore Science Park II, Singapore 117528  
Tel: (65) 6395-7575 Fax: (65) 6536-0896  
[contact@ttgasia.com](mailto:contact@ttgasia.com); [www.ttgasia.com](http://www.ttgasia.com)
- HONG KONG** Unit 2011, 20/F Harbour Center,  
25 Harbour Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong  
Tel: (852) 2237-7174 Fax: (852) 2237-7227

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MCI (P) 098/09/2014 • PPS 619/02/2013(022926)

Printed by Times Printers Pte Ltd  
16 Tuas Avenue 5, Singapore 639340

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