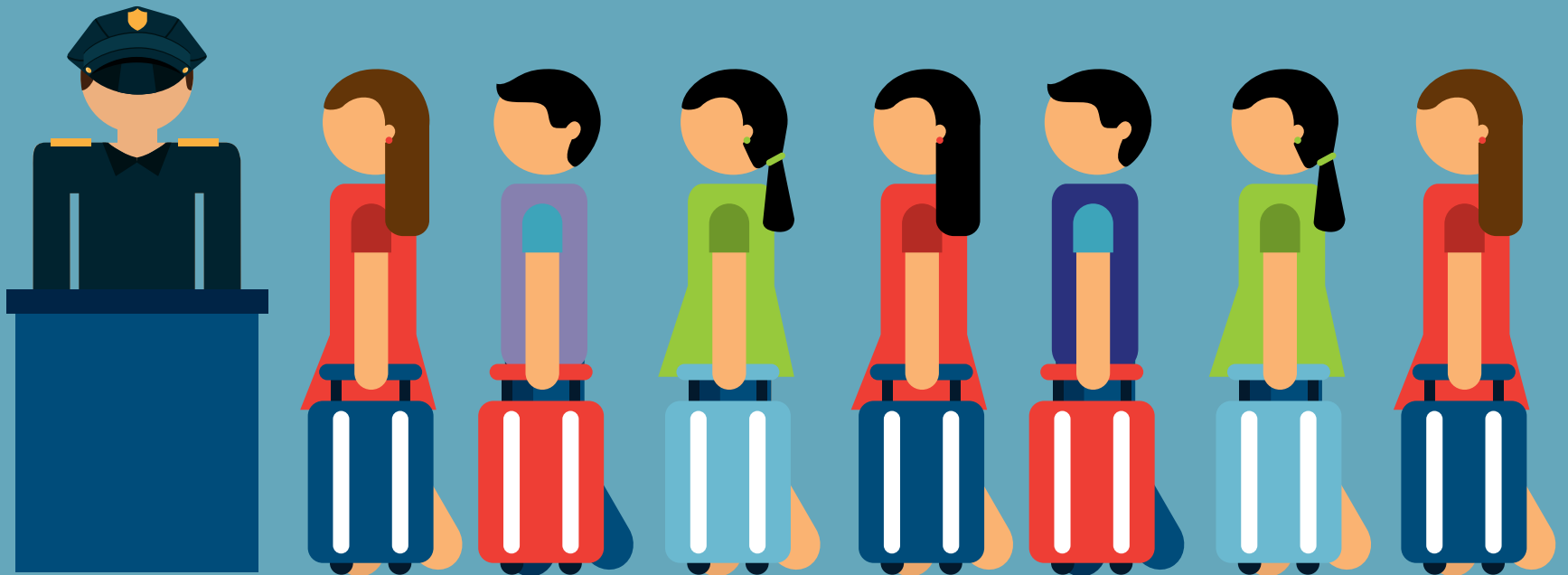




## VIEW FROM THE TOP

In just two decades, Qatar Airways has become a force to be reckoned with in the aviation world. The airline's outspoken CEO, Akbar Al-Baker, speaks his mind to [Sim Kok Chwee](#)



# Walls between us

There is reason to fear that governments will start to tighten visa policies and entry rules given the issues today. The UNWTO and its allies are lobbying harder for them not to. Will governments listen? By [Raini Hamdi](#)

**Who's afraid to be middlemen?**

The trade ponders the future for intermediaries

**Not quite business as usual**

What a tepid economy means for business travel

**Making old new again in Kedah**

The Malaysian state touts its millennia-old heritage

# Contents & editorial

Want to read us on the go?



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Report:  
Business travel



Destination:  
Macau



Destination:  
Malaysia



Destination:  
Myanmar

## SAFETY MUST BE FIRST PRIORITY



As a traveller, I used to lament how tiresome flying has become...But today I'd have more stringent checks at airports, planes and trains, hotels, beach resorts, etc, please. This should be the new normal.

In a mere 10 days between March 13 and March 22, there were three terror attacks. Gunmen opened fire on civilians at an Ivory Coast beach, another terror attack in Istanbul, this time on its main shopping street Istiklal, and the attacks at Brussels airport and metro last week.

Beach, airport, shopping street. As a tourist or business traveller, would you stop travelling? As head of homeland security of a country, would you tighten up security? As someone whose livelihood depends on travel & tourism, what should you do?

The UNWTO does not think tourists or business travellers will stop travelling. More than 50 million more tourists travelled the world last year than in 2014, a 4.4 per cent increase to a total of 1.2 billion people. This year, it expects another year of growth, around four per cent, despite increased volatility and uncertainty.

On the second question, it would be unlikely that security would not be tightened. But the Global Travel Association Tourism (GTAC) comprising groupings such as UNWTO, WTTC, IATA, etc, is worried that this would be done in such a way that would “end up killing the industry we are trying to preserve”, said UNWTO secretary-general Taleb Rifal. At a media conference at ITB Berlin (see Analysis on pages 4-5), he called for not just safe but ‘friendly’ passage of travel. “If we (countries) start closing borders, building walls, reducing our openness attitude, mixing the refugees issue with tourism, we will reverse our openness index,” he said.

In these times, we are indeed lucky to have GTAC

speaking in one voice on behalf of global travel and tourism. But because safety and security are inextricably interlinked, GTAC must ensure it is lobbying for the right outcome. And for me, the right outcome is not more openness for tourists to enter a country, but more security measures to ensure they are as safe as possible.

As a traveller, I used to lament how tiresome flying has become, with one feeling like a criminal at security checks and immigration. But today I'd have more stringent checks at airports, planes and trains, hotels, beach resorts, etc, please. This should be the new normal. GTAC should press for more security, then run a campaign for the world tourists to understand why more stringent safety measures are needed and what tourists themselves can do to make it easier on everyone travelling (say, read up what is/isn't allowed on planes today; don't hold up everyone by arriving at the nick of time, etc).

Those of us whose livelihoods depend on travel and tourism should also make safety first the top priority today. Otherwise, the four per cent increase UNWTO believes we will get again this year will not happen. Immediately after Brussels, it's the stocks of travel companies such as Carnival Corporation that went down. And with technology such as augmented reality, we can't take growth for granted.

**Raini Hamdi**  
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[twitter.com/rainihamdi](https://twitter.com/rainihamdi)

### COMING UP



- INSIGHTS INTO EXPEDIA** *TTG Asia* heads to Seattle for a first-hand account of how Expedia runs the show and experiments for the future

**TICKETS TO FUN** With Asia now the epicentre of theme park development, each market is seeing a different stage of development, dynamics and potential
- ASIA'S HOTTEST RESORTS** Outbound agents rate the region's resort markets and pick the emerging destinations to watch out for

**OLMPIC GLORY** As Pyeongchang readies for the 2018 Winter Olympics, South Korea sets its sights on becoming the ski destination of Asia



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# Analysis



## WALLS BETWEEN US

The industry is worried the handiwork it has done to-date on getting governments to ease visa and entry regulations will disentangle in the face of terror attacks in recent months in cities as random as Paris, Jakarta, Istanbul and most recently, the Ivory Coast, Brussels and Istanbul again. The refugee crisis and a shaky EU that could even put paid to the Schengen visa only add to concerns.

Before all this, travel and tourism was coasting on a general mood of increased welcomeness. According to UNWTO's Visa Openness Report 2014, the percentage of world population requiring a traditional visa prior to travel was 62 per cent in 2014, down from 77 per cent in 2008. In 2014, 19 per cent of the world population was able to enter a destination without a visa, while 16 per cent could receive a visa on arrival, compared with 17 per cent and six per cent respectively in 2008.

The UNWTO was aiming to further lower the percentage of the world population requiring a traditional visa prior to travel to 50 per cent last year. It did not meet the target. Still, it said "we're on the right track", pointing out that last year, 39 per cent of the world population could travel for tourism without a visa – the lowest level ever. That showed governments had seen the positive impact of visa facilitation on economic growth and job creation through tourism, it pointed out.

But in the current climate, it's loud and clear that UNWTO and its allies in the Global Travel Association Coalition (GTAC) – namely the WTTC, PATA, IATA, ICAO, Airports Council International, Cruise Line International Association and the World Economic Forum – are afraid that current issues will reverse the mood for openness. Representing the "one voice" of the global industry, they aim to lobby harder for governments worldwide not to kill the golden goose of tourism.

Holding a media conference at the recent ITB Berlin, UNWTO secretary-general Taleb Rifai elaborated what exactly GTAC would be lobbying governments for. "Safe

and friendly travel, not just safe, but friendly," he said.

"It is clear travel has become more complicated and travellers are faced with the challenge of security. Security is important but it must be done in a way that does not end up killing the industry we are trying to preserve.

"If we (countries) start closing borders, building walls, reducing our openness attitude, mixing the refugees issue with tourism, we will reverse our openness index," he said.

Rifai added: "We're advocating that tourism have a seat, so to speak, when it comes to discussions on safety and security. Tourism is being targeted everywhere by the forces of darkness because they know it hurts economically and politically. Now, if hurting this sector will cause a lot of damage to the country, then the country has an obligation to say, 'Come, let's hear what you have to say'. If it ends up taking measures without consulting the sector, it will end up killing that very sector and it's something it will regret in the future."

PATA's CEO Mario Hardy said safety had shot up to the top as GTAC's key priority, whereas before it was more about getting governments to ease visa policies so tourism could grow. Airlines, airports, destinations and cruises all have reason to make safety

the number one issue today.

But safety inevitably is linked to security, which in turn can impact entry rules.

Hardy explained: "The danger we're facing is if there is an increasing number of these attacks moving forward, countries will go the opposite way of what we want them to do – they'll increase restrictions on visas, make it more difficult for people to enter the country, and that will impact tourism."

Asked if he's already seeing countries reversing entry rules, Hardy said: "Not at this stage. There hasn't been an increase in restrictions because of these attacks yet. The refugee problems do have an impact, particularly in Europe, not in Asia, but then it might affect outbound from Asia into Europe in the long term if Europe tries to put up borders again, if England pulls out of EU and if there are restrictions (with the Schengen (visa))."

Hardy said with technology today, countries could still have their necessary controls to monitor people "but not necessarily fending off the 99.9 per cent who are coming into the country as tourists".

"We want to make sure agencies – CIA, Interpol, whatever – work together and exchange data of people coming into their countries. Countries can have friendly faces and a welcoming attitude towards tourists but still be alerted to

potential threats through the use of technology," he said.

But managing director of Marco Polo Reisen, Holger Baldus, begged to differ that countries weren't tightening up on visas. "Visa procedures are getting a bit more difficult – even for Germans travelling to the US," he said.

"Before, Germans needed a kind of landing permit for the US which could be applied online costing around US\$11 to US\$13. Now, it's been tightened. For example, if I've been to countries like Iraq, Syria or Sudan since 2013, I need a visa, and I do get that. But Iran, which is a top study tour destination for us? So, because I've been to Iran lately, I've to go to the US embassy in person and apply for a visa, which costs more than a landing permit, even though when we listen to the news, it seems Iran is on the right path.

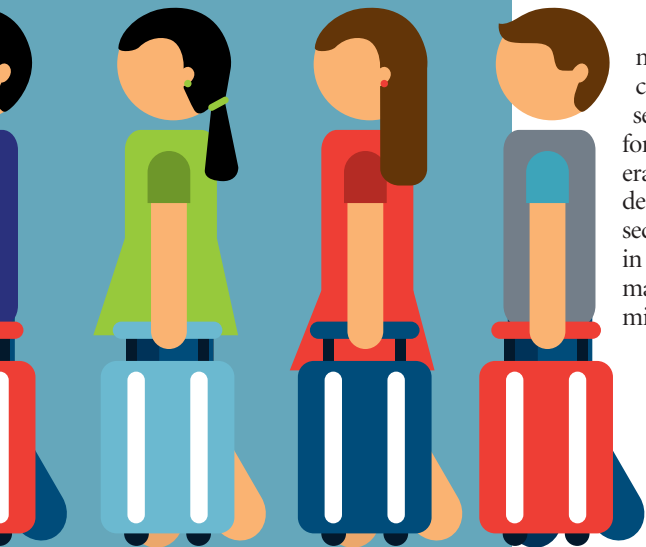
"In some places of the world it is getting stricter. Germany itself is extremely strict. We hear from partners from quite a number of countries attending ITB Berlin that it was quite a problem getting a visa. They

Now, if hurting this sector (tourism) will cause a lot of damage to the country, then the country has an obligation to say, 'Come, let's hear what you have to say'."

Taleb Rifai  
Secretary-general, UNWTO



There is reason to fear that governments will start to tighten visa policies and entry rules given the issues today. The UNWTO and its allies are lobbying harder for them not to. Will governments listen? By **Raini Hamdi**



Terrorist attacks in recent months, along with the refugee crisis, have also made safety and security even more of a concern for tourists. It is the chief consideration now for German tourists deciding where to go – price comes second – following the bombing in Istanbul which claimed 10 German lives and press coverage of the migrants issue in popular Greek islands such as Kos, said German operators interviewed at the recent ITB Berlin.

“These are difficult days and it’s a huge problem to sell the African part of the Mediterranean,” said DER Touristik Frankfurt managing director, Matthias Rotter.

“Fortunately DERTOUR and Meier’s have a big portfolio of destinations and we’re able to compensate for a loss in one with a gain in another,” he said.

Asia will do well this year because of perception it is safe. There are no major price increases in traditional destinations in Asia like Thailand, but what’s more attractive to Germans is not pricing but that Asia is seen as safe, according to tour operators.

For Marco Polo Reisen, Indochina, India and China are “back on track” after a decline of 12 per cent, nine per cent and 26 per cent

were getting a much shorter duration of stay here, for example.

“Countries have to be welcoming when people apply for visas and make them feel welcome when they get their visas. If you are strict, make people understand why you are strict,” said Baldus.

In the end, Germans will continue to travel...It’s a question of where and business is being re-divided according to safety perceptions.”

**Holger Baldus**  
Managing director, Marco Polo Reisen



respectively last year. But the real star is Japan, which rose a whopping 73 per cent last year.

“We expect a bit more growth this year, after last year’s substantial one. That’s more than 1,000 guests to Japan. For its high prices that’s a lot of guests. Again, it’s not about pricing. Japan is seen as safe,” said Baldus.

He added: “Asia is looking good...In the end, Germans will continue to travel. Our economy is doing well. It’s a question of where and business is being re-divided according to safety perceptions.”

Thomas Cook Touristik product manager Asia, Arabia and Indian Ocean, Jens-Jochen Lauff, agreed: “The clients are never more concerned about safety and security than now. The reservations people are getting the question, ‘Is it safe to go?’ all the time. Clients are now very aware of (hazards) be it a virus or terror. This is especially so for families than couples.

“So the travel agent has quite a lot of influence in helping clients decide where to go. If they say Bali is safe, it can influence the clients to go,” said Lauff.



## Hong Kong Disneyland Springtime Egg-stravaganza!

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From now till December 21, 2016, employees across designated travel trade industry sectors are welcome to enjoy exclusive discount up to 40% off\* at Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel and Disney’s Hollywood Hotel. There’s also a 10% off on the published price of 1-Day or 2-Day Tickets from now till December 31, 2016.

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# Analysis

Is there a future for intermediaries? In an open forum on the issue – hosted by an intermediary – is it any wonder that the answer is a resounding yes? But not all is PR, reports **Raini Hamdi**



## WHO'S AFRAID TO BE MIDDLEMEN?

Skeptics might be squirming in their seats when a select group of people flown in by GTA to Bangkok for its inaugural 'g meet' recently all said they believed there was a future for intermediaries. After all, they were suppliers, clients and technology companies that work with GTA, a B2B intermediary, and were being hosted for the one-day powwow.

But the arguments they put forth might convert even the hardest non-believers.

Arthur Kiong, CEO of Far East Hospitality (FEH) Management, recalled when he was a 25-year-old sales executive at Hyatt International, sitting in a conference room much like the one at the InterContinental Bangkok where the 'g meet' was held, and the chain's then executive vice president John Wallis had said agents would be obsolete because of the advent of the GDS. It amused Kiong that 25 years later, "we're still sitting in a room asking if there is a future for intermediaries – *of course* there is. And that's why the hotel business is a good business, because we keep selling conference rooms to people like you. So it is very important we keep you guessing and asking, 'Is there a future?'" said Kiong, turning furrowed brows on a serious topic into bellows of laughter.

A good joke aside, Kiong explained that for a company like FEH, whose brands and products are so disparate – from boutique hotels to conference resorts – intermediaries are essential. "We don't have the

capability to build a distribution infrastructure; it's not our core business. Our conversion rates (from look to book) are terrible. We do want direct bookings and we have been working at it but the reality is the results improve by decimal points," said Kiong.

Similar sentiments were echoed by a far bigger chain, AccorHotels, whose recent acquisitions leave some in the industry wondering if it is on the path to cut out intermediaries. AccorHotels acquired Fastbooking in April last year, a French firm that helps more than 3,500 hotels in Europe and Asia mainly sell directly to guests online with tools including website builder, channel manager, digital marketing campaigns and business intelligence software. More recently, it acquired a 49 per cent stake in Squarebreak, the disruptor

operator of hotel homes in France, and a 30 per cent share of Oasis Collections, another 'Home meets Hotel' category of accommodation founded in Buenos Aires.

But Markus Keller, deputy senior vice president of AccorHotels, said these moves did not mean the chain was muscling in on intermediaries. Private home rentals were an extension of its core business – which is hotels – and widening the range of products it could offer guests, he said.

"Our new CEO has taken the approach of doing what you're good at. We're hoteliers by core, if we're not good at it, we'll be overtaken by someone who is. So there will always be a role for intermediaries in the short term and in the future. Customers need them, but they are also good for hotels. I don't want to manage thousands

of clients, (only partners) that can connect me to people who sell specialised products. I don't need people who sell standard rooms; we have people doing that already," said Keller.

Kiong couldn't agree more. There's a future for intermediaries that sell specialty products as it is those that drive the yield, or that add value. But he said intermediaries like GTA want to sell standard products at the lowest possible price. "One is fast-driven, quick volume; the other wants to push the specialty products. Either the agendas are misaligned or the system does not allow us (to sell specialty products)," said Kiong.

He said however that GTA had done a lot for FEH by marketing and promoting its brands in an effective and entrepreneurial way. "That's what intermediaries should do. Value add, seek out the opportunities and capitalise on them," he said.

"I predict a bigger future for intermediaries because the travel market in ASEAN and Asia is not only growing in size, but the people are becoming more sophisticated in their travel choices. And when they spend more on travel products, they want to talk to somebody. But intermediaries do have to step up, not just be a postbox of contracting most effective rates. The value add has to be a lot more sophisticated than the cheapest price and the easiest way to pay," added Kiong.

Metin Altun, CEO and founder of Metglobal, a technology provider, said the industry did not need more players. "Current players need to be more efficient in order to grow. The big boys are monopolising the market, so the current smaller players must focus on what they do in order to maintain the business," he said.

MakeMyTrip's COO Mohit Gupta said if the larger, mainstream intermediaries got their act together and start addressing the broader requirements of either clients or suppliers, some of the smaller players who are on the fringe face the risk of being cut out. Conversely, if the small players are faster, the larger intermediaries would find it difficult to displace them.

Asked what some of the broader requirements might be, Gupta said: "One is to focus beyond booking to experiences as well. Right now, a lot of the focus is around price, availability and inventory. While you continue to work on those, you need to shift the focus to great quality content, the types that are more useful for mobile, pictures that are more detailed in nuances, more promotions flow-in to the system – all this will help significantly to expand the services in a relevant manner."

"Also, let's say someone makes a booking with an OTA, which is connected to GTA, which is connected to hotels, and he wants additional services, say, bed arrangements, special food, handicap support, etc. An intermediary's ability to support that kind of conversation between the hotelier and the customer in a seamless and easy manner is important. Similarly, going beyond selling the cheapest room to upselling services like early check-in/late check-out and other add-ons. Suppliers want to sell more than just the basic room and there are customers who really need the services. Essentially the system needs to expand its ability to handle those types of cases."

– So what's GTA doing? Turn to the next page for a Q&A with CEO Ivan Walter on GTA's Vision 2020

(Twenty-five years later), we're still sitting in a room asking if there is a future for intermediaries – *of course* there is.

**Arthur Kiong**  
CEO, Far East Hospitality Management



Thanks to the *Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner*, travelers can soon travel nonstop daily between Singapore and San Francisco, United Airline's largest U.S West Coast hub. Find out from the airline's **Alison Espley**, Managing Director, Japan and Pacific Sales, on what is in store when the historic service launches on June 3, 2016.



**Why will the eastbound flight UA2 leaving Singapore Changi Airport for San Francisco International Airport on June 3, 2016 be historic?**

United will be the first airline to offer a daily nonstop service between Singapore and San Francisco and this will be the only nonstop service to the United States from Singapore.

The *Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner* is the world's most advanced passenger airplane and United's Singapore-San Francisco service will be the longest scheduled B787 flight operated by any airline, and at 13,593 kilometers is the longest scheduled flight operated by any U.S. carrier. The use of lightweight composites, together with its modern engines and improved aerodynamic design allow the aircraft to fly farther, faster and more efficiently than similar-sized conventional aircraft.

**How will this new daily service benefit travelers from Singapore and other key South-east Asian markets such as Malaysia and Indonesia?**

Flying times will be approximately 15 hours, 30 minutes

eastbound and 16 hours, 20 minutes westbound. Travelers will be able to save up to four hours of travel time each way compared to United's one-stop service now and competitors' schedules.

Flight UA2 will depart Singapore at 8:45 a.m. and arrive in San Francisco International Airport at 9:15 a.m. the same day. United has timed the new service to allow convenient connections to an extensive network of services throughout the U.S., Canada and Latin America. United and United Express jointly operate over 270 daily flights from San Francisco to 80 destinations throughout North, Central and South America and the Caribbean. With this new service, United will provide a convenient one-stop service between Singapore and more than 40 U.S. cities, including more than 25 cities that do not have one-stop service from Singapore today.

The return flight, UA1, will depart San Francisco at 10:55 p.m. daily and arrive in Singapore at 6:15 a.m. two days later (all times local).

From Southeast Asia, flying times will be approximately 15 hours, 30 minutes eastbound and 16 hours, 20 minutes westbound. Travelers will be able to save up to four hours of travel time each way compared to United's one-stop service now and competitors' schedules.



**ALISON ESPLEY**  
Managing Director  
Japan and Pacific Sales  
United Airlines



The first daily non-stop service from Singapore to San Francisco on UA2.

**What enhanced traveler experiences can the passenger expect on the Singapore-San Francisco service?**

The *Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner* offers greater comfort with improved lighting, bigger windows, larger overhead bins, enhanced ventilation systems and lower cabin altitude – which will help to reduce jetlag. There will be 252 seats comprising 48 in BusinessFirst seats in a 2-2-2 configuration, 204 in Economy, including 88 Economy Plus seats, in a 3-3-3 configuration.

The BusinessFirst seat reclines 180° into a 1.98-m lie-flat bed and features a personal

on-demand entertainment system with a 39-cm touch-screen monitor. BusinessFirst amenities include laptop power, USB ports, noise-reduction headsets, amenity kits featuring Shoo House's Cowshed skin-care products, duvet-style blankets and a multi-course meal with complimentary wines. Economy Plus offers 7.6cm of extra legroom. Located near the front of the Economy cabin, the seats give the added benefit of allowing a swifter exit from the aircraft upon arrival. In Economy, inflight meals will be served in a three-course format starting with complimentary drinks, cheese

and biscuits, followed by a hot service and finishing with gelato or ice cream. Seats feature an adjustable headrest and 22.8-cm seat-back monitor delivering a personal on-demand entertainment system.

**What about fares on this daily nonstop service and what should travel agencies interested in promoting the flight look out for?**

United will be offering competitive prices and the travel agency community, which provide the bulk of bookings, is an important part of United's distribution channel. Agent events, education sessions and promotions will be coming up in the next two months, so please look out for them.

For more information, please go to **VisitTheUSA.com**



Onboard  
UA's Boeing 787-9  
Dreamliner.

# Analysis

• From page 6

**Where is GTA at now and where do you want to be?**

We are a leader in the industry in our specific segment. We have great people, strong global footprint with local people

all over and we are innovative as an organisation. What we now need is acceleration of pace, making sure we can bring to the market quicker all the digital initiatives that we have made, and that we have the funds and back-up to do so.

To stay a leader, we need to invest, not

just in technology but people. There are also lots of opportunities for consolidation, as the smaller players may lack the resources and funds to play a role.

**Are you saying you will be acquisitive?**

We can do it organically and inorgani-

cally, the latter looking at what elements are missing to make us a leader, what technology out there that we are lacking today and which potentially could be part of our portfolio going forward.

**What's your take on TUI putting Hotelbeds up for sale?**

For TUI, it's a consequence of their vertical integration strategy. They want to be in control of the entire process, be it the booking process, their own airline, hotels, cruise ships, etc. They want to make sure that every touch point is proprietary to them and the content belongs to them, so in that sense Hotelbeds does not fit in. That does not mean it's not great business.



Ivan Walter, CEO, GTA

**How will this remake bed banks?**

The market is so huge. There are a lot of small players out there that are involved in intermediary accommodation and destination services distribution. They can be small bedbanks or DMCs that have no differentiated value proposition – purely selling hotel rooms, which is not sustainable, we think.

So the market today is not dominated by a couple of bedbanks. In fact, it is very fragmented and is in the hands of hundreds if not thousands of small individual players, thus there are lots of opportunities for consolidation. So any potential buyer of Hotelbeds would be looking at consolidation as well. How can we drive consolidation faster, how can we remove some of the players that may not have sufficient differentiated value proposition out of their market?

**Why is consolidation important to you?**

It's crucial today for any B2B or B2C player to have relevance, and that relevance has to do with a certain size, negotiating power with suppliers and clients, global footprint and scale.

The process of selling hotel rooms is also something that needs technological support. And if you have strong customer base, strong technology and very robust infrastructure, adding additional demand on it is easy because your processes end-to-end are already streamlined and automated.

As well, suppliers have created quite a dependency on OTAs. I'm sure they are looking for alternative partners so they don't put all their eggs in the same basket. They want a more balanced client portfolio, but at the same time they don't want to have to manage thousands of small players with different touch points, contracts and systems.

### A PATAcademy-HCD Workshop

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**Julia (Ting Ting) Gong**  
Chief Executive  
CHINA READY Group, China

**Maggie Wu**  
Chief World Explorer  
www.flywithmaggie.com, China's only bi-lingual travel blog

**Jason Lin**  
Founder / Chief Talent  
Talent Basket, USA

**David Tang**  
Vice President  
Ivy Alliance Tourism Consulting, China

**John Koldowski**  
Head of the Service Innovation & Development Unit,  
College of Innovation  
Thammasat University, Thailand

The programme also includes a walking tour of Bangkok's famous Chinatown district. After successful completion of the course, participants will be awarded with a PATAcademy-HCD certificate entitled: "Certified Asia Pacific – Chinese Outbound Market".

For more information, visit  
**PATA.org/patacademy-hcd-june-2016**

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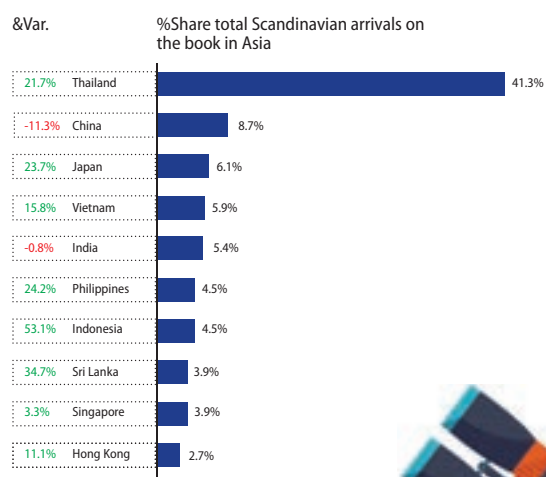
With a strong demand for leisure travel, German arrivals in Asia Pacific rose 2.8% in 2015

Meanwhile, traditional sun, sand, and sea destinations still maintained their appeal, with Sri Lanka and the Maldives attracting 12.6% and 8.6% more German arrivals in 2015 respectively.

**%Share total Scandinavian arrivals on the book in Asia**

|        |             |       |
|--------|-------------|-------|
| 21.7%  | Thailand    | 41.3% |
| -11.3% | China       | 8.7%  |
| 23.7%  | Japan       | 6.1%  |
| 15.8%  | Vietnam     | 5.9%  |
| -0.8%  | India       | 5.4%  |
| 24.2%  | Philippines | 4.5%  |
| 53.1%  | Indonesia   | 4.5%  |
| 34.7%  | Sri Lanka   | 3.9%  |
| 3.3%   | Singapore   | 3.9%  |
| 11.1%  | Hong Kong   | 2.7%  |

China's updated visa-free transit policy may bring new products for the Scandinavian market in 1H2016. Starting from end-January 2016, Schengen country citizens can stay up to six days without a visa on direct transits through airports in Shanghai, Nanjing and Hangzhou. With SAS' direct flights between Copenhagen and Shanghai, and between Stockholm and Hong Kong, trips combining visits to the Yangtze River Delta in China and Hong Kong may become increasingly popular.



Discover this land,  
like never before.

Luxurious integrated resort, Wynn Palace, will be unveiled in 2016



# Elevated Meeting Experience at Wynn Palace

Wynn Resorts is proud to announce a whole new hospitality experience with the launch of Wynn Palace, the company's first luxurious integrated resort in Cotai, in 2016.

The surprise for guests starts with them making a breathtaking journey across a stunning Performance Lake – think plumes of water dancing with balletic grace – via a dragon SkyCab into the heart of the US\$4.1 billion, 28-storey resort.

Guests then check into spacious and elegantly furnished spaces, taking their pick from 1,700 rooms, suites and villas commanding sweeping views of the captivating Performance Lake and Cotai landscape.

Gastronomic desires can be satisfied easily from the variety of F&B options: offering Chinese, Japanese and international cuisines. Be it casual, contemporary or fine, remarkable cuisines created by passionate chefs are served in extraordinary environments.

## Versatile Meeting Facilities

Meeting facilities across 26,300 sq ft. of multi-purpose space are aplenty and highly flexible



Guests can make a journey across Performance Lake by SkyCab

at Wynn Palace, catering to the varying needs of business guests. A dedicated team of experts makes it their business to design and deliver bespoke events for guests. What makes it even more special having your event hosted in Wynn Palace is having an exclusive consultant, culinary team and florist to help personalizing your event. To do more than just imagination, Wynn Palace has set up an Events Studio for privileged guests to preview every detail of your events.

4 meeting rooms provide 10 flexible configurations. The 17,400 sq ft. pillarless Grand Theater Ballroom lends a touch of drama to any business event with its theatrical-standard stage. This ballroom has the capacity to seat up to 960 people banquet-style, and is convertible to meet different event styles and sizes.

Last but not least, all spaces are well equipped with advanced technology, including sophisticated audio-visual devices as well as broadband and wireless Internet capabilities.

## Perfecting the art of work and play

Of course, Wynn Palace's offers are not limited to the above. Other treats include a



Tulips created by artist Jeff Koons



Wynn Macau Ballroom

luxurious spa, an opulent beauty salon, a well-equipped fitness center, and the 200,000 sq ft. Wynn Esplanade housing the most luxurious brands. Guests can indulge in retail therapy from the latest in luxury accessories, jewellery and exquisite timepieces.

## Right in the heart of Cotai, highly accessible

Conveniently located in Cotai, the highly anticipated Wynn Palace is just a few minutes' drive from Macau International Airport and the Taipa Ferry Terminal. Complimentary shuttle bus services are also available for guests arriving from Gongbei Port of Entry and both Macau Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal and Taipa Ferry Terminal.

Led by a team of experts, the resort's facilities and activities are crafted in perfection to pamper all guests with the best of best. This luxurious integrated resort encapsulates every guest's dreams into one place with its spectacular range of entertainment, shopping and gourmet heaven, and top-notch facilities for the any event – meeting, convention, wedding and more. Regardless it is for leisure or business, Wynn Palace is the ultimate choice for you and everyone.

# Agency

Learn from the experts, take heed of tech-savvy agencies that have transformed their businesses and pick up new ideas on how to do better

## WHO GETS THE BOOKING?

Wanting to extend a trip to Boracay with her sister following her business trip in Manila, **S Puvaneswary** visited two travel companies in Kuala Lumpur to find out more about their packages. She reveals which company she prefers



### Safety Travel & Tours



**APPEARANCE** The agency had a simple storefront with only one travel consultant, Eugene Ngoi, on duty. I felt at ease the moment I stepped in as the store was brightly lit and Ngoi greeted me warmly.

**PRODUCT** Ngoi was upfront in saying that he didn't have ready-made packages to Boracay. However, if I gave him time, he could customise a special package for two, with activities for a 4D/3N stay. He could also arrange the airport transfer and accommodation, and after a quick Internet check estimated that the entire package would cost about RM1,500 (US\$346).

He also showed me the rooms of several four-star resorts in Boracay on his computer screen. I was impressed with his initiative.

**EASE OF BOOKING** Ngoi said that I could transfer the money to the company's bank account. He also wrote his mobile number on his business card, should I need to contact him later.

**PRICE** Since I was already on a business trip to Manila, I thought I would extend my stay in the Philippines by travelling to Boracay. However, Ngoi warned me that the air ticket on Cebu Pacific would cost more if I travelled from Manila to Boracay. He advised that it would be cheaper to fly via a LCC from Kuala Lumpur to Boracay with return tickets from RM550, taxes included.

**VERDICT** I would go with Safety Travel & Tours simply because Ngoi was friendlier and he took the initiative to find out about my likes and dislikes, my budget and the reason I was making the trip. In the few minutes I was in his store, I felt that we made a personal connection, as he also shared personal stories of his travels. Ser, on the other hand, was more clinical in his approach, waiting for me to prompt him with questions, and he didn't try to find anything in common with me.

### Apple Signature Holidays

**APPEARANCE** This was a much larger travel agency with more than 10 staff stationed behind their computers; the store boasted carpeted floor and had travel magazines for guests' reading pleasure. One of the consultants, Alwin Ser, caught my eye the moment I stepped in and I approached him for assistance.

**PRODUCT** I told Ser that I wanted to go to Boracay and he took about two minutes to fish out an itinerary and print me a copy. The ground itinerary had a 4D/3N half board programme, complete with a selection of hotels, activities and pricing.

I had to prod Ser for more information, but to his credit he answered every question concisely. He also informed me that I had to purchase my own air tickets with another travel agency if I wanted to fly on Cebu Pacific. He would have won me over if he had gone a step further by writing down the agency's name and contact number.

**EASE OF BOOKING** Ser also informed me that I could make a bank transfer and provided me with the company's bank details.

**PRICE** A 4D/3N night stay in Boracay would cost between RM1,159 and RM1,689 based on a half-board programme, and the hotel and room category I chose. This price excluded air tickets.



## Sir Rocco Forte to headline first ATM 2016 Leaders Breakfast

Leading regional travel industry professionals will come together at Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2016, as organiser, Reed Travel Exhibitions, hosts its first ever Leaders Breakfast.

The invitation-only event, will take place on Wednesday 27th April 2016. As well as providing a unique platform for peer to peer networking, the highlight of the session will be an open one-on-one interview by BBC World News television anchor Zeinab Badawi, with veteran luxury hotelier, Sir Rocco Forte, Chairman of Rocco Forte Hotels.

Topical industry issues such as opportunities for luxury brands in Iran, the impact of technology on distribution channels and guest experience as well as his views on the future of the industry – online travel agents and the future of luxury in the Middle East post 2020.

### About Arabian Travel Market

Now in its 23rd edition, Arabian Travel Market 2016 will showcase more than 2,800 products and destinations from around the world to over 26,000 buyers and travel trade visitors across four days at Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre (DICEC).

For more information, please visit [www.arabiantravelmart.com](http://www.arabiantravelmart.com)

ADVERTORIAL



Sir Rocco Forte

Son of the late Lord Charles Forte, and a descendant of one of the UK's best known hospitality dynasties, Sir Rocco Forte founded his luxury hotel company in 1996 following a distinguished career with Forte Plc, which he joined as a young man in 1969. He oversaw the group which at one point, managed a portfolio of more than 800 hotels, 1,000 restaurants and almost 100,000 employees located in 50 countries.

Rocco Forte Hotels currently operates hotels in major European destinations including London, Edinburgh, Brussels, Florence, Rome, Munich, Frankfurt, Berlin, and St. Petersburg, as well as a flagship property in Jeddah. Saudi Arabia. In 2009, Rocco Forte Hotels launched Verdura, the company's first resort on the island of Sicily and has an active strategy for future expansion into new European destinations and other global markets, with a Shanghai hotel set to open in 2018.

Knighted in 1994 for services to the UK tourism industry he was also president of the British Hospitality Association (the main trade body for the UK hotel and catering industry) from 1991-6, and has also been an active member of the Executive Committee of the World Travel & Tourism Council.

## INNOVATORS

Caroline Boey

# MADE TO ORDER

**WHO** A former reporter with London's *Sunday Times*, Sarah Keenlyside moved to China in 2005 where she was involved with running the *Time Out* magazine. It was during the 2008 Beijing Olympics that spurred her to help visitors who found it hard to navigate around the city.

Bespoke Travel Company was born a year later when Keenlyside founded the Beijing-based firm as managing dictator. The company specialises in customised city experiences by expert curators on the ground, and has hosted celebrities the likes of Katy Perry, Matt Damon and Johnny Depp.



Sarah Keenlyside (right), managing dictator, Bespoke Travel Company

**WHAT** Eschewing package tours for personalised ones, Bespoke offers an online travel menu of all the components needed to create a personalised trip, with tours priced separately so travellers know exactly where the money is going.

For example, the traveller will see how much it costs to hire a tour guide, a car, do a taichi class, etc, and even the hourly fees for Bespoke to customise the trip – a radical departure from the industry norm.

**WHY?** Keenlyside believes the new creative class of traveller wants customisation, value for money, honesty and savvy tips from people in the know, hence they will also appreciate the transparency and collaborative design process in customising the packages.

She is keenly aware that sophisticated travellers want to delve deeper into the local history beyond the touristy version, enjoy memorable meals whether it is street food or fine dining, and stay somewhere fun.

**Target?** The goal for Bespoke – which started in Beijing and has since expanded to Shanghai – is to offer its service all over the world. The company is looking to open offices in New York and Tokyo next, and seeks to make travel easier and more personalised for its Western and Chinese clients alike.

## View from the top

In just two decades, Qatar Airways' has become a force to be reckoned with in the aviation world. The airline's outspoken CEO, Akbar Al-Baker, speaks his mind to [Sim Kok Chwee](#)

# THE HIGH-FLYING CHIEF

**In recent years, the global aviation sector appears to have evolved into a Middle East versus the world carriers scenario. What do you make of the attention given to the Gulf carriers?**

We are getting free publicity. (Such claims) have no substance. We are operated just like any other airline. (The US carriers) are fighting a proxy war on behalf of their joint-venture partners; they have not been able to prove we have violated the air services agreements.

**Qatar Airways has threatened to leave the One-world alliance, and you stated that you would not join another alliance but form your own. What will be the deal-breaker?**

If we cannot work as a family or as a real alliance (or) if one member is undermining the interests of its other members, then we will not continue to be a member of the alliance.

**Are airports in the Asia-Pacific region coping with growth and matching the experience that Qatar Airways is delivering in the air?**

Airports in the Far East are delivering the quality of service and amenities. Qatar Airways has gone one step ahead. Our new Hamad International Airport has been named the best airport in the Middle East and is able to compete with any airport in the world. Those facilities are built over a lifetime.

Hamad International Airport is difficult for anyone to match. It is the only airport in the world to be designed and built with one hundred per cent input of an airline – Qatar Airways. All the needs of passengers in premium and economy classes were addressed in detail and matched with the highest quality of product.

**What innovation do you wish to see in the aircraft cabin for all classes?**

The manufacturers do not propose to us. We raise the bar. Qatar Airways has changed even airlines in the region. We were the first to have horizontal flat seats, and a lounge on board our First Class cabin. We are always one step ahead of the other airlines, (even) Singapore Airlines will have difficulties narrowing the gap.



We are getting free publicity. (Such claims) have no substance. (The US carriers) are fighting a proxy war on behalf of their joint-venture partners...

## 10 NEED TO KNOW'S ABOUT AKBAR AL-BAKER

- **What do you do for fun?** Running Qatar Airways.
- **Your ideal vacation?** Representing Qatar Airways at trade fairs
- **How do you book your leisure trips?** There is no leisure trip. It is all business only.
- **What are you reading now?** I read Qatar Airways emails...hundreds of them every day. In my spare time, I read publications that give me information about political developments in the world.
- **How do you stay healthy?** (Smiles) By the grace of God.
- **What is your favourite food?** I do not eat much and I am very flexible, but I enjoy Indian, Chinese and Japanese cuisines too.
- **Do you have a habit you cannot kick?** By the grace of God, I do not have any bad habit. I do not smoke or drink, and I work.
- **What is your pet peeve – something that never fails to annoy you?** (In a serious tone) What really annoys me is when the kind of service that I want and expect for our guests is not given and when any staff fails me.
- **Most people don't know that you...**Everybody knows me well and they know what I expect of them – and they know my standards.

**Is the time right for manufacturers to re-visit the higher-speed ultra-longhaul aircraft? Is ultra-longhaul travel limited by aircraft range or the human's ability to stay alive and sane beyond 17 hours in the air?**

We already have our fleet of ultra-longhaul aircraft available. These include the Boeing 777-200LR and the Airbus A350-900 along with the B777X on order.

There could be a possibility of an aircraft with the ability to fly at a speed higher than Mach 0.85. In any case, the Gulfstream G650 of Qatar Executive cruises at Mach 0.9.

**You have been appointed to IATA Board of Governors. What legacy would you like to leave at the end of your term in 2018?**

Since the 67<sup>th</sup> IATA Annual General Meeting in Singapore in 2011 where Qatar Airways challenged the way the association worked, there has been a sea of change in the way it operates.

In the interest of all airlines, it is my duty towards them to ensure IATA operates efficiently and with corporate governance and represents all the airlines of the world.





**Craig Moyes,**  
World Travel Market  
Portfolio Director

# WTM Connect Means Business

## Reed Travel Exhibitions' new pod events in South East Asia and China take place in May this year

WTM Connect Asia and WTM Connect China are brand new 1-2-1 invitation only pod events, marking World Travel Market's move into the growing South East Asian and Chinese tourism markets.

The new 'pod' format differs to the traditional World Travel Market exhibition events providing attendees with 2.5 days of pure business meetings, education content and networking opportunities. WTM Connect offers a high value 1 to 1 ratio with the same number of buyers and suppliers at each event, ensuring maximum return on investment for attendees.

WTM Connect Asia will bring together suppliers of South East Asia and international travel product to meet with South East Asian and international buyers. And WTM Connect China will bring suppliers of international travel product to meet with 100% outbound Chinese buyers.

WTM Portfolio Director, Craig Moyes, commented: "We are delighted to be able to take the WTM Portfolio to Asia and China. WTM Connect will offer the perfect platforms for the Asian and Chinese travel industries to conduct business and firmly establish themselves as the fastest growing and most important regions in the global tourism marketplace. WTM Connects are targeted events for exhibitors to meet with hand-picked buyers. The WTM Portfolio helped to facilitate more than \$7 billion in travel industry business deals in 2015 and with the arrival of the WTM Connect events in China and Malaysia we will see this figure increase further in 2016."

**For more information about WTM Connect Asia visit [www.wtmconnectasia.com](http://www.wtmconnectasia.com) and [www.wtmconnectchina.com](http://www.wtmconnectchina.com) for details about WTM Connect China**



**wtm  
connect**  
Asia

**18-20 May 2016**  
Eastern and Oriental Hotel  
Straits Quay Convention Centre  
Penang, Malaysia  
**Register your interest**  
[www.wtmconnectasia.com](http://www.wtmconnectasia.com)



**wtm  
connect**  
China

**23-25 May 2016**  
Renaissance Sanya  
Resort & Spa Sanya,  
Hainan Island, China  
**Register your interest**  
[www.wtmconnectchina.com](http://www.wtmconnectchina.com)

# Shop

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## HOTELS



**THE OLYMPIAN, HONG KONG**  
The latest addition to Sino Hotels' portfolio, this boutique property is located close to Tsim Sha Tsui along West Kowloon's waterfront. The hotel features 32 guestrooms and suites from 43m<sup>2</sup> to 75m<sup>2</sup>, with amenities such as a fitness centre and a private lounge where guests can have cooked-to-order local and international meals round the clock.



**SHANGRI-LA HAMBANTOTA RESORT & SPA, SRI LANKA**  
Opening on June 1, 2016 is the first internationally-branded luxury resort in developing Hambantota town. The 300-room beachfront resort spans more than 18ha, and facilities include CHI The Spa, an artisan village, an 18-hole golf course, a kids' club and a host of dining and entertainment options.



**SUDAMALA KOMODO VILLAS & DIVE RESORT, INDONESIA**  
Slated to open in 2017, the 50-villa luxury resort located on Sebayur Island in East Nusa Tenggara is a jumping-off point to diving sites in and around the UNESCO-listed Komodo National Park. Seclusion is guaranteed – the hotel is 30 minutes by boat from the nearest domestic airport of Labuan Bajo.



**SUN & MOON, CAMBODIA**  
The Sun & Moon Hotel Company has launched a four-star property in Phnom Penh's old quarter. The hotel is situated within walking distance from the riverside and major tourist attractions like the Royal Palace. Billing itself as a modern and affordable design hotel, its 80 rooms are tricked out in custom-designed furniture and a vibrant colour palette.

## ACTIVITIES

### DANCE YOUR HEART OUT AT ZOUKOUT BORACAY

For the first time ever, electronic dance music festival ZoukOut will expand beyond Singapore's Siloso Beach to three other Asian cities – Japan, Hong Kong and the Philippines. The first of the three dance festivals, ZoukOut Prelude Edition will be held from April 30-May 1, 2016 at the Epic and Uptown beachfront in Boracay. The festival will feature the likes of Kaskade, Dubvision and DJ Vice, in addition to costumed buskers, interactive visual art installations and food stalls.

### PERSONALISED SHORE JOURNEYS WITH ROYAL CARIBBEAN

Guests with Royal Caribbean International can now choose to go on customisable shore excursions across the cruise liner's 288 ports of call in 77 countries. Titled Private Journeys, this concierge-style planning service is offered on top of the company's 3,000 excursions worldwide. Examples include visiting a Michelin-star restaurant in Belgium, soaring above the Alaskan wilderness in a float plane and swimming in one of Dubrovnik's secluded lagoons.



# Win your pass to unforgettable experiences



12 once-in-a-lifetime experiences reserved for our SuperSellers

We would like to reward our SuperSellers with The Unforgettables; prizes that money can't buy. We're giving away 12 unforgettable experiences to some of the most exclusive events in the world. From front row seats at the most celebrated fashion weeks to VIP hospitality at the world's top football leagues to tickets to the most prestigious film festivals. Every month, one SuperSeller will win. With 12 prizes up for grabs, the more you sell Etihad, the better your chances are. To join our SuperSeller programme or find out more about our amazing rewards, visit [agents.etihad.com](http://agents.etihad.com)



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# NOT QUITE BUSI

## JAKARTA

### Policies and domestic demand spur confidence

By Mimi Hudoyo

Increased government spending and strong domestic travel demand in Jakarta are keeping the Indonesian trade sanguine despite signs of declining hotel revenue in 2015 and a sluggish global economy.

The capital's hotels, which are "predominantly driven by corporate demand", saw RevPAR fall last year, according to Matt Gebbie, director, Pacific Asia for Horwath HTL.

"In 2015, economy/midscale hotels in Jakarta suffered the greatest falls in RevPAR of around 10 per cent, followed by upper midscale/upscale, down around five per cent. The upper upscale hotels were able to maintain RevPAR at 2014 levels," he said.

But the trend could change as the recent boost in Jakarta's upscale and luxury hotels is expected to exert a downward pressure on the same small high-yielding market, Gebbie opined.

John Flood, president and CEO of Archipelago International, noted: "For our (midscale) hotels we're seeing an increase (in occupancy) – perhaps due to belt tightening by some companies downgrading from (upscale) to (midscale) to save money."

Amid the slowing global economy, the oil and gas and related industries are the hardest hit. The automotive industry is also declining, while the construction and pharmaceutical sectors remain strong, observed industry players.

Mixed sentiments are seen for the financial sector though. Said Hellen Xu, COO of Panorama Tours Indonesia: "We see some financial institutions that are growing their presence in Indonesia, while some established firms here are cutting their spending."

Still, there are compelling reasons to believe that Jakarta's business travel sector will hold its own, especially as the Indonesian economy is performing better than its regional competitors, Flood posited.

He added: "(Archipelago's) business in 2015 was down in 1H but picked up in 2H; 1Q2016 is about 30 per cent up from the same period of last year."

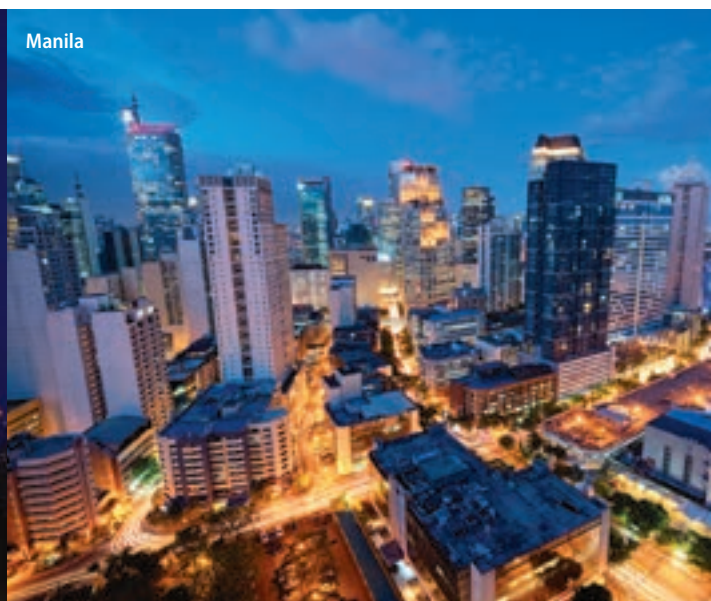
Gebbie said: "The local economy and domestic tourism are what drive Jakarta's mid to upper-upscale hotels and there are some encouraging signs for the Indonesian economy this year."

Increased government spending and lower interest rates should drive greater investment and consumption, and the government has been pushing forward with infrastructure projects, he explained.

Furthermore, midscale hotels might benefit from government bookings, since the sector is once again allowed to organise events in hotels with some stipulations.



Jakarta



Manila



Hong Kong



Singapore



Although many companies are under pressure to reduce costs, they also understand that travel is necessary to facilitate and grow their business.

Alvan Aiau

Vice president, global sales & program management, Asia-Pacific, Carlson Wagonlit Travel

## SINGAPORE

### Corporations stretch travel dollars more than ever

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

As financial storm clouds gather on the horizon, companies are likely to tighten their travel policies with a stronger focus on cost control but they will continue to travel, according to TMCs interviewed.

Several key industry sectors for premium travel – notably banking & finance,

mining and energy – face challenging conditions that weigh down on their travel demand, noted Greg O'Neil, president of Asia Pacific for BCD Travel.

Due to plunging oil prices, the energy sector has suffered heavier travel cutbacks more than other industries, noted Bertrand Sallet, general manager of FCM South-east Asia.

Alvan Aiau, vice president, global sales & program management, Asia-Pacific at Carlson Wagonlit Travel, commented: "We see many of our customers adapting to the continued challenging economic climate. Although many companies are under pressure to reduce costs, they also

understand that travel is necessary to facilitate and grow their business."

Sharing similar sentiments, Sallet opined: "We do not expect a complete travel freeze, (perhaps) a slight drop in (business) travel this year but it will not be too drastic."

The demand for business travel remains high though and business travellers in Singapore are very much focused on luxury, according to Sallet, with 52 per cent of flights booked on premium classes and 75 per cent of accommodation booked with international hotels.

"Companies are now looking at value-driven travel solutions to maintain the same travel volume but for less," he added. "The current economic situation presents a good opportunity for companies to now mandate their travel policies to drive more value and greater savings."

Sallet elaborated: "Instead of travelling less, companies can travel smarter and better on the same budget. By applying simple rules like advanced booking (at least seven days), allowing more restrictive fares, considering LCC for short trips, a company can generate substantial savings."

O'Neil also suggested: "(Corporates) have many options including changing booking patterns, restricting who can travel, changing the class of travel or hotel tier."

The impacts of a tepid global economy and plunging oil prices are not playing out equally across Asia's business cities, with some markets seeing a cutback in corporate travel while others are enjoying faster growth momentum. *TTG Asia* sizes up the situation

# NESS AS USUAL



Cost-cutting measures taken include sending fewer staff members on trips and choosing a lower subclass of airline seats.

**Syed Razif Al-Yahya**  
Group managing director of Sutra Group of Companies

## MANILA

### FDI inflow bodes well for corporate travel demand

*By Rosa Ocampo*

Greater foreign investment volumes and improving business infrastructure in Manila are contributing to positive sentiment within its business travel sector.

The Philippines is seeing economic growth and foreign investments in major industries and business enterprises related to infrastructure, energy, hospitality, as well as special economic zones.

"There are lots of opportunities for investors. Business process outsourcing and real estate developments are just two of the many industries that are getting a growing number of foreign investments," said Fe Ablang Yu, general manager of Ar-fel Travel and Tours.

"Several five-star hotels are opening (in Metro Manila). These hotels will not invest in the Philippines had they known that the business landscape was not improving," she opined.

"This is the best time to invest in businesses in the Philippines and that's why business travel is booming," Christine Urbano-Ibarreta, director of sales and marketing, Golden Phoenix Hotel Manila,

pointed out.

She said the boom in foreign investments include China-based companies pouring their money into the country where there are already a plethora of Filipino-Chinese-owned businesses and industries.

As well, the attractiveness of Manila to foreign investors is becoming more apparent, with a growing number of investors from South Korea, Japan and China setting up offices and headquarters in Manila even though their operations are elsewhere in the Philippines.

The growing wave of businessmen seeking opportunities in the Philippines has helped to buoy occupancy rates at New World Makati Hotel, according to its director of sales and marketing, Jann Delgado.

Corporate meetings and conferences too have been on the rise since last year, she noted.

But business travellers have to contend with pricey room rates and traffic congestion in Metro Manila.

"Hotel rates are still high compared with other Asian countries despite an increasing inventory of hotel keys in the city," said Ablang Yu.

She added that the Metro Manila's traffic situation is another complaint among time-strapped business travellers.

## KUALA LUMPUR

### Shrinking travel budgets prompt new tactics

*By S Puvaneswary*

Feeling the effects of the global economic slowdown, particularly in the oil & gas and banking sectors, Malaysia's industry players are bracing themselves for a tough year ahead.

Corporate Information Travel's business development manager, Foo Sze Zhaun, projected outbound travel to be flat, adding that longhaul travel demand has dropped as corporate clients opt for regional destinations instead.

Even incentive travel has been affected as fewer people had met their targets in 2015, resulting in a reduction in the number of qualifiers compared with previous years.

On the other hand, business travel to trade fairs and exhibitions in Europe had

picked up slightly for the automotive, publishing and industrial machinery sectors, added Foo.

According to Syed Razif Al-Yahya, group managing director of Sutra Group of Companies, the government sector has reduced travel budgets by more than 50 per cent for both overseas and domestic travel.

"The cost cutting measures taken include sending fewer staff on trips and choosing a lower subclass of airline seats," he explained.

Many corporate clients have dragged payments in the current challenging climate too, he revealed.

Expecting a 40 per cent fall in revenue from corporate and government bookings, Syed Razif plans to grow the leisure market, which currently comprises 10 per cent of the group's total business.

Hotels too, are rolling out new strategies to cope with the reduced travel budgets among corporate and government sectors.

Following slower forward bookings this year, Eric Tan, general manager of Pullman Kuala Lumpur Bangsar, shared that the hotel is targeting both leisure and business travellers with ongoing tacticals such as including rooms with breakfast inclusions.

And as hotels compete for business amid an uncertain economy, Dorsett Kuala Lumpur has collaborated with Zuger International to equip guestrooms with smartphones that afford guests free 3G connectivity, local calls and SMSes in the hopes of attracting more business and leisure travellers.

## BANGKOK

### Diversified economy a boon

*By Michael Mackey*

Business travel to Bangkok is proving resilient despite turbulence in the global economy and uncertainties at home, and players are pointing to Thailand's diversified economy which continues to bring travellers to the Thai capital.

"Business travel for us continues to grow," commented Leanne Harwood, InterContinental Hotels Group's (IHG) vice president, operations, South-east Asia and Korea, adding that this market segment was the first to rebound after last year's

bombing in Bangkok.

"What we are seeing is growth across both SME and MICE segments," she added.

IHG, which has nine properties in the capital with 2,800 rooms, put the business travel crowd at 20 per cent of its guests, substantially higher than the Bangkok average of 12 per cent.

Unlike most other cities which often see companies with tightened travel budgets switching to lower-category hotels, pointed out Menard, this approach as not been observed in Bangkok as the Thai capital "still offers good value".

"Corporate (demand) is slightly up about 15 per cent on the first two months," said Accor's Ianic Menard, vice president sales, marketing & distribution, who also observed stronger competition among Bangkok's hotels for corporate travel business.

Alvan Aiau, vice president, global sales & program management, Asia-Pacific, Carlson Wagonlit Travel, believes Bangkok will remain an important business travel destination.

He said: "We expect to continue to see a strong volume of business travel to Bangkok in 2016, and CWT's 2016 Global Travel Price Outlook forecasts that hotel rates in Thailand will increase 1.6 per cent this year," he told *TTG Asia* in written responses.

Helping matters is Thailand's economic diversity.

Oil and gas sectors have been hit, but manufacturing, consumer goods and banking were described by Accor's Menard as "fairly stable", electronics, chemicals and software sectors "okay", and car manufacturing exceedingly good.

Thailand will turn out some two million vehicles this year.

Sharing similar observations, IHG's Hardwood said: "We are absolutely seeing growth in the automotive and pharmaceutical sectors."

## TOKYO

### Domestic economy holds the fort

*By Julian Ryall*

Japan's business travel trade appears rela-



Miss SHOPhia: Malaysia Shopping icon.

## SHOPPING

Aside from its eco-tourism attractions, cultural heritage, and culinary wonders, travellers to Malaysia often recognise it for one other thing – shopping. Those seeking luxury can easily walk in to any one of the many high-end shopping malls such as Pavilion Kuala Lumpur, KLCC, or Midvalley Megamall, while those looking for a more rustic experience can visit the many street stalls, bazaars, and night markets in various parts of the country.



Freeport A'famosa Outlet.

In terms of affordable luxury, several mega outlet stores have established themselves as excellent shopping choices - the Johor Premium Outlet for example, is the first Premium Outlet Center in Southeast Asia, housing 130 stores of branded luxury goods, while near the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the newly-opened Mitsui Outlet Park, (also the first in Southeast Asia) spans over 25,000 square meters, and houses 140 outlets.

The historical city of Melaka also added another feather in its tourism cap when a premier outlet, Freeport A'Famosa Outlet, opened in November last year. Offering over 100 retail units, Freeport is the 7th largest outlet developed in the world, and Freeport A'Famosa Outlet is Freeport's first outlet in Southeast Asia.

These shopping centres are all complemented by the three major shopping events held annually in the country – the 1Malaysia Super Sale, the 1Malaysia Mega Sale Carnival, and the 1Malaysia Year-End Sale, during which all stores and shopping malls offer unbeatable bargains along with exciting promotions. Recently, Tourism Malaysia has also introduced the newly created promotional icon, Miss SHOPhia, which will be featured in both local and overseas shopping campaigns.



Johor Premium Outlet.

These attractions, coupled with the favourable exchange rate, makes Malaysia the perfect shopping destination for avid shoppers worldwide.

## THEME PARKS

Malaysia is also an ideal destination for family fun, as the country is home to some of the best theme parks in the region. Currently housing an impressive 16 theme and water parks around the country, with 10 more reported to be opening within the next few years, Malaysia is setting itself apart as a top-of-mind family destination in the region.

For instance, the country houses the first LEGOLAND in Asia, which opened its doors in 2012 in Johor. It started off with more than 40 rides, shows, and attractions, and has since expanded to include a water park and hotel. Besides that, Johor is also home to the Puteri Harbour Family Theme Park, which has the Sanrio Hello Kitty Town. Meanwhile, in Kuala Lumpur, tourists can go to Sunway Lagoon, which offers over 80 attractions for both adults and children.

This year, two more highly anticipated theme parks are set to open their doors – Resorts World Genting



Sunway Lagoon.



Movie Animation Park Studios (MAPS).

is scheduled to open the Twentieth Century Fox World outdoor theme park with about 25 rides and attractions based on Fox films such as 'Alien vs Predator', 'Ice Age', and 'Planet of the Apes', while Ipoh will soon be home to the world's first theme park devoted solely to animation – Movie Animation Park Studios (MAPS). Much of the animation featured will be drawn from their alliance with DreamWorks, and feature characters such as Croods, Megamind, Casper the Friendly Ghost and their latest film personas – Mr. Peabody and Sherman.

Once opened, families will be hard pressed to find a more exciting destination for their annual family getaway!



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# Guide Business travel

tively unconcerned about recent uncertainties in the global economy, thanks in large part to the strength of the domestic economy.

Japanese airlines are also reporting good performances in the most recent quarter, thanks to falling aviation fuel prices, making overall travel costs lower.

"We have not seen any impact of the global economic downturn and we are not predicting anything down the line," said Jian Yang of the Japan Airlines' public relations office. "Our 3Q results show stable growth and all the data is still on track."

"A big factor is probably the domestic economy doing so well and the fact that there has been no downturn in our business class sales, which suggest that there is not too much concern here," he said, adding that the abolition of the fuel surcharge is welcomed by business travellers.

Hotel operators also foresee few clouds on the horizon as demand for rooms still remains high in Tokyo for business and leisure markets alike.

Ignatius Cronin, director of international public relations for Tokyo's Imperial Hotel, has so far seen "no discernible impact".

"Our occupancy rates are up and we're not factoring economic problems into our sales activities at all for the foreseeable future," he said.

For Shinya Kurosawa, head of global business and a member of the board of JTB, the strength of the domestic econ-

## What we are seeing is growth across both SME and MICE segments.

**Leanne Harwood**

Vice president, operations, South-east Asia and Korea, InterContinental Hotels Group



omy is keeping the business arm of his company buoyant.

"Japanese companies are having a good time at the moment and we're seeing that reflected in the business they are doing with us," he told *TTG Asia*.

However, there has been a slight tapering off of business in economies traditionally closely linked to the economy of China, such as Singapore and Malaysia, Kurosawa said.

Other countries in South-east Asia, such as Vietnam and the Philippines are less exposed to volatility in China and consequently business has remained solid, he said.

## HONG KONG

### Decline in leisure arrivals prompts business tack

*By Prudence Lui*

Travel trade players in Hong Kong are training their sights on the business travel segment after feeling the pinch from the decline in leisure travel to the city.

According to Hong Kong Tourism Board's statistics, business arrivals grew 3.3 per cent to eight million last year with overnight mainland business arrivals rising 11.4 per cent due to a surge in commercial activities between China and Hong Kong.

Following a weak 1Q, BCD Travel man-

aging director, Lily Agonoy, believes that the trend will continue into the next few months.

"2H will be better than 1H. I believe the retail luxury goods sector will be most affected, followed by banking and finance sectors. We will be more aggressive and innovative to win business."

To make up for the loss of leisure traffic, hotels are competing for the business travel segment.

For instance, Hotel Icon used to see a 70 per cent share of leisure travellers but business travellers now make up over half of hotel guests.

Director of strategy & business development, Sally Osborne, said: "We put a strong focus on this segment over the last six to eight months. In 2016, we'd look at international business and so far, the US and UK markets are strong."

The hotel has embarked on plans to cater to leisure travellers, with value-added services like breakfast on the club floor and a "creative conversion space" that allows the travellers on business to work outside the confines of their rooms.

Harbourview Hotel in Wanchai, general manager, Harrison Leung, said: "With a lower travel budget, business travellers tend to cut down their attendance to trade fairs. Indeed, hotel rate in this district was down by 15-20 per cent."

"Five-star properties even lure their business back by offering a lower rate. What we can do is to maintain our volume of business and occupancy by cutting our rate."

## TRIED & TESTED

### Plaza Athénée Bangkok

A recent multimillion makeover gave this business-oriented hotel stronger amenities and edgier character to its rooms, finds **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

**LOCATION** As good as it gets. Besides commanding an address in Bangkok's diplomatic quarter (the American, British and Dutch embassies are situated on the same road), it's also steps away from the Ploenchit BTS skytrain station, making it a breeze to hop onto the metro to get between places in the inner city.

And Wireless Road being a prime business district too, situated in the hotel's vicinity are plenty of established lunch spots and cafes (think Soi Ruamrudee, Langsuan Road, etc) catering to the working crowds on weekdays as well as quality dining outlets in the luxurious but strikingly quiet Central Embassy shopping mall.

**ROOM** A two-year refurbishment completed in November 2015 sees the 374 remodelled guestrooms and suites donning a contemporary Thai colonial design look. The ISO20121-certified property also adheres to its sustainability ethos by repurposing the existing furniture into the new decor – for instance, a silver headboard

takes new life as a framed work of art.

My 44m<sup>2</sup> Royal Club Room on the 26<sup>th</sup> floor embodies understated luxury with its grey, blue and brown tones, with Thai latticework motifs adorning the air-con cover, headboard and wall art.

Clearly designed with guests' comfort in mind, the workstation is comfortable and the chaise lounge by the large bay window makes a good spot to unwind after a day of meetings. My favourites? The consistently strong Wi-Fi (in the room and throughout the property), plus the multi-port charger for mobile devices by the bedside.

**F&B** Eight restaurants and bars call the hotel home. The all-day dining Raintree Cafe has garnered rave reviews from local gourmands for its wide-ranging and indulgent buffet selection.

In addition to the Bakery and Glaz lob-



by bar on the ground floor and the poolside View on the fourth floor, speciality restaurants at the hotel include The Reflexions (French), Silk Road (Chinese), Smooth Curry (Thai) and Utage (Japanese).

**FACILITIES** The 29-storey property offers the full gamut of amenities expected of its category, with a lagoon-like outdoor swimming pool, a seven-room spa and a well-equipped gym on the fifth floor.

What's also notable are the hotel's 28 meeting rooms and three grand ballrooms – spanning over 5,600m<sup>2</sup> altogether – making it a versatile venue for hosting corporate functions and events.

**SERVICE** Faultless. From Le Royal Club Lounge to the restaurants, staff constantly

checked on us to make sure we were comfortable; even my 10-month-old baby was not forgotten – "orange juice for the little one perhaps?" As well, a last-minute request to check out an hour later was also swiftly accommodated and met with smiles.

#### VERDICT

While Plaza Athénée Bangkok is perfect for road warriors, it scores highly as a leisure property too.

**No. of rooms and suites** 374

**Rates** From 5,000++ baht (US\$142++)

**Contact details**

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# Destination **Macau**

The dazzle of a gaming destination belies Macau's cultural charm and heritage, but change is underway to connect tourists with communities that call the territory home, writes **Prudence Lui**

## BETTING ON COMMUNITIES

**T**he Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has been endeavouring to help visitors discover Macau's lesser-known districts, engaging local associations and communities in its bid to get walking tours and cultural activities on the tourist radar.

To encourage visitors to experience Macau's local col-

our, MGTO has over the past three years launched eight walking tour routes as part of its ongoing *Step Out, Experience Macao's Communities* initiative. It also supports local associations in organising tourism activities such as exhibitions, performances and carnivals around the eight themed routes.

MGTO director, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes,

said: "As local associations actively organise activities and maintain good communication with members of relevant industries in the community, they in general maintain a broader network and strong reputation in the community... This leads to positive effect and contribution to the development of community tourism."

In the recent three years, the number of district associations taking part in the *Step Out, Experience Macao's Communities* initiative has grown from six to 13, the number of activities supported from 12 to 40, and the number of participants from 42,000 to 700,000.

Some successful examples include Reel Fun, a 90-minute cruise organised by the Fishermen's Mutual Help Association and MGTO last year with support from the Marine and Water Bureau; and pedicab promotional activities such as photo taking and rides by the Macao Pedicab Drivers Union.

"This year we will continue to allocate resources to this initiative to lure visitors to extend their length of stay and experience Macau in depth," said de Senna Fernandes.

Tourism suppliers such as Best Western Hotel Sun Sun Macao is also keen to promote community-based tourism by displaying a sightseeing map of Macau with recommendations in its lobby.

The hotel's COO, Charles Huang, explained: "We mainly showcase lesser-known tourism resources available in our neighbourhood, ranging from historical spots and traditional eateries to a bakery operated by the older generation.

"When MGTO rolled out a hop-on, hop-off sightseeing bus tour late last year, we also packaged it with our hotel accommodation. Our next move is to support the local creative industry by engaging local artists to exhibit their art pieces in the hotel," he added.

The response to MGTO's walking tours among travel agents has been varied though.

"FITs from Guangdong Province, South-east Asia and Hong Kong tend to like walking tours if they stay for three days," observed Johnny Choi, director of sales at Estoril Tour Travel. "The younger generation may be fond of this idea as they can download apps on their mobile devices that can guide them through the district."

Choi is selective about the walking tour itineraries as not all are deemed interesting to his clients. He said: "So far, we only pick routes emphasising creativity such as those that cover Tap Seac area where the different styles of architecture are rich and varied."

Air Cruise's executive director, Eric Chang, said: "MGTO has proactive promotions in Europe and the US so we don't have to push the tours aggressively. Despite overseas agents' interest, the volume of traffic is still small due to the very small longhaul market.

"However, local tour operators don't agree with this walking tour concept as it doesn't involve any coach services at all and brings no income."



Portuguese colonial architecture in Macau

### Destination in numbers

**30.1 million**

The total number of arrivals for 2015, down 2.6 per cent from the previous year. Over half of the traffic were same-day visitors

**5.8 million**

The number of passengers that Macau International Airport received in 2015, a 6.4 per cent growth from the previous year. The number of airlines serving Macau also increased from 18 to 24 while the number of destinations expanded by six to 40

**US\$186.50**

Macau's average room rates in 2015, down 7.8 per cent from 2014. Meanwhile, the city's inventory grew 14.4 per cent to 33,047 rooms



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# Destination Macau

## Viewpoints

Besides walking tours, what other related ideas can MGTO look into?



**Johnny Choi, director of sales, Estoril Tour Travel**

I heard about plans to push north district and Macau Gate district but there is nothing to see there other than residential developments. There are no historical relics and visitors prefer to visit downtown. For Coloane, the problem's accessibility as buses are always packed with locals and it may not be easy to catch a taxi. These factors may hinder FITs' desire to visit.

**Andy Wu, managing director, Gray Line Tours (Macau)**

Indian groups seldom cover these routes in their itineraries and I wonder if they would do it in their free time. It's not for us to say where else tours should cover because some local residents don't want tourists to intrude into their districts and disrupt their pace of life. The government should consult residents' views before rolling out more new routes.



## How to sell



**Pak Loh Chiu Chow Restaurant**

**DO** Visit the **Tea Culture House** located at Lou Lim Ieoc Garden to learn about tea. Admission is free, and complimentary tea tasting sessions are available on weekends and public holidays from 15.00 to 16.00.

**EAT** The **Pak Loh Chiu Chow Restaurant** at Galaxy Macau offers high-end and authentic Teochew dishes, such as braised lion head goose, cold crab and oyster omelette.

**SEE** Macao Science Center is hosting the **Living Dinosaurs** exhibition from March 23 to September 11. Apart from 14 replica dinosaurs and 72 smaller dinosaur models, enjoy interactive games, science talks and parent-child workshops.

**STAY** Experience the signature Butler Services at **The St Regis Macao**, which opened in December 2015, and be pampered with highly personalised services.

## MY WAY

### What is your hobby in Macau?

I love to walk when I can and Macau is a great walking city. Walking down Macau's cobblestone streets and through the colourful and historical parts of the city is always invigorating. In contrast, the nature trails in Coloane and Taipa allow you to escape to peace and quiet.

### Do you have a favourite hangout?

The Terrace at Pousada De Sao Tiago. Originally a Portuguese fortress, this local hotel is steeped in history. It features a beautiful sunny terrace – a great place to enjoy drinks with friends on a Sunday afternoon.

### How do you spend your day off in Macau?

I love to spend Sundays relaxing with my husband and our dogs. We take the dogs walking on the trails. In the evenings we sometimes sit on our roof deck and enjoy a barbecue with friends. Other days I am just as happy to spend my time reading a book.

### Name your favourite local restaurant in Macau.

A Petisqueira in Taipa. As well as being a sentimental favourite as the first Portuguese restaurant I visited when



The street in the historical centre of Macau



**Ruth Boston**  
Vice president of destination marketing & sales, Sands China

I arrived in Macau 10 years ago, the restaurant also serves delicious, authentic Portuguese food and wine in a cheerful, low-key environment featuring tables decked with red-and-white checked cloths.

### Any tips for first-time travellers to Macau?

Take the time to go beyond the tourist trails and explore the historical centre of Macau. Make sure you try the local Macanese dishes – you won't be disappointed.

## NEWS IN A MINUTE

### 1 The 13

Set to open in summer 2016, The 13 is an ultra-luxurious hotel with 200 villas ranging from 185m<sup>2</sup> to 2,787m<sup>2</sup>.

Other opulent offerings on the property include an invitation-only L'Atelier store offering limited-edition products from selected luxury brands, the only branch of the three-Michelin-star L'Ambroisie outside of Paris, as well as chauffeured rides on custom-made Rolls-Royce Phantoms.

### 2 Best Western Hotel Sun Sun

All 178 guestrooms at the Best Western Hotel Sun Sun were com-

pletely refurbished last year, with two of three room categories – life-style premium and suite – providing amenities like a Nespresso coffee machine and free Wi-Fi.

The expanded lobby bar now serves craft beers and cold drip coffee, while the new restaurant on the first floor features modern continental cuisine with a capacity of 85 seats and a 16-seat private room.

### 3 Ritz Kids Night Safari

The Ritz-Carlton, Macau's Ritz Kids Night Safari programme allows young ones to turn their suites into imaginary outdoor camping sites. A full inventory of camping tools

is provided, including a flash torch lamp, a compass and a drink bottle.

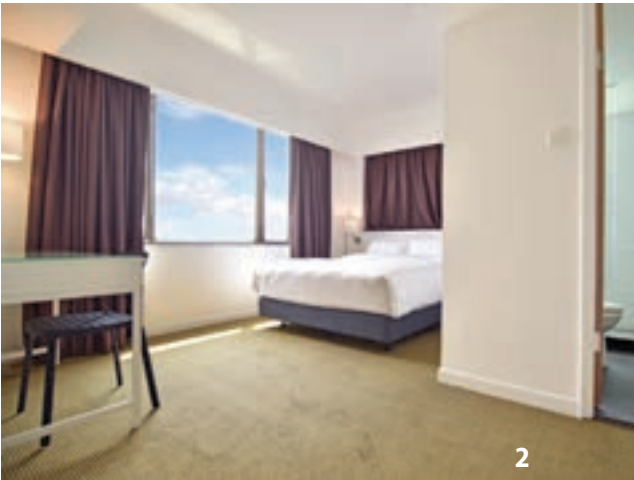
An Explorer Certificate will be given upon completion of colouring activities and stamp collections, and families (of up to four) can enjoy chocolate afternoon tea at The Ritz-Carlton Café as part of the experience.

### 4 JW Kids' Club

The world's largest JW Kids' Club at JW Marriott Hotel Macau has rolled out its first hair salon for kids in town. Young patrons can get their hair trimmed while sitting in little ride-on vintage cars and watching their favourite cartoons.



1



2

# Destination Malaysia

While Langkawi has long been the state's crown jewel for tourism, Kedah state government now wants its other attractions to be recognised in their own right through its newest destination campaign, finds **S Puvaneswary**

Hong Kong Tourism Board

## MAKING OLD NEW AGAIN

Kedah state hopes to leverage archaeological sites like Bujang Valley (pictured) to draw more visitors

### Destination in numbers

**RM3.5 million**

The sum, equivalent to US\$854,064, allocated by the Kedah state government for the *Discover Kedah 2016* campaign

**1.9 million**

The targeted number of foreign tourists for Kedah this year, or 37 per cent of the five million arrivals goal

**36,967**

The number of cruise passengers to Langkawi in 2015, up from 19,975 in 2014

**RM3,500**

The average expenditure of regional tourists to Langkawi; their average length of stay is four days

The Kedah state government is reaching back into its millennium-long history for its latest *Discover Kedah 2016* campaign, which spotlights archaeological tourism in Bujang Valley with the tagline of *Where it all began*.

Targeting five million arrivals and RM5.9 billion (US\$1.4 billion) in revenue this year, the campaign is aimed at increasing international visitor footfall to Kedah by raising awareness of tourism offerings in the state as a whole apart from Langkawi, Tourism Kedah CEO, Zulkifli Mohamad, told *TTG Asia*.

He said: "Langkawi has a strong brand and an international airport. Through this campaign, we want people to associate Langkawi with Kedah. When they visit Langkawi, we also want them to extend their holiday to the mainland."

Tourism Kedah currently has 20 trained guides to provide interpretation for tourists who visit Bujang Valley's Sungai Batu Civilisation Complex, which date back to 535BC.

Mokhtar Saidin, director at the Centre for Global Archaeological Research at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), believes the archaeological sites will be well received by the international community, as

the relics are even older than Cambodia's Angkor Wat and Borobudur in Indonesia.

He added: "This is the only historical site in South-east Asia where you see four distinct functions – ritual sites, an ancient harbour, administrative building and iron smelting industry – in one locality."

Kedah Sungai Batu Civilization Archo-Adventure Society started offering guided tours of the historical sites early this year. Said Mazlan Mahmud, founder chairman of the society: "Interest stems mainly from students, historians and a niche segment of tourists who are interested in archaeological tourism."

Welcoming Tourism Kedah's heightened efforts to promote the mainland, Anthony Wong, group managing director, Asian Overland Services Tourism & Hospitality Group, commented: "As an inbound tour operator, (the campaign) will make it easier to promote the destination to our overseas partners. We have come up with new packages on mainland Kedah, including the Sungai Batu archo-tourism packages.

"We will also work with state tourism authorities to host ground arrangements when there are familiarisation trips for overseas agents and media," he added.

Long dubbed the crown jewel in Ke-

dah's tourism, Langkawi is not resting on its laurels either.

CEO of Langkawi Development Authority (LADA), Khalid Ramli, said: "Our focus is to target more high net worth tourists and we are intensifying marketing efforts this year to highlight tourism products that Langkawi has to offer. We are leveraging the weakened ringgit to attract more domestic and international tourists."

LADA will capitalise on AirAsia's new four-times weekly flights between Guangzhou and Langkawi with B2B roadshows in Guangzhou and its neighbouring cities in 2Q2016 to attract more leisure and MICE business travellers. Guangzhou is the second international destination with direct access to Langkawi, after Singapore.

Meanwhile, LADA is also trying to attract more chartered flights to the island by linking arms with Malaysia Airports Holdings to roll out a new charter flight incentive programme.

Valid from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2017, the new scheme doubles incentive support to US\$20 per inbound passenger (up from US\$10 under the old scheme) and provides marketing support of up to US\$50,000 to charterers who commit at least 10 chartered flights

to Langkawi with an average seat factor of 70 per cent.

The Oriental Village, a prime attraction on Langkawi, will also undergo a progressive facelift from mid-2016, revealed Khalid.

New products at the Oriental Village this year include SkyRex, 3D dinosaur motion ride; and SkyGlide, a cabin-type transport that takes visitors from the top cable car station to the SkyBridge with panoramic views along the way.

Major tourism events such as the 30km Tuba Trail Run on April 2 and the XTER-RA Malaysia off-road triathlon races on May 7 and 8 are expected to attract visitors to the island.

Into its fifth edition this year, the Langkawi International Laksa Carnival from May 27-29 will feature a cooking competition with international participants from Asia.

# Destination Malaysia

## How to sell

**STAY** The newly opened **St Regis Langkawi** boasts 85 suites and four overwater villas. Facilities include five dining venues, the renowned Iridium Spa, a well-equipped gym and the largest swimmable lagoon on the island. The luxury resort is located on Jalan Pantai Beringin, a half hour's drive from the airport.

**SEE** Kedah is known as the rice bowl of Malaysia, producing closed to a third of the country's supply of rice. A visit to the **Paddy Museum** is hence a must to understand more about the history of paddy cultivation in Malaysia. The museum is nestled amid paddy fields at the foothill of Mount Keriang, showcasing the paddy cultivation process, as well as

the tools and equipment used in the trade.

**DO** The 950m-long **Tree Top Walk in Sedim River Recreation Park**, built in a lowland dipterocarp forest in Compartment 15 of Gunung Inas Forest Reserve, is the longest canopy walk in the world. At its highest point 26m above the ground, visitors will be able to obtain a bird's-eye view of

rushing streams and flora and fauna of the rainforest.

**EAT** Bon Ton Resort's **Nam Restaurant** offers front-row seats to Langkawi's spectacular sunsets. The menu is a creative mix of western and eastern cuisine, cooked with Asian spices and fresh local and imported ingredients.



From left: The St Regis Langkawi, Tree Top Walk in Sedim River Recreation Park

## Viewpoints

What are you doing to leverage the *Discover Kedah 2016* campaign?



**Arnaud Girodon, general manager, The Datai Langkawi**  
We have lined up various activities and offers throughout the year in support of the year-long campaign and to promote our property.

In January, we hosted media fam trips from China in conjunction with AirAsia's inaugural flight from Guangzhou. In February, we had a joint promotion with Malaysia Airlines and hosted three-Michelin-star chef Michel Roux for a culinary event in the hotel. We will also collaborate with the state tourism authority on roadshows and B2B events in the region.



**Andy Yow, director of sales and marketing, Vivanta by Taj - Rebak Island, Langkawi**  
We will work closely with the Langkawi Development Authority and participate in travel shows such as ITB Berlin

and ATM in Dubai to promote *Discover Kedah 2016*.  
We will also create a Langkawi-Kedah promotional kit with local tour operators; for example, a two-night stay at our resort in Langkawi and a night in Alor Setar for the Middle East, India and ASEAN markets. We hope that first-time tourists will discover the unique attractions in the state and experience our warm hospitality so that they will return after the campaign ends.

## MY WAY

**What are your favourite activities in Kedah?**  
I love cycling through the stretch of paddy fields near Golden Jubilee Park or having a cup of coffee at the riverside area at Kampung Cina. Both are in Alor Setar.  
I also enjoy people-watching at Gunung Keriang (Mount Keriang) Recreational Park. I love sitting in the cave and enjoying the moment, without dwelling on the past or thinking about the immediate future.  
**Which Kedah attractions would you take foreign friends to?**  
It will be to the Oriental Village shopping mall in Langkawi to let them experience the 3D Art Museum and a ride on the Langkawi Cable Car.

I will also recommend a trip to Tuba Island in Langkawi where they can experience the lifestyle of the local fishermen. The beautiful island is 20 minutes by boat from Kuah Town.  
I will also take them to Bujang Valley to see the archaeological sites and the museum, as the experience itself will help visitors understand more about the early civilisations in the area.  
**Which local restaurant would you recommend to first-time tourists to Kedah?**  
Restoran Bahtera Nelayan in Alor Setar, for its delicious seafood dishes such as fish head curry.



**Mint Leong**  
Managing director, Sunflower Holidays

**What is your hobby?**  
I love jungle trekking as it offers an opportunity to be away from the city. My two favourite places are Taman Negara National Park and Mount Kinabalu National Park.



From left: 3D Art Musuem at Langkawi's Oriental Village; Tuba Island

# Discover Kedah 2016

Many centuries before the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British arrived, Kedah Darul Aman (Abode of Peace) was already a gateway for traders across Asia. Along with discoveries of ancient ruins in Bujang Valley, Kedah is one of the oldest civilisations in Southeast Asia. Blessed with unique natural beauty – from mountains, rivers, jungles, paddy fields to islands of ancient myths and legends – it's no wonder why visitors from all over the world keep coming back.

Rich in history, natural beauty and tradition.

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where it all began

[www.discover-kedah.my](http://www.discover-kedah.my)

# Destination Malaysia

## NEWS IN A MINUTE

**1 Aiman Batang Ai Resort & Retreat, Sarawak**  
Previously managed by Hilton, the

former Batang Ai Longhouse Resort has reopened in January 2016 as Aiman Batang Ai Resort & Retreat

under Planet Borneo Lodge Management. Its public areas had undergone soft refurbishment, with a function room that can fit 200 people in theatre style and a multipurpose room. Located on the fringe of Sarawak's Batang Ai National Park, the 100-key

property offers activities such as fishing in Batang Ai Lake, kayaking, canopy walks, longhouse visits, excursions to waterfalls, and day trips to nearby towns and villages.

**2 Dorsett Putrajaya**  
The 218-key Dorsett Putrajaya, which soft-opened in January with 43 rooms, is expected to fully open in early May. The hotel has a pillarless ballroom that seats up to 300 pax, meeting rooms of various sizes and Putrajaya's first rooftop infinity pool. It is located in Putrajaya's Precinct 3, near attractions such as the Putrajaya Maritime Centre, Putrajaya Lake Club and Palladium Mall.



**3 Nickelodeon Lost Lagoon**  
Asia's first Nickelodeon-themed park debuted in early February at Sunway Lagoon in Selangor. The five-hectare park features 12 rides and attractions, including an interactive water play area, giant aqua tube rides and a variety of water slides. There are also daily meet-and-greet sessions with Nickelodeon characters such as SpongeBob SquarePants, Patrick Star, Dora the Explorer, Boots and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

**4 Movie Animation Park Studios**  
Movie Animation Park Studios will become Asia's first animation theme park when it opens in July in Meru Jaya, Perak. Featuring six themed zones and over 40 rides and shows, the park's key attractions include Stunt Legends, South-east Asia's first live car and bike stunt show in a 2,000-seat arena; the DreamWorks Adventure Zone; and The Home of BoBoiBoy featuring Malaysian favourite animation character *BoBoiBoy*.

**5 Visa-free entry for Chinese tourists to Malaysia**  
For stays of up to 15 days, inbound tourists from China to Malaysia will not require a visa between March 1 and December 31 this year. According to Tourism Malaysia's director-general, Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, the visa exemption could push up arrivals from China by two- to three-fold. This would mean an additional RM5 billion to RM10 billion in tourism expenditure, whose average spend per person is RM3,335 (US\$822).



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## MAH MERI CULTURAL & HERITAGE

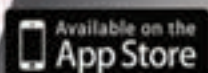
Mah Meri (also spelled Hma' Meri), a subgroup of the Senoi people who live along the coast of Selangor. The Mah Meri are renowned for their masterful woodcarving, and comically expressive oversized masks.

For more info, visit : [www.tourism selangor.my](http://www.tourism selangor.my)



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# Destination Malaysia

## TRIED & TESTED

# The Andaman, Langkawi

S Puvaneswary enjoys a comfy, meaningful stay at this sumptuous retreat that cares as much for the environment as its five-star service standards

**LOCATION** For me, the biggest draw of Langkawi is its turquoise seas and fine sands, and hence The Andaman's beach-front location perfectly encapsulates the quintessential experience of this idyllic archipelago some 30km off the north-western coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

Guests staying at this tropical getaway will enjoy the best of both worlds. The sprawling resort – fronting Datai Bay on the north-west coast of Mount Machinchang Forest Reserve – is tucked between a 10-million-year-old rainforest and a

long stretch of coral-fringed beach.

**ROOM** My Jacuzzi Studio Suite experience was pure bliss, beginning the moment I stepped into the room and was greeted by a fruit basket and welcome note by the general manager.

The spacious room had a double king-size bed and a covered terrace comprising both a private Jacuzzi bath and seating area. I even had my own private garden and a path leading to the beach.

What impressed me was the suite's



well-thought-out design. For example, the air-conditioning buttons were easily reachable from the bed, allowing me to adjust the temperature without getting out of bed in the middle of the night when it got too cold.

**FACILITIES** Backed by a strong marine conservation ethos, this property has a marine life laboratory and a coral nursery. The coral nursery regenerates broken corals and also conducts private guided snorkelling sessions for guests. At the recently-opened marine life laboratory, I learnt so much about the underwater world from the enthusiastic guide who taught me about the bay's ecosystem.

A resident naturalist conducts fascinating walks of the rainforest surrounding The Andaman every morning and evening (except on Mondays), providing much-appreciated insights into the native

flora and fauna.

All six F&B outlets have sea views and great service. My favourite was Jala, as I loved walking barefoot on the restaurant's sand floor and its fresh seafood caught and delivered by local fishermen.

**SERVICE** Fantastic. The staff were helpful, cheerful and enthusiastic. I was late for an off-site meeting and a front-desk staff got me a hotel taxi at a discounted rate. I was touched by this spontaneous gesture.

**VERDICT** A luxurious resort that inspires people to think about the conservation of natural resources without sacrificing comfort or service.

No of rooms 178  
Rates From RM850 (US\$202)  
Contact details  
Tel: (60) 4 959 1088  
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# Langkawi's Winged Wonders

The Langkawi UNESCO Geoparks is a must-visit destination for bird lovers. More than 220 species are found here – some rare and endangered, plus the annual migratory ones. Various species of eagles, hawks and hornbills routinely glide through the breathtaking vistas of the islands. Others can be seen at their favored habitats of the rainforest, mangrove eco systems right down to the paddy fields in the villages, and even at your resorts.

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# Destination Myanmar

For how long will Yangon's heritage buildings like this remain standing?



christians1238.com

## Destination in numbers

### 4.2 million

The number of visitor arrivals to Myanmar in 2015, setting another record for the country

### 1 million

The number of arrivals through Yangon International Airport in 2015, up 13.1 per cent from 2014

### 160,852

The number of visitor arrivals from Thailand, Myanmar's biggest source market, followed by China (99,821), Japan (86,491) and South Korea (62,306)

# THREATENED TREASURES

In a region that has lost much of its architectural heritage, Yangon stands out for its intact colonial core, due to years of neglect and stagnancy under the military junta and lack of foreign investors during its decades of isolation. The government's decision to move the capital from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw in 2005 further hastened the deterioration of the already-crumbling colonial-era administrative buildings.

Yet as the country makes unprecedented strides towards international trade and tourism since opening its doors in 2011, Yangon's faded glamour – made up of a kaleidoscope of cultures, golden temple spires and a rich palette of building styles and types – is undeniably the biggest draw for Myanmar's former capital, attest tour operators that *TTG Asia* spoke to.

"As Yangon – and all of Myanmar – modernises, these heritage buildings stand out more and more in the landscape," said Anne Cruickshanks, Myanmar country manager of Easia Travel. "Our guests see these buildings, even if they are of no historical significance, as monuments and reminders of a bygone era. Almost every guest requests a tour of downtown, specifically so that they can see these buildings."

Exo Travel Myanmar's product manager, Thomas Barrows, said: "Shwedagon is one of the most revered locations in Buddhism, and is possibly the nation's most famous landmark. I think Shwedagon takes care of itself, as long as it remains standing it will be an iconic tourist attraction."

"The same cannot be said of the colo-

nial architecture downtown," he added. "Many of the buildings are in need of renovation."

With no formal rule in place to conserve the buildings however, there stands a danger of Yangon losing its venerable architectural heritage although organisations like Yangon Heritage Trust (YHT) and Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) have been "doing a good job in preserving heritage buildings", pointed out Khiri Travel's Myanmar country manager Edwin Briels, reflecting a sentiment widely shared among industry players.

YHT was set up in 2012 by a group of like-minded conservationists to lead efforts in maintaining and restoring heritage buildings in the city. The non-profit organisation, which launched walking tours of Yangon's heritage sites for inter-

national visitors in September 2009, has been advocating a comprehensive zoning plan that encompasses not just the 189 buildings identified by the YCDC but also green spaces, private houses, skyline and the cityscape broadly, according to the trust's spokesperson Shwe Yinn Mar Oo.

Mika Itävaara, managing director of HG Travel Myanmar is optimistic that preservation will play a more prominent role in Yangon's future.

"Under the country's new government led by Aung San Suu Kyi as well as YHT's figurehead Thant Myint-U (the trust's founder and chairman), the city's architectural heritage is likely to be better leveraged," he opined.

Easia's Cruickshanks thinks more needs to be done. "In Yangon, as in Mandalay, huge swaths of downtown are occupied by heritage buildings and they are currently sitting empty. We would love to see them turned in to public spaces – libraries, galleries, museums, restaurants, etc – so that everyone can enjoy them. This would also, hopefully, generate enough income to cover the upkeep and any ongoing preservation work."

Even before Myanmar's transition to an open economy in 2011, a handful of historic buildings had already gone down the hospitality route, with the Strand Hotel and Belmond Governor's Residence as notable examples.

More converts into luxury properties are expected in the pipeline. The former headquarters of Myanmar Railways, which was built in the 1880s, will be redeveloped as the Peninsula Yangon, while Kempinski Hotel is due to open in the former Police Commissioner's Office by end-2016.

In light of recent developments, YHT's Shwe Yinn Mar Oo cautions against seeing tourism as a quick anecdote to conservation. "We are of the opinion that heritage preservation and tourism development in downtown Yangon are directly proportional to each other. We believe the tourism plays a vital role in preserving the unique urban landscape of Yangon."

"However, too much gentrification, i.e. repurposing all of the heritage buildings into tourism-related amenities would bring more harm than good. Tourism should benefit the local residents instead of driving them out of downtown," she commented.

Smart urban policy planning with an eye on preserving Yangon's colonial-era and heritage buildings will determine Yangon's future – and tourism appeal, writes **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

**Viewpoints**

What more should be done to balance tourism development and heritage preservation in Yangon?



**Anne Cruickshanks, Myanmar country manager, Easia Travel**

Tourism authorities should view Yangon's heritage buildings as items in a museum. Signage should be placed at each building in Burmese and English to explain its origins and story. This would hopefully build in the local community a stronger sense of pride and respect for these monuments and for the tourists, enhance their understanding of Yangon's rich history.



**Mika Itävaara, managing director, HG Travel Myanmar**

With UNESCO World Heritage status and proper heritage buildings marking and zoning it could be possible to maintain some of (Yangon's) old charm. It would be nice to have a few walking streets in the city, improved public transportation network, information centres, signage and museums that will do justice to this amazing country. In 15 years I hope to see a riverfront with facilities for both locals and tourists to enjoy. Also, river transportation like in those in Bangkok could make getting around easier when traffic sits still.

**How to sell**



From left: Shwedagon Pagoda, Belmond Governor's Residence



**DO** Yangon is home to Asia's largest collection of colonial-era buildings in South-east Asia and a heritage walking tour with the non-profit **Yangon Heritage Trust** will reveal to visitors the history of the city's storied past. Highlights of this tour include Sule Pagoda, City Hall, the High Court and the Former Burma Railways Company.

**SEE** A visit to Yangon is incomplete without a stop at **Shwedagon Pagoda**, a 99m-tall gilded stupa that is arguably Myanmar's most iconic landmark. Join the throngs of barefoot devotees and swelling ranks of tourists to visit the pagoda at dawn or sunset, when the pagoda becomes beautifully illuminated and temperatures are cooler.

**EAT** A charming establishment located on the second floor of a restored colonial building on Pansodan Road, **Rangoon Tea House** offers such Burmese staples as *mohinga* (noodles in fish broth), *la phet* (tea leaf salad), Rangoon samosas and a wide variety of tea blends in a comfortable, buzzy setting.

**STAY** Dating back to the 1920s, **Belmond Governor's Residence** is an imposing teak mansion hotel surrounded by verdant greenery and lotus pools. The property features 47 rooms and suites, all boasting elegant décor of teak furniture, hardwood floor and fan-cooled verandas redolent of a bygone era.

**MY WAY**

**If you have a few days off, where in Myanmar would you go?**

I would visit Mt Victoria, or Natma Taung, one of the Himalayan peaks located in Southern Chin State, just a few hours from Bagan.

Despite its 3,053m height, trekking to the peak was enjoyable and fascinating. I was literally walking above the clouds all the way. The view from the peak was awe-inspiring and mind-blowing, and I was surrounded by an seemingly impossible blanket of silence.

**What one place in Yangon deserves more attention?**

Yangon River. It is a critical lifeblood of Myanmar as goods and commodities are transported between Yangon and other parts of the country.

Take the ferry and enjoy the views of Yangon and Shwedagon Pagoda from a different perspective. There are also sunset and dinner cruises operating along the river. Unfortunately, not much has been talked about Yangon River, which needs more attention from both locals and foreign visitors.

**Tell us something that few people know about Myanmar.**

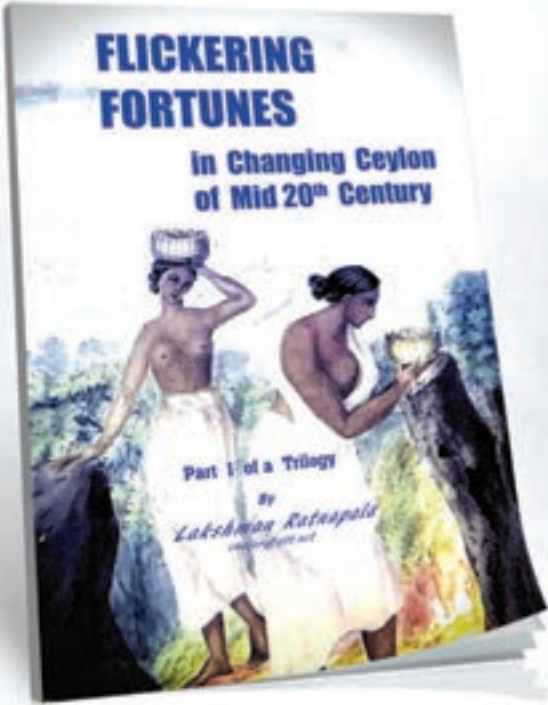
Myanmar people have no surnames. If you are not familiar with Myanmar names, it will be hard to identify if they are men or women.

**When in Myanmar, one should...**go off the beaten path. Take the trishaws, horse carts, bullock carts or local buses, join the crowds at local teashops and try to blend into the local crowd. Locals are fond of conversing with foreigners, and you'll be surprised that most people in Myanmar are able to communicate in English.



**May Myat Mon Win**  
General manager, Chatrium Yangon

*Flickering Fortunes is a colorful tapestry of word pictures woven by Emeritus President & CEO of PATA, Lakshman Ratnapala, that recounts his childhood as he grew up in mid-20th century Ceylon at a time when his country was being transformed from a British colony to a free Sri Lanka.*



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# Destination Myanmar

## NEWS IN A MINUTE

### 1 Emirates

From August 3, Emirates will commence daily flights from Dubai to Yangon and Hanoi. Using a three-class Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, EK388 will depart Dubai at 02.50 and arrive in Yangon at 11.00; it will then take off from Yangon at 12.35 and land in Hanoi at 14.50. The return flight, EK389, will depart Hanoi at 22.50, arrive in Yangon at 00.20 the following day; the service will then leave Myanmar at 01.50 and land in Dubai at 05.05.



### 2 Anawrahta

Vietnam-based Heritage Line, which already boasts two vessels – *Jahan* and *Jayavarman* – sailing on the Me-kong River, has added *Anawrahta* in Myanmar to its collection.

Having commenced its inaugural sailing in March 2016, the 23-cabin luxury paddle-wheeler will take guests to remote places on the Irrawaddy River not accessible by large ships thanks to its shallow draft. Named after King Anawrahta, the 11<sup>th</sup>-century founder of the Burmese nation, the *Anawrahta* is modelled after a turn-of-the-century vintage steamer mixing Burmese motifs and British colonial-style décor. The ship also features a bar, lounge, restaurant, spa, gym and Jacuzzi plunge-pool.



### 3 Vib Yangon

South-east Asia's first Vib hotel will debut in Yangon, announced Best Western Hotels & Resorts in a press release. Scheduled to welcome its first guests in 2018, the new-build hotel will boast 110 rooms, complimentary Wi-Fi, the V b social lobby, mobile check-in services, "grab and go" snack station and fitness centre.

### 4 HK Express

Hong Kong-based LCC HK Express has started services to Yangon and Mandalay.

The four-times weekly Hong Kong-Yangon service started on February 17, with the Wednesday flight departing from Hong Kong later at 18.05 instead of 16.25 on Mondays, Fridays and Sundays, arriving in Yangon at 20.05 and 18.25 respectively. Return flights will take off

from Yangon at 20.50 on Wednesdays and 19.10 on Mondays, Fridays and Sundays, arriving in Hong Kong at 01.45 and 23.55 respectively.

The twice-weekly Hong Kong-Mandalay service has commenced on February 21, taking off from Hong Kong at 12.05 to arrive in Mandalay at 14.05. Return flights will depart from Mandalay at 15.10 and land in Hong Kong at 19.35.

### 5 Pan Pacific Yangon

The 334-key Parkroyal Yangon has recently completed a comprehensive refurbishment, including a rebranding of the all-day dining restaurant into Spice Brasserie, a relaunching of the former Music Club into Club 5 and the introduction of the new Si Chuan Dou Hua restaurant. Rooms have also undergone upgrading in the form of new fittings and fixtures.

## TRIED & TESTED

# Sedona Hotel Yangon

The new Inya Wing wins top points for its savvy blend of upscale comfort and Burmese design accents, finds **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena** after a three-night stay

**LOCATION** In a rapidly developing city where traffic congestion is increasingly a norm, the hotel scores highly on its location – standing halfway between Yangon International Airport and downtown, both a 20-minute drive away.

**ROOMS** A new 29-storey Inya Wing was launched last October at Sedona Hotel Yangon, adding 431 keys to its existing 366-room Garden Wing to make it the biggest property in Myanmar's former capital. The Inya Wing boasts three room categories – Premier Superior Room, Irrawaddy and Prestige Suites.

I had a delightful three-night stay at

the 49m<sup>2</sup> Prestige Suite, which was tastefully designed for work and play. The umbrella-inspired lamps by the bedside and workstation add a Burmese touch to the contemporarily-designed room. The expansive windows offer views of the tranquil Inya Lake – Aung San Suu Kyi's lakeside residence can also be spotted in the distance. The adjoining bathroom, fitted with a bathtub and separate shower, is another haven in itself with L'Occitane amenities and a shade to cover the glass window separating the bathroom and the room.

The older Garden Wing's 366 rooms are



decidedly more plush with traditional design elements such as *saung* (Burmese harp) and traditional lattice screens.

**FACILITIES** For recreation, there is a large outdoor pool with a sauna and steam room and a 930m<sup>2</sup> state-of-the-art Real Fitness Signature Club. A connector between the Inya and Garden wings houses a high-end retail gallery, with upcoming tenants like Franck Muller and internationally acclaimed Burmese designer Mo Hom.

The 20-year-old property's function spaces continue to shine thanks to a renovation last year to cater to Yangon's fast-growing MICE and corporate market. The hotel has over 1,700m<sup>2</sup> of function space, including the 748m<sup>2</sup> Grand Ballroom and meeting rooms varying between 33m<sup>2</sup> to 301m<sup>2</sup>.

Complimentary Wi-Fi is available throughout the property at a high speed of 100mbps.

**F&B** Five F&B outlet, each specialising in a different cuisine, provide excellent spots to eat and drink on-site.

D'Cuisine is a gorgeous all-day restaurant with high ceilings, offering a hearty buffet breakfast spread every morning and champagne brunch on weekends.

Du Fu features Chinese cuisine while Orzo serves up Italian and Mediterranean classics with views of the freeform pool.

For drinks, head to the Ice Bar, which has regular live band performances, or the Lounge Bar, in the Garden Wing.

**SERVICE** Staff are accommodating, smiley and eager, like most Burmese people.

### VERDICT

A solid pick in Yangon. The hotel's closer proximity to the airport is clearly a plus for business travellers but all guests, regardless of the nature of their visit, will surely appreciate its stable and fast Internet.

**No. of rooms and suites** 797

**Rates** Inya Wing rooms from US\$170;

Garden Wing rooms from US\$120

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# Connect

ICYMI: Tune in to what's been going on at [ttgasia.com](http://ttgasia.com) and the social media space

## APRIL FOOLS Odd, quirky and hilarious encounters from Asia's travel agents

An Indian client, upon reaching his hotel, told my driver to open his backside. My driver, with his limited English vocabulary, was at a loss for words. So he told his passenger that this was an Islamic country and that what he was asking was wrong. – **Adam Kamal, CEO, Olympik Holidays, Malaysia**

Sri Lankans are superstitious over many things. Once a client wanted to know the colour of the walls of the hotel room in Bangkok and the direction of the bed. Another asked whether it would rain in a country he planned to visit; he didn't want to go if it rains there as it would spoil his holiday and waste his money. – **Anonymous agent from Sri Lanka**

We placed an advertisement in the newspaper with a note saying 'please call Monday'. On Monday, someone called and asked to speak to Monday. We all had a great laugh in the office. – **Sef Lam, managing director, Via Vai Travel, Hong Kong**

In Hungary, when we greet the locals we are told to say 'hogy vagy?', which means 'how are you?'. But it became quite funny when the pronunciation started to sound like 'you are a gay'. This became a quote among our travellers and it helped to make it easy to remember too. – **Alicia Seah, director of marketing communications, Dynasty Travel Singapore**

"I was really disappointed by the food during the trip, which is unusual because I love Chinese food back home," commented a traveller after a trip to Japan. – **Anonymous agent from Japan**

As a travel agent, I automatically think of airline flights, not a car or cab. A client called to ask how to get to San Francisco so I started giving her the airlines, flight schedule and other details. But she meant San Francisco in Quezon City, metro Manila, not in California. I then told her how to get there by car. – **Anonymous agent from the Philippines**

## WHO'S SAYING WHAT

### Instagram



NATAS Travel Fair 2016 opened with a colourful extravaganza at the Singapore Expo Hall 7 on March 4. [#natastravelfair](#)



Darren Ng, MD of TTG Asia, speaking to the Thai minister of tourism and sports Kobkarn Wattanavrakul at the pre-launch of Visit ASEAN@50 campaign. [#itbberlin](#) [#ttgasia](#)



The Indonesia booth was a hot favourite at the three-day MATTA Fair that took place in Kuala Lumpur's Putra World Trade Centre. [#mattafair](#)

## WE LIKE Snippets of happenings good and bad surrounding the travel trade



### UFI SEEKS TOP EXHIBITION TALENT

Global exhibition industry association UFI has launched its Next Generation Leadership Grant to recognise the best talents in the exhibition industry. Supported with funding from Reed Exhibitions, this initiative will involve these talents in the planning and realisation of the largest annual events for the global exhibition industry. UFI is looking for up to five outstanding professionals who are ready to plan and conduct a 60-minute session at the UFI global congress in Shanghai this year.

### WOMEN TAKE OVER JAPAN AIRLINES

In recognition of Girls' Day or Hina-matsuri, a traditional Japanese festival that celebrates women's health and happiness, Japan Airlines (JAL) operated a scheduled flight from Tokyo-Haneda to Komatsu on March 3, 2016 with an all-female team comprising the flight crew, maintenance staff, cargo handlers and the catering team. At the departure gate, JAL female staff representing the numerous operational departments also gathered for a warm send-off.

### A MATCH MADE IN HEL

To raise awareness of their Asia-Europe air connectivity, Finnair and Helsinki Airport are joining hands to transform the airport's runway 2

into a fashion catwalk event – aptly named a Match Made in HEL. On May 24, seven top designers from China, Japan, South Korea, the UK, Sweden, Denmark and Finland will strut their stuff on the airport runway.



### TERRORIST ATTACKS HIT BRUSSELS, ISTANBUL

Barely four months after the November attacks in Paris, Europe was once again hit by terrorist attacks when bombs exploded in Brussels on March 22, two at the airport and another at a crowded downtown metro station, resulting in 34 dead and more than 200 injured at last count. ISIS was quick to claim responsibility for this latest attack which specifically targeted transportation hubs. Istanbul's main shopping street was also struck by a suicide attack last month, causing at least five deaths.



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