

# TTG

A S I A

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December 14, 2012 – January 10, 2013



## year-end issue

**Newsmakers** Recap of the hottest stories in the Asian travel trade as chosen by readers – page 2 **Weather report** Stormy or sunny? CEOs reveal their business predictions – page 4 **Hot sellers** Buyers tell us which destinations are flying off the shelves – page 6 **Spotlight on** A sampler of up-and-coming products – page 10 **The many sides of airlines** Aviation experts share what they thought were good, bad and ugly in 2012 – page 12 **If I was on a day trip** NTO chiefs dream up an ideal day off – page 15 **Charting the future** Travel agencies on how they intend to beat the Internet – page 16 **It's a wrap** Our team reflects on this year's highs and lows – page 18





# NEWSMAKERS 2012

We wrote. You read and responded. Here's a recap of the hottest stories in the Asian travel trade as covered by *TTG Asia's* team of reporters and correspondents in the region

**Friday . December 14, 2012**

Asia-Pacific's leading travel trade business resource since 1974

## Hottest Features\*

- Are hotel chains China-centric or eccentric in launching new Chinese brands?
- Music fests are fluting their way across Asia, but they don't always strike the right note with travel consultants.
- The world of premium air travel has never seen better innovation, even despite the shaky economy.
- Are alliances yesterday's news if they don't include the three Gulf giants?
- IRs walk a tight rope between pandering to the affluent and reaching out to the wider mass market.
- The next wave of design hotels is more customer-centric than design-centric.
- In swoops the Falcon: A look at how the Qantas-Emirates partnership will change the stakes for key players.
- Travel consultants get creative as cash registers ring at shopping outlets worldwide with Asian spending.
- It's full steam ahead for cruise lines which are pumping up capacity in Asia.
- There's a blurring of business with pleasure even in the meetings business. It's a pleasure to serve you.

*\* Some of the best news analyses published in TTG Asia in 2012*

## TTG Asia this week

**Japan preps for LCC boom**  
Airlines expected to slide and PTAs to flourish

**Banyan's new CEO**  
He has the honour of being the first CEO of Banyan to step into the role. He's also the first to be under the shadow of a former CEO.

**Tourism developments concerning Singapore**  
Tourism developments concerning Singapore were top among readers

## In Memoriam

**Rama Rebbapragada**, founding chairman of Asia Cruise Association and the man who led Royal Caribbean Cruises' entry into Asia-Pacific, died on July 25 following a long battle with illness.



**Lalit Sheth**, chairman and managing director, Raj Travel World, Mumbai, decided to end his life on August 1. Debt woes proved too much for him to handle. A slump in travel exacerbated his predicament, said local authorities.

**Paul Graham** succumbed to cancer on October 12. He was director of Silverbird UK and, in the past year, a valued member of Chic Locations UK.



**Hans Peter Tuggener**, general manager of Diethelm Travel Thailand in the early years when the country was on the cusp of tourism growth, died in Switzerland on November 9 after a long battle with cancer.

## Best of Page 1 Stories in TTG Asia



**Myanmar's sudden growth in arrivals and the lack of hotel investment over the past decade has contributed to soaring rates**

1. **Growing pains for Myanmar:** An industry meeting to resolve hotel contract issues in Myanmar has failed to yield a plausible solution, deepening concern among tour operators who call behaviour by hotels unprofessional (June 1 issue)
2. **Philippines braces for the worst:** The territorial dispute between China and the Philippines has seen cancellations of roomnights from Chinese groups and route suspensions by airlines, hitting destinations such as Cebu and Boracay (May 18 issue)
3. **3/11 tourism watershed:** Japan tourism leaders voice need for a creative rebirth of industry a year after the Tohoku tsunami (May 4 issue)
4. **Rupee slide hits outbound:** A depreciating rupee coupled with a steep rise in airfares has hit India's outbound market, driving up tour package prices by as much as 25 per cent (June 15 issue)
5. **Verdict still out on Qantas:** The full impact of Qantas' new 10-year alliance with Emirates on Asia has yet to be seen, but inbound operators in Singapore are anticipating a drop in stopover business (Sep 21 issue)

## Most Popular on TTG Asia e-Daily\*

1. Arthur Kiong to spearhead Far East Organization's hospitality expansion, July 12
2. M'sia implements new visa application process for visitors coming through S'pore, October 22
3. Debt woes prove too much for Raj Travel boss to handle, August 2
4. Singapore gets new tourism chief, May 8
5. Failed Singapore river cruise bid ruffles Ducktours' feathers, August 6



**Tourism developments concerning Singapore were top among readers**

*\* Culled from Google analytics from April 2012 to date*

## Hottest Online Polls

**Which LCC will be the biggest game-changer for regional aviation?**

Scoot (Singapore Airlines)	29%
Jetstar Hong Kong (Qantas, China Eastern)	19%
AirAsia Japan (AirAsia, All Nippon Airways)	27%
Thai Smile Air (Thai Airways International)	25%

**Is hotel branding in danger of becoming farcical?**

Yes, there are way too many brands out there!	61%
No, there's always room for growth. The more the merrier.	39%

## Gallery: Proud Moments for TTG Asia Media



Launch of TTG Asia Luxury



Launch of IT&CM India



TTG Travel Experts training

## Most Commented

- 1 AirAsia's charts path from regional to global airline. Really?, said readers, who pointed out the LCC didn't do a good job on London, Paris, the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand, etc.
- 2 The new weekly remittance frequency for India BSP troubled travel consultants, who managed to obtain a deferral from June to November.
- 3 It's time for tourism in ASEAN to grow up. Readers couldn't agree more with the opinion by Willem Niemeijer, CEO/co-founder, Khiri Travel Group.
- 4 Myanmar's local hotels jump on rate hike bandwagon. Tour operators said hotels were shortsighted in cashing in, while hotels said it was demand and supply at work.
- 5 Airlines cut commissions for Hong Kong's travel trade. It's still a sore point for travel agencies it seems.
- 6 Hotel branding ludicrous. The consensus was, indeed, it's a joke.
- 7 Malaysia is high on airfares, low on attractions, Indian agencies said, on why the destination's star is fading.
- 8 Sri Lanka's upscale hotels suffer faltering occupancies. Prices are too high for the quality received, said readers, though some believe the entry of new players will force existing players to up their game.
- 9 Not everyone agreed with Bhutan's daily tariff hike as part of efforts to move away from mass tourism.
- 10 Illegal tour guides pose threat to Singapore's image. There are still ways to mitigate the problem in an open market, said readers.

## Rainmakers



**"We approach this market with great humility as Westerners coming in."**  
Brett Tollman, president/CEO, The Travel Corporation, US, on expanding in Asia



**"When you list a company, you make a conscious choice that you're not exiting but actually growing the company."**  
Deep Kalra, founder/CEO, MakeMyTrip, India, on being deep in an M&A prowl



**"The innovation that is going on is... groundbreaking ways a consumer can book travel, e.g. via mobile on the same day."**  
Barney Harford, president/CEO, Orbitz Worldwide, US



**"Today, even how well you do won't guarantee your future success, so you have to be watchful, reinvent yourself if you have (to), be flexible."**  
Boh Tuang Poh, executive chairman, Asiatravel.com Holdings, Singapore



**"I've not seen too many brand creations which are amazing or significant by the hoteliers who created them."**  
Jean-Gabriel Pérès, president/CEO, Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts, Switzerland



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“Batten down the hatches to be ready for **some stormy weather** (in 2013), but don’t forget to pack the swimmers as there will be **some sunshine** as well!”

“The year ahead will be **a little cloudy and potentially stormy**, but with good chances of **sunny spells** sprinkled throughout the year.”

“I believe I will still see enough **sunny skies** next year with the ongoing growth in the hospitality business.”

# Weather report

By **Raini Hamdi**

**Michael Issenberg**, chairman & COO, Accor Asia-Pacific, Singapore

**What’s the biggest deal you made this year, or what to you was big deal?**

The Mirvac transaction, where we added 43 hotels in Australia and New Zealand.

**Describe 2013 in climatic conditions.**

Unpredictable.

**How are you preparing yourself and your team for it?**

Batten down the hatches to be ready for some stormy weather, but don’t forget to pack the swimmers as there will be some sunshine as well!



**Chanin Donovanik**, CEO, Dusit International, Thailand

**What’s the biggest deal you made this year, or what to you was big deal?**

The opening of Dusit Thani Maldives marked the continuing expansion of the Dusit International brand. We expect Dusit Thani Maldives to also make a significant contribution to the local economy particularly in hospitality industry education through Dusit Thani College. We also signed a hotel management agreement with property owners Tanota Partners for an upcoming Dusit Thani Guam, which is located in the island’s prime commercial and tourist precinct.

In 2013, we will be ready for five hotel openings in Guam, New Delhi, Abu Dhabi, Pasadena (US) and Hainan.

**Describe 2013 in climatic conditions.**

I believe I will still see enough sunny skies next year with the ongoing growth in the hospitality business. Despite the effect of the current cloudy economic problems in European countries, we see that while some markets show little or no growth, others such as China clearly have enormous potential for both outbound and inbound tourism.

In Asia, tourism in most countries continues to increase, with RevPAR for example, growing at a fast pace. Medical tourism also continues to grow, particularly in Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and India. A sharp increase is also being seen in long-haul clients.

**How are you preparing yourself and your team for it?**

I have a great team that always helps to achieve business success, thanks to its commitment and dedication. We are already achieving a presence in new regional and international markets but there is still much more to be done.

My philosophy is to follow a strategy of innovation without losing sight of our founding principles – service and welcoming, sunny Thai hospitality.

At the same time, I strongly believe that developing people is fundamental to the success of any organisation, especially in light of the upcoming ASEAN Economic Community in 2015.



**Iqbal Jumabhoy**, managing director & CEO, SilverNeedle Hospitality, Singapore

**What’s the biggest deal you made this year, or what to you was big deal?**

We acquired a major asset in Brisbane, the Chifley at Lennons, for A\$57million (US\$60 million).

**Describe 2013 in climatic conditions.**

Sunny with rainy spells.

**How are you preparing yourself and your team for it?**

Raincoats and waterproof character!



**Choe Peng Sum**, CEO, Frasers Hospitality, Singapore

**What’s the biggest deal you made this year, or what to you was big deal?**

We launched Capri by Fraser, then followed it up with the opening of Capri by Fraser, Changi City/Singapore in September. We managed to cut through the traditional perception of what a hotel or serviced residence is supposed to be. We dared to take a step sideways. Potential partners, supporters and friends of Fraser have given us the thumbs up for this urban-inspired, design-led brand, aimed squarely at the e-generation. It’s big deal for me when the whole team comes together to produce something all of us are proud of.

**Describe 2013 in climatic conditions.**

A little cloudy and potentially stormy, but with good chances of sunny spells sprinkled throughout the year.

**How are you preparing yourself and your team for it?**

Grey suits and raincoats could be part of our daily wardrobe, but along with that, these same raincoats can be peeled off adroitly to reveal more colourful reversible sides, with fashionable zippers which could change the entire look of the sombre rainy day staple. In short we will tamper caution with dexterity so as to seize the opportunities when they present themselves.



**Bernold O Schroeder**, CEO, Jin Jiang International Hotel Management, China

**What’s the biggest deal you made this year, or what to you was big deal?**

Putting a new international team together. Most of the leadership team are highly-motivated PRC nationals with an international background. Building a new headquarters with new owner- and consumer-friendly service platforms. Changing the sales and marketing structure, including a five million-member strong loyalty programme. Signing 15 new management contracts and opening eight hotels. And our financials are good – in an often over-supplied market, this is big deal for me and the credit goes to a great team.

**Describe 2013 in climatic conditions.**

Mainly sunny in this part of the world. The industry here (in China) has become very flexible, there is overall enough demand and everyone knows what to do when there is some intermittent rain or scattered showers.

**How are you preparing yourself and your team for it?**

Don’t overreact and think it’s a typhoon when it is actually only drizzling. This can be avoided with regular monitoring of the weather forecast, having a finger on the pulse and having a grassroot management that focuses on the execution. As management, we review and plan for all scenarios, from sunshine to rain to special scenarios like poor visibility.





**Marc Dardenne**, CEO, Patina Hotels & Resorts, Singapore

**What's the biggest deal you made this year, or what to you was big deal?**

It was the introduction of Patina Hotels and Resorts, our new luxury hospitality collection, to the global luxury hospitality market. The response to the new brand has been tremendous – we are busy developing our flagship property, due to open 2014 in Singapore, as well as working on an exciting project pipeline of hotels in Asia and the Middle East.

**Describe 2013 in climatic conditions.**

I am an optimist and always see the glass half full. I don't deny that there are some clouds in the sky, especially over the US and Europe, but I think Asia is the place to be and Singapore is in a better position to weather the storm than other parts of the world.

**How are you preparing yourself and your team for it?**

We are focused on developing our flagship property; introducing new breakthrough ideas and key service differentiators that will set us apart in the luxury hospitality market when we open our hotel in 2014. We are also working with like-minded partners to continue developing our pipeline of hotel projects that we feel will be able to take full advantage of the upswing in business when the global economy eventually recovers.



**Jason Peck**, CEO, Furama Hotels International, Singapore

**What's the biggest deal you made this year, or what to you was big deal?**

The biggest deal or achievement was the TTG Travel Award for Furama RiverFront, our flagship hotel, as Best Mid-Range Hotel for the fourth year running. It gives us satisfaction to get such recognition from the trade.

**Describe 2013 in climatic conditions.**

The European debt crisis will have some effect on our business. But Asia is strong, and we are an Asian brand. With a positive mindset, we will still be heading towards a good year ahead.

**How are you preparing yourself and your team for it?**

We are all prepared and mentally set for the positive challenge.



**Peter Henley**, CEO, Amari Hotels & Resorts, Thailand

**What's the biggest deal you made this year, or what to you was big deal?**

Our deal with the BBC to bring *Dancing with the Stars* here (Thailand) as an exclusive sponsor to raise awareness of Amari in the Thai market and give life to our Colours and Rhythms tagline.

**Describe 2013 in climatic conditions.**

Watery sun with dark clouds rumbling in the distance.

**How are you preparing yourself and your team for it?**

Equip everyone with sunblock and Amari umbrellas as well.

**Allen Law**, CEO, Park Hotel Group, Singapore

**What's the biggest deal you made this year, or what to you was big deal?**

Being named Best Regional Chain at the TTG Asia Travel Awards 2012 and securing Park Hotel Group's first two hotel management contracts were definitely the highlights for this year. The results are strong testaments of our efforts and recognition of Park Hotel Group's management capabilities.

**Describe 2013 in climatic conditions.**

Generally sunny in Asia.

**How are you preparing yourself and your team for it?**

We always pack clothing for all seasons, but will certainly stock up on ice cream and sun-tanning lotion for 2013.



**Loh Lik Peng**, founder & CEO, Unlisted Collection, Singapore

**What's the biggest deal you made this year, or what to you was big deal?**

Ha ha hmmm...bought a hotel site in Sydney that will be converted into a 60-room boutique hotel and three restaurants. An exciting development, and it's big deal for me (monetary and expansion-wise) moving into Sydney for the first time.

**Describe 2013 in climatic conditions.**

Rain clouds and the occasional heavy shower with brighter conditions later in the day.

**How are you preparing yourself and your team for it?**

We've been distributing raincoats in the last few years but remarkably they have proved to be less useful than my initial forecasts, at least in the places we're operating in, so 2013 could be the year we're finally going to use them. I hope the rainstorms are sharp but very short!

**MPS Puri**, founder and CEO, Nira Hotels & Resorts, UK

**What's the biggest deal you made this year, or what to you was big deal?**

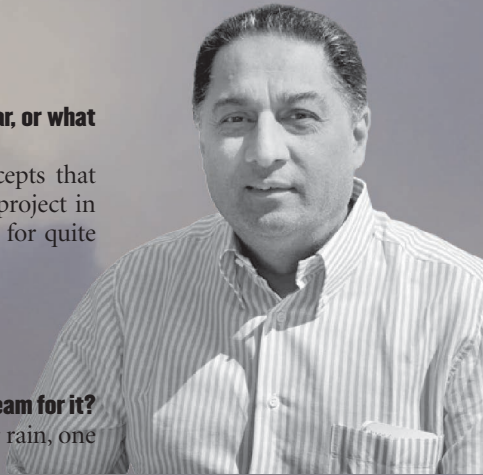
Managed to create two new F&B concepts that will launch next year. Also, acquired a project in Thailand that we have been waiting for for quite some time.

**Describe 2013 in climatic conditions.**

Unpredictable.

**How are you preparing yourself and your team for it?**

Everyone has two sets of clothes, one for rain, one for shine.



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# Hot sellers



The *TTG Asia* team asked buyers near and far which destinations are flying off the shelves and what they have their bets on for next year

As told to Gracia Chiang, Xinyi Liang-Pholsena, Hannah Koh, Linda Haden and Brian Higgs



2012  
**ITALY**  
**SWITZERLAND**

2013  
**NEPAL**

For 2012, our bestselling destination was Europe, in particular Italy and Switzerland, due to the attractive airfares offered by Emirates and Etihad Airways via the Middle East, which also facilitated popular, two-night stopovers in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Nepal should sell well in 2013. It is a beautiful place to visit, with its mountain ranges, natural attractions and local culture. AirAsia X and Malaysia Airlines launched direct flights between Kuala Lumpur and Kathmandu earlier this year.

**Lina Tsen**, manager, Ibanika Tours & Travel, Malaysia

2012/2013  
**THAILAND**

Thailand was our top seller for 2012 and it will still probably be for 2013. We just started selling it this year, and we already see that the culture, cuisine and climate are extremely attractive to South Korean travellers. Thailand is also relatively cheap, with good deals found in places such as Phuket, Koh Samui and Bangkok. The volume is especially high for leisure travellers.

**Edmond de Fontenay**, CEO, Evasion, South Korea

2012  
**VIETNAM**  
2013  
**INDOCHINA**

Vietnam is up 20 per cent so far this year on 2011 bookings, making it our fastest-selling destination. Singaporeans flock to Vietnam for its culture and food, and let's not forget, the shopping.

It's hard to tell which destination will do well in 2013 given the uncertainty in the global economy. My bet is that countries in Indochina, including Vietnam and Myanmar, will continue to grow, as more Singaporeans yearn for adventure.

**Jimmy Sim**, product development director, Dorison Travel, Singapore

2012  
**FINLAND**  
2013  
**SPAIN**

We sold Finland really well, and sales for the Northern Lights itineraries have tripled this year. Having done the traditional West Europe circuit, Singaporeans are now looking for alternative destinations.

Based on what we've seen, there is a strong chance Spain will be our bestseller for 2013. Spain is number one for one reason alone – its cuisine. Andalucia is a popular region for self-drive holidays for Singaporeans because of its scenery.

**Rufus Tan**, head of media and marketing, Quotient TravelPlanner, Singapore

2012  
**TAIWAN**  
**MALAYSIA**  
**SINGAPORE**  
**JAPAN**  
2013  
**THAILAND**  
**SOUTH KOREA**  
**JAPAN**

This year, destinations like Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and Japan have done quite well. These places are very accessible because of the availability of direct flights, a good choice of hotels and decent service standards.

For 2013, I have seen good growth for Thailand, where rates are low. I think South Korea will emerge stronger, while Japan is definitely recovering and the country is holding more promotions than before.

**Kevin Cheong**, supervisor – meetings & incentives, BCD Travel, Hong Kong

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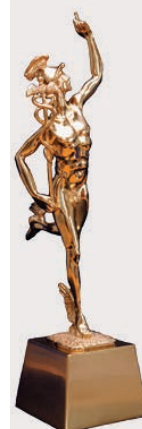
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## Travel Hall of Fame

The Travel Hall of Fame, displayed in the Raffles Hotel Museum on the third level of Raffles Hotel Singapore, showcases accolades, artefacts and memorabilia of the region's most exceptional travel organisations.

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

Singapore Airlines and Singapore Changi Airport are the Travel Hall of Fame's pioneering honorees, having been voted by Asia-Pacific's travel trade as Best Airline of the Year and Best Airport of the Year respectively, for more than a decade. Joining this elite family are Hertz Asia Pacific, Star Cruises, Royal Cliff Hotels Group, Abacus International, SilkAir and Lotte Tour.







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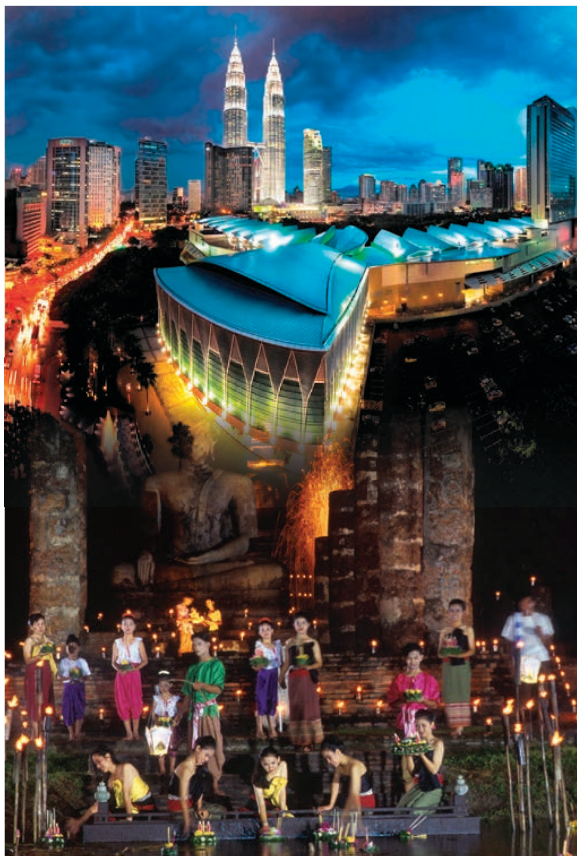


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2012/2013  
**SINGAPORE  
MALAYSIA  
THAILAND**

We send almost 35,000-40,000 travellers annually to Singapore/Malaysia/Thailand, and they will continue to be the biggest destinations for us. These are nearby, weekend destinations for Indian travellers. They are what I call over-the-counter destinations. Indians like the shopping and theme parks there, plus pricing is cheap. Cruise holidays are also getting very popular, resulting in travellers coming back to Singapore again and again. There are also no language or food problems.

**Raghuvinder Singh**, director, D Paul's Travel & Tours, India

2012  
**INDIA  
THAILAND**  
2013  
**BHUTAN  
MYANMAR**

For this year, it has to be a tie between India and Thailand. It was the Year of India in Canada in 2011, so there was a huge campaign and that motivated people to visit India. We also get a lot of FITs and small groups going to Thailand, which is easy to sell because it's the gateway to South-east Asia and has beautiful beaches.

There is growing interest in Myanmar because of news reports on how it has opened its doors. I am also thinking of increasing the number of yoga trips I do for Bhutan, which has been growing in popularity due to word of mouth. Travellers can also access it via India or Thailand.

**Bernard Bacle**, director, Club Aventure Voyages, Canada



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2012/2013  
**MYANMAR**

The extensive international media attention alongside new and increased air routes mean Myanmar is the latest hot seller. Myanmar often exceeds clients' expectations, so when they return home from their vacations, they provide extremely excellent feedback of their trips and the word spreads. Hopefully the country will grow with improved infrastructure and hotel development. Myanmar will continue to be popular in 2013, followed by growing interest in Indonesia and Japan, which is already back on the travel radar.

**Maeve Nolan**, product & operations manager, Backyard Travel, Thailand

2012/2013  
**MYANMAR**

Myanmar. Many people have shown interest to travel to this country since sanctions were lifted in 2010. We have seen a 40 per cent year-on-year increase in demand this year. Interest will remain high next year and we expect group tours to Myanmar to do better as compared to the FIT segment, as the country has become more expensive over the past year.

**Neill Prothero**, product manager – Far East, Cox & Kings, UK

2012/2013  
**HONG KONG  
SOUTH KOREA**

Hong Kong is a hot seller, as Filipinos like going there for shopping in places such as Mong Kok, as well as to visit theme parks. Singapore has taken away some traffic with its new attractions, but still cannot overtake Hong Kong. Another upcoming destination is South Korea because of religious reasons. The Philippines is a Catholic country, and there is interest in South Korea's Our Lady of Naju. The destination is also good for shopping.

**William Po**, director of marketing, Wonder Resort Travel Centre, Philippines





## EVERYTHING YOU NEED IN THE HEART OF BANGKOK

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## NTOs, tour operators and attractions across Asia-Pacific reveal what they will be calling attention to in 2013

As told to Xinyi Liang-Pholsena, Mimi Hudoyo, S Puvaneswary, Linda Haden, Hannah Koh, Gracia Chiang and Brian Higgs



# Spotlight on...

### Malaysia: Johor

**Raaj Navaratnaa**, general manager, New Asia Holiday Tours & Travel, Malaysia

We are promoting Johor as a theme park destination for families as there are two new theme parks – Legoland Malaysia and Puteri Harbour Family Theme Park. They will attract families travelling with young children.

We have come up with Twin Theme Park tour packages combining accommodation, transfers and entrance fees to the parks, and will promote them to the regional market.

We are also selling optional tours to Endau Rompin National Park and Sibul Island, both of which are near Johor.

### Thailand: Khao Yai

**Santi Sawangcharoen**, chief – ASEAN, South Asia and South Pacific marketing integration section, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

TAT will promote Khao Yai more aggressively to the international market next year. The area, in the north-east

of Thailand, has yet to receive much international attention despite being a popular weekend getaway among Thais and home to one of Thailand's oldest and best-known national parks.

We will bank on Khao Yai's wide range of attractions – vineyards and wineries, golf courses, dairy farms, soft adventure options, resorts and shopping outlets – to appeal to diverse travel segments.

### Singapore: Marine Life Park

**Clement Ng**, spokesperson, Resorts World Sentosa

Newly opened on November 22, Resorts World Sentosa's (RWS) Marine Life Park (the last of the integrated resort's facilities) has been billed as the largest oceanarium in the world. It houses over 100,000 marine animals from across 800 species in more than 60 million litres of water. The park comprises two key experiences, the Adventure Cove Waterpark and the SEA Aquarium.

RWS also plans to unveil a brand new ride within Universal Studios Singapore next year, as well as a new theatrical performance, to be staged at the Festive

Grand Theatre, which is currently unnamed.

### Indonesia: Muslim travel

**Rizki Handayani**, director, MICE and special interest marketing, Ministry of Tourism & Creative Economy

While Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world, not all products are halal or in accordance with Muslim laws.

Next year, we will launch *syariah* (Muslim) travel products together with Indonesia's tourism stakeholders. Tourism players have called for a way to identify, package and market Muslim travel to earn the full confidence of Muslim travellers coming to Indonesia. A standard for such products and services is in the making.

### The Philippines: Palawan

**Hazel Tan**, marketing executive, Pacific Leisure Marketing for Department of Tourism Philippines

We're pushing for Palawan, where the

Puerto Princesa Underground River is located. It is something new, following its recent achievement as one of the New7Wonders of Nature. It is still a living cave – inhabited by birds and bats, and there is no artificial light – so it's very unique. There are already airlines flying into Puerto Princesa, and we're hoping there will be more direct flight connections.

We'll also be focusing more on niches such as diving and cuisine.

### South Korea: Jeju Island

**Caitrin Moh**, MICE manager, Korea Tourism Organization Singapore

One destination we will be promoting next year is Jeju Island. It features 27 golf courses and three UNESCO World Natural Heritage sites, including Mount Halla, Seongsan Ilchulbong Tuff Cone and Geomunoreum Lava Tube System, as well as *haenyeo*, or sea women, who earn a living by diving and harvesting products from the sea.

The island is also perfect for hosting conferences since it offers visa-free entry to 180 nationalities, and has an abundance of direct air connections from

From left: Johor's Legoland Malaysia; elephants in Khao Yai; Marine Life Park's SEA Aquarium; Coron, Palawan







Japan, China, Taiwan and the Philippines.

### China: Eastern Yunnan

**Julien Monnerie**, product manager,  
*Exotissimo China*

We plan to highlight remote and lesser-known destinations in Eastern Yunnan through our new 8D/7N Yunnan, Photographer's Paradise tour. The package spans places like Luoping, Puzhehei and Yuanyang, spotlighting the area's diverse range of colourful landscapes, from the patchwork of oxidised lands to fields of canola flowers and karst peaks dotted among rice terraces.

### Japan: Ibusuki, Kagoshima

**Hiroyasu Konishi**, manager – overseas division, Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization

We would like to promote Ibusuki in Kagoshima prefecture, which is famous for *sunaburo*, sand baths that are said to provide a range of health and beauty benefits. Bathers put on robes and are buried along the shores of Ibusuki's beaches,

where geothermal forces warm the sand to 40°C.

*Sunaburo* can be found on public beaches for about 1,000 yen (US\$12) but they are free for guests at hotels such as the Ibusuki Hakusuikan ryokan.

### Australia: Ayers Rock Resort

**Ray Stone**, executive general manager for sales & marketing, Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia

Having noticed a steady growth in visitors from Asia to Ayers Rock Resort in Northern Territory, operator Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia is making an unprecedented push to grow its client base from the region.

A recommended experience is Tali Wiru, which sees guests dining under the stars with Ayers Rock as a backdrop. Guests are treated to champagne and canapés around a firepit, followed by a four-course dinner, matched with premium wine. After dinner, a local storyteller will relate Aboriginal tales that showcase the language, spirituality, land and culture of Australia's indigenous people.



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## Best Western continues Gulf growth with Bahrain launch

By Glenn de Souza  
Vice President International  
Operations – Asia & the Middle East  
Best Western International

Best Western International has continued its major Middle East expansion with the launch of its first hotel in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The BEST WESTERN PLUS The Olive offers 250 comfortable guest rooms all equipped with flat-screen televisions, minibars and high quality amenities. As with all BEST WESTERN PLUS hotels, Wifi internet access is available in all rooms and public areas.

Other facilities include business center, plus a well-equipped gym and an outdoor swimming pool.

In terms of dining, the hotel's Vesuvio restaurant offers fine Italian cuisine, while Mantraa serves up modern Indian dishes plus daily breakfast. BEST WESTERN PLUS The Olive also offers 24-hour room service.

"The launch of our BEST WESTERN PLUS brand in Bahrain marks another exciting stage in our Middle East expansion strategy," said Glenn de Souza, Best Western International's Vice President International Operations – Asia & the Middle East. "The Gulf region is one of the hottest hotel markets in the world today and Bahrain is a key part of this. I am confident that guests will enjoy the upscale splendors offered by this impressive new hotel," Mr. de Souza added.



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# The many sides



## The good, the bad & the ugly

### LCCs in full flight

Budget carriers have flourished even as full-service airlines struggled to stay profitable.

Executive chairman of the Centre for Aviation (CAPA), Peter Harbison, said: "LCCs in Asia are really making a difference to the entire scene, generating new travel opportunities, innovations and spreading economic activity into regional centres. This year, they even penetrated the arcane Japanese aviation system." He believes that there are still "massive opportunities" for expansion in North-east Asia.

Some LCCs have also notably been able to undermine rigid international regulations through their cross-border joint ventures, while the hastened evolution of LCCs in the region has yielded longhaul budget airlines such as AirAsia X, Jetstar International and Scoot.

### Incheon, Narita cut operating costs

Against a backdrop of economic uncertainty, South Korea's

Incheon International Airport and Japan's Narita International Airport are cutting airline operating costs and improving their competitiveness.

Reductions at Incheon will result in savings of over US\$15 million, while Narita will see operating costs slashed by more than US\$35 million per year.

### Air Koryo enters the digital age

North Korea's national airline, Air Koryo, came closer to catching up with the region when it began offering an online booking service in August. Despite teething problems – slow response and dropped bookings – it is nonetheless a bold step forward.

### Preparing the next generation for take-off

This year, a total of 99 students pursuing aviation courses at Singapore's Temasek Polytechnic took up internships at various airlines operating at Singapore Changi Airport and aviation-related companies such as Changi Airport Group, Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore, Dnata and SATS. The internships placed them in positions rang-

## My good, bad & ugly

Industry bigwigs tell *S Puvaneswary* what caught their eye this year



**Andrew Herdman**  
Director general  
Association of Asia  
Pacific Airlines (AAPA)

**THE GOOD** The global aviation industry has seen growth over 2011, despite concerns of political uncertainty and the risk of the break-up of the eurozone. Asian airlines have witnessed a 7.5 per cent increase in passenger demand. European airlines have also posted passenger growth despite pressure in terms of cost. So profit margins are squeezed.

**THE BAD** Fuel prices are stubbornly high due to political risks and concerns in the Middle East.

**THE UGLY** There's nothing ugly in the aviation scene this year. It would be ugly had passenger growth followed the cargo business, which saw a four per cent dip in volume over last year. However, this is not the case as passenger traffic, accounting for 80 per cent of airline business, has seen growth.



**Patrick Yeung**  
CEO  
Dragonair

**THE GOOD** It has been an unprecedented year for Dragonair. Ten new destinations were launched this year, within Asia and China. We also had four new Airbus A320s delivered.

**THE BAD** Oil prices are still up, which result in higher operating costs.

**THE UGLY** There's nothing ugly I can think of. This has been a very good year for us, with the expansion of our network.



**Jurriaan Stelder**  
Regional general manager  
South China Sea  
Air France-KLM

**THE GOOD** Air France has announced it will commence thrice-weekly services to Kuala Lumpur on April 22, 2013. I am very excited about these flights, as it is an opportunity for us to contribute good results to the company. For the Malaysian travelling public, this is also great news because now they can buy a seat to London and also get two other cities in Europe (Paris and Amsterdam) at no additional charge, provided they are on flexible fares.

**THE BAD** Air France-KLM's overall financial results this year were not good, and have not been for quite a while now. Air France-KLM's staff will have to make sacrifices in the coming years to restore the health of the company.

**THE UGLY** The economic crisis in Europe has been putting a strain on the results of all European airlines, including ours.



# of airlines

With the help of some experts, **Sim Kok Chwee** takes stock of the most headline-worthy happenings across Asia’s aviation scene in 2012

ing from cabin attendants to ground/traffic and operational staff, nurturing the upcoming generation of aviation professionals.

## The good, the bad & the ugly

### Airport capacity trailing demand

The lack of airport capacity poses an issue in certain Asia-Pacific countries, said IATA’s regional vice president for Asia-Pacific, Maunu von Lueders.

“(At) the top of the list would be Bangkok, which urgently needs to expand Suvarnabhumi; Manila, which needs a new airport to replace Ninoy Aquino International Airport that is not 100km away; and Mumbai, which desperately needs to move forward with its Navi Mumbai project,” he said.

### The free-rider effect

Protectionism continues to hinder attempts to liberalise Asian skies. Some governments are prepared to share the benefits of access to other markets while restricting access to their own, lamented CAPA’s Harbison, who said such old-fashioned protectionism had “no place in the Asia of the future.”

### Cathay pacification

Chinese passengers appear to have acquired a penchant for staging sit-ins each time a flight is delayed, with cash compensations the ulterior motive, even when delays are weather-related.

On a few isolated occasions, passengers burst forth from the aircraft to take their protests to the airport’s ramp and taxiway. Airlines are left with little choice but to keep beefing up the compensations paid out, which does nothing but encourage the trend.

## The good, the bad & the ugly

### Kingfisher Airlines’ fortunes nosedive

Kingfisher Airlines takes the cake for failing to pay its staff for consecutive months, as far back as April 2012, even as the airline continues to sponsor a Formula 1 Grand Prix team and its owner, Vijay Mallya, swans to various races via his corporate jet or luxury yacht.

Furthermore, Kingfisher’s mountain of debt to airport operators and aircraft leasing companies led to the trimming of its fleet and eventual abandonment of international services. By October 2012, the Indian government had suspended Kingfisher’s aircraft operating certificate citing safety concerns. As of December 1, the airline remains grounded. An

estimated minimum of US\$500 million is required to recapitalise the company.

### The ETS U-turn

When the European Union (EU) forced airlines from around the world to subscribe to its Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), it was met with forceful resistance from China, Russia and the US. IATA threw its weight behind the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), calling on the EU to suspend ETS while a solution was prepared.

“What could be more ugly than the EU’s unilateral attempt to legislate environmental rules for the whole world with its ETS? Even if the basic idea is right, the airline industry is already actively targeting reduced fuel costs and improved efficiency,” said CAPA’s Harbison.

The EU has since relented and suspended ETS for a year. The ball is now in ICAO’s court

and it should waste no time in making a concerted push for a permanent solution. When the one-year grace period is up, it should hopefully have reached this objective – or at least, achieved measurable progress to convince the EU that the ETS should be burned and buried.

### Ridiculous rates at India’s airports

IATA’s von Lueders’ vote for ugly happening of the year goes to New Delhi and Mumbai’s airports. New Delhi has increased charges by a whopping 346 per cent, while Mumbai has proposed a mind-boggling increase of 881 per cent!

The Airports Economic Regulatory Authority has tentatively decided to “moderate” Mumbai’s proposal to 151 per cent, but more can be done to reduce charges further.

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intrinsic Buddhist culture, national and colonial architecture, gastronomy, World Heritage Sites, multi-ethnic people, trekking locations and local handicrafts. Its unparalleled natural landscape has earned Laos the reputation of being the only remaining "original" South-east Asian experience left, and it is just waiting to be discovered.

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# If I was on a day trip

NTO executives in the region tell *TTG Asia* how they would spend the day off in their destinations

*As told to Gracia Chiang, Xinyi Liang-Pholsena, Mimi Hudoyo, S Puvaneswary, Marianne Carandang, Prudence Lui, Linda Haden, Shekhar Niyogi*



"In the morning, I would go to the Taling Chan Floating Market for a tour of the canals and the

temples on the Thon Buri side of Bangkok. Lunch would be at an old restaurant called Wang Burapha Noodles, then coffee at On Wok Yun. In the afternoon, I would head to Chatuchak Weekend Market and Or Tor Kor Market for some shopping. I would have street food for dinner, and end my day with a traditional Khon performance at Sala Chalermkrajongkarn Theatre."

**Suraphon Svetasreni**  
Governor  
Tourism Authority of Thailand



"I would try to spend that time with my family in Bohol. As a matter of fact, I own a small farm

there, where we used to plant mangoes.

Bohol is a centre for culture and adventure, with many historical churches and great scenery. There's so much to do there: diving in Balicasag, seeing my 'cousins', the tarsiers, and my 'nephews', the whalesharks!

Seriously though, I'd probably do a little birdwatching in the morning, curl up in bed for a while and read a book, then go out and soak up a bit of sun or go out for a scenic drive around the island. I have lots of friends in Bohol and a relative who owns the beautiful Eskaya Beach Resort and Spa. Visiting Bohol would also be a good chance to brush up on my Visayan-speaking skills."

**Domingo Ramon 'Chicoy' Enerio III**  
COO  
Philippine Tourism Promotions Board



"I would like to go back to Penang as that was my birthplace and I have very fond child-

hood memories of the island city. Today, Penang has become one of the most developed resort islands in Malaysia.

While holidaying in Penang, I would sleep in, enjoy authentic Penang food and catch up with old friends and on my reading."

**Azizan Noordin**  
Deputy director general  
Tourism Malaysia



"I am a big-time foodie so I love to search for new tastes in town whenever I get a break from

work. There are tens of thousands of eateries offering some of the world's best cuisines, with new ones popping up every now and then, so I am never short of choices.

Another thing I do on holiday is hiking in the suburbs. Believe it or not, most of Hong Kong's land area is actually rural! Some of the most breathtaking scenery in the region is a mere hiking boots' throw away from the teeming city centre. What's more, Hong Kong is so compact that you can get to these places within 30 minutes via public transport. After stretching your legs, there is no better way to end the day than with a feast, whether it is seafood in a fishing village or al fresco dining by the beach."

**Anthony Lau**  
Executive director  
Hong Kong Tourism Board



"I like to spend my holidays in Yeosu and Namhae coast (in the south). The Namhae coast is well

known for the beautiful scenery of its maritime park, natural ecology and culinary culture. It is also where the 2012 Expo was held.

Whenever I go there, I feel really relaxed. I usually take a cruise around the maritime park, and the grand, naturally formed rocks are a wonderful sight. A walk in the ecological park in Suncheonman Bay makes me feel completely refreshed.

Next year, I plan to go to the Garden Expo in Suncheonman Bay. It runs from April to October, which is the perfect time to enjoy the changing seasons and colours of nature. From the greenery in warm and sunny spring to the beautiful foliage in autumn, the scenery will be amazing."

**Jeong-bo Shim**  
Executive vice president for marketing  
Korea Tourism Organization



"I like seeing new things and trying local foods. Depending on the number of days I have,

I would like to travel to destinations in Indonesia I have not been to before. There are so many!

But if I had only one day, I would spend it in Jakarta and the surrounding areas like Bogor, Tangerang and Banten. Cuisine is an important part of tourism, and also an interest of mine. I would ask someone who knows the area to take me around."

**Mari Elka Pangestu**  
Minister  
Ministry of Tourism & Creative Economy Indonesia



"Sydney? That's an obvious one – climb to the top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It should be on every-

one's bucket list.

For Queensland, I would take a chopper ride out of Cairns or Hamilton or Hayman Island in the Whitsundays and hover over the incredible Heart Island on the Great Barrier Reef.

For Perth, walk to the top of the steps at Kings Park and look out over the beautiful Swan River.

I also love Kangaroo Island in South Australia and Phillip Island in Victoria, and want to one day go to Lord Howe Island, off the coast of New South Wales.

Other destinations on my wish list include Cape Leveque, Broome and the Kimberley, Ningaloo Reef, Arnhem Land, Clare Valley, Lizard Island, Byron Bay, Noosa and the Gold Coast hinterland. And of course, Tasmania."

**Andrew McEvoy**  
Managing director  
Tourism Australia



"As I live and work in Tokyo, I would like to visit the cities in the western region such as Osaka, Kyoto

and Wakayama for a short getaway for something different.

I would spend a day relaxing in the hot springs at Shirahama Onsen in Wakayama, while reflecting on how best to showcase Japan to the world in the coming year. Shirahama Onsen, popular among locals, is one of the oldest hot springs in Japan and offers a fantastic view of the Pacific Ocean.

If time permits, I would love to hop over to Kyoto, the former capital that's famous for its culture and historic temples.

Last but not least, I would like to savour the wide variety of authentic Japanese cuisine in Osaka, which is known as a gourmet's paradise."

**Ryoichi Matsuyama**  
President  
Japan National Tourism Organization



"I would assess the vulnerability of the natural environment in any destination I visit.

As a scientist, I will always try to formulate solutions so that increased footfalls do not lead to the deterioration of the location. I would also scout around for more local information while I enjoy my holiday to get a better feel of what makes the destination work.

Ensuring cleanliness and an understanding of how careless conduct can harm the beauty that tourists are so enamoured of must be ingrained in every traveller.

As a policy maker and executor of tourism guidelines, I am always alert to the lacuna that each destination may suffer from and how it can be improved upon."

**Lalit Panwar**  
Chairman and managing director  
India Tourism Development Corporation



# Charting the future

Travel agencies at TTG's recent Travel Experts Conference reveal how they are evolving to meet changing client needs amid growing competition from the Internet

As told to Linda Haden



From left: Alicia Seah, Helen Giam and Mary Kheng

**Alicia Seah**, senior vice president (marketing & PR), CTC Travel Singapore

## What is your greatest challenge?

How to stay relevant in the Internet age when travellers can make bookings instantly at their own convenience.

## What do you intend to do about it?

As suggested during the conference, we have to encourage our employees to become more proactive and stop competing with our rivals solely based on price. Instead, we should train our staff to become specialists either in a destination or niche.

## How will you get there?

CTC Travel plans to hold two sessions with both operational and middle management to impart the key points raised during the conference. We are also looking at implementing a new customer relationship management system to capture consumer data and to develop pertinent products and recommendations. Staff will be encouraged to call clients regularly to keep them up to date about new itineraries or products that might appeal to them. A concrete schedule of product training sessions is already in place.



## FITUR 2013: INTERVIEW WITH ANA LARRAÑAGA, THE DIRECTOR OF FITUR

**Innovation and competitiveness are two of the great challenges facing the tourist industry today. To what extent does FITUR cater for these concerns within the industry?**

Within the ever-changing and globalised tourism market of today, innovation and competitiveness constitute the key with regard to companies' development and success. The fact that Spain is a world-wide point of reference within the field of tourism and occupies a leading position as a foreign destination (the country that generates the second highest tourist revenue figure in the world and the highest revenue in Europe), clearly complements the country's characteristics as a destination. Underpinning this market is a strong business fabric that has developed a valuable corpus of tourism know-how, based on high levels of specialisation and the ongoing study and implementation of improvements with regard to the management of different realms of the tourism business.

In this respect, being fully conscious of the importance of this know-how, FITUR has sought to make its own contribution with regard to the needs and challenges of the industry,

based on the creation of a new and unique initiative on the international scene, namely the FITUR KNOW-HOW & EXPORT Forum, which seeks to add a value-added dimension to the business and innovation prospects of companies operating within the field. This initiative is promoted by the fair, in conjunction with SEGITUR and the Spanish Foreign Trade Institute (ICEX), with a view to promoting the value of expertise and experience within the tourist industry as a means of boosting innovation and development. Around thirty companies that have already confirmed their participation will present their potential, their know-how and their experiences, as well as their products and services, to buyers from other foreign markets, thus providing a series of tourism models that can be exported.

In this sense, we aim to contribute to the industry's progress by highlighting the directions in which tourism is currently moving, based on an integral perspective of tourism management, one that encompasses everything ranging from consulting and strategic planning to the development of tourism technology and e-commerce, not to mention tourism marketing, infrastructures and facilities, technologies designed to boost tourism facilities, the environment and sustainability, the social-health sector and, of course, the management of tourism enterprises. All of this is backed by the activities organised by the UNWTO, which will feature the participation of tourist authorities from all over the world, who will be presenting their tourism projects, strategies and tenders, together with other business opportunities.

## What initiatives has FITUR set up in order to promote business activity amongst the tourism companies attending the fair?

FITUR's main objective is to facilitate meetings between companies and buyers through a series of initiatives that seek to ensure that the participants obtain the highest possible returns on their investment in the fair. In this respect, we can highlight the fact that FITUR has once again invited important buyers from all over the world to attend the fair, based on a closed programme of trade meetings that enable the guests to gain a detailed insight into the products and services of the participating companies and destinations. On this occasion we have even gone a step further by taking the commercial interests of the exhibitors into account, offering them the possibility of directly inviting their buyers or potential buyers to the fair so that they can establish contact and manage their deals and operations.

These B2B meetings will take place within the framework of the Third Hosted Buyers Workshop, having produced some excellent results in the past in terms of providing access to new markets, strategic alliances and trade opportunities. They constitute the most direct means of enabling participants to promote their products world-wide and generate business within the context of the fair itself, thus optimising their resources and their participation at the event.

These trade meetings have proven to be highly effective in previous years. Specifically, at FITUR 2012 around 1,800 trade appointments took place at the different workshops that were organised within the framework of the fair: INVESTOUR for the Americas, INVESTOUR Africa and the Hosted Buyers Workshop.

## How does FITUR cater for the latest new trends on the international tourism market?

FITUR is committed to the idea of innovation, always based on new trends and new market needs. In this respect, in addition to its most important new initiative on this occasion, in the form of the business forum known as FITUR KNOW HOW & EXPORT, the fair will incorporate a new forum devoted to wine tourism and hotels, as well as forums that focus on various areas of interest or of up-and-coming importance within the tourism business, such as tourism efficiency (FITUR GREEN), the application of technology to tourism (FITURTECH) and the specialised sections known as FITUR LGBT, RECEPTIVE TOURISM SPAIN and FITUR ACTIVE. All of these initiatives offer important tools to tourism professionals and, in this respect, we seek to make our contribution to the future growth of the tourist industry.

**Fitur** 2013  
Feria Internacional de Turismo  
International Tourism Trade Fair

## For more information:

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**Helen Giam**, director, Giamso International Tours Singapore

#### What is your greatest challenge?

The Internet is a bigger threat to our livelihood than our traditional rivals. Travellers today trawl the Internet 24/7 for deals, while travel experts like us still operate only during fixed (office) hours. We are losing out massively, as more travellers, especially those in their 20s, now prefer to make bookings online and cut us out of the picture gradually.

#### What do you intend to do about it?

I like the idea of rebranding our front-line employees as travel concierges or experts and transforming their mindsets so that they become full-fledged travel planners who offer customers a wealth of travel information and services, instead of just being purveyors of rates. We have to ensure that employees stop behaving like the Internet – that is, they should not compete on price alone and instead offer a more personalised level of service.

#### How will you get there?

The most vital first step is to implement a comprehensive customer relationship management system.

**Mary Kheng**, director of business development, Chan Brothers Travel Singapore

#### What is your greatest challenge?

Ensuring that offline travel firms such as ourselves beat the Internet at its own game as it continues to infiltrate the market.

#### What do you intend to do about it?

In order to combat the threat of OTAs, it is crucial to emphasise to existing and potential clients that our staff have both the travel expertise and knowledge that the Internet cannot readily provide.

#### How will you get there?

First on my to-do list is to hold a session with managers to share the key points raised during the conference, including the significance of customer service, how to upsell and how to stop behaving like the Internet. This conference has affirmed my belief that Chan Brothers Travel should continue to focus on niche markets.



Where are you going?

SEE YOU IN March 2013

## GUANGZHOU INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL FAIR

7-9 March 2013 China Import and Export Fair Complex, Zone C

For any exhibition enquiries, please contact:

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# It's a wrap!

The *TTG Asia* team reflects on the year's glowing moments, as well as those dark chapters we want to close the cover on

## SENIOR EDITOR Raini Hamdi

### BEST EXPERIENCE

"I had great interviews with CEOs this year. My heart breaks to pick one – after all Orbitz Worldwide's Barney Harford is like chalk and cheese with Starwood Hotels & Resorts' Fritz van Paaschen, while it's always refreshing to interview the rare female CEO (Carlson's Trudy Rautio). Forced to pick, I'd go with The Travel Corporation's Brett Tollman – he makes you feel he cares for your time, your questions, your well being. Unbelievably polished."

### WORST EXPERIENCE

"The one that did not happen. David Scowsill, if you're reading this (I'll send a personal copy), I'm still sore that you agreed to an interview in Singapore, referred me to your PR to fix a time, which I did, and nobody bothered to follow up. Not sure if the World Travel & Tourism Council really cares to tell us what it's been able to fix to date."

## GROUP EDITOR Karen Yue

### BEST EXPERIENCE

"My favourite interview this year was with Simon Manning, Langham Hospitality Group's new vice-president – sales and marketing, when he swung by Singapore in late September. He was animated, forthcoming and very enthusiastic about the group's properties, brand positioning and future plans. It was a bonus that he looked so dapper in his pink tie, Langham's corporate colour and my favourite happy shade."

### WORST EXPERIENCE

"I met a peculiar hotel general manager at a networking party organised by his parent company. After introducing myself, I was met with a look of suspicion and a curt "What do you want?" It made me wonder if I had attended the wrong event. He might have had a rough day, but as one of the hosts, he could have been a tad nicer."

## DEPUTY GROUP EDITOR

## Gracia Chiang

### BEST EXPERIENCE

"I especially enjoyed covering the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) in Perth because of the quality of media conferences, press materials and the willingness of both buyers and sellers to share market updates. At the end of the business day, state NTO pavilions would bring out their finest gourmet treats ranging from oysters to barbecued meats. The pre-show fam was also not rushed through, giving me time to catch my breath while basking in the remote wilderness of the Kimberley. It was one of those trips where I returned bursting at the seams with too many good interviews and good meals."

### WORST EXPERIENCE

"Also at ATE, the media had mandatory sessions with Qantas (our flight sponsor), whose representatives were all equally tight-lipped on future plans. This was during the period when the Australian airline had begun restructuring its operations. There was nothing new beyond what had officially been issued, so my only angle was to focus on existing route performance. Besides the one-on-ones, Qantas also had a press conference slot – it was a terrible waste of time as it was nothing more than a look-back and all questions raised were not adequately addressed. Qantas had the chance to be open about its plans at one of Australia's key trade events of the year, but chose to throw it away instead."

## SENIOR REPORTER

## Linda Haden

### BEST EXPERIENCE

"The highlight of the year was my trip to Paro, Bhutan in early February, where I attended the PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart 2012. I met with luminaries in the adventure travel industry, and was given a glimpse of this incredible, serene country, its scenic landscapes and wonderful, friendly people."

### WORST EXPERIENCE

"Trying to get Chinese buyers to speak to me at IT&CM China in Shanghai with my rudimentary Mandarin. I managed to get a little bit of information, but it was an arduous process. They gave me quizzical looks as they tried to make sense of my halting Mandarin."

## SUB EDITOR

## Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

### BEST EXPERIENCE

"A fam trip took me to Shanxi this year, where visits to historic attractions stirred fond memories of Chinese literature classes during my secondary school days. I also learned more about Shanxi's vinegar- and noodle-centric cuisine. Singaporean travel consultants specialising in outbound tours to China that came on the trip also shared invaluable insights on the evolution of Singapore-China travel."

### WORST EXPERIENCE

"Interviewing people who are not proficient in English poses a constant challenge due to the need to interpret their responses into English as closely as possible to their intended meaning. At the recent CITM in Shanghai, my interview with an Iranian travel consultants was conducted in three languages – Persian, Mandarin and English – aided by a Persian-speaking Chinese interpreter."

## EDITOR-INDONESIA Mimi Hudoyo

### BEST EXPERIENCE

"I visited Penang this year for its first international travel mart, where the government and industry players were very forthcoming with information. I stayed at the beautiful boutique heritage hotel 23 Love Lane in the heart of George Town, and Penang food cast a spell on me, leaving me craving it long after the trip."

### WORST EXPERIENCE

"Once I had three back-to-back events to attend in a day. The first event was delayed so I had to leave before the press conference ended. I arrived at the second meeting late anyway thanks to the notorious Jakarta traffic, managed a short interview, then dashed off to the third, only to find that the event was for the next day and I had gotten the date wrong!"

## EDITOR-MALAYSIA S Puvaneswary

### BEST EXPERIENCE

"My best experience this year was a MICE fam trip to Seoul, the land of Samsung, Kia and Gangnam Style, organised by Seoul Convention Bureau. The city, food and hospitality of the people impressed me and the event was very well organised. The best part: Seoul Convention Bureau was just as helpful after the trip and replied quickly when I emailed them from Kuala Lumpur."

### WORST EXPERIENCE

"A representative of a foreign NTO who promised to get back to me "tomorrow"



Linda Haden



Xinyi Liang-Pholsena



Redmond Sia



S Puvaneswary



Mimi Hudoyo



Raini Hamdi



Karen Yue



Gracia Chiang





Hannah Koh

with information I wanted but never did. As time went by, I kept sending email reminders to no avail. When I managed to get said representative on the phone, he breathlessly told me he was in a meeting and would reply within the day. I am still waiting!”

## CORRESPONDENT-AT-LARGE

### Sim Kok Chwee

#### BEST EXPERIENCE

“I had two of the most interesting interviews in October – one with Ye Jhan, country manager (Thailand and Cambodia) for Myanmar Airways International and the other with Tshering Penjore, general manager, commercial and ground operations for Drukair. The similarities are uncanny – both airlines are small carriers from predominantly Buddhist countries embarking on growth, both gentlemen spoke English beautifully, and were extremely candid and humble in discussing growth prospects and challenges. Both also consented to being interviewed at very short notice and were very well prepared.”

#### WORST EXPERIENCE

“Too often, PR staff and representatives promised answers to media queries but failed to deliver on their promises. Even as we pushed the deadlines for our reports and pleaded for answers, nothing was received. In too many instances, neither explanation nor apologies were offered. This has happened too often in 2012 and I hope that the next year will reverse the tide.”

## CORRESPONDENT- THE PHILIPPINES

### Marianne Carandang

#### BEST EXPERIENCE

“I’d name two events: the Asian Development Bank Board of Governors meeting in May and the PATA Travel Mart in September, both held in Manila. The spotlight was on us for MICE and tourism, showcasing the Philippines to top-level banking executives and prospective buyers in the trade. Many buyers at PATA Travel Mart said they loved our cultural presentations.”

#### WORST EXPERIENCE

“The territorial stand-off between China and the Philippines made the travel trade jittery, especially airlines and hoteliers dependent on Chinese tour groups. I reported on the impact, but producing the story wasn’t easy. I had to do my job, yet at the same time I understood where (airline employees and hoteliers) were coming from and why it was so hard for them to talk.”

## CORRESPONDENT- THE PHILIPPINES

### Rosa Ocampo

#### BEST EXPERIENCE

“I enjoyed the launch of TAcenre.com, when reporters were invited to a one-on-one interview with Boh Tuang Poh, executive chairman of Singapore-listed Asiatravel.com Holdings, which owns TAcenre.com. Boh’s enthusiasm and unassuming demeanor were disarming, and he explained things in a simple, effective way. He was in no hurry to leave, devoting his full attention to the interview.”

#### WORST EXPERIENCE

“Getting through to the communications director of Fairmont and Raffles Makati for information and photos of the hotels. When I phoned, she promised to email the information kit. She didn’t. When I asked for her email address, she said she’d already given it to me. She hadn’t. When I called her mobile phone, she said she would call later. She never did.”

## CORRESPONDENT-HONG KONG

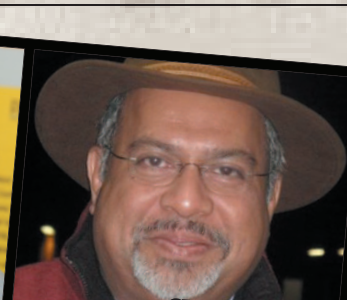
### Prudence Lui

#### BEST EXPERIENCE

“The three-day International Media Day in Chicago, organised by United Airlines (UA), was an eye-opener. Apart from a formal business session with the airline’s top management team, we could venture into the Network Operations Center at Willis Tower, which monitors all UA traffic. There was also an offsite night reception at the marvellous Millennium Park.”



Sim Kok Chwee



Shekhar Niyogi



Rohit Kaul

#### WORST EXPERIENCE

“A one-on-one interview I was doing with a representative from an overseas NTO that lasted less than 10 minutes after he rushed off to greet his consul general for protocol’s sake.”

## CHIEF CORRESPONDENT-INDIA

### Shekhar Niyogi

#### BEST EXPERIENCE

“The Great Indian Travel Bazaar in April, set amid the picturesque palaces of Jaipur and bringing together sellers from all corners of India and several hundred serious buyers. It was a journalist’s delight. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry did a good job organising it. Dinner with the prince and princess of Jaipur at their private residence in the palace crowned a memorable event.”

#### WORST EXPERIENCE

“There were one-off bad experiences at several shows. Hotels where I was hosted in during the Kerala Travel Mart and Great Indian Travel Bazaar were below par and I had to move to better hotels. At SATTE, due to the huge number of visitors signing up, there were security issues and my camera was stolen on the exhibition floor, picked from my jacket pocket.”

## CORRESPONDENT-NEW DELHI

### Rohit Kaul

#### BEST EXPERIENCE

“After a 20-year absence, the Indian Association of Tour Operators hosted its annual convention in Mumbai in August. It was well attended by industry stakeholders, and the first time the convention saw India’s tourism minister, civil aviation minister and chief minister of the state share the dais. Various sessions on human resources and best marketing practices were interesting and insightful.”

#### WORST EXPERIENCE

“During a press conference regarding the annual convention of the Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India, the organising committee did a good job of providing all necessary event details. I was flabbergasted when an editor-in-chief of a travel trade publication actually took the opportunity to ask how many meals would be provided for delegates at the convention!”

## CORRESPONDENT-SRI LANKA

### Feizal Samath

#### BEST EXPERIENCE

“One of the best interviews this year was with Chandra Mohotti, a Sri Lankan veteran hotelier. Unlike others, he emphasised the need for proper staff training over new hardware, pointing out that owing to the war, many experienced hands had gone abroad. With the return to peace, Sri Lanka was suddenly seeing a surge in arrivals but was unable to provide quality service.”

#### WORST EXPERIENCE

“I can’t recall anything that I would put down as a worst experience.”

## THE REST OF OUR TEAM:

- Timothy France, correspondent, Thailand
- Glenn Smith, correspondent, Taiwan
- Hannah Koh, sub editor
- Redmond Sia, creative designer
- Lina Tan, editorial assistant



Timothy France



Feizal Samath



Lina Tan



Prudence Lui



Marianne Carandang



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\*Across Buyer, Corporate Travel Manager and Media Categories

“It is **definitely worth while being an exhibitor** at IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific.”

Tammy Piatti of OPTIMUM Thailand

“An excellent event! Appreciated the opportunity to meet with **many new exhibitors** and **learn about new venues** that we can consider for our future events.”

Michal Barszap, President/CEO of ITS Tours, Meetings & Incentives, USA

“Am **very satisfied with the numerous new contacts** I made at the event as well as new ideas and knowledge on destinations gained.”

Agnieszka Kaminska, Project Manager of Impuls Travel, Poland

“I've attended a lot of industry events and **this is the best** among them.”

Gabe Dakwa, Travel Manager of Agilent Technologies, USA

“A truly great experience with **loads of networking**, allowing me to connect with industry peers and discover insights of representing countries.”

Leena Andrews, APAC Travel Manager of Juniper, India



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# TTG

A S I A

No. 1674/December 14, 2012 – January 10, 2013

# Six of the BEST!



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# BEST WESTERN RIDING HIGH

## ON CONTINUED GROWTH

Best Western International - The World's Largest Hotel Chain® - is enjoying solid growth in Asia, where it continues to add new hotels and resorts to an ever expanding portfolio. The company now boasts in excess of 4,100 properties in more than 100 countries and territories worldwide.

Best Western's growth in Asia and the Middle East is in full swing. The goal is to have a portfolio of 350 hotels offering 52,000 rooms by 2020, making Best Western the region's fastest growing international hotel chain. Currently the group has 211 hotels in operation, under construction, or in the process of rebranding across Asia and the Middle East.

China, India, Japan, South Korea, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Vietnam are among the chain's key targeted destinations in Asia. In the Middle East – a region Best Western sees as holding strong potential for strategic development and brand growth – targeted locations include Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Iraq.

As Best Western International forges ahead with its aggressive expansion, much attention is given to maintaining the consistent quality standards for which the chain is globally recognized. In recognition of this, for five consecutive years (2007-2012), Best Western has been voted Best Mid-Range Hotel Brand by the TTG Travel Awards with an outstanding Best Marketing & Development Effort Award in 2009-2011 and Best Marketing & Relationship Effort Award in 2012.





Country/Property	No. of rooms	Opening
<b>Bangladesh</b>		
BW PREMIER Fort Marino, Cox's Bazar	720	Q4 2014
BW PREMIER Coral Beach Hotel, Inani Beach	1,000	Q4 2014
BW PLUS The Heritage, Cox's Bazar	232	Q2 2013
BW Bashati Grand Pacific, Cox's Bazar	448	Q1 2014
BW Kothay, Dhaka	60	Q4 2014
<b>Indonesia</b>		
BW PREMIER Candi, Semarang	127	Q3 2013
BW PREMIER The Bellevue, Jakarta	133	Q1 2015
BWP Sun Heritage, Bali	272	Q1 2013
BW Inn Banjarmasin, Banjarmasin	138	Q4 2013
BW Hariston, Jakarta	203	Q4 2013
BW Star Hotel, Semarang	259	Q4 2013
BW Mahakam View, Samrinda	225	Q4 2013
BW Serpong (Great Western SETOS), Jakarta	140	Q1 2013
BW The Hive Cawang, Wika	191	Q4 2013
BW Surabaya, Jalan Ahmad Yani, East Java	253	Q4 2013
BW Bogor, Bogor	287	Q4 2013
BW Mall of Indonesia, Jakarta	161	Q1 2013
BW Satrio Kuningan, Jakarta	69	Q4 2012
BW Cipto, Malang	133	Q1 2013
BW Pantai Bahu, Manalu	200	Q1 2015
<b>Iraq</b>		
BW PREMIER Erbil, Erbil	150	Q3 2014
BW PREMIER Erbil Airport, Erbil	82	Q1 2014
<b>Jordan</b>		
BW Grand Hotel Madaba, Madaba	56	Q4 2012
<b>Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</b>		
BW PREMIER Khobar, Khobar	220	Q4 2013
BW PREMIER Al-Hasa, Al-Hasa	150	Q4 2013
BW PREMIER Mekkah, Mekkah	494	Q4 2014
BW PREMIER Arras, Al Qissim	90	Q4 2013
BW PLUS Al-Ahsa Grand Suite & Studios, Al-Ahsa	80	Q3 2013
BW Mekkah, Mekkah	305	Q4 2014
BW Al-Hamra'a Hotel, Jeddah	148	Q4 2012
BW Bakkah Awan Hotel, Makkah	180	Q1 2013
BW Hotel Jeddah, Jeddah	141	Q4 2013
BW Al Khudair, Riyadh	80	Q1 2015
BW Ring Road, Riyadh	82	Q2 2013
<b>Kuwait</b>		
BW Mahbola, Kuwait	96	Q4 2012
<b>Malaysia</b>		
BW PREMIER Malekka, Malacca	290	2015
BW PREMIER The Haven Lakeside Suites, Ipoh	100	Q4 2013
BW PLUS PJ13, Pentaling Jaya	200	Q4 2013
BW PLUS One Gateway, Port Klang	100	Q4 2013
BW Residence Shah Alam, Shah Alam	86	Q4 2013
BW Prima Inland Sea Resort, Port Dickson	362	Q4 2012
BW Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur	200	Q4 2013
<b>Nepal</b>		
BW Montys', Kathmandu	60	Q4 2014
<b>Oman</b>		
BW PREMIER Al-Qurum, Muscat	220	Q4 2013
<b>Pakistan</b>		
BW Lahore, Lahore	220	Q4 2012
<b>Philippines</b>		
BW PREMIER Angeles, Angeles	104	Q1 2014
BW PLUS Harbour Springs, Palawan	80	Q3 2013
BW PLUS Lex Capitol (Tanchan), Cebu	80	Q4 2012
BW Cebu Sand Bar Resort, Cebu	72	Q1 2013
BW Cebu Times Square, Cebu	200	Q3 2014
BW Cebu FBIC, Cebu	100	Q1 2014
<b>South Korea</b>		
BW PREMIER Gunsan, Gunsan	200	Q4 2013
<b>Thailand</b>		
BW PREMIER River View, Bangkok	80	Q2 2014
BW PREMIER South Sea Khao Lak, Phang Nga	125	Q1 2013
BW PLUS Jomtien, Pattaya	300	Q1 2015
BW Patong Beach, Phuket	220	Q4 2013
BW Paradise Sukhumvit, Bangkok	75	Q4 2012
BW Wanda (Changwattana), Bangkok	180	Q4 2014
<b>Vietnam</b>		
BW PREMIER Nha Trang Plaza, Nha Trang	200	Q3 2013
BW PREMIER Oceanami Hotel & Resort, Vung Tau city	200	Q4 2014
BW PREMIER Saigon Kenton, Saigon	300	Q4 2014
BW PREMIER Hon Tam Resort & Residences, Nha Trang	49	2013
BW Sea & Sun, Nha Trang	80	Q1 2013



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