

VIEW FROM THE TOP

Nobu Hospitality believes its upside-down model from restaurants to hotels is hotter than hell's kitchen. After expanding in the US, Europe and the Middle East, it is now whipping up interest in Asia. CEO Trevor Horwell talks to [Raini Hamdi](#)



SAIL AWAY WITH THE GAME CHANGERS

Asian cruise agents are spoilt for choice in 2016/2017 as cruise companies unleash new-gen ships, debut at exotic ports around the world and unveil new innovations. Here's a guide compiled by [Raini Hamdi](#), [Karen Yue](#), [Xinyi Liang-Pholsena](#) and [S Puvaneswary](#)



A NEW BREED OF ROAD WARRIORS

As millennials enter the workforce in droves, [Paige Lee Pei Qi](#) reports how this new generation is shaping business travel



SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME

Singapore's leaders come forward to mentor and retain young talent in the face of staff shortage. By [Raini Hamdi](#)



WHEN LUXURY COMES KNOCKING

The Philippines brandishes a new crop of luxury hotels and attractions to woo premium travellers, writes [Rosa Ocampo](#)

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A MISUNDERSTOOD GENERATION



What often irks me is that these studies approach millennials as a monolithic group, instead of a large and diverse collection of people with different upbringings, beliefs, cultural experiences and life goals.

Millennials are a much-maligned and misunderstood generation. I'm saying this not because I myself and many of my colleagues and friends are millennials. For the most part, I feel that we are a normal lot, or as quirky and diverse as any generation preceding us.

In the last couple of years, countless think pieces and surveys have focused on millennials, as well as much hand-wringing writing and commentary levelled at the generational faults of the under-30 set.

What often irks me is that these studies approach millennials as a monolithic group, instead of a large and diverse collection of people with different upbringings, beliefs, cultural experiences and life goals.

Take me as an example – being born in the early 1980s put me on the older end of the millennial age spectrum, and being married and a new mother also led to my different attitudes towards career development, stability and money than younger members of the group.

I think it's misleading to make sweeping generalisations about a whole generation. Surely the common notions that millennials are lazy, entitled and narcissistic do not apply to all millennials or even the majority of them.

Even in the business travel world (see page 14), millennials continue to be cast in a different light from their predecessors. Hyper connected, social media addicts, wanting to mix work and pleasure, and a desire to bypass traditional corporate travel policies seem to be the common stereotypes associated with the youngest members of the workforce.

Interestingly, a recent exhaustive study conducted by the INSEAD's Emerging Markets Institute, Universum and the HEAD Foundation of more than 16,000 people between 18 and 30 years old across 43 countries revealed that almost all views of millennials – whether it's their desire to become leaders, the importance of work-life balance, the kind of managers preferred or priorities in life – vary considerably by region and culture.

A lot of the hype surrounding millennials probably stem from nervousness at having to recruit and retain these young employees, who are projected to make up 50 per cent of the global workforce by 2020.

Millennials, just like the gen X and baby boomers before them, generally value learning opportunities, professional development and personal fulfilment as much as monetary gains in the workplace, therefore such initiatives like the Industry Mentorship Programme (see page 4) – in which a group of hospitality veterans in Singapore band together to mentor youngsters just starting out in the industry – will encourage the millennials to step out, rise up the career ladder and pay it forward when their turn comes to guide the generation that comes after them.

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COMING UP



PERSONALISATION End the year with reflections on people and winning them over with personalisation

MILLENNIALS VS COMPANIES We look into the brains of millennials; actually they make sense

UP-AND-COMING Our pick of who made it in the industry this year and the ones to watch out for ahead

WE LIKE

Thanks to virtual reality (VR), Shangri-La is no longer the aspirational paradise it was made out to be in the 1933 *Lost Horizon* novel. Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts has become the first hospitality brand to roll out the Samsung Gear VR headsets for its sales offices worldwide, offering travel agents, meeting planners and other customers to virtually explore the different areas of its properties.





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Analysis

SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME

Saddled by the grave issue of attracting and retaining talent, Singapore hoteliers are taking the bull by the horn and going out in force to mentor students in a plan that is believed to be unprecedented in the global hotel industry.

The initiative sees the Singapore Hotel and Tourism & Education Centre (SHATEC) – which is owned by members of the Singapore Hotel Association (SHA), comprising virtually most hotels in the city – launching an Industry Mentorship Programme that matches an industry leader to a SHATEC student who is keen to rise in any of the five key areas of hotel operations, tourism, F&B, pastry & culinary, and sales, distribution & marketing.

This early, no fewer than 41 industry members have signed up to be a mentor and fulfil the obligations outlined in the structured programme. Leading by example, most are right from the top – general managers, departmental vice presidents, executive chefs, celebrity chefs and business owners. While most are from hotels, the programme has also been able to reach an industry-wide audience, including such companies as Google Asia-Pacific, Trafalgar Asia, Silversea Cruises, Suntec Singapore and Lo & Behold Group, which owns and runs upmarket restaurants in the city.

The programme is championed by two prominent veterans, Tan-Wee Ling, executive director-asset management, Pan Pacific Hotels Group (PPHG), and Diana Ee-Tan, director of Far East Orchard and chairman of Mt Faber Leisure Group. They chair and co-chair respectively an eight-member SHATEC Mentorship Advisory Council that includes representatives from the four large chains, Accor Hotels, Hilton International, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) and Starwood Hotels & Resorts.

At the heart of the initiative is the industry's anxiety to develop the next generation of leaders. Tourism workforce has grown 5.5 per cent year-on-year since 2001, ahead of Singapore's workforce growth of 3.3 per cent per year in the past three decades, which is expected to slow to one to two per cent per year till 2020. Based on new rooms opening, a shortfall of 3,000 workers or 10 per cent of the sector's current workforce is looming.

In the region, it has been well-documented that Singapore particularly has a chronic issue of attracting talent to hotels, a problem that evades countries such as the Philippines or Thailand. Perceptions linger of long hours, and even longer ones to advance in what has been an industry charted and led by Westerners.

But Asian owners are viewing local talent with fresh eyes, said Tan-Wee. "There has been a sea change of heart. Asia is booming. Before we served Western high tea, now we serve Chinese high tea. Owners also see that many Asians have been appointed to senior roles overseas, so why not appoint them here?" she said.

PPHG in February this year appointed two locals, Gino Tan and Tina Sim, to head its flagship Pan Pacific and Parkroyal hotels in Singapore respectively. Other homegrowns including the Park Hotel Group and Far East Orchard also have predominantly locals helming their hotels.

But what has mentorship to do with it? Both Tan-Wee and Ee-Tan said the value of guiding, coaching and inspiring a young person to achieve his/her true passion was key to retaining and developing local talent. Ee-Tan gave a recent example arising from the programme: a student



(Mentors provide) priceless guidance on career planning...

Diana Ee-Tan

Director, Far East Orchard and chairman, Mt Faber Leisure Group

has dreams to open a restaurant after graduating. Her mentor is a hotel F&B leader who gave her solid advice as what the financials could look like and coached her on the areas she needed to focus on in her studies at SHATEC.

Said Ee-Tan: "Besides giving technical knowledge guidance, support to mentees during their workplace internships, or when they begin their first jobs, mentors with their years of experience can provide priceless guidance to mentees on career planning and development and when the mentor-mentee relationship is well matched, it can extend beyond student days, as a mentee progresses along his or her career path."

For the inaugural launch, 23 students

Singapore's industry leaders come forward to mentor young talent in a bid to retain them as staff shortage looms ahead. By **Raini Hamdi**



were matched with a mentor for a duration of one year. "As this is the first time we are rolling out the programme, we have deliberately kept the number small," said Margaret Heng, CEO of SHA and SHATEC.

The programme is open to all students who have completed at least one term of studies in their respective courses. To ensure commitment, students must apply and the application requires a recommen-

of mentors. Being the training arm of SHA, Heng is confident more will come forward. She said: "The mentors approached (thus far) were very gracious and accepted the invitation wholeheartedly. For example, upon attending the first Advisory Council meeting, of which she is a member, Tash Tobias (general manager of InterContinental Hotel Singapore), immediately recommended an additional five mentors from IHG, many of them at general manager and director level.

"As the programme matures and stabilises, we hope to broaden the network of mentors."

Mentors like Michael Tan, director F&B-west zone hotels and MICE of Resorts World Sentosa, just "want to give back to the industry and help to provide more opportunities for people who are passionate and deserving". Twenty-three years ago, he was given the opportunity to study at SHATEC by no other than PPHG's Tan-Wee herself.

"I believe we all have a part to play in building the next generation. As the saying goes, 'we rise by lifting others'; society as a whole will not progress unless we extend a helping hand.

"A structured mentorship programme is needed as it gives both the mentor and mentee a guideline to go by, and ensures that proper accordance and channels are in place to achieve the best outcome. This also helps to accredit the mentee, allowing him/her access to a wider range of platforms and programmes that they can pursue to further their career journey in their respective industries," said Tan.

Asked how they would measure the success of the programme, Tan-Wee and Ee-Tan gave three yardsticks: has the student's knowledge of their course and studies expanded with the coaching by their mentors?; has it helped de-mystify the hotel management hierarchies and create greater confidence in students to engage senior leaders?; and have opportunities to speak with and network with senior industry players and leaders helped them with internship at the workplace and with transition to the business or working environment?



There has been a sea change (for owners to employ local GMs).

Tan-Wee Ling

Executive director-asset management, Pan Pacific Hotels Group

dation from course tutors, who look at attitude, conduct and passion in developing a career in the industry.

Unsurprisingly though, those who applied in the first batch were students who had better grades. "We are encouraging the SHATEC management to reach out widely, with the message that all students regardless of their grades will be welcomed wholeheartedly into the programme and the ones with lesser grades should not exclude themselves," said Ee-Tan.

Ideally, there should be a mentor for every student, but the champions of the programme would be just happy if, by the end of the first year, 25 per cent of a graduating cohort had a mentor.

That means developing a larger pool

Analysis

When a crisis strikes, honesty and consistency matter most when engaging the media.
By Mimi Hudoyo and Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

WHEN HONESTY MATTERS

When a crisis hits a destination, the best way industry stakeholders can circumvent the situation and prevent another crisis from unfolding is to engage the media constructively.

Speaking at the TTG Media Engagement Workshop during ITB Asia, Imtiaz Muqbil, executive editor of Travel Impact Newswire, said: "Do not try to sweep things under the carpet. You have to confront the problem because it is not going to go away."

Thailand stands out in the region as destination that has mastered "the whole art of crisis management down to a tee", opined Muqbil. "Every time a crisis hit, (the Thai authorities) know exactly what they should do. That is why in terms of visitor number, they have seen minimum impact," he said.

On the contrary, Ken Scott, managing director of Scott Asia Communications, believes that the Thai government could have better handled the recent Erawan Shrine bombing, which also provided learning points in crisis communications.

"It is all right to say 'I don't know' if you don't know. Do not speculate," Scott remarked, adding that the authorities should appoint one spokesperson to liaise with the media to avoid conflicting information.

Acknowledging the heightened media attention – as well as sensationalism – during crises, Marcus Cotton, managing director of Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge in Nepal, said: "If it bleeds, it leads...When there is intense spotlight on the stage, the rest of the stage goes into blackness."

Furthermore, the online era has enabled the general populace to become reporters too. "Everyone with a phone nowadays basically is a member of the media, there is no such thing as the media anymore," added Muqbil.

"The cumulative power of individuals will allow you to push back against imbalanced reporting in the mainstream media. You're no longer at the mercy of the mainstream media."



Asia's top media practitioners and industry players speak out on crisis communications. Back row, from left: Scott Asia Communications' Ken Scott, Travel Impact Newswire's Imtiaz Muqbil, Sabah Parks' Jamili Nais, Sojern's Stewart Hunter, Tiger Mountain Nepal's Marcus Cotton, E-Quill News Media and Six-Six News' Kannan Chandran, HRS' Todd Arthur and TTG Asia Media's Darren Ng. Front row: TTG Asia Media's Xinyi Liang-Pholsena and Raini Hamdi

While social media allows the word to get out faster, problems could arise when inaccurate information gets disseminated, pointed out Kannan Chandran, founder and publisher of E-Quill News Media and Six-Six News.

"The role of the media is to ensure that the information is authenticated and that viral content don't get viral until due diligence has been exercised to verify the information," said Chandran.

Questioning if it was the media or the public that needed handling in times of crises, he added: "Both need to work together. The media needs to be measured in how they present the facts, while public needs to take a step back and check the story if the facts are true."

Adopting a proactive stance in disseminating information quickly and accurately is hence paramount for authorities to prevent crisis communication from spiralling out of control, the speakers emphasised.

When queried on how tourism organisations can tackle misinformation coming from the public, Scott suggested: "Bite your bottom lip and correct them nicely and consistently."

If it bleeds, it leads...
When there is intense
spotlight on the stage,
the rest of the stage
goes into blackness.

Marcus Cotton
Managing director,
Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge

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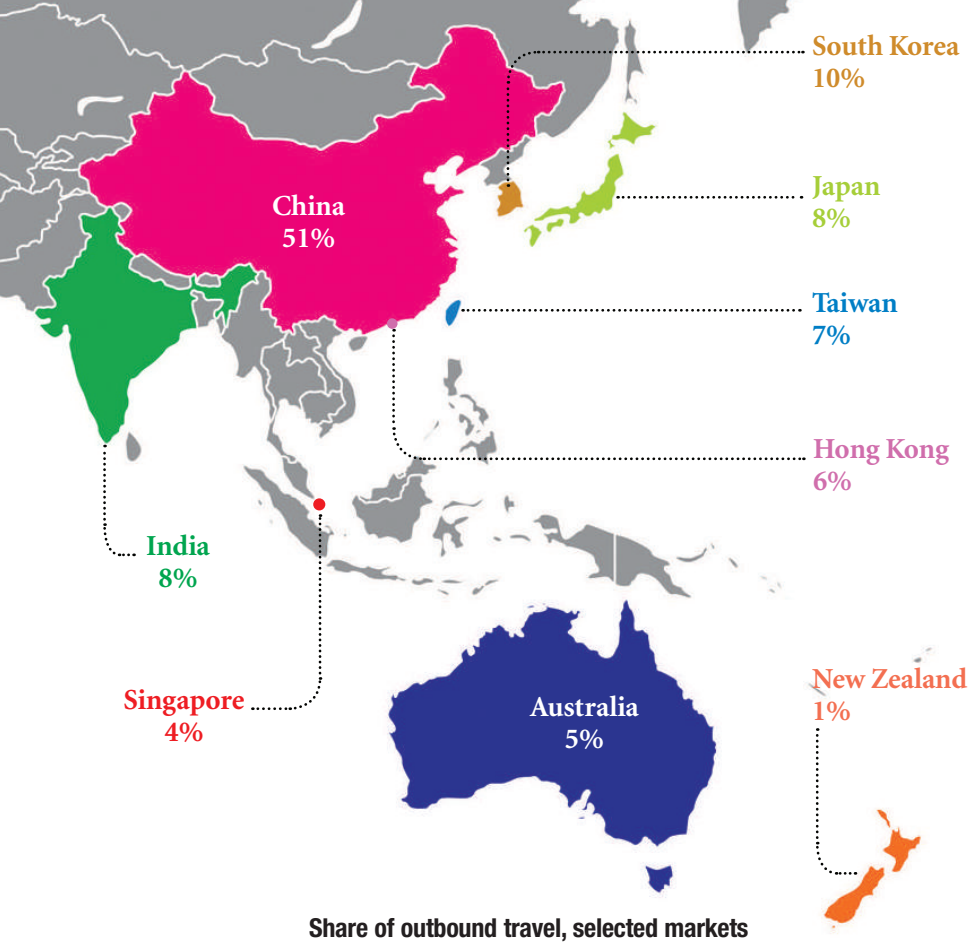
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Moderate growth for APAC's outbound market

Outbound travel from most major markets in Asia-Pacific are growing close to 10% this year.

There are some caveats however. One main market missing is Malaysia, although the last counts it produced included land travel to Singapore, which distorts comparative counts. Earlier this year, France's DMO estimated that Malaysia's outbound total in 2013, excluding travel to Singapore, was 7.9 million. From that, we estimated a 7% AAGR over 2009-2013.

For this chart (above), land travel out from Hong Kong and from Singapore is not included. However, land travel from China to Hong Kong and Macau is included.

Based on the selected findings, Japan is the outlier, falling 5% so far this year.

South Korea, in contrast, chalked up

an impressive growth of 19%, overtaking Japan at the beginning of this year to become the region's second largest market after China.

Our estimates for India also indicate a good growth of 12%. This would mean that India has also overtaken Japan, and is now the region's third largest outbound market. (However, note that India's totals are estimates while Japan's are actuals.)

Of the two city-based markets, Hong Kong grew 14%, but Singapore a disappointing 4% – suggesting that it is not just Singapore's inbound market that is weak. This is not good news for the five airlines based in Singapore – Singapore Airlines (SIA), Jetstar Asia, Scoot, SilkAir and Tigerair – particularly for the SIA group, which owns or part-owns four of them.

Airline stocks on the rise, hotel stocks fall

A year can be a long time in the world of travel stocks. Over the past year, AirAsia's stocks fell a big 50% and while Malaysia's stock market also fell, it was only -12%. Compatriot Malaysia Airlines also had a bad decade before it was delisted in 2014. Just before that, its price showed an annual average growth (fall) rate of -42% since 2010, and an AAGR of -45% since 2000.

Here are some other indicators:

Airlines

The four Hong Kong-quoted airlines (Air China, Cathay Pacific, China Eastern Airlines and China Southern Airlines) shrugged off the big 25% fall in the stock market over the past 12 months.

Cathay managed only a 2% growth, but the three China-based airlines grew fast. Air China grew 24% over the past year, while China Eastern grew 85%. China Southern, which grew 124%, is the only one of the three to have grown since 2000.

Another out-performer – and somewhat a surprise – is Qantas, up 175%, presumably following its good results in its financial year through June. Investors also seem to like Singapore Air-

lines – despite its unfriendly traffic results. It has grown 9%, even though the Singapore market fell 15%.

Hotels

Hotels usually outperform airlines but all the hotel companies we track surprisingly have fallen over the past year.

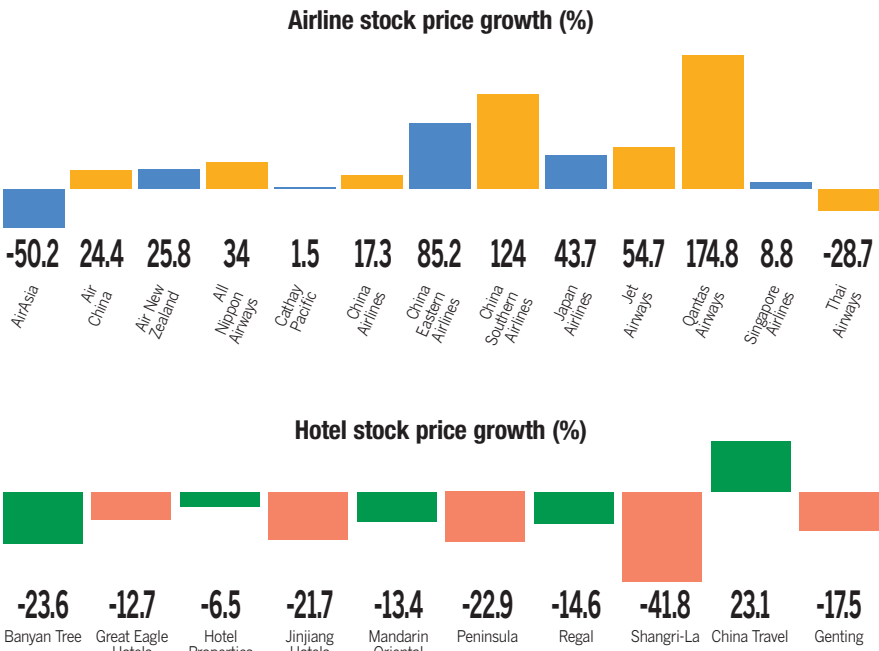
For larger companies, they fall further. Shangri-La Asia has fallen 42% over the past 12 months, and fell an AAGR of -18% since 2010 and -1% since 2000.

Hong Kong-based Mandarin Oriental did slightly better than the Singapore market where it is listed. It hasn't been doing so well since 2010 – an AAGR of -2%, but a +6% AAGR since 2000.

A surprise is the continuing fall at Banyan Tree, despite its good reputation in the (resort) market. It fell 24% over the past 12 months, and an AAGR of -11% since 2010.

Others

Hong Kong-quoted Genting is down 18% over the past year, although this is actually better than the Hong Kong market. That said, its -7% AAGR since 2010 is a bigger fall than the market's -1% AAGR.



HOTEL BAROMETER

July occupancy up slightly but RevPAR down

Overall, in Asia-Pacific, hotel occupancy in July was up three points to 74%, but ARR in US dollars was down to US\$124, which also pushed RevPAR in US dollars down to US\$91, almost US\$7 down from its 2014 result.

There are substantial differences in some occupancy measures. Most notable is a 7% fall in the Maldives. The total visitor arrivals into the Maldives that month grew 4%. That was better than 2% YTD, and so hotels and resorts may see better results as the year progresses.

Another resort destination, Bali, showed growth, but greater growth was expected than the 3% achieved as visitor arrivals into Bali grew 6% that month.

Meanwhile, occupancies for Melbourne and Tokyo were high.

As is becoming a 'new norm', exchange rate changes with the US dollar are affecting some results significantly.

For ARR: Bali's -20% in US\$ becomes -4% when measured in the local currency, Hanoi's -6% becomes flat, the Maldives' +7% becomes +5%, Melbourne's -15% becomes +4%, Shanghai's -1% becomes +3%, Tokyo's +5% becomes +16%.

The overall hotel TBA-100 Index in the latest available month in 2015 (July) now seems poised to reach parity with 2014, although merely to near-match the previous year is hardly a great achievement.

That said, and as noted before, much of this is related to changes in exchange rates with the US dollar – the currency of the rate measures in our index.

July's index was at 98 – representing a

Hotel operating results in selected centres, July 2015

Location	Occupancy, %	Growth, %	ARR, US\$*	Growth, %	RevPAR, US\$*	Growth, %
Bali	76.2	3.4	140	-19.7	107	-17.0
Hanoi	76.1	22.9	85	-5.6	65	16.1
Maldives	65.4	-6.7	554	7.0	362	-0.1
Melbourne	88.4	0.9	158	-15.3	139	-14.5
Shanghai	68.6	11.9	93	-0.9	64	10.8
Tokyo	90.2	12.8	216	5.4	195	18.8

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

2% fall in comparison compared to the same months in 2014, and July 2014 was 4% down compared to July 2013.

Of the three parts that make up our index, occupancy is comfortably ahead – up

5% over the past 12 months. That indicates high-enough growth to prompt an increase in ARR. But this measure is complicated by exchange rates. As it is, ARR fell 6%, and the resulting RevPAR fell 4%.

Discover the Natural Beauty of the United States

President Obama designates three new National Monuments which visitors from South-east Asia should not miss

The U.S. is home to many famous natural attractions and the United States of Great Outdoors is being promoted in South-east Asia to showcase national monuments that tell the story of significant events in American history, and how these unique natural resources are being safeguarded for the benefit of all Americans.

In 2015, U.S. President Barack Obama designated Waco Mammoth National Monument in Texas, Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument in Northern California and Basin and Range National Monument in Nevada as National Monuments.

Be ready to marvel at what these three new National Monuments have to offer.

Waco Mammoth National Monument

Site of rare mammoth fossils, the first and only recorded discovery of a nursery herd

The Waco Mammoth National Monument in Texas provides a rare chance to understand and interpret the behavior and ecology of the **extinct Columbian Mammoth**.

The oldest fossils identified at the site are thought to be **more than 65,000 years old**. In addition, both the excavation area and the land around it offer an excellent opportunity for **further exploration and paleontological and geological research**.

Sally Jewell, Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, said: "Our National Parks inspire and teach us about our nation's natural history – in this case, about the prehistoric animals that walked our Earth tens of thousands of years ago."

"The Waco Mammoth National Monument will share the wonder of these incredible mammoths with visitors from around the world and help to introduce a new generation to the thrill of scientific discovery that only a special site like this can demonstrate first-hand."

The site is managed by the National Park Service in cooperation with the City of Waco and Baylor University. The National Park Service will conduct a management planning process, working closely with these partners, community residents and other groups that have devoted themselves to preserving the site for many years.

How to get there: Waco is a short two-hour drive from Dallas Fort Worth, which is served by multiple daily flights via Hong Kong and Tokyo.



Waco Mammoth National Monument, Texas
Photo: National Park Service



Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument, Northern California
Photo: U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument

Protecting and connecting Northern California area known for its natural beauty and recreational opportunities

The 330,780-acre monument, comprising existing Federal lands, extends from Berryessa Peak and other lands in the vicinity of Lake Berryessa in Napa, Yolo and Solano Counties through to the spectacular lands of Lake, Colusa and Glenn Counties and to the eastern boundary of the Yuki Wilderness in Mendocino County.

It is now the **second-largest national monument in California**, after the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.

The monument does not include Lake Berryessa itself, which will continue to be managed as a recreation area by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Miles of hiking, horseback riding and designated off-road vehicle trails offer visitors views of the Sacramento Valley and Sierra Nevada Mountains to the east and the Coastal Mountains to the west, as well as panoramic vistas overlooking Clear Lake, Lake Berryessa, and the steep canyon of Cache Creek.

Hunting and angling are popular activities all year round. The Cache Creek, Cedar Rough and Snow Mountain wilderness areas provide opportunities for remote backcountry travel, and Cache Creek provides the closest commercial whitewater rafting to San Francisco.



Basin and Range National Monument, Nevada
Photo: U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Our National Parks inspire and teach us about our nation's natural history – in this case, about the prehistoric animals that walked our Earth tens of thousands of years ago."

SALLY JEWELL

Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior

The area contains one of the **greatest concentrations of biodiversity in California** and is **home to threatened and endangered plant and wildlife species** including northern spotted owls, marten and fisher, and California Coastal Chinook salmon and Northern California steelhead spawn in the area's waterways.

How to get there: Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument is located less than one hundred miles from the Bay area and metropolitan regions of San Francisco, which is served by multiple flights via Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul.

Basin and Range National Monument

Discover sweeping landscapes and ancient rock art

Basin and Range National Monument, located in Lincoln and Nye Counties about two hours from downtown Las Vegas, spans approximately 704,000 acres of rugged mountains and sweeping valleys.

The monument tells the **story of the area's native peoples as well as the history of more recent settlers and mining communities**. The designation also preserves current uses of the land, including traditional ranching practices and ongoing military training operations,

while ensuring that the land remains unspoiled for future generations.

The Basin and Range National Monument contains a wealth of scientifically significant geological, ecological, cultural, and historical resources and is an important area for studies of paleoecology, seismology, archaeology and paleoclimatology.

The area's vast unbroken expanses in the transition between the Mojave Desert and the sage brush steppe of the Great Basin region makes it home to a **wide diversity of plants and wildlife**, including desert bighorn sheep, golden eagles, and a host of bat, lizard, and snake species.

How to get there: Basin and Range National Monument is less than a two-hour drive from McCarran International Airport, the main commercial airport for Las Vegas. Korean Air operates direct flights between Seoul and Las Vegas.

For more information, please go to VisitTheUSA.com



View from the top

Nobu Hospitality believes its upside-down model from restaurants to hotels is hotter than hell's kitchen. After expanding in the US, Europe and the Middle East, it is now whipping up interest in Asia. CEO Trevor Horwell talks to Raini Hamdi

NOT A CLASH OF TITANS

Star power but no clash of egos, according to CEO Trevor Horwell (far right). From left, Nobu Matsuhisa, Nobu Hospitality COO Struan McKenzie, Meir Teper and Robert de Niro



Why take brand Nobu from restaurants to hotels?

Nobu started over 20 years ago and we now have 35 restaurants in five continents. Nobu revolutionised Japanese cuisine and a lot of hoteliers were coming to us (to have the restaurant in their hotels) as a means to draw customers.

We could expand Nobu into secondary cities but we wanted to take the brand to a whole new level, so we decided to move from restaurants to hospitality, which is now the core business. We have a clientele base of three million around the world – (akin to) a clientele base of a hotel company with 25 hotels. We can now provide them with a 24/7 Nobu experience when they stay with us, rather than just a few hours when they dine with us. The 24/7 includes the restaurant experience, the Nobu room service and other aspects of what the shareholders felt represent a Nobu hotel.

Yes, but the cast of shareholders includes celebrity chef Nobu Matsuhisa, actor Robert de Niro and movie producer Meir Teper. No clash of egos?

If you break down a Nobu hotel, the creativity of the F&B is really Nobu, who is the founder of the concept. But, like a fashion house, say Christian Dior, there are creative directors who work under the founder. So Nobu too has creative chefs who work alongside him.

When it comes to the hotel, naturally Robert de Niro, who has done his own hotel (the Greenwich New York), brings his experiences to the table, while Meir Teper, who is very much into the art world, brings a lot of style.

Don't forget they have been partners for 22 years (since Nobu Restaurants started in 1993) – you have to get along with each other if you've been together that long.

Why Nobu Hotels, not 'de Niro Hotels'?

A Nobu hotel is largely a boutique luxury experience. At the same time, we wrap the F&B around the hotel. Other hotels, on the other hand, have a huge issue with F&B – they lose money on F&B, owners

give them a hard time because the F&B is bland, etc. But with a Nobu restaurant, we have a high margin business. In some locations, we make as much money on a seat than on a room.

Consider too that a lot of hoteliers today are leasing their restaurants to a third party. The challenge with that is they can't control the creativity of the F&B, or the service quality, whereas Nobu has proven itself a consistent global brand, operating restaurants in five continents for over 22 years and building a loyal base of three million clientele in the process.

With Nobu, we also attract the locals to come into the hotel. We bring in all age groups. And customers want to be in a hotel where the action is.

Are you still growing Nobu Restaurants then?

Selectively. We will go into markets where we can't do a hotel potentially with a restaurant – if it makes sense (to open the restaurant). Why spend time and effort in a location doing a restaurant when we can do a hotel and a restaurant? We don't want to commoditise the brand. A lot

of hotel companies are stock market-driven; so many of them go to secondary locations to fulfil the numbers they promised shareholders.

But your first hotel in Asia in Manila (opened 3Q2014 in City of Dreams; see page 28) is not exactly an 'it' gateway.

When we started in Asia, we were opportunistic. We went into Manila because, one, it has a great service culture, two, because we knew the partners Lawrence Hill and James Packer (co-chairman of Melco Crown Entertainment, which runs the City of Dreams in Macau and is one of the companies behind the Manila offshoot). James is our partner in Australia with (two) Nobu restaurants in Crown Hotels and Casino. (Editor's Note: As TTTG Asia went to press, Packer had bought a 20 per cent stake in Nobu Hospitality – see TTTG Asia e-Daily, October 30, 2015.)

Plus, we are going into what we believe is going to be the number one destination in Manila, the City of Dreams.

Our approach when we started was to establish a flagship in America, followed by Europe and the Middle East, which we have done.

We now have 12 hotels opened or opening over the next two years. So now we are looking at Asia and we'll be selective.

Where are you looking at and what are your thoughts on the market?

Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea, Taipei, Bangkok, Jakarta, Macau, but the fundamentals have to be there in terms of both restaurant and hotel.

A lot of hotels in Asia are still traditional, but Asia is becoming niche-driven. In future, a lot more niche concepts like ours will be coming to Asia.

Other hotels have a huge issue with F&B – they lose money on F&B, owners give them a hard time because the F&B is bland, etc. But with a Nobu restaurant, we have a high margin business.

– Trevor Horwell (right)



10 NEED TO KNOWS ABOUT TREVOR HORWELL

■ Who's in your family?

We always talk about our employees as our family

■ What do you do for fun? Travelling and meeting new friends...washed down of course with a good glass of champagne as Raini knows

■ Your ideal vacation? Enjoying the south of France and the Italian Riviera – style while relaxing!

■ How do you book your own leisure trips?

I know where I want to go and book directly through friends

■ What are you reading right now? *The Taste of Luxury* by Bernard Arnault and the *Moët-Hennessy Louis Vuitton Story*

■ How do you stay healthy? I eat healthy food and enjoy it, from fish to salads and of course washed down with a glass of champagne

■ Favourite food? Nobu, and an occasional good Italian

■ A bad habit you cannot kick?

Some people may describe my retail therapy as a bad habit, yet I know it is a good habit

■ Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you? Immigration at Miami airport...

■ Most people don't know that you...

I make the best cappuccinos

We've seen names like Missoni, Bvlgari, Armani, transposed to hospitality, but with varying degrees of success. Why?

They sell design and once that design is dated, what's left? We are F&B-led, it's not just about design.

Few celebrity chefs, if any, go from fork to pillow, on a global chain scale. Why?

Just ask: How many of our competitor brands in restaurants have been around for 20-years plus? Not one. How many of them have achieved consistent growth in 20 years? Not one. How many of our competitor chefs have had their restaurants opened for more than five years? Although they are still celebrity chefs, some of their restaurants have closed.

Nobu, on the other hand, has delivered consistently, whether the restaurant is in New York, London, Dubai or Manila. And this is our approach in growing Nobu Hospitality. It is not just about consistency in operation but consistency in growing the hotels side.

If there is a Nobu restaurant in a city – as at the InterContinental Hong Kong (in Kowloon) – won't you be competing with it if you open a Nobu Hotel in Hong Kong?

We would do a hotel on the Hong Kong side, not Kowloon. It is important that we are loyal to our partners. And they (InterContinental) have been great partners.



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ASK THE EXPERT

MEANINGFUL CONSERVATION

There's a very simple conservation strategy that I believe in. Essentially, it is based on making animals worth more alive than dead.

An essential part of this involves the communities that live around wildlife reserves. Having the community on your side is the best security that money can buy. This ensures that communities see the benefits that flow from conservation, whether through employment or other forms of support.

&Beyond, in partnership with the Africa Foundation, focuses on education, healthcare, enterprise development, environment and conservation in rural areas surrounding the reserves where &Beyond operates. Africa Foundation's projects are grounded in community participation and driven by local leadership, working with the communities rather than for them.

Tip 1: Forge a long-lasting partnership with the local community.

Where many companies go wrong is expecting these relationships to bear fruit overnight. The bonds between our lodges and their neighbours are so strong because they have been forged over time.

Thanks to the partnership that &Beyond Phinda Private Game in South Africa has with the community for almost 25 years, we have rarely lost a rhino in the reserve in spite of the country's poaching crisis.

Tip 2: Share knowledge, combine efforts and resources to achieve more.

One of the most valuable lessons that I have learnt is that there is no universal solution to conservation issues. The only thing that works is to implement locally crafted solutions to local problems. Factors that affect

Conservation is not something that happens in a day – it is long term.



Les Carlisle
Group conservation manager, &Beyond

this include government regulations, existing expertise and local conditions. However, this doesn't mean that conservation knowledge should not be shared – in fact, it should be.

In 2011, &Beyond was able to help Indian conservation officials carry out the country's first successful mass translocation of animals – by adapting the techniques that we used to move buffalos at &Beyond Phinda – to reverse the local extinction of Indian bison in Bandhavgarh National Park.

The end goal is larger than any one company. Partnerships with Rhinos Without Borders, a shared initiative by &Beyond and Great Plains Conservation, allow us to achieve much more than we would individually. Working with the governments of Botswana and South Africa, Rhinos Without Borders has already translocated one batch of rhinos from high-risk poaching areas to a safer environment and plans are in place for the movement of another batch. In total, the project aims to move 100 rhinos.

Tip 3: Do not be discouraged, press on.

If you don't get the results you are looking for, try doing things differently. Every action that contributes towards conservation is valuable.

The biggest thing that gets me out of bed every morning is the ability to make a difference. For me, it's important to see what the end goal is and to stay focused on it, regardless of the hurdles faced. Conservation is not something that happens in a day – it is long term.

WHO GETS THE BOOKING?

Booking the same hotel – for the start and end of a trip – on two different OTAs yielded different experiences for Rosa Ocampo when she had to amend the bookings. She tells us which site she prefers



Asiatravel.com

SEARCHING EXPERIENCE This OTA lists hotels, flights and tours. Initially, I could not find The Manila Hotel in the Hotel/Destination field, but I managed to find it when I searched under "Hotel Name Contains".

PRICE In my previous experience with this OTA, I managed to find affordable hotels in countries like the Philippines, Kuala Lumpur and Cambodia. I also find that their rates for The Manila Hotel, which I booked several times this and last year, don't fluctuate much.

PRODUCT It's more personalised. Email exchanges were signed by the person in charge of our booking. They were business-like and polite on the phone and text messages.

Asiatravel.com allowed us to change our booking date with The Manila Hotel at no extra charge, in keeping with their policy that "notification of cancellation must reach us at least 16 working days (not including non-working days and public holidays before your check-in date, to avoid a penalty of one room night(s)".

VERDICT Asiatravel.com wins hands down for its more personalised service, less strict cancellation policy and concession when it came to changing the booking date. As for Agoda.com, it would have earned our goodwill had it gone the extra mile to help amend our booking. After all, there were rooms available and it would not have cost the company a penny to help with the modifications.



Agoda.com

SEARCHING EXPERIENCE This site caters to hotel bookings worldwide. I also could not find The Manila Hotel under the Hotel/Destination field, not even on its map of Manila. I eventually found it after several tries.

PRICE Our initial two-night booking at The Manila Hotel was US\$9 cheaper than on Asiatravel.com. But when we tried other dates, Agoda.com was higher than Asiatravel.com.

PRODUCT Email exchanges are signed not by a specific person but by the "Agoda Customer Support Team". Agoda.com rejected our request to change our booking date with The Manila Hotel, stating that the hotel did not allow any amendments to the booking and they had no rooms available on the dates that we wanted to change to. The company also said that the booking was not refundable.

However, when I contacted the hotel directly, we found out that rooms were still available. In the end, the hotel acceded our request to change our booking dates through Agoda.com

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GALLERY



THE LION CITY ROARS TO A NEW PARK HOTEL

The opening of the 442-room Park Hotel Alexandra earlier this month marks Park Hotel Group's (PHG) fourth hotel in Singapore and the first hotel for Chip Eng Seng Corporation (CESC), a Singapore-listed group whose business spans construction and property development and investment. Attending the ribbon-cutting ceremony are (from left to right) PHG's Mohd K Rafin and Allen Law; CESC's Lim Tiang Chuan; Heng Swee Keat, minister for finance; CESC's Lim Tiam Seng and Hoon Tai Meng; CEL Development's Judy Lim; and Park Hotel Alexandra's Angeline Tan



A COMMUNITY STANDOUT

The 40-room Hmong Hilltribe Lodge recently won top honours in the Community category of Mountain and Resort Properties in the third Thailand Boutique Awards Season 2014-15 organised by Krungthai Card. Located a 45-minute drive away from Chiang Mai, the property's staff and cultural entertainers all hail from neighbouring Hmong villages.

APPOINTMENTS



Helene Fong



Janet McNab



Filip Boyen



Tane Picken

HELENE FONG

NOW Director of sales and marketing, JW Marriott Hotel Bangkok
THEN Director of marketing, JW Marriott Hong Kong

SELINA CHAVRY

NOW Global managing director, Pacific World, Singapore
THEN Regional director, Asia, Pacific World, Singapore

ANDREW LANGDON

NOW Senior vice president for Asia, Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts, Hong Kong
THEN Executive vice president, Jones Lang LaSalle Hotels and Hospitality Group, Asia

GARTH SIMMONS

NOW COO, AccorHotels Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore
THEN Regional general manager, AccorHotels NSW and ACT

JANET MCNAB

NOW Managing director, Sheraton Macau Hotel, Cotai Central and St Regis Macao, Cotai Central
THEN Area general manager, Starwood Hotels & Resorts in South Thailand

BUHDY BOK

NOW President, Costa Group Asia
THEN President, Costa Asia, Costa Cruises Asia-Pacific and China

FILIP BOYEN

NOW CEO, Small Luxury Hotels of the World, London
THEN COO and senior vice president, Belmond

TANE PICKEN

NOW Hotel manager, Golden Sands Resort, Penang
THEN Resident manager, Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort & Spa, Singapore

TRADE CALENDAR *SEE YOU AT...*



Chengdu International Tourism Expo

December 3-5, 2015, Chengdu

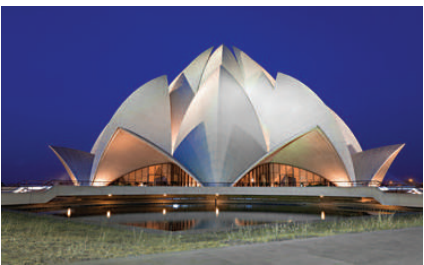
This mega-scale exhibition in western China provides a one-stop platform for all things related to tourism. It will have two segments: Commercial Chengdu and Leisure Chengdu for travel agents and consumers respectively.



FITUR

January 20-24, 2016, Madrid

Touted as a global meeting point for tourism professionals, last year's event drew over 9,400 companies from 165 countries and regions. Held annually, the leading trade fair for inbound and outbound Ibero-American markets is currently in its 36th edition.



SATTE

January 29-31, 2016, New Delhi

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Qatar Tourism Authority

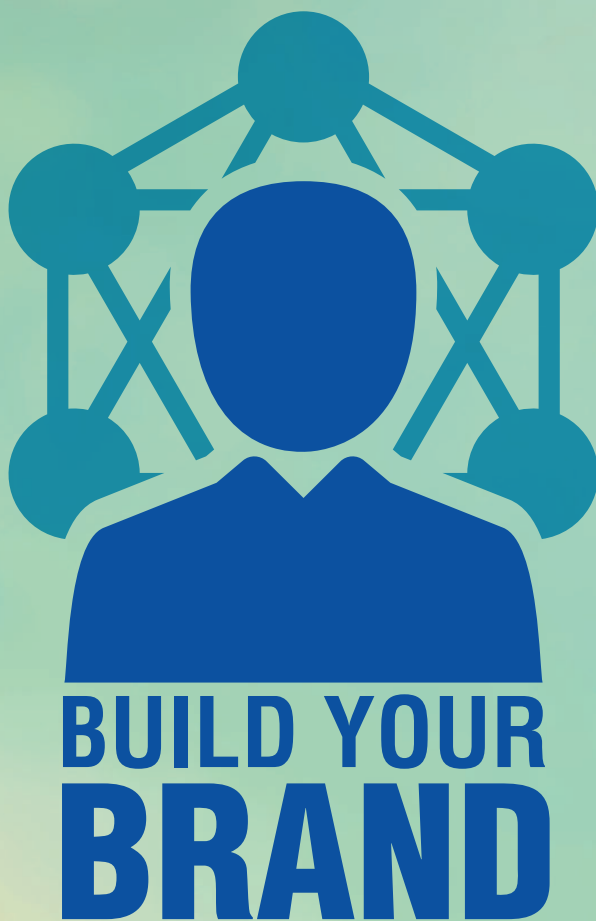
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HOTELS



AEROTEL SINGAPORE
The inaugural flagship transit hotel for Plaza Premium Group, Aerotel Singapore has launched at Changi Airport's Terminal 1 in October. Amenities include an outdoor pool, jacuzzi, gym and library lounge, plus a bespoke pillow menu. Rates are based on a six-hour block, beginning from S\$90-S\$130 (US\$65-US\$94) depending on room sizes, with every subsequent hour priced at S\$20 each.



WYNDHAM LEGEND HALONG, VIETNAM
Wyndham Hotel Group will launch its first property in Vietnam in early 2016. The 217-room Wyndham Legend Halong will be located in Halong City, the gateway to Halong Bay. Currently under construction, the US\$40 million development will boast all-day dining outlets, meeting rooms, a pool bar and an onsite gym.



DHAWA BO'AO, CHINA
Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts will open its fourth and newest hotel brand, Dhawa, in Bo'ao, China, come March 2016. The 346-key lifestyle hotel offers rooms with plush beds, bathrooms providing spa-branded amenities, communal spaces with complimentary refreshments, relaxation pods in the lobby, and an all-day restaurant and bar. Other facilities include a spa, fitness centre, kids club and meeting facilities.



VIB, LAOS
Best Western Hotels & Resorts will launch its first boutique hotel, Vib, in Vientiane, capital of Laos, in 2018. It will be located close to the night market, Lao National Museum, Black Stupa and Patuxai Arch, and will feature 70 rooms with free Wi-Fi. Other facilities include a social lobby area, a grab n' go snack station and a zen zone for relaxation.

TECHNOLOGY

MUSLIM-FRIENDLY HOTEL STANDARD PORTAL GOES LIVE
Malaysia-based Lagisatu has launched Salam Standard, an online hotel reference

tool dedicated to Muslim travellers. It caters to the specific accommodation requirements of Muslim travellers by providing information on Muslim-friendly amenities and services available at hotels and resorts. Faez Fadhilillah, CEO and co-founder of Lagisatu Travel, said more than 10,000

properties worldwide have already joined the initiative, including international hotel chains such as Accor Hotels, Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts and Anantara Hotels & Resorts. He added that it is his aim to encourage hotel operators to offer more facilities for Muslim travellers.



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It began by gazing up at dramatic, sheer rock cliffs from a speeding jet boat in New Zealand. Anthony Chan was on a family vacation and found that travel was both an exhilarating and bonding experience for his family. It was then that he knew he wanted to go into the family business. But when he began working with his father in 1983, the travel agency was small and mostly sold air and train tickets and packages to Asia. Anthony knew that in order to succeed, the agency would have to expand in both offerings and operations, and he set his sights on horizons around the globe.



"I wanted us to be recognized as a forward-thinking provider of travel solutions worldwide," Anthony stated.

And that is exactly what he has done through innovation, technology, creativity and a passion for travel. His staff – from offices in Singapore, Malaysia, Jakarta and Shanghai – is sent on trips around the world, so they can truly understand the unique packages they sell. And the agency leverages long-standing relationships with partners to offer exclusive opportunities. What's more, with increasing online and personal service touch points, the agency is more accessible than ever before. Today, the agency offers a wide array of options to meet almost every traveler's whim and fancy.

"Brand loyalty is vital with profit margins shrinking," he said. "But we accomplish this with new, exciting packages, exclusive benefits, special interest holiday trips, emergency assistance, and a deep passion for travel and travelers."

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#WhereNext?

Report Business travel

A NEW BREED OF ROAD WARRIORS

Millennials are quickly becoming a force to be reckoned with. Currently in their 20s and early 30s, these tech-savvy digital natives are expected to account for nearly half of the workforce by 2020, bringing with them vastly different travel habits and preferences from previous generations.

According to new study by GBTA, millennials are more likely to want to travel for business than baby boomers (45 per cent vs 26 per cent respectively).

On the road, this mobile-first generation care more about having access to Wi-Fi at airports and hotels, express a greater preference for using corporate cards over personal ones, and more likely to use social networking for a variety of purposes than their older cohorts.

At the same time, the rising appeal of the sharing economy has caught the eye of the millennial business traveller as an alternative mode of accommodation, sources revealed.

A rapidly changing workforce dynamic

Kevin O'Sullivan, CEO of travel technology provider Open Destinations, said: "What we have seen with our clients is

a shift in their customers' booking patterns. The millennials want hotel properties that are more casual and offer amenities like in-room music entertainment, free Wi-Fi and an environment that reflects their lifestyle.

"Many (millennial) customers expect their business travel to mirror their per-

sonal travel experience," he added.

General manager of FCm Travel Solutions, Bertrand Sallet, remarked: "Millennials today are familiar with alternative options like Airbnb, which are appealing because they offer local experience and interaction when staying within the community.

Companies must acknowledge that the sharing economy is here to stay.

There is a need to move away from the traditional format of preferred hotels and airlines and consider flexibility.

Bertrand Sallet
General manager, FCm Travel Solutions



"The different characteristics of the millennials obviously pose some challenges to companies, but also present opportunities to make travel policies more relevant," Sallet said, urging companies to adopt greater flexibility in their corporate travel policies as millennial employees increasingly look towards vacation rentals as accommodation choices.

He added: "Companies must acknowledge that the sharing economy is here to stay. There is a need to move away from the traditional format of preferred hotels and airlines and consider flexibility."

Alvan Aiau, vice president, global sales & program management, Asia-Pacific at Carlson Wagonlit Travel, agreed: "Sharing economy services are likely to gain in popularity, and what we see now is just the beginning. Whether they like it or not, companies should be mindful that corporate travellers are probably already using these services.

"Whether or not companies are comfortable integrating sharing economy offerings into their programmes ultimately depends on their culture. The more traditional, risk-averse companies may de-

As millennials join the workplace in droves, the different travel patterns and desires of this new generation are also changing the face of business travel. **Paige Lee Pei Qi** finds out how

cide that the risks outweigh the benefits,” added Aiau.

Capturing the business and loyalty of a new generation

In June this year, Airbnb expanded its Business Travel programme to start a worldwide roll-out of tools that will make it easier for companies to book accommodation for business trips through the short-term room rental service.

The expansion of these tools brings Airbnb closer in line with the traditional hotels, as it helps to promote their service as a viable alternative for business travellers. For instance, this new suite of tools provides visibility into employee travel itineraries and help track financial data to improve the business travel experience for travellers and travel managers.

Chip Conley, head of hospitality, Airbnb, said: “Airbnb offers inspired spaces in memorable places to make the most of any type of travel. Nearly 10 per cent of Airbnb’s customers already travel for business and we have heard from customers that this type of offering is high on their wish list.”

According to Conley, Airbnb for Business is “gaining a lot of traction”, and there are over 1,000 businesses including Google and SoundCloud in more than 35 countries which have signed up to use its business service.

Meanwhile, Airbnb’s business travel tools have found takers, particularly from the technology sector.

Darragh Ormsby, global travel manager of Google, said: “Our employees worldwide appreciate the choice and flexibility that Airbnb listings provide them when they are on the road – whether for conferences, meetings, or team offsites.”

Kelly Cammer, travel manager for Twilio, said: “Not only are we able to get better insights into how and when our employees are using Airbnb, but travellers are able to choose a place that feels like home at a price that fits our travel budgets (as well).”

Skepticism, challenges remain

However, TMCs and corporate travel managers do not entirely trust the sharing economy when it comes to meeting corporate travel criteria.

FCm’s Sallet noted that the majority of companies are not looking to change policies yet. “Most companies continue to stick with standard travel policies focusing on cost control and working with traditional providers. So far, companies have put in some effort and work with their partners to upgrade their technology without a real shift in paradigm,” he said.

“Clearly, there is more that can be done to tailor their travel policy to strike a balance between flexibility, accountability and safety of the employee,” he added.

Amarnath Lal Das, general manager, India Travel, Accenture, said: “To meet corporate travel requirements, certain standards need to be met. The big challenge we have seen with the corporate (sector) is data security and privacy.”

While Airbnb has come up with various categories of accommodations, they are not integrated into GDSs, said Lal Das. “You have got to integrate it with your programme. Integrating their technology and ours can be a challenge.

“In the meantime, while we are not officially open to (the shared economy providers), we do allow people to use with



The millennials want hotel properties that are more casual and offer amenities like in-room music entertainment, free Wi-Fi and an environment that reflects their lifestyle. Many (millennial) customers expect their business travel to mirror their personal travel experience.

Kevin O'Sullivan
CEO, Open Destinations

some do’s and don’ts,” he added. To aid companies on this front, Simon Akeroyd, vice president, corporate strategy and business development, Amadeus Asia-Pacific, said: “The key is collaboration across the industry and an openness to doing things differently. While not all sharing economy content would fit into our distribution business, there is a great opportunity to cooperate – be it with these new players expanding our online travel accommodation offers or them potentially becoming new distributors of our already existing GDS content.”

While Amadeus does not currently collaborate with Airbnb, Akeroyd said the company is “leading this charge” through partnerships with players in the same space such as BookingPal, a distribution and booking platform for vacation rental properties.

By plying to the travel preferences of this millennial generation, companies will be able to build their travel programmes into a staff retention strategy as well, and that reaps more benefits for the companies in the long run, said FCm Travel Solutions’ Sallet.

He said: “With so much online activity and the millennial travellers leaving a massive cyber trail, there are opportunities for suppliers to use the big data available to track traveller patterns and predict their needs to provide the best travel solution that meets their expectations.” – additional reporting from Mimi Hudoyo





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Guide Cruises

Asian cruise agents are spoilt for choice in 2016/2017 as cruise companies unleash new-gen ships, debut at exotic ports and unveil new innovations. Here's a guide compiled by [Raini Hamdi](#), [Karen Yue](#), [Xinyi Liang-Pholsena](#) and [S Puvaneswary](#)

Royal Caribbean's Quantum of the Seas



SAIL AWAY WITH THE GAME CHANGERS

COSTA CRUISES

China is set to become a focal point for Costa Cruises as the Italian cruise line has unveiled plans to introduce sister brands, Carnival Cruise Line and AIDA Cruises, to the Middle Kingdom come 2017.

Furthermore, when *Costa Fortuna* becomes Costa Cruises' fourth ship to be deployed to China in April 2016, it will boost capacity in the region by 49 per cent.

Homeported in Shanghai, *Costa Fortuna* will visit various popular port cities in North Asia, including Fukuoka, Kagoshima and Nagasaki in Japan, plus Incheon, Jeju and Busan in South Korea.

The 1,358-cabin ship is equipped with four restaurants, 11 bars and a 1,300m² wellness centre, in addition to such recreational facilities as a theatre on three levels, casino, water slide, shopping centre, library and disco.

Also known as "The Museum at Sea", *Costa Fortuna* features close to 5,000 world masterpieces and antiques, and is filled with exhibits and decor that hark back to its Italian seafaring traditions.

"In addition, we will launch a 46-day

trans-Pacific cruise with *Costa Atlantica* on November 30, 2016 from Tianjin, bringing guests to explore various islands in the Pacific and Oceania," a Costa Crociere spokesperson told *TTG Asia*.

CRYSTAL CRUISES

The luxury cruise line this month launches the all-inclusive Crystal Yacht Cruises, fielding the new *Crystal Esprit* with just 31 suites, personal butlers, Michelin star-level cuisine and even a private submersible.

The 3,000-ton yacht's maiden seven-day voyage will explore the Seychelles when it sets sail on December 23, 2015, ending with an inclusive, post-cruise New Year's Eve celebration at the Taj Dubai Hotel.

"The overnight package in Dubai for the New Year is a fantastic addition for the Christmas/New Year's Seychelles voyage. We've included this as most clients will be using commercial air via Dubai, but if guests are using their own private jet to join us and prefer not to avail of the overnight adventure, we will offer a tour

credit," said Marnie Whipple-Tarsinos, regional sales manager Asia-Pacific, Crystal Cruises.

Come 2017, Crystal will enter into river cruising with Crystal River Cruises, bringing its all-inclusive service onto the waterways.

Crystal Luxury Air will also mark the company's foray into air travel on board a specially configured Dreamliner, which flies 60 guests in fully reclining business class seats to destinations where major airlines do not offer nonstop service.

New parent Genting Hong Kong has also just bought Lloyd Werft, a shipyard in Bremerhaven, Germany, with which it earlier this year signed a letter of intent to build Crystal's Exclusive Class ocean vessels, which are polar class cruise ships expected to debut in late 2018.

CUNARD

Travel agents can look forward to new designs and experiences on *Queen Mary 2*, the world's biggest ocean liner and the only cruise ship with regular transatlantic

service between New York and its homeport in UK's Southampton, following a 25-day dry dock refurbishment from May 27 to June 21, 2016.

Richard Meadows, president, North America, Cunard, said: "Guests will enjoy new designs and experiences that reflect the changing needs of today's passengers, including 15 Single Staterooms, 30 additional Britannia Club Balcony Staterooms, and an expansion to the ship's dedicated kennels."

While the Single Stateroom supports passengers travelling alone, the Britannia Club Balcony Staterooms offer flexibility in dining arrangements, allowing guests to dine at a time of their own choosing. As well, *Queen Mary 2* will be the only cruise liner in the world to offer dedicated kennels, carrying up to 12 dogs and cats.

Another bright spot will be Cunard's 2017 World Cruise Programme, as the global ocean line has planned five calls to ports that none of its three ships – *Queen Mary 2*, *Queen Elizabeth* and *Queen Victoria* – have ever visited before.

"*Queen Victoria* will visit South America, venturing into the Amazon River for

COSTA CRUISES



Costa Fortuna
Arriving
Asia
April 2016

Costa welcomes you to a greener cruise

Costa Cruises' sustainability initiatives go from land to sea and into the future, as the company puts into practice a commitment to minimise its environmental impact even as it launches new, even more exciting experiences and itineraries for guests.

SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Costa Cruises, Europe's number one cruise company, has expanded its concept of sustainability worldwide including Asia. In its latest "Sustainability Report - Results for 2014 and Outlook for the Future" (right), the company highlighted the results of its wide-ranging initiatives. These include 100% separated waste, fleetwide use of LED lighting and the world's first LNG-powered ship due for delivery in 2019.

Guests on Costa Cruises may have already noticed some of these measures. But behind the scenes, Costa Cruises employees, both shoreside and shipboard, are implementing new earth-friendly, community-building activities worldwide.

Foremost among the company's sustainability considerations are fuel and



A detailed report from Costa Cruises.

electricity consumption, water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, waste management and supply chain management.

The results from 2014 were very encouraging: 9% reduction in fuel consumption per passenger/day; 3% reduction in the company's carbon footprint; and 9.7% reduction in energy consumption.

INNOVATION AT WORK

New technologies play a major role. Seven ships have been installed with an Exhaust Gas Cleaning system. The replacement of existing light globes with low-power LED lamps on all ships have resulted in 80% energy savings.

Guest may not be aware of this, but 100% of materials and products consumed on board are collected and separated for disposal and recycling.

62% of the water used onboard Costa Cruises' ships is produced by means of special desalination plants while the remaining is supplied in ports during stopovers.

In 2014, there was a 1.36% reduction in water consumption rate.

LOCAL ECONOMIES

Sustainability also means creating value by generating



Biodiversity, climate change and contribution to the economic development of local destinations are among the themes covered in Costa Cruises' wide-ranging sustainability programmes.

new opportunities for business and employment. The company has more than 8,800 suppliers in five continents across 261 ports of call.

21 new destinations were added in 2014 alone. The combined global impact of Costa Cruises' operations is tremendous. When a Costa ship arrives at a destination, it brings not only new visitors who will buy from local businesses, but also creates new demand for service providers and merchants, such as suppliers of fresh foods.

SHIPS OF THE FUTURE

In July this year, Costa Cruises announced that it has ordered the construction of the first two cruise ships in the world to be powered by liquefied natural gas (LNG), the world's cleanest burning fossil fuel. They will be delivered in 2019 and 2020.

In Asia, the company will add *Costa Fortuna* to its fleet in April 2016, boosting capacity by 49%. From North Asia to Southeast Asia, Costa Cruises' unique Italian sense of elegance and cruise experience have won over many travellers.



Costa Cruises tracks each vessel's sustainability performance.

About Costa Cruises in Asia

By April 2016, Costa Cruises will have four ships based in Asia—Costa Fortuna, Costa Atlantica, Costa Victoria and Costa Serena. They are all designed to provide a unique "Italy at Sea" experience rich with Italian culture, hospitality, cuisine and art. www.costacruisesasia.com

Guide Cruises



Cunard's Queen Mary 2



Crystal Cruises' Crystal Symphony

a five-night exploration, which will not only be a first for the current Cunard fleet, but will also break the record for the largest cruise ship ever to transit the Amazon. *Queen Mary 2* will also sail a unique set of round-trip voyages including full round-trip New York, as well as Hong Kong and Shanghai sailings,” said Meadows.

NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) will return to Asia and Australia for the first time next year since Norwegian Wind Fall/Winter 2001-2002.

According to William Harber, NCL's senior vice president & managing director Asia, there will be new ports to choose from in 2016 and 2017, including cruises to Asia onboard the *Norwegian Star*, with itineraries departing from Istanbul, Dubai, Singapore, Hong Kong, Sydney and Auckland, and first-ever visits to The Gulf and India.

In 2017, the company will introduce a purpose-built ship customised for the China market, which NCL's CEO Frank Del Rio hopes will be a game-changer. “Our new purpose-built ship for China will have characteristics that are authentic to (NCL) and yet distinctively Chinese in all of its sensibility. With this new ship, we will introduce a new standard of innovation and excellence into the marketplace, with an unrivalled level of customisation for the Chinese consumer. It will perfectly suit what modern Chinese

travellers value from an upscale cruise experience.”

The new ship will be the second of NCL's Breakaway Plus class and will feature the line's Freestyle Cruising concept. With a capacity of 4,200 guests, it will provide the same sense of freedom and flexibility found on all NCL ships, but with experiences and amenities designed specifically with the Chinese guest in mind.

PRINCESS CRUISES

Princess Cruises will base a new ship, *Majestic Princess*, in China year-round, beginning in summer 2017. The ship, which is being built now, will incorporate a blend of international and Chinese features.

Homeported in Shanghai, carrying 3,560 guests on cruises to Japan and South Korea, the 143,000-ton vessel's innovations will include a dramatic multistorey atrium serving as the social hub of the ship; a unique over-the-ocean SeaWalk (a glass-floor walkway extending 8m beyond the edge of the ship; the Princess Live! interactive studio; and Chef's Table Lumiere, a private dining experience that surrounds guests in a curtain of light. The ship will also offer Princess' signature Movies Under the Stars, with the largest outdoor screen at sea, and Princess Watercolor Fantasy fountain and light show.

“We're excited that Shanghai will be welcoming this newest, most advanced addition to the Princess fleet, as it represents our brand's long-term commitment to the continuing growth of the China

market,” said Jan Swartz, president, Princess Cruises.

Meanwhile, Princess Cruises has sealed several partnerships to enhance onboard experiences. This includes a multi-year agreement with three-time Oscar-winner and composer of *Wicked*, *Pippin* and *Godspell*, Stephen Schwartz, who will oversee the creative development of four new musicals to debut across its fleet over the next few years.

As well, in partnership with Australia's celebrity chef Curtis Stone, the cruise line has unveiled SHARE by Curtis Stone, his first restaurant at sea. SHARE is scheduled to debut aboard *Ruby Princess* and *Emerald Princess* this December.

And travel agencies with clients who love to sing can entice them with *The Voice of the Ocean*. As with the popular international singing competition, The Voice, the show comes to life throughout the cruise with auditions, mentor rehearsal sessions, the iconic spinning chairs, three charismatic team coaches and a live finale performance where guests choose the winner.

ROYAL CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL

Look out for *Ovation of the Seas*, a Quantum Class vessel that is being built in Germany, and is particularly exciting for Sean Treacy, Royal Caribbean International's (RCI) managing director Singapore and South-east Asia, “because it is the first new-build ship to come straight to Asia for our brand. Its sister ship *Quantum of the Seas* is fairly new too, but it spent a sea-

son in New York before coming to Asia”.

With a capacity of over 4,000 passengers, the ship's fun facilities include the RipCord by iFly air machine that lets your clients soar in a safe, controlled environment and the North Star capsule that ascends over 91m above sea level. There are also more family-friendly interconnected modular staterooms and venues that transform throughout the day to serve different purposes.

Ovation of the Seas will kick off its inaugural season from Southampton in April, offering several European cruises before journeying to Asia. Ports of call along the way include Aqaba, Muscat, Cochin, Penang, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong, Xiamen and Seoul. Three-night round-trip cruises from Singapore to Port Klang will also be offered, as will two New Zealand cruises from Sydney on December 15, 2016 (15 nights) and Jan 9, 2017 (14 nights).

Further afield, *Harmony of the Seas*, an Oasis Class ship, which is also under construction currently, will begin its maiden journey in May 2016. Based out of Barcelona, the ship will offer cruises around Europe and the Caribbean. Innovations include robotic bartenders and a wonderland of slides, water cannons and waterfalls to keep children busy.

Meanwhile, Royal Caribbean has increased the frequency of sailings from Singapore to over 40 a year, by deploying its 3,807-guest *Mariner of the Seas* from October to early April next year.

The deployment of more cruise programmes in Asia through *Ovation of the Seas* and *Mariner of the Seas* helps to attract first-time cruisers, Treacy said.

“We have noticed around the world that a lot of first-time cruisers like to stay close to home. Our programmes out of Singapore allow these first-timers to sample the cruise product and still stay close to home,” he explained, adding that thematic cruises are instrumental in getting new customers onboard.

Mariner of the Seas will host RCI's first

RIVER CRUISES

AQUA EXPEDITIONS

A collection of new bespoke excursions by the *Aqua Mekong* has been launched. Offering nine-to-five adventure, they take guests to undiscovered areas of the river to enjoy experiences unlike any other found along the Mekong River, according to Aqua Expeditions.

“The latest experiences to be added to the Mekong itinerary truly embrace the Cambodian and Vietnamese cultures, and allow guests to really immerse themselves into the local environment and experience a different way of

life at their own pace,” a spokesman said.

For example, to explore parts of the river not accessible by larger vessels, guests will climb aboard *Aqua Mekong's* private skiffs and paddle through floating markets, where more than 400 sampans gather every day, starting in earnest from 05.00. Guests can continue their day adventures by bicycle or local rickshaw ride for more up-close encounters with Mekong River inhabitants.

The 20-suite *Aqua Mekong* departs weekly from either Ho Chi Minh City, Siem Reap or Phnom Penh, and itineraries are available for three, four or seven nights.

The whole vessel can also be chartered.

PANDAW

The company has unveiled a new seven-night river recce itinerary on the Upper Mekong River sailing from Thailand's river port town of Chiang Saen through Myanmar and Laos, and will – for the first time – cross the border into China to the city of Jinghong in Yunnan Province.

Pandaw's founder, Paul Strachan, said: “It



Laos Pandaw



Tonle Sap, Cambodia

Aqua Expeditions

has been a long-held dream to sail the length of the navigable sections of the Mekong River; now we can. There is much to explore in this undiscovered region; travellers need to be up for a real adventure as the daily itinerary might change, but with a flexible attitude, they will have the adventure of a lifetime.”

The recces will sail aboard the 20-pax *Laos Pandaw*, specifically designed and built for sailing on the Upper Mekong with 10 main deck staterooms, low draught and extra powerful engines.

Pandaw also operates cruises in Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and India.

UNIWORLD BOUTIQUE RIVER CRUISES

Uniwold Boutique River Cruises goes to Asia with a 12-night sailing through India's most popular destinations and its sacred river, the Ganges, beginning 2016.

The India's Golden Triangle & the Sacred Ganges tour begins in New Delhi and ends in Kolkata on the new all-suite *Ganges Voyager II*. The ship has a maximum capacity of 56 guests.

cosplay-themed cruise. Cosfest at Sea will set sail January 8, 2016 from Singapore to Port Klang over three nights. Treacy expects demand to come from all over the Asian region.

SILVERSEA CRUISES

A new flagship, *Silver Muse*, described by Silversea Cruises’ regional director-Asia as a game-changer in luxury cruise concept, will sail the seas in April 2017.

Built by Italian shipbuilding company Fincantieri, the 40,000-ton ship will accommodate 596 guests in spacious all-suite cabins.

The addition of the *Silver Muse* will expand Silversea’s fleet to nine. Additional details and specifications of the new ship will be announced in the near future.

Meanwhile, travel agents can cast their eye on the *Silver Discoverer* which will visit Bangladesh in 2017 – a first in the luxury segment, according to Yap.

Although the Bangladesh sailing, which has not been officially published, will only depart in February 2017, 50 bookings on it have been made “just by talking to our regular guests”, said Yap, adding: “There is a hunger for new destinations.”

STAR CRUISES

Genting Hong Kong is anticipating the arrival of its first of two newly-built mega cruise ships, scheduled to be homeported in Asia in fall 2016.

The new class of ships expands its fleet in Asia to meet growing demand across the region, said Ang Moo Lim, executive vice president of sales, marketing & hotels, Genting Hong Kong.

Travel agents can expect innovations such as “a shopping paradise at sea”, as Ang put it, a mammoth 1,000m² of designated retail lifestyle shops featuring international luxury brands.

The new ships will also be outfitted

with state-of-the-art deep-sea submersibles for guests to gain new perspectives of rich undersea landscapes and wildlife.

“To further strengthen the Star Cruises brand and offerings in North Asia in 2016, Star Cruises will also review the possibility of expanding its homeport footprint to

new destinations such as to the Pearl River Delta in China,” she added.

Innovations last year included Beatship, a revolutionary series of beach club parties taking place aboard *Superstar Virgo*’s newly-renovated nightclub, ACES, to attract a younger, more lifestyle driven

group of guests. Featuring world-class DJs and performers, Beatship has been an unqualified success in bringing this new segment on board its ships and through collaborations with international club brands such as Zouk. Beatship is ongoing in 2016.





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Guests will stay at Oberoi Hotels and Resorts Collection in New Delhi, Agra and Jaipur during the five-day land portion of the itinerary.

Travellers can also opt for a two-night extension to the holy city of Varanasi, known in India as the holiest spot on its holiest river.

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2015 Nov 23, 30, Dec 17
2016 Jan 11, 18, Feb 5, 22, 29
Ports-of-call: Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang),
Langkawi, Phuket

5/7^-NIGHT
SPICE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA CRUISE

Singapore Departures:
2015 Dec 7, 12, 24, 29
2016 Jan 3, 22^, Feb 9, 14
Ports-of-call: Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang),
Penang, Langkawi, Phuket

7-NIGHT
THAILAND AND VIETNAM CRUISE

Singapore Departures:
2016 Jan 29
Ports-of-call: Bangkok (Laem Chabang,
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A FRESH TAKE ON A POPULAR ISLAND



Jeju may no longer be associated as a honeymoon destination once Resorts World Jeju comes online from 2017

While Jeju is well-established as a honeymoon destination with its charming beaches and scenery, there will be something fresh for the island to shout about with the upcoming Resorts World Jeju (RWJ), which broke ground in February this year.

Slated to open progressively from 2017, the integrated resort is a US\$1.8 billion development which will occupy 2.5 million square metres of land, and is said to be the largest on the island.

Comprising a casino, a theme park, a water park, retail and food complexes, hotels and a spa, RWJ is a joint project between Chinese developer Landing International Development and Genting Singapore. The resort, which is expected to be completed by 2019, will be five times bigger than its Singapore counterpart.

Welcoming this project at its groundbreaking ceremony, Jeju governor Won Hee Ryong, said: "We are confident that this resort will further strengthen Jeju island's reputation as a holiday paradise."

RWJ will house Jeju's largest family theme park offering more than 20 rides and attractions in seven different zones themed after myths and legends from all over the world. The integrated resort will also boast the island's largest adventure waterpark. Its premium hotels will have more than 2,000 rooms and luxury villas, as well as the island's first six-star hotel.

Lim Kok Thay, Genting Singapore's

executive chairman, said: "RWJ will be a game changer in Jeju. We believe it can help Jeju attain its goal of surpassing 15 million tourists by 2018."

According to the latest statistics from the Jeju Convention and Visitors Bureau (JCVB), 12 million people visited the island last year, a year-on-year increase of 13 per cent.

Dooyoun Hwang, president of US Travel in Seoul, said: "There will definitely be new interest in Jeju with this resort, especially for families who enjoy theme parks. It will be a big new thing for us to sell when it is ready."

Likewise, Jane Tour & DMC's team manager, Jay Lee, said: "This will be an attractive offering we can promote in addition to all the island offerings Jeju provides. It is something very different that will add variety to our attractions in Jeju."

However, president of Holiday Planners, Daehong Kim, adopts a more cautious stance. He said: "Jeju island is famous for its natural attractions and its priority on ecotourism. By having a man-made attraction, it will be useful for tourism, but it will be against the policy of presenting Jeju as a clean and natural island."

Meanwhile, with its offering of world-class facilities and attractions, RWJ looks set to grow its proportion of foreign visitors. Of the 12 million tourists that visited the island last year, 8.9 million were domestic visitors (74 per cent) while 2.8 million were Chinese, a market which grew

55 per cent from 2013.

While Jeju is popular with the Chinese market, JCVB's marketing director Cho Jin Hun said there is rising interest from South-east Asia too, especially from Indonesia and Vietnam. The destination last year recorded 36,850 visitors (+62 per cent year-on-year) from Indonesia and 32,000 (+76 per cent) from Vietnam.

The appeal of Korea drama could be a reason driving these "rapidly growing" markets, said Cho. To raise greater awareness about Jeju's offerings, the CVB intends to participate in more international exhibitions, and may organise fam trips.

Viewpoints

What else is needed to promote Jeju?



Daehong Kim, president, Holiday Planners

Increased awareness about what (other activities) the island can offer, apart from the beaches, because that is what everyone thinks Jeju is about. There are a lot of other (cultural attractions) like dialects, food, customs and myths in Jeju that more people should know about.

Jay Lee, team manager, Jane Tour & DMC

We have a lot of local Korean restaurants there already so I think we need more international restaurants to appeal to the foreign (visitors) who may not always enjoy Korean cuisine or may want a taste of their comfort food. We especially need halal cuisine too.



How to sell

DO Experience the vibrant indie music and club scene of **Hongdae**, located just outside Hongik University in Seoul. The best time to do so is **Live Club Day**, held on the last Friday of the month, when a single 20,000 Korean won (US\$17.50) will get you into 10 live music clubs and concert venues. The district is where you'll find some of Seoul's finest dining and nightlife too.

SEE Don't miss the transcendent beauty of **Changdeokgung Palace's Huwon Garden**. The garden, registered along with the rest of the palace as a UNESCO World Heritage site, makes superb use of the hilly terrain to produce exquisite, naturalistic landscapes seemingly pulled from the canvas of traditional Korean ink paintings.

EAT **Korean royal court cuisine**, modelled on the cooking style employed in palace kitchens during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), is the pinnacle of Korean cooking. A royal dinner may include white and sweetened rice, a stew, a hot pot, a dozen side dishes, sauces and the obligatory kimchi, all made from the finest ingredients and artfully presented, table d'hôte-style. Try it at **Korea House**, an arts and culture centre at the foot of Mount Namsan.

STAY For a very Korean experience, try **Rakkojae**, a hanok boutique hotel in Bukchon Hanok Village. A century-old home, Rakkojae has four Korean-style rooms, meaning guests sleep on the floor, which is heated using Korea's ingenious heating system of underfloor flues. The hotel also hosts cultural programmes, including classes on kimchi-making.

Already famed for its natural beauty, a new intergrated resort on South Korea's island hopes to give tourists a more compelling reason to visit, reports **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Destination in numbers

15 million

Number of inbound tourists South Korea welcomed in 2014, a 16 per cent rise from the previous year and the highest growth rate in a decade

636

Number of international conferences South Korea hosted in 2014, placing South Korea fourth worldwide and second in Asia, just behind Singapore

2nd

According to the China National Tourism Administration, South Korea was the second favourite travel destination for mainland Chinese tourists in 2014, after Hong Kong. South Korea was however, the favourite destination for mainland Chinese tourists in 1Q2015, prior to the outbreak of MERS

MY WAY

How do you spend your free time?

I enjoy spending my free time discovering new things such as eco-gardening, which I learnt from Pinterest earlier this year. I made my backyard garden with eco-friendly materials collected from around my house. It gives me an opportunity to develop creative ideas, a break from my routines.

What's your favourite hobby?

Cooking became my hobby during my student days when I cooked for friends. I have created a secret recipe cookbook with the various dishes and ingredients that I have tried over the years.

What is a must-do/see in Seoul?

Discover Seoul with the metro. It does not cost a lot but it is much more interesting to see how Seoulites live. You will also see Seoul city from another point of view.

Visit local markets like Dongdaemun market, Gwangjang Market, Namdaemun Market and Noryangjin Fisheries Wholesale Market. At some of these markets, you can spend a day shopping, dining, sightseeing and people watching.

Can you recommend top dining spots in Seoul?

For an authentic Korean meal, visit Samcheongdong or Insadong streets, where there are many traditional, reasonably-priced restaurants.

For a Korean BBQ, head to Majang-dong, where you can also see a local meat market.

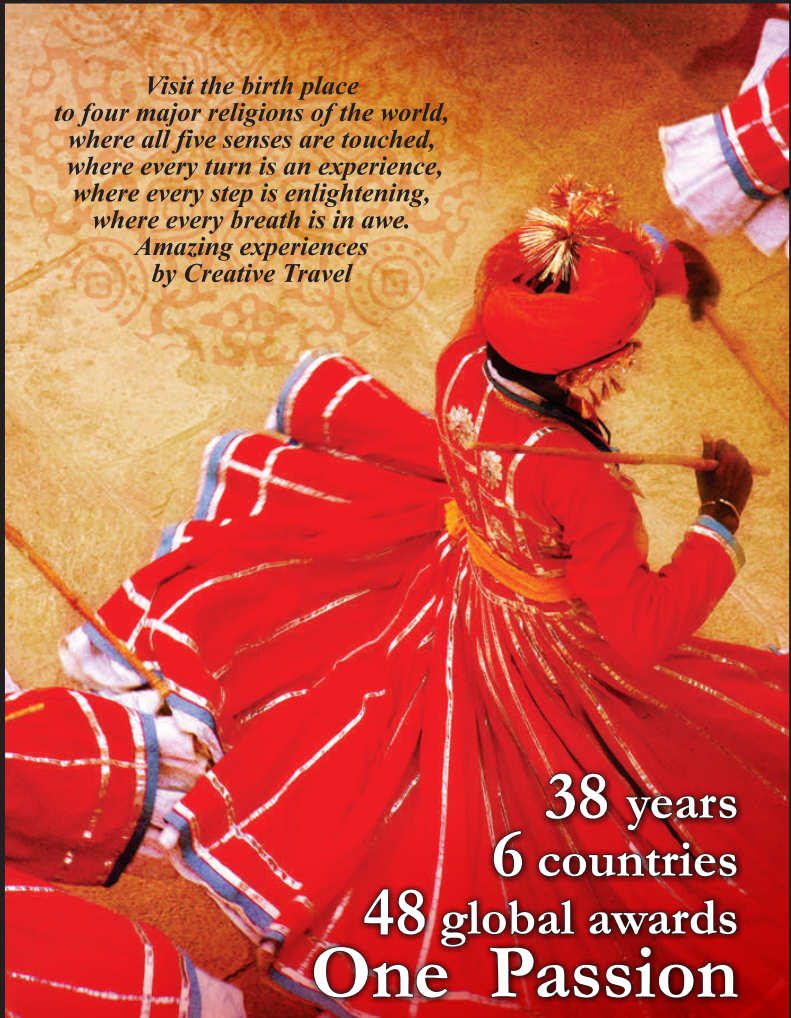
Which is your favourite attraction in South Korea?

It is all about fashion, fashion and fashion in Myeongdong, Seoul's primary and most famous shopping district. Myeongdong also houses a variety of family restaurants, fast food eateries,



Tchang Young Lee
General manager,
Hotel ibis budget Ambassador Seoul
Dongdaemun

plus Korean, Western and Japanese dining options. This is also the place where everyone shops for popular South Korean cosmetic brands.



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Market Hong Kong, whose 7.2 million citizens can visit 140 destinations visa free, **spent US\$22.1 billion on international travel** and made 86 million departures in 2014, thus ranked Asia's **4th largest outbound market and 15th in the world***.

* Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

Exhibitors & Visitors ITE & MICE 2015 drew from 50 countries and regions 607 exhibitors (85% from abroad); **11874 buyers and trade visitors** (75% from Hong Kong & 18% China; 52% from travel agents and 21% from MICE) in trade days; and **78116 public visitors** with overwhelming majority preferring FIT.



Themes Attractive to affluent travelers, FIT and travel trade serving them, themes highlighted in ITE & MICE included **MICE / Corporate Travel** (180 exhibitors), **Sport, Adventures, Eco-tourism, Honeymoon & Overseas Wedding, Travel Photography, Culture and Heritage** (each some 50 exhibitors); **Cruises and Wellness** etc

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Destination South Korea

NEWS IN A MINUTE

- 1

Four Seasons Hotel Seoul

The Four Seasons brand has arrived in Seoul with the opening of its first Korean property in October.

Located downtown, the hotel has 317 rooms, including 32 suites, which sport chic, modern décor with Korean motifs. The rooms also boast floor-to-ceiling windows with views of Gyeongbokgung Palace and Mount Namsan.
- 2

Air Canada

From June 17, 2016, Air Canada will begin daily flights between Toronto's Pearson International Airport and Seoul's Incheon International Airport on Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner aircraft.

The flight will depart from Toronto at 13.35 to arrive in Seoul at 16.20 the following day. From Seoul, the flight will take off at 15.00 and land in Toronto at 14.50.
- 3

Citadines Haeundae Busan

Opened in October, the Citadines Haeundae Busan is the southern port city's first internationally-owned serviced residence.

Just 10 minutes from Haeundae Beach, the residence is housed in a 42-storey multipurpose building. The property is operated by The Ascott, and is the largest Citadines property in the world with 468 rooms.

- 4

Ibis Styles Ambassador Seoul Gangnam

Formerly known as the ibis Ambassador Seoul Gangnam, the refurbished and rebranded AccorHotels has opened the ibis Styles Ambassador Seoul Gangnam. It is located in the Teheran-Ro business area of the Gangnam district, near several entertainment and shopping attractions and a 10-minute walk from the COEX Convention Centre.

Amenities in the 317-room hotel includes a 24-hour gym, sauna, the 110-seat pop art-themed Fresh 365 Dining restaurant as well as the Le Bar café and bar lounge.

For event planners, the hotel features three function rooms that are equipped to host meetings, banquets, seminars and cocktail parties for up to 50 guests.
- 5

Medical tourism

The Seoul government announced on October 26 a comprehensive plan to develop the city's medical tourism industry with the goal of attracting 400,000 medical tourists a year.

The plan calls for major infra-

structural developments, including the establishment of a one-stop information centre by 2018.

Some 155,000 tourists visited Seoul for medical reasons last year; the number of foreign patients who have come to the city has grown 25 per cent over the last three years.



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Destination Thailand

Thailand's community-based tourism initiatives are driven by a rising interest in sustainable tourism and authentic experiences, discovers **Greg Lowe**



Destination in numbers

28.2 million

Number of international tourist arrivals expected for Thailand in 2015, up from 24.8 million last year

2.2 trillion baht

Projected tourism earnings (equivalent to US\$61.8 billion) in 2015, comprising 1.4 billion baht from international tourism and the remaining from domestic tourism

6.1 million

Number of arrivals from China from January to September 2015, a 96 per cent surge from the same period last year

SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNITIES

TAT lends its support to CBT initiatives such as the water-based community of Amphawa in Samut Songkhram

Travel consultants are incorporating more community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives in their Thailand itineraries, driven by increased demand for more authentic cultural experiences from clients as well as a growing interest in sustainable travel.

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is also bringing increasing support to the CBT sector. Part of its 2015 *Discover Thainess* campaign focuses on the so-called 12 Hidden Gems, provinces renowned for their unique history, culture and lifestyle, which includes projects such as Ban Nam Chiao Community in Trat, Klong Rua Community in Chumphon, Klong Noi Community in Surat Thani and Ban Bang Phlab Community in Samut Songkhram.

TAT has expanded its support for CBT beyond marketing to include a number of other initiatives. Its Green Community (under the 7 Greens project) and Thailand Tourism Awards have been developed to encourage entrepreneurs to improve product standards. The NTO has also set up the Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute to help establish guidelines for related products, which a spokesman said was key to the sector's development.

CBT projects should be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure the sustainable development of the local communities, said Graham Read, sustainability and responsible tourism manager at Khiri Group.

"Many products in Thailand are marketed as CBT, but aren't at all. Just because tourism occurs in a community doesn't

mean it's CBT," he said.

"There is confusion that CBT is 'responsible tourism'. CBT can be 'responsible' but this is not always the case. The quality of CBT should be judged by the quality of the product and the benefit to the community as a whole."

Another core challenge is navigating the fine line between providing an authentic experience of traditional life in a community and supporting a product which could actually hinder local development, said Soren Wettendorff, product development director, Destination Asia Thailand.

"In many people's view, not least some NGOs, CBT has to be a primitive experience, almost like an expedition into the agonising everyday life of poor people," he said. "(Too many people think) if it does not look poor and worn out it is not CBT. To me this (perception) is like trying to keep the population underdeveloped."

Successful CBT projects should become financially sustainable and self-funding after their set-up phase, he elaborated, and both the industry and tourists alike should become more accepting of local communities achieving the aspirations of the wider society at large.

Many DMCs and travel consultants, including luxury specialists, are currently marketing CBT as elements of an itinerary rather than the focus of an entire trip. The trade also needs to be selective about the source targets and demographics to which it markets such products.

"CBT in Thailand is becoming more popular, but not for all markets," said Read. "For Khiri Travel, CBT is generally

more popular with the young European market (Millennials) interested in soft adventure; it's less popular with the American market. There also tends to be a perception amongst baby boomers that CBT cannot be associated with comfort."

Wettendorff said community initiatives focused on wildlife and nature are often more successful and easier to sell than those offering cultural experiences.

"When it comes to direct interaction with local communities, I find that it's a lot harder for people in general to handle," he said. "The guests are afraid of being annoying to the local people and locals being afraid about not pleasing their 'donors' in the right way."

Yann Gouriou, founder and managing director of Unicorn Hospitality, which manages Maekok River Village Resort in northern Thailand, said using a more conventional business, such as a hotel which works with the wider local community can be effective for developing CBT.

Maekok River Village Resort, in part due to its relatively remote location, has always worked closely with the local community "both as (a place of employment for locals), an education centre and a resort offering tours and educational programmes for students and hotel guests alike," he said.

The property has also helped support local schools, raising more than 20 million baht (US\$568,700) for some 150 projects over the past 11 years, and has developed strong links with a weaving cooperative run by Shan women in the nearby village of Ban Mai Mok Cham.

Viewpoints

What are the challenges and opportunities in community-based tourism?



Sugree Sithivanich, deputy governor for marketing communications, Tourism Authority of Thailand

In enabling rural communities to develop tourist attractions, it is pivotal that their operations are constantly monitored to ensure (high) standards as well as to prevent unsustainable overexposure. This goes back to our ongoing activities to promote the 7 Greens and the Thailand Tourism Awards, as well as the activities under the Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute.

Graham Read, sustainability and responsible tourism manager, Khiri Group



CBT projects are often set up with a lot of funding and goodwill. However, when the funding and technical support discontinue, the project will not survive if it isn't in demand. Having the private sector involved in the set-up can dictate how desirable they are in the future... Most CBT projects are located in rural areas where hospitality and business skills may be lacking, therefore many initiatives lack a solid business plan as well as marketing expertise.

Destination Thailand

How to sell

EAT **Seedlings Phuket** is Banyan Tree's first social enterprise restaurant in Thailand. Head to this restaurant, which resides within Laguna Phuket, for a taste of southern Thai specialities and to show support for disadvantaged and marginalised local youths who commit themselves to the 18-month training programme in return for career and personal development.



Seedlings Phuket

DO Cycling is all the rage in Thailand now, so join local enthusiasts to explore the length and breadth of the country on two wheels. In Bangkok, hot favourites for recreational cycling include **Suan Rot Fai**, a lush park near Chatuchak Weekend Market, and the 23.5km **Green Cycle Track** around Suvarnabhumi International Airport.

STAY This family-friendly 36-room **Maekok River Village Resort** outside of Chiang Mai provides a window into rural life along the Maekok River. The resort also features an education centre and arranges a number of eco and cultural activities involving local communities. Camping is available for larger groups and school trips.

SEE Andaman Discoveries runs a number of tours involving the **Moken** ethnic community living in and around Koh Surin National Park in southern Thailand. The business works with the nomadic community to provide education, fun-packed trips around the area, all of which present the unique culture and traditions of the Moken.



Maekok River Village Resort

MY WAY

What's your favourite dish and where can you get it?

I love *khao yam*, or southern Thai style salad, as it's a refreshing and healthy dish made of a variety of local vegetables and herbs with *budu* (fermented fish sauce) dressing. I usually buy it from the weekend morning market near my house; they use lotus leaf packaging instead of plastic bag – very environmental friendly!

One way to see the hidden side of Bangkok is to...

walk, talk and taste. The best way to explore the city is on foot or bike to capture the insights, chat with the locals to learn about their lifestyles and try the street food in the market. I suggest Hua Takae, a canal-side community in Lat Krabang area (close to Suvarnabhumi airport), which is still relatively unknown to tourists or even some locals. I recently spent an afternoon strolling along the canal to see the beautiful wooden houses, local art exhibition and the fresh market.

Which is your favourite holiday spot in Thailand and why?

Phang Nga never disappoints me. This province offers all kinds of natural beauty (mountains, national parks, diving spots, scenic roads, easy access to the outlying archipelagos, etc), colourful culture and food (local

southern food and fresh seafood). I can enjoy many outdoor activities here, experience a homestay or even a luxury beach break.

Do you have a favourite hotel in Thailand?

I have stayed in over 100 hotels in Thailand, but my all-time favourites include Ariyasom Villa in Bangkok for its warm, homey feel, Four Seasons Resort Chiang Mai for the beautiful setting and great service, and Iniala Beach House in Phuket for the real luxury experience.

Name one unusual attraction in Thailand

The savannah landscape of Koh Phra Thong, off the coast of Phang Nga. My friends and I stayed a weekend there with the friendly locals in their home; they drove us around on a local tractor to explore the huge beautiful golden blanket of grassland, and we had delicious freshly caught seafood and access to a private beach.

Soontarut Wattanahongsiri
Product manager
South-east Asia,
Abercrombie &
Kent Thailand



NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 Dream Phuket Hotel & Spa
Dream Phuket Hotel & Spa will open on November 15, 2015 on Bang Tao Beach, offering 174 guestrooms, suites and villas.
Hotel amenities include the swim-up Pool Bar with private cabanas and sun beds; Indulge, a lounge featuring over 200 types of wine, tapas and a selection of cigars; the Sanctuary spa; and Dream Beach, a beach

club located five minutes away from Layan Beach.
A main highlight is Trilogy, the hotel's signature restaurant offering food by Michelin-star chefs.

2 Modena by Fraser Bangkok
This 239-unit serviced residence is set to open in the Thai capital in 2016, marking the brand's launch in Thailand following its debut in

China in 2010 by Frasers Hospitality.
The property will be sited within a mixed-use development, FYI Center, located at the corner of Rama IV Road, near Queen Sirikit MRT and the National Convention Centre.

Units range from fully furnished studios to three-bedroom apartments, and come with complimentary high-speed Internet access. Facilities include a 24-hour gym, steam and sauna facilities, self-service launderette as well as meeting and conference rooms.

3 X2 River Kwai
X2 River Kwai, located in Kanchanaburi two hours west of Bangkok, will introduce a new room category, XFloat Cabin, in November this year.

All six XFloat cabins are fully furnished and contemporarily designed, featuring amenities such as a bathtub, washbasins for two and a separate shower area. Guests can also access the upper-floor "moon deck" that is available in every cabin for a stargazing session.

4 Mighty Mekong River by Road
SpiceRoads Cycle Tours has introduced the Mighty Mekong River by Road programme, an eight-day adventure trip in north-east Thailand.

Highlights include stays in small riverside guesthouses, and visits to the atmospheric riverside town of Chiang Khan and the bizarre giant concrete statues at Sala Keoku. This tour includes six days of cycling, varying between 80km to 150km each day to clock up a total of 694km. The tour will be entirely conducted on tarmac, with a support van carrying cold drinks and snacks and is available for anyone in need of a break.

5 Emirates
Emirates will begin four new weekly flights between Phuket and Dubai on December 1, 2015, raising its capacity on this route by 57 per cent.
Emirates will operate the new weekly flights with a Boeing 777-300ER, offering eight seats in First Class, 42 seats in Business Class and 310 Economy Class seats.



2

TRIED & TESTED

Radisson Blu Plaza Bangkok

Beyond its nondescript architectural façade, **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena** finds an inviting hotel edged with buzzy restaurants and sumptuous rooms

LOCATION This hotel sits on a prime spot on Bangkok's most famous thoroughfare, offering quick access to Terminal 21 shopping mall as well as the Asoke BTS Skytrain and Sukhumvit MRT subway stations. It is also just a hop away from Sukhumvit Soi 31 where a lot of dining action takes place.

ROOM When I entered my Business Class room on the 19th floor, the expansive view of downtown Bangkok framed by the big window immediately caught my eye. At 36m², it afforded just the

right level of space and comfort – there was enough room too to place a cot for my four-month-old daughter.

The brown-and-beige colour scheme was soothing while the maroon sofa makes a cosy corner to curl up on. As well, expect a king-sized bed, a workstation, a coffee machine and the de rigueur Wi-Fi.

F&B Attico Cucina Italiana raised my expectations when I walked through its wine barrel-dotted entrance. With lofty ceilings and exposed brick walls,

the restaurant was conceived like an old-style European farmhouse with a focus on hearty Italian dishes like ravioli con porcini and pepata di cozze.

The B/Sharp bar and adjacent B/Sweet dessert lounge, designed around the cascading butterfly piece de resistance in the lobby, is relaxed and elegant.

The all-day dining brasserie, Twenty-Seven Bites, delivers a scrumptious spread for breakfast while China Table serves Cantonese fare amid its contemporary Chinese décor. A yet-unnamed rooftop bar is currently in the works.

FACILITIES The sixth floor is dedicated to fitness and well-being, with the Spa Esc by Radisson Blu, a gym and an outdoor swimming pool.

On the third floor reside the meeting and events spaces like The Suite, which caters for up to 150 pax with its own show kitchen, and the 180m² Gallery, ideal for cocktail receptions. On the fourth floor is the 420m² pillarless grand ballroom, which can accommodate up to 400 guests.

SERVICE Seeing that I had a baby in tow when I visited the B/Sweet Lounge for high tea, the staff was quick to clear a space for me to park the pram. However, my high tea order took consider-

able time to arrive even though we were the only patrons.

VERDICT A smart hotel that adds to Bangkok's competitive hospitality scene. While Radisson Blu's unfussy approach may be catered to business travellers, leisure guests will find plenty to rejoice during their stay.

Name Radisson Blu Plaza Bangkok
No. of rooms 290
Rates From 4,200++ baht (US\$118)
Contact details
Tel: (66) 2-302-3333
Email: reservations.bangkok.blu@radisson.com
Website: www.radissonblu.com/plazahotel-bangkok



FITUR 2016

THE WORLD TOURISM INDUSTRY COMES TOGETHER AT ITS LEADING BUSINESS CENTRE

20 - 24 January 2016 | Feria de Madrid, Madrid, Spain

Intensifying the preparations for the upcoming staging, FITUR 2016 is confident to bring back last year's magnificent results - a new record participation of 222,551 visitors over the five days, among which was a 12% increase in professional visitors with a total of 125,084 professionals from 139 countries, showing

A REFLECTION OF HOW THE TOURISM SECTOR HAS EVOLVED

The rising participation trend in FITUR and the optimistic climate observed at the last staging have reflected the good times the tourism sector is enjoying.

According to the Frontur survey conducted by the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism, Spain welcomed 47.2 million international tourists between January and August 2015, reflecting an increase of 4.1% over the same period in the previous year. 7% growth was also registered in expenditure generated by non-residents, which amounted to 46.59 billion euros, as is apparent from the Egatur report drafted by the same organisation. These figures make Spain the third most visited country in the world, only behind France and the United States, and the second in the ranking of destinations by expenditure made by international tourists.

Spanish outgoing tourism has also experienced growth in the past year. Spanish residents made a total of 11.78 million trips abroad, representing an annual increase of 4.8% according to the official Familitur survey. An increase was also seen in average expenditure by Spanish tourists travelling outside Spanish borders, which amounted to 13.565 billion euros. This upward trend, which is expected to continue over the next few years, has enhanced the appeal of FITUR 2016's participating countries, increasing their opportunities to attract tourists.

SPECIALISED SECTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE NEW TOURISM OUTLOOK

One of FITUR's characteristics is its ability to adapt to market realities and bring its participants the possibilities offered by the new trends in tourism. In response to 2 sectors with significant growth potential, FITUR SHOPPING and FITUR HEALTH were successfully launched at the previous staging. Both sections hosted the proposals of 24 and 15 companies respectively, and expectations for the upcoming staging are of higher levels of participation for the two monographic events, both of businesses and of public.

The other sections - FITUR KNOW HOW & EXPORT, FITURTECH, FITURGREEN and FITUR GAY (LGBT) have also proven to be equally effective in helping tourism professionals to find the key to successfully confront the challenge of innovation in tourism management, and will be returning for their next editions.

MEETING POINT FOR BUSINESS

All sections have their own perfectly differentiated display spaces and areas for debating and personalised professional meetings. FITUR will boost its programme of B2B meetings, tailored appointments and scheduled agenda of contacts to facilitate encounters and the possibilities of commercial exchange and agreements. In the previous staging, more than 5,000 scheduled meetings materialised at the Fair's

B2B Space, where multiple trade collaborations were closed. The FITUR B2B Hosted Buyer Workshop will be staged again, unfolding an intense schedule of personal, previously arranged appointments between participating companies and a broad selection of international hosted buyers.

In addition, INVESTOUR will be returning for its seventh edition on 21 January 2016 where FITUR renews its commitment to sustainable development in Africa through its tourism industry, in the Tourism Investment and Business for Africa Forum.

Lastly, FITUR will once again host an intensive schedule of professional workshops and encounters, prominent among which are the eighth Tourism Leadership Forum organised by EXCELTUR; the events organised by the UNWTO such as prize-giving ceremony of the 12th UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism.



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Advertorial

Destination Philippines

Manila is now experiencing a boom in luxury hotel development



WHEN LUXURY COMES

When a group of travel consultants took up the cudgels and organised the Asia Premium Travel Mart (APTM) – the first high-end B2B tourism event in the Philippines – in May, it exposed major hurdles in harnessing the destination's immense potential as a luxury destination.

First and foremost was the lack of knowledge on the Philippines, which was what prompted Fe Ablang-Yu, president of S8 Exhibition, to organise APTM.

"We have been attending luxury travel market shows abroad. The closest one in Shanghai is a huge show, but there are no Philippine sellers except (for) Eskaya, which is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World and the Manila Peninsula, part of the Peninsula Hotels group," said Ablang-Yu.

"We tell buyers to bring their clients to the Philippines and they ask, 'Where's the Philippines?'" she added.

However, owing to limited government funding, the private sector was forced to rely on themselves and pooled their own resources for APTM, according to the show organisers.

"We lack government support," lamented Edwin Villanueva, director of S8 Exhibition, who added that despite being a Johnny-come-lately in the luxury market, the Philippines has huge potential to tap the luxury leisure, MICE and wellness segments.

On his part, Philippine Tourism Pro-

motion Board (TPB), COO, Domingo Ramon Enerio III explained to *TTG Asia* that they had supported APTM financially.

In agreement with private sector sentiments that more marketing is needed, the NTO chief said: "We have to be more aggressive with our combined efforts (on) the premium markets."

On a more positive note, travel consultants observed that the country is fast catching up in its cache of luxury developments, despite ongoing challenges such as the need for more infrastructure and upmarket properties outside of popular destinations like Manila, Boracay, Cebu and Palawan.

International luxury hotel brands like City of Dreams, Conrad, Shangri-La, AccorHotels are coming into the country. "(These companies) won't be investing here if they didn't think that the country is ripe for premium travel," Ablang-Yu pointed out.

Wilson Techico, vice president – business and product development of Uni-Orient Travel, which has been offering customised services for high-end travellers, is confident that given time, the Philippines will develop as a premium destination. "We now have luxury hotels, resorts and facilities that were absent five or 10 years ago," he said.

A growing number of destinations within the country are now becoming accessible, thanks to helicopter services and airlines like Skyjet and Air Juan which are

targeted at high-end travellers.

Targeting premium travellers, who spend more and stay longer than average visitors, also reap higher dividends for tour operators, noted Shan David, president, Corporate International Travel.

Current luxury trends now include beach, culture and shopping sprees. Also becoming popular are men's leisure golf and gaming, especially with the opening of the two integrated resorts, Solaire Resort & Casino and City of Dreams Manila, observed trade players.

Destination in numbers

10.3 per cent

Percentage increase in arrivals to 3.4 million from January to August 2015, up from 3.1 million during the same period last year

1.2 per cent

Percentage increase in tourism earnings to 111.1 billion pesos (US\$2.37 billion) in 1H2015, from 109.8 billion pesos in 1H2014

4,612

Number of new rooms opening in Metro Manila in 2015

MY WAY

What do you do when you're not working?

I enjoy reading books. A bit of fiction is always good for diversion. I also like spending time with friends over coffee.

Where are the best places to hang out in Boracay?

For food, I always have to have our

Boracay



Not willing to be hampered by poor infrastructure or a lack of promotion any longer, the Philippines wants to woo premium travellers with its new crop of luxury hotel openings and attractions, writes **Rosa Ocampo**



christianwey/123RF.com

Viewpoints

What is currently being done to position the Philippines as a premium destination?



Cesar Cruz, president, Philippine Tour Operators Association

We have luxury properties coming into Metro Manila, Cebu, Boracay and Palawan. The airports are a setback but hopefully these will all change starting this year. Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport will soon finish its refurbishment, while Mactan Cebu International Airport will build a resort terminal. Caticlan Airport in Boracay is upgrading its capacity while the airport in Busuanga (Palawan) is being expanded. Tour operators are also introducing thematic tour packages for luxury, adventure and wellness travel.

Simon Ang, managing director – operations, Celebrate Life TLC

We have the properties. We have the destinations. We provide excellent service. The Philippines is ready to become a luxury destination. However, as long as the government's mindset is on quantity over quality; open policies against patriotism; selfish motives and greed over self sacrifice and team effort, then we will face problems such as traffic congestion, dilapidated airports, red tapes and everything that makes us fall short of being a luxury destination.



How to sell



pata tim (pork leg dish) in TropiCafe and finish it off with coffee and calamansi muffins from Real Coffee and Tea Cafe.
For a night out with friends, I like the ambience and drinks at SandBar Beach Club Boracay.

Apart from the beach, what must visitors not miss in Boracay?
The sunset – it really is quite extraordinary.



Tricia Sarabia
General manager
Best Western Boracay Tropics and Hotel Celeste

Any tips for first-time visitors?
Plan your trip ahead of time. Make sure you have enough time to experience the beach. Try the food, get a massage and enjoy the nightlife.

What other destinations can be twinned with Boracay?
For international visitors, a bit of shopping before leaving the country is always good. Makati has the biggest shopping malls in the country and a quaint boutique property – Hotel Celeste – just a stone's throw away offering a unique experience.



STAY **Costa Pacifica**, the only resort along Sabang Beach in Baler, Aurora province, has a swimming pool, an events venue and wide grounds for outdoor activities including bonfire building.

SEE The **600-year-old balete (banyan) tree** is so huge it needs 60 people to encircle its trunk. The tree is wired so tourists can post selfies and photos instantly on Facebook and other social media.

Watch the sunrise and comb the variety of beaches, from white to pebbly and rocky. Climb the **Dicasalarin Lighthouse** for a 360-degree view of Baler's cliffs, rock formations and outlying islets.

EAT Several holes in the wall, including **Kusina Luntian** (literally Green Kitchen), serve simple local delicacies and are eaten with bare hands. Tourists can also try and bring home **Nanay Pacing's** peanut butter and coconut jam.



Clockwise from above: the 600-year-old balete (banyan) tree in Baler; Costa Pacifica

DO Hire a tricycle to **Ditumabo Falls**, take a dip and trek the forest surrounding it. Over 60 tricycle drivers including women were trained by the Department of Tourism to also serve as tour guides. On foot, visit the Quezon Park, Baler Museum and Aurora House. For the more adventurous, options include spelunking in the **Tikbalang Caves**, trekking in the thick jungles of the **Sierra Madre** or diving at some islets.

Destination Philippines

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 DreamPlay
Family travel is boosted with the recent opening of interactive and educational attractions at DreamPlay in the City of Dreams Manila. The DreamWorks-themed play centre boasts activities like wall-climbing and a challenging rope course, based on the studio's animated hits like *Shrek*, *Madagascar* and *How To Train Your Dragon*. There is also a DreamTales Library, DreamStudio and 4-D DreamTheatre.



2 Increased flight connectivity
More airlines have blazed new routes to the Philippines, improving the country's accessibility. Ethiopian Airlines started flying from Manila to Addis Ababa via Bangkok in July while Turkish Airways is planning to turn its thrice-weekly Istanbul-Manila route – launched in March 2015 – into a daily service.

Cebu Pacific now flies from Australia, Doha and Dubai, with plans for a new service to Guam while Garuda Indonesia inaugurated a four-times weekly service from Manila to Jakarta in August 2015.

3 Discovery Primea
Ideal for long-stay corporate travellers, Discovery Primea is the newest luxury

residential address in the Makati CBD. It offers spacious suites ranging from 40m² to 125m², with all the amenities and comfort of a luxurious home.

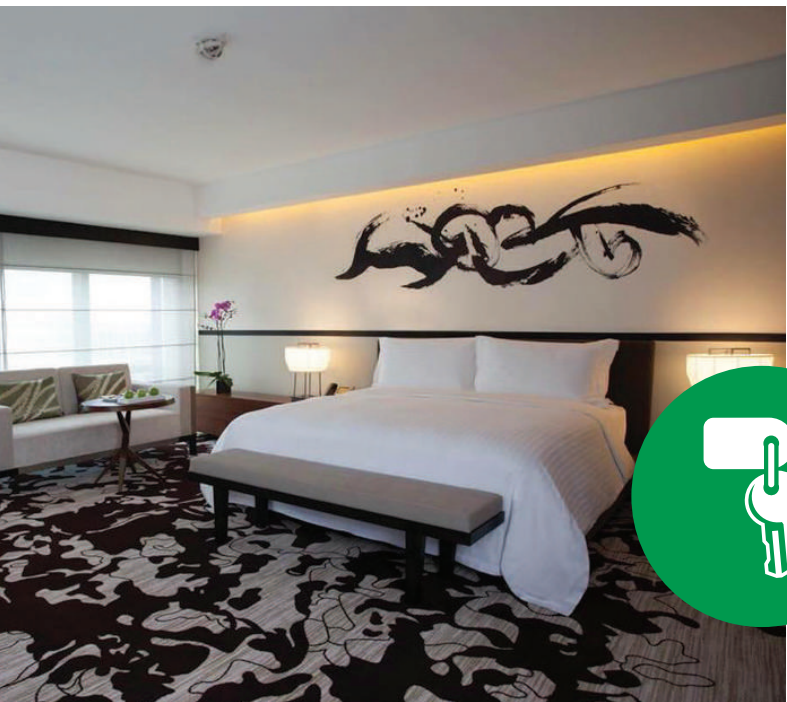
4 Henann Resort Alona Beach Panglao
Launched in August 2015, the sprawling beachfront Henann Resort Alona Beach Panglao in Bohol



has 400 keys and three huge swimming pools. An adjoining convention centre, the first in Bohol, can cater up to 1,000 pax.

5 Paradise Garden Boracay Resort and Convention Centre
This resort is the first and only halal-certified resort in the Visayas. Aside from a central kitchen serving

halal food, it has a prayer room and guestrooms with Korans, prayer mats and *kiblat* (arrow) pointing to Mecca. With halal certification from the Islamic Da'Wah Council of the Philippines, the resort boasts Muslim staff and has created a halal committee to be in charge of halal requests, needs and concerns.



TRIED & TESTED

Nobu Hotel Manila

At the first Nobu outpost in Asia, which is owned by acting ace Robert De Niro, Hollywood producer Meir Teper and acclaimed chef Nobu Matsuhisa, **Rosa Ocampo** discovers a sumptuous experience that makes her feel like a celebrity for a day



LOCATION The hotel is very accessible, located just minutes away from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Makati CBD, Mall of Asia and other Manila Bay area attractions. A big plus: City of Dreams (CoD) Manila provides complimentary shuttle service to and from various points of the metro.

ROOMS Our 36m² Deluxe Room spells Zen luxury, from the softest and cushiest bed and pillows, to the statement wall adorned with a huge calligraphy-like artwork. While our bathroom doesn't have the high-tech Japanese toilet found in the more expensive rooms, we are bowled over by its aesthetics (ladder towel rack, wooden planks, deep basin), luxuriant bathrobes and towels, and Natura Bissé bath amenities.

FACILITIES The lobby is cheerful with splashes of colours in the seating area. But the swimming pool is small, the corridors narrow, and the lifts cramped and confining. Although the hotel stay comes with complimentary breakfast buffet at Nobu Restaurant, I recommend returning for dinner or a nightcap when the elegant venue is transformed into something theatrical, magical and whimsical even, thanks to the lighting, the wide skies and the gilded backdrop of CoD Manila's domed Fortune Egg. The Japanese fusion food is pleasing to both the palate and eye. The flavours do not overpower, and are refined with just the right balance of sweet, spicy, sour, salty and bitter. The food presentation is an art, served with dramatic flair and flourish, one dish after another in special plates and saucers.

We spotted several celebrities contentedly tucking into their meals and for one magical night, I felt like a celebrity also.

SERVICE A standout. Hotel staff are young, cheerful and helpful. The restaurant staff are relaxed, attentive but not suffocating. The waiters know the menu well.

VERDICT An indulgence of the palate and senses. Furthermore, Nobu Hotel Manila is an escape from the hurly-burly of the city without actually getting away.

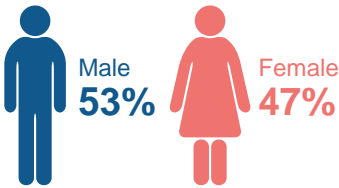
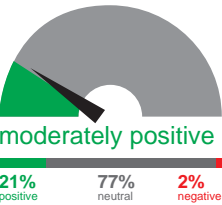
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Connect

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

DATA

Fun insights of ITB Asia 2015 from social media



5.6K
average daily impressions

Data is based on Hootsuite's uberVu metrics which tracked keyword mentions on social media between October 1 and 26. ITB Asia took place from October 21 to 23.

WHO'S SAYING WHAT

Instagram



And that's a wrap for our day 3 issue of ITB Asia Show Daily! Remember to grab a copy before you go on the last day. [#TTGAsia](#) [#TBAsia](#) [#TravelRave](#)



TTG Asia's late night party at The South Beach is the reason why so many ITB Asia delegates stayed way past their usual bed time tonight. [#TheSouthBeachSG](#)



Team wefie just because we got a #selfie stick lying around, courtesy of Jetstar Asia. [#RememberSam](#)

Most commented

ASIA HARDEST TO SCORE LOW-SEASON HOTEL BARGAINS: AGODA

Well, hotels in Asia are on average much cheaper than in the US or Europe, while the service generally speaking is much better. If you want to lock in some steep discounts simply book through a mobile app like HotelQuickly or make use of other private sales channels like The Luxe Nomad. I wonder why people are still booking on OTAs really. – Andrew Roszkov

TRAVEL PURSUITS

Compiled by The Fox

QUIZ

- Which two airlines is Singapore's Scoot taking over new routes from?
- Visit USA is the name of the DMO for the US. True or false?
- Which is the odd resort out – Goa, Penang, Phuket?
- History: Which three Asian destinations did Pan American Airlines flew seaplanes from the US to in the 1930s?
- Outside Asia: Which airline has had three different CEOs in two months?

LETALITE

A light-hearted section where we take a word, alter it by adding, cutting or changing just one letter – and giving it a new definition:
Thair Bangkok-based airline.
Shai This Bangkok-based airline does not fully promote its attractions.
Chai Beverage served on Bangkok-based airline.
Thaid This Bangkok-based airline does not have full operating freedom.
Thait Strict financial limits on this Bangkok-based airline.

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

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

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

Pictorial

Attendees of Asia Travel Leaders Summit (ATLS) relax over cocktails at the soon-to-open Patina, Capitol, Singapore. ATLS is organised by the Singapore Tourism Board as part of the NTO's initiative to co-locate travel events under one umbrella called TravelRave. Eugene Tang captures cocktail moments



IDP DFS Budi Setiawan, Singapore Tourism Board (STB)'s Andrew Puah and Lionel Yeo, TTG Asia's Raini Hamdi, STB's Chew Choon Seng, Panorama Group's Budi Tirtawisata and STB's Lynette Pang



The Patina, Capitol, Singapore's Jean-Pierre Joncas, Tracy Lowe and Sereena Supa'at, STB's Andrew Phua and Patina Hotels & Resorts' Marc Dardenne



Savioke Service Robots US' Steve Cousins and Izumi Yaskawa, Marina Bay Sands Singapore's Ian Wilson and The Patina, Capitol, Singapore's Tracy Lowe

TIME TO RELAX AFTER MEETING



Tour East's Shigeyuki Suzuki and Judy Lum, and STB's John Gregory Conceicao



Marina Bay Sands Singapore's Benny Zin and Anthea Tan



SingEx's Aloysius Arlando, and Singapore Furniture Industries Council's Shermaine Ong and Ernie Koh



World Travel & Tourism Council's and TUI's Michael Frenzel with wife Gabriel



Parkway Hospitals Singapore's Jessica Teo and Anthony Lim, and STB's Lynette Wee



GfK (Growth From Knowledge)'s Anthony Tan, Laurens van der Oever and Lawrence Liew



Royal Caribbean Cruises' Gavin Smith, Thomas Cook India's Madhavan Menon and Royal Caribbean Cruises Asia's Sean Treacy



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