



Nelayan Beachfront Bar & Seafood Dining

Transforming BLR, Making it Stand Out Through Stronger Customer Engagement

Bintan Lagoon Resort, which was rebranded BLR a year ago, celebrates its 20th Anniversary in August 2016. Its young President Director, **Moe Ibrahim**, with a background in financial advisory and asset management, says his many failures as an entrepreneur have taught him how to be a better resort operator.

Congratulations on BLR's 20th Anniversary. How did you come to acquire the resort and what has changed?

The hotel industry has evolved and devolved. It's a completely different world today compared to 2006. I was an opportunistic investor of an illiquid asset, and I was not interested in the hotel business per se. The timing was right and I invested with the hypothesis that the investment was fair value, compared to building a new resort, with decent risk over a 10-year recovery period.

Then 2008 unexpectedly caught everyone by surprise and it was a painful year for investors. The biggest impact on hotel profitability in 2008 was the rise of the OTAs. The likes of Expedia, Priceline and Agoda flourished because hotels were looking to fill their rooms. The OTAs dominated hotel bookings and prices flew out the window. In addition, traditional travel agencies – the story tellers – and our

longer-term partners found it more difficult to survive and some went out of business. This hurt us.

Fast forward to the last 12 months. What is the picture now?

I took over the running of the hotel a year ago and embarked on an experiment to go back to basics, of BLR creating memorable experiences for the customer, of them having a good time and coming back again and again. My team and I decided to focus on three main demographics – the family market, MICE and golfers. Our aim was to promote the resort for its active lifestyle and target those looking for fun and wanting to socialise at a beach resort. In the process, we created packages to speak directly to these core markets with clear messages.

Since they were launched in March 2016, we have seen a 300% increase in customers buying our packages and this has resulted in a 40% increase in



direct business. This is unheard of in the resort space where between 80% and 90% of business typically comes from third parties.

What else is BLR doing?

With the structure of our new packages, operations have been aligned, F&B has been enhanced and we continue to improve the activities to be less of a hotel and more like a cruise ship, offering 24/7 activities with entertainers and performers creating a carnival atmosphere.

We are heavily focused on digital tools getting the word out, working with bloggers and influencers and the Facebook pages of our 700 staff, who post their photographs, share

creative ideas and comments, which have resulted in a steep increase of bookings via Facebook.

We are also increasing our budgets and investment in sales and marketing to acquire, attract and engage with the right customer and to be clear about how to make money from the right customer.

Bintan is perceived as an expensive destination where, with a captive audience, resorts make money from F&B. To me, it's the wrong model. Offering value for money is the right model. BLR has cut its F&B prices but has also created premium products for customers who want and will pay for them.

continued on page 2



Creating the WOW Factor at BLR!

Switched on to the changing demands of today's travellers and constantly innovating, Bintan's resort leader offers unique leisure and MICE solutions. **Gerald Hendrick**, Vice President, Business Development & Hotel Operations explains.

What major changes have been taking place that your partners should know?

Since BLR's rebranding (from Bintan Lagoon Resort) in July 2015, we have undergone a number of changes including market repositioning, renovations, menu concept renewal and service and operational upgrades. We went back to the drawing board to define our desired customers and to truly understand their needs to create unique product offerings to suit the demands of the various segments. We began by adopting a test-and-learn approach and introduced BLR's All Inclusive packages for individual leisure



travellers, families, golfers and the MICE segment.

Our customers are absolutely loving these packages and we are moving towards becoming an All Inclusive Resort. In July 2016, we introduced packages that are designed for even more segmented audiences – from adventure and culture seekers to special occasions, to young families.

This follows through in the golf and MICE segments as well.

Why do our customers love the All Inclusive packages? It's because they are stress free, easy to plan and most importantly an easy way to gauge their overall expenditure before the trip itself.

In addition, BLR creates special celebration programmes for occasions such as Chinese New Year,



The West Lawn

continued from page 1

Beverage prices have come down 30%. In the first three days after all-day dining restaurant Fiesta opened in May, the revenue generated from beverages was up by 300% compared to the revenue based on the old beverage pricing.

How does BLR stay fresh and in demand?

Comments on TripAdvisor used to say the resort was old and tired. In the last nine months, we have increased the number of maintenance staff from 25 to 225 so there is a completely fresh new look. The Terrace, an American-style diner and sports bar has opened and Fiesta, with the tagline Good Mood Food, is big, bright and lively with a stage and band. Guests are spending a big part of their time there.

There is still a lot to do on customer service and service recovery and that's why Champions of BLR was created to recognise employees who go above and beyond their work, employees who do something unexpected for the customer as well as their colleagues to make them successful. Today, there is a stronger culture of camaraderie and teamwork. BLR has also engaged an English teacher to help staff communicate better.

What have you discovered as you travelled on your BLR journey?

Running a hotel is a 24/7, 100% commitment and I have finally figured out what I want to be when I grow up. I want to be the best hotelier that ever was.

I have been most satisfied this last year living in the hotel and working

closely with the staff, opening the new restaurants and overseeing the other improvements that have taken place.

With 700 staff and up to two, three thousand guests at times, every day is a new level of education. I like the unpredictability, being engaged intellectually and the need to excel in different disciplines.

I don't have all the ideas and answers, and many come from brainstorming with the team. It's important not only to hire the right people but to also allow them to make mistakes, to experiment and to be able to measure if their actions work or not, not just by instinct. If it fails, they must be able to scale back the resources and move on; that's the entrepreneurial way.

For the last two-and-a-half years I have been getting tremendous support as a member of the Entrepreneurs' Organization and the Young Presidents' Organization, two large global organisations.

It's tough keeping a smart person excited and motivated and I have learnt that I'm not always right, but I still have to push my team and push them hard, and let them know it's okay to make mistakes along the way. This is how we learn what works and what doesn't.

I'm also creating a culture where staff members talk to customers and respond to a complaint by asking what went wrong. They may not be able to solve the problem but they can empathise with the customer, and that's what most customers want.

Where do you see BLR as you continue the journey?

If we don't grow, we will die. We will grow through partnerships at all levels and in all shapes and sizes. Being a standalone resort is scary as the industry is dominated by huge brands.

With 300 hectares of land, most of which is jungle, we are embarking on creating a master plan which we have been working on for six months.

I'm a big believer of branding and the BLR branding has been growing more significantly over the last 12 months than it has in the last 10 years.

As long as we focus on the brand and the brand promise and find good partners, BLR will be okay. I do not know if being a Hilton will help BLR. But being associated with, for example, folks like Google, Uber, Apple and other big brands to put BLR on the map is what I'm looking at.

Christmas, Halloween, Women's Day and Themed Night Club Parties.



In which markets is the All Inclusive trend hot?

In ALL MARKETS! The All Inclusive packages are very popular because they have been created with our four core segments in mind – leisure travellers, golfers, corporates and special interest groups. All Inclusive packages include accommodation, ferry tickets, BLR's wide range of land and sea activities and F&B options. The packages are very attractive because with the bundling, customers can save up to 30%!

Asia-Pacific has always been strong for us and Europe is growing. After ITB Berlin this year, we received a huge number of requests from Central and Eastern Europe. Domestically, the spending power of Indonesian travellers is also increasing.



How is BLR going after a bigger piece of the MICE pie?

Since the launch of the Meet For Free package, BLR is buzzing as a choice destination for corporate meetings. There has been an increase in inquiries and a 40% conversion rate!

What's important is that we tailor make the programmes to suit each organiser's requirements and provide the flexibility to customise to achieve the company's goal in creating outstanding and memorable corporate retreats. A meeting package can be offered by anyone. At BLR, we create a WOW experience.

Not only do we offer a wide choice of meeting rooms – among them are several that provide natural sunlight

and a stunning view of the golf course. The Great Hall, the largest venue in Lagoi, is perfect for large groups and can be converted from classroom seating to a themed dinner.

With more than 300 hectares of land, BLR offers unlimited unique dining and party venue options, including the golf course, the West Lawn and the beach.

Having created a reputation for being able to create the wow factor, some of our corporate clients return to BLR for events three to four times a year.



We differentiate ourselves by delivering unique surprising touches – anything from personalising canapés with the company name, to organising break-the-ice activities for attendees who don't know each other, to a brilliant fireworks display to mark the finale of a successful meeting and all the time showcasing the modern and cultural aspects of the destination.

We also offer spouse and family programmes for our MICE attendees.

BLR's MICE packages include an All Inclusive Meeting package, a Teambuilding package and Incentive/Corporate Retreat packages, and each can include a game of golf or a large variety of land and sea sports to choose from.

What's next for MICE at BLR?

BLR has put Bintan on the MICE map and in conjunction with our 20th Anniversary, we are targeting more international exposure with sales missions in Asia-Pacific and Europe.

Where else can you find a resort with its own CIQP (customs, immigration, quarantine and port) clearance facility on its doorstep? Now that's hard to beat.

How is BLR enhancing its relationship with its trade partners?

BLR is making full use of digital marketing and new technology to strengthen the important relationships we have with our trade partners by regularly communicating and updating them on developments. We also engage our partners at trade shows to get their feedback.



The Great Hall

HOW TO PULL OFF THE MOST REWARDING 3D2N CORPORATE FAMILY RETREAT & TEAMBUILDING PROGRAMME

DAY 1

- Arrive by Mozaic Ferry Lines and enjoy VIP treatment with Express Immigration Clearance at the Bintan Lagoon Ferry Terminal.
- A colourful, uptempo Indonesian cultural dance welcomes everyone followed by express check-in to sea-facing rooms.
- Assemble at the lobby and head to the Great Hall, Bintan's largest convention centre, for the conference. Meanwhile, the little ones enjoy supervised fun at BLR's Nutty Bunch Kids Club.
- Lunch is an Indonesian buffet spread complemented with a sushi and sashimi counter.
- In the afternoon, teams compete in the exciting Bintan Lagoon Amazing Race for Hoop Laa, Resort Treasure Hunt, Giant Snake & Ladder, Archery & Put Put Challenge, Sandcastle or Raft Building and Tug of War.
- Then it's time to wind down, rest and freshen up before dinner.
- Assemble at the lobby and buggy down to the beach for a barbecue dinner, live entertainment and prize presentation. Then write wishes on sky lanterns and release them.



DAY 2

- The group enjoys breakfast at the new, vibrant Fiesta offering a wide range of Asian and Western breakfast favourites from live cooking stations and buffet sections.
- Tee off time! BLR's two exceptionally designed championship 18-hole courses – the Jack Nicklaus Sea View Golf course and Ian Baker Finch Woodlands Golf course – offer spectacular signature holes, fast greens, undulating fairways and scenic water hazards. Non-golfers can choose organised activities such as a 3km Run, Zumba, Batik Painting, Pool Activities or a Cooking Class.
- For lunch, choose from any of the resort's several outlets followed by free and easy time. There is the Kedaton Spa or choose from 50 land and sea activities such as an all-terrain vehicle adventure tour, exploring the resort on Ninebot personal transportation robots, paddle boating and jet skiing.
- Assemble at the lobby after sunset and buggy down to Hole 12 of the Jack Nicklaus course for destination dining and spectacular views of the South China Sea. The young ones enjoy their own special supervised dinner at the West Lawn.
- After dinner, enjoy post-dinner drinks, live music, a sarong fashion show at the West Lawn and be wowed as fireworks light up the sky.



DAY 3

- It's a free and easy morning to chill by the beach or just relax at one of the resort's two swimming pools. Gym junkies can check out the latest Techno gym equipment from Italy at the Powerhouse Gym in the Leisure Centre.
- Assemble at the lobby and buggy down to the Upper Deck of Nelayan Beachfront Bar & Seafood Dining for an international brunch.
- Check out and embark on your journey back to Singapore taking wonderful memories of your time at Bintan Lagoon Resort!



Kedaton Spa

Bintan's Trendsetter Unveils its New Developments

BLR, one of the most sought-after resorts on Bintan, has been buzzing with activity in the last year, reaching fever pitch in the past few months to get ready to showcase what's new and improved to mark its 20th Anniversary celebration in August.

Following its rebranding from Bintan Lagoon Resort to BLR in July last year, guests are now greeted by **unobstructed, stunning views and new furniture as they arrive at the lobby.**

F&B and new menus take centre stage among BLR's new developments as the brand new **Fiesta** all-day dining restaurant has replaced Kopi-O, and **Mangia**, an Italian outlet, and **Chop Chop**, for Asian street fare, come on board to offer guests new dining experiences and options.

Also say hello to the updated **Terrace** sports bar in the lobby, the perfect drinks hang-out to catch the latest sports programmes and sporting news.

BLR has fittingly renamed its 331-seat Rice restaurant **Nelayan Beachfront Bar & Seafood Dining** in keeping with the outlet's location and F&B concept, as Nelayan is Indonesian for fisherman.

BLR has also refurbished **Silk**, its club, disco, live music venue and lounge, enhanced its wi-fi connectivity, beautified the resort's landscaping, introduced a new **Powerhouse Gym** and **Kids Jungle Gym**, added new paddle boats, canoes and other recreational equipment and it's in the midst of curating the **Bintan Museum**, to be filled with artifacts from different parts of Indonesia.

These new developments ensure BLR stays on the cutting edge of delivering the best leisure and MICE resort experience to its guests.

At BLR, software is just as important as hardware and staff training programmes have been put in place to ensure there is seamless communication and handover from sales to operations and service, to anticipate the changing needs and demands of customers and to deliver excellence and heartfelt interaction – **Service from the Heart** – each and every time.



2016	- Pusat Penghargaan Indonesia (Indonesia Awards Center) - Tourism Industry Awards for Excellence Best Resort & Service Award - Indonesia Development Achievement Foundation Indonesian Excellent Quality Award - Among Top-five Winning Entries of Singapore Marketing PR Awards Product Relaunch Category - Bronze Award in the Award for Innovation in Brand Renovation/Rebranding category of the Asia Pacific Stevie Awards 20th Anniversary celebrations in August - Launch of Chop Chop in July - Launch of Fiesta and Mangia in May
2015	- Moe Ibrahim, BLR President Director, receives Executive of the Year – Resort Award – in the inaugural Singapore Business Review Management Excellence Awards - Launch of Powerhouse Gym and Kids Jungle Gym in December - Bintan Lagoon Golf Club hosts inaugural BLR President's Cup in November - Relaunch of The Terrace sports bar in November - Bintan Lagoon Resort is rebranded BLR in July
2013	Opening of 1,858m² Great Hall conference centre in February
2012	- Launch of Mojo Café in December - Launch of BLR's own S\$15 million ferry terminal, complete with Customs, Immigration, Quarantine and Port facilities and ferry service in July - Launch of Rice Beachfront Restaurant in May (renamed Nelayan Beachfront Bar & Seafood Dining in 2015)
2011	Completion of S\$15.46 million Deluxe Guest Rooms upgrade
2009	Outstanding Resort Providing Excellent Service from Interval International
2008	- Outstanding Resort Providing Excellent Service from Interval International - Launch of staff housing, Pelangi Dormitories at Sungei Kecil, in June - Launch of staff housing, Shab on property, in September
2007	Launch of Galleria shops in January
2006	- American hedge fund entrepreneur Moe Ibrahim acquires Bintan Lagoon Resort - Launch of Silk, Bintan's first nightclub in the Lagoi area
2005	Five Star Award by Interval International in recognition of Superior Quality Standards that provide an Exceptional Vacation Experience
2004	Opening of Resort Spa
2003	- World Travel Awards – Asia's Leading Golf Resort - Asian Golf Monthly Annual Awards – Best Par-Five
2001	Asian Golf Monthly Annual Awards – Best Course in Indonesia, First Runner-up; Best Golf Resort in Asia, First Runner-up
2000	- Asian Golf Monthly Annual Awards – Best Par-Five, First Runner-up in Asia - Hotel Sedona Bintan Lagoon renamed Bintan Lagoon Resort
1998	Bintan Lagoon Golf Club starts hosting Ryder Cup
1996	Opens as Hotel Sedona Bintan Lagoon
1993	Groundbreaking of Hotel Sedona Bintan Lagoon

CONTACT US

Gerald A Hendrick
Vice President - Business Development
& Hotel Operation
Tel: +65 6750 2288
Email: Gerald@bintanlagoon.com

Agnes Tan
Director of Sales
Tel: +65 6750 2263
Email: Agnes@bintanlagoon.com

Singapore Corporate Office:
151 Lorong Chuan,
#06-07A, New Tech Park, Lobby G,
Singapore 556741

Bintan Lagoon Resort
Jalan Indera Segara Site A12,
Lagoi, Teluk Sebong,
Bintan, Kepri – Indonesia 29155

Ferry Enquiries (Singapore)
Tel: +65 6785 7455
Website: www.ferryful.com

Reservations Hotline (Indonesia)
Tel: +62 770 691 388
Fax: +62 770 691 300

Reservations Hotline (Singapore)
Tel: +65 6223 3223
Fax: +65 6534 5157

Email
reservations@bintanlagoon.com

Website
www.bintanlagoon.com



facebook.com/bintanlagoon
twitter.com/lagoonbintan
instagram.com/bintanlagoonresort



View from the top

Thailand's minister of tourism & sports Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul tells **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena** why creating sustainable inclusive growth in tourism remains an enduring aim and challenge

+

Wooing the young rich, Swiss style

Guilin's tourism gets on track

Clark: secondary base no more



Taming a wild frontier

Nature can go hand in hand with tourism, Asia's trade players realise as they recognise the importance of tapping wildlife resources in a non-consumptive manner.

Xinyi Liang-Pholsena unearths the growing trend

Contents & editorial

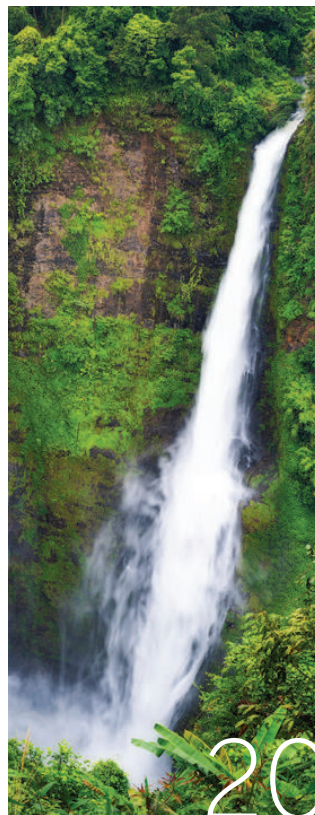
Want to read us on the go?



Analysis	04
Intelligence	08
View from the top	10
Shop	11
Social	12
On the radar	13
Connect	31



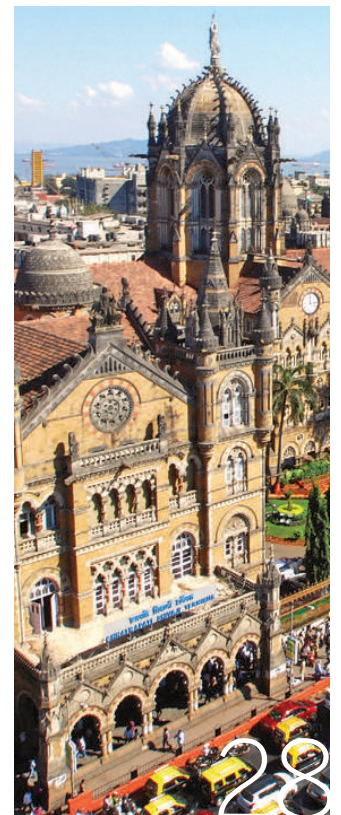
Report:
Longhaul travel



Report:
Sustainable travel



Destination:
China



Destination:
India

Elephantine achievement



We get mystery shoppers and qualified quality inspectors to audit our retail fronts and hotels – why not audit elephant camps, or for that matter, other forms of tourism attractions where there is reason to suspect things are not done correctly?

In the wild, such as the high mountains of Switzerland where I was on vacation last month, marmots whistle when they sense danger. These cute large squirrels are a source of food for eagles, and even humans. Nature, as we know, is a survival of the fittest, so I have no argument with natural food chains. But I have a problem when humans make the natural unnatural, and how we have seen that happen in big and small ways.

In captivity, animals are totally powerless to fend for themselves. And many – elephants, tigers, dolphins, etc – are used as tourists' amusement.

Elephant camps in particular are aplenty in our region where logging has become illegal and their masters find new uses for these pachyderms as a tourist attraction. When done in the right way, tourism helps keep these big mammals alive, as the cost of feeding them is enormous. But we know much isn't done in the right way. This is why when I learnt that Buffalo Tours had audited elephant camps across six countries in South-east Asia (see page 22), I could not help but smile, not just because a funny headline, 'Buffalo audits elephant camps', came to mind, but because it is such a wonderful initiative.

We get mystery shoppers and qualified quality inspectors to audit our retail fronts and hotels – why not audit elephant camps, or for that matter, other forms of tourism attractions where there is reason to suspect things are not being done correctly? The elephant audits by Buffalo Tours were not done in secret or in a way to catch errant players by surprise, and the mere knowledge there was an audit was

enough to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Graham Harper, chair of Buffalo Tours Responsible Travel Advisory Group, told me: "All camps that passed the audit readily agreed to participate. All were very enthusiastic about improving overall industry standards and proud to highlight their own best practices. Any camp that refused the audit automatically failed. Unfortunately there were a few camps in a couple of countries that did not want to participate. We believe these camps would have failed the audit regardless."

The ones that passed the test are now recommended to Buffalo Tours' overseas operators which include Flight Centre, Vakanties, Wendy Wu and Topdeck.

And there's more good news. Buffalo Tours is in discussion with the ASEAN Captive Elephant Working Group, which is producing a guide for travel agents, with an FAQ for clients on captive elephants to enable them to make informed decisions on what type of elephant experience to enjoy while on holiday.

In the UK, ABTA has come up with a Global Welfare Guidance for Animals in Tourism (see page 22). Tourism bodies in ASEAN or Asia should take a leaf from such great initiatives.

Raini Hamdi

Senior Editor

raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com

twitter.com/rainihamdi

COMING UP

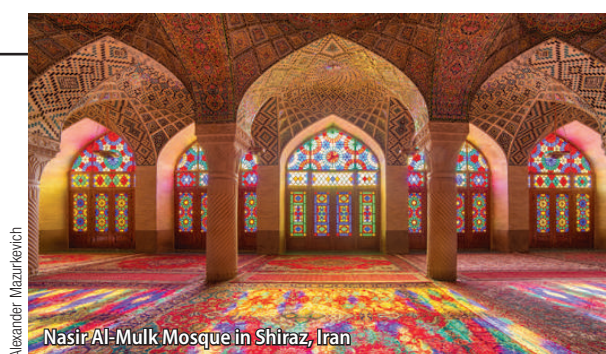
NEXT ISSUE:
SEPTEMBER
2016

INDONESIA How a pair of integrated resorts – Lagoi Bay and Treasure Bay – have redefined Bintan's tourism fortunes and made the island a destination in its own right

WORLD HERITAGE SITES A look at World Heritage Sites in Asia-Pacific and whether the label is a valuable promotional tool for tourism

MIDDLE EAST Asian travellers are showing a stronger interest in the Middle East, with Iran (right) becoming the next hot destination

AIRPORTS Aviation expert Mark Wolfe discusses what makes a modern airport stand out and why the airport of the future will resemble a city more than a transport hub



Alexander Mazurkevich

Nasir Al-Mulk Mosque in Shiraz, Iran



ME

BY MELIÀ

CONTEMPORARY RESORTS
AND URBAN HOTELS

ME. You. Us.

ME by Melià is the luxury lifestyle brand of Melià Hotels International. Located in global centres of culture and fashion, the hotels are a contemporary fusion of innovation and local style.

As one of the largest hotel companies in the world, we understand that strong brands are built on concepts that deliver real experiences. The passion and vision of the founding family resonates in all aspects of our business, and we offer a range of services to hotel proprietors and investors that help position assets at the most profitable end of the scale.

For more information or to discuss a development opportunity, please contact us at 86 (21) 3382 0800 or development@melia.com.

GRAN MELIÀ
HOTELS & RESORTS

ME
BY MELIÀ


PARADISUS
BY MELIÀ

MELIÀ
HOTELS & RESORTS

INSIDE
BY MELIÀ


Sol
hotels&resorts

Analysis

The new Philippine president has put infrastructure projects back into the spotlight, reigniting hope that the potential of Clark as a gateway and travel destination could finally be unlocked. By **Rosa Ocampo**

Clark sees light of day

A fresh presidential directive could provide the impetus for the Clark Freeport Zone in Pampanga, a former US military airbase, to get serious about developing its tourist infrastructure and emerge out of the shadows of neighbouring Manila.

Newly-elected Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte recently stressed the importance of completing projects such as the fast rail linking Clark Freeport Zone and metro Manila, which will help to decongest the overcrowded Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) and attract more airlines to Clark International Airport (CRK).

The rail link plan had failed to materialise under the previous administration, leaving the potential gateway airport in Clark underutilised and several international carriers such as AirAsia, Emirates and Etihad Airways to cease flying there several years ago due to low passenger volume.

The urgent need to develop CRK as an alternative airport was again underscored last month when a pothole on NAIA's runway led to the massive diversion of flights to Clark.

Now with hopes of the inter-city rail project on the rise, Philippine Airlines has announced it will move some of its domestic flights to CRK to help decongest

Manila's NAIA.

Cebu Pacific is currently the only domestic carrier that operates in Clark although foreign carriers include Emirates, Asiana, Cathay Pacific, Dragonair and Tigerair.

Having moved its hub to NAIA's terminal 4, AirAsia had repeatedly said it would return to Clark if the rail or road link to Makati was built. It recently resumed flying from Kuala Lumpur to Clark.

Emirates, which pulled out from Clark in 2014, returned to CRK in March this year with daily Dubai-Clark-Cebu services. The circular service saw "strong load factor", with 150 to 200 passengers (of the 400-seat capacity) flying from Clark, said Emigdio Tanjuatco III, president and CEO of Clark International Airport Corporation.

The airport chief wants to show international airlines that CRK "is willing to take them back" by offering incentives such as reduced taxi and landing charges.

Explaining the strategy to attract more airlines, he added: "Some of our rates are 30 per cent lower than NAIA. We will help airlines in marketing their flights."

Works on a new terminal to increase passenger capacity has begun this year, in addition to recent upgrades that increased the number of check-in counters from six to 32, immigration counters from four to 16 and VIP lounges to three, with plans to bring in more duty free concessionaires.

Favouring a dual airport strategy, Tanjuatco believes CRK can be positioned as a gateway to the Philippines through northern and southern Luzon, while NAIA serves visitors to metro Manila (National Capital Region) and southern Luzon.

Due to the size of the northern and southern Luzon catchment area, 10 million passengers fly out of the region annually but only a fraction of it was captured by Clark.

"It's a ripe market," said Tanjuatco, commenting on the prospects for CRK and tourism in the area.

Adding to Clark's allure is its booming supply of new hotels, investment incentives and lower cost of doing business, luring more businesses and investors pushed away by the lack of space in heavily congested metro Manila.

Foreign investors choose Clark for its safety and security; proximity to metro Manila; green and unpolluted environs; English-speaking skilled workers; and resilience against natural disasters, protected by its 158m location above sea level among mountain ranges, explained Irineo Alvaro, immediate past president and chair of BB International Leisure and Resort Development, and who, at press time, is touted to become chief of Clark

Development Corporation.

International-branded hotels that have opened in the area include the 268-key Hilton Clark Sun Valley Resort; newly minted 111-room Midori Clark Hotel and Casino, which is in the first phase of a 40 billion pesos (US\$850 million) integrated resort development; and the 164-key Park Inn By Radisson. The 260-key Marriott at Clark is set to open next year.

More room keys are driving arrivals into Clark, said Malu Parungao, junior branch supervisor of Filipino Travel Center in Angeles City, Pampanga. In particular, tourists from Europe and the Middle East are increasing in numbers since Emirates started flying to Clark again.

Parungao said tourists are mainly at-

We're telling the local government to enhance tourism in the area. We have to be collaborative.

Emigdio Tanjuatco III
President and CEO
Clark International Airport Corporation

tracted to Clark's four golf courses, often combining it with the sun and sea in Subic just 45 minutes away.

While some remain doubtful of Clark's appeal as a leisure travel destination, Tanjuatco insists there is much to see outside its perimeter, including the Mount Pinatubo crater and the Hot Air Balloon Festival every February.

Some hotels do not even have the capacity to cope with the influx of tourists during the Hot Air Balloon Festival, pointed out Othie Maninang, inbound tours supervisor at Mango Tours.

She also suggested ramping up the standards of existing attractions, such as Nayong Pilipino and Air Force City Park, and promoting go-karting and ultralight aircraft flights, which is unique to the area.

Beyond leisure, business tourism could also flourish as the destination spruces up its MICE hardware.

"Clark has a lot of MICE potential," remarked Angel Ramos Bognot, president and managing director, Afro Asian Travel and Tours, who has chosen Clark as the base for the annual B2B Travel Business Exchange introduced last year.

PLAZA PREMIUM LOUNGE

WORLD AIRLINE WINNER SKYTRAX AWARDS 2016

World's Best Independent Airport Lounge

We could not have done it without your continuous support.
Thank You!

Plaza Premium Lounge, Terminal 2, London Heathrow Airport

plaza-network.com

A member of Plaza Premium Group



HONG KONG DISNEYLAND RESORT HONORED TRADE PARTNERS AT "CELEBRATION OF SALES EXCELLENCE 2015" WITH OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD "STAR WARS™: TOMORROWLAND TAKEOVER" EVENT!

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort (HKDL) donned its hat to close to 300 travel trade partners and media friends at the "Celebration of Sales Excellence 2015" on June 24, which also included an exclusive look at Asia's first and only "Star Wars: Tomorrowland Takeover." The award ceremony and in-park adventure was packed with Disney magic, recognizing the outstanding contributions and unfailing support of the resort's travel trade partners last year.

Hong Kong Disneyland presented a total of 26 awards, including the Sales Excellence Award for 20 outstanding partners, the Sales AdvancEAR Award for 5 partners, and the Top Sales AchievEAR Award, the highest honor, bestowed on GZL International Travel Service Ltd.

After a sumptuous buffet with *Star Wars*-themed desserts, the travel trade partners took part in a specially-designed Jedi Training "Light" experience. Afterwards, they were transported to a galaxy far, far away in Tomorrowland, embarking on a galactic adventure with the "Star Wars: Tomorrowland Takeover."

First-in-Asia *Star Wars* experiences create diversified sales platform

Tomorrowland's classic attraction Space Mountain has been completely reimagined as Hyperspace Mountain, taking guests on a reconnaissance mission to outer space where they'll experience an epic dogfight in the *Star Wars* universe. Guests can also encounter the Wookiee pilot Chewbacca and astromech droid R2-D2 at the *Star Wars*: Command Post, or Captain Phasma with her Stormtroopers on a First Order patrol in Tomorrowland. Under the tutelage of Jedi masters, kids can even learn how to use the Force to wield lightsabers in Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple.

Terruce Wang, Vice President (VP), Sales and Distribution Marketing, HKDL, said: "Hong Kong Disneyland Resort is constantly refreshing its entertainment offerings, leveraging Disney's powerful brand and a growing library of popular Disney stories. Thanks to the global impact of the well-loved *Star Wars* series, the all-new 'Star Wars: Tomorrowland Takeover' makes diversified product offerings available that enhance the resort's appeal. We will continue to work closely with travel trade partners to design more unique themed travel products to attract more guests to the resort, creating win-win business relationships."



Terruce Wang, VP, Sales and Distribution Marketing of HKDL (far left) and the trade partners sent good wishes to new heights of partnership.

More offerings and trade offers to enrich business opportunities

Hong Kong Disneyland has lined up new offerings following the launch of "Star Wars: Tomorrowland Takeover." All-new shopping experiences are now ready with the recently opened Duffy-themed merchandise shop and, coming in August, a PANDORA store. To honor trade partners for their ongoing support, employees across designated travel trade sectors are welcome to enjoy up to 40% off* at Hong Kong Disneyland Resort hotels and 10% off* the published price of Park Tickets. Please call (852) 1830 830 or email reservations@hongkongdisneyland.com for enquiries.



Sweet delights featuring beloved *Star Wars* character BB-8.



Samuel Lau, Executive VP and Managing Director of HKDL (3rd from left) celebrated with trade partners at the ceremony and enjoyed the evening packed with Disney magic.



Guests immersed themselves in the first-in-Asia "Star Wars: Tomorrowland Takeover" and enhanced their understanding of the latest attractions and offerings.



(From left to right) Terruce Wang, VP, Sales and Distribution Marketing of HKDL; Samuel Lau, Executive VP and Managing Director of HKDL; Ken Wong, VP, APAC Regional Sales of Walt Disney Parks & Resorts; and James Tung, Director, Travel Trade Sales of HKDL, welcomed trade partners and media friends with an onstage toast to start the memorable evening.

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort 2015 Top Sales AchievEAR of the Year GZL International Travel Service Limited

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort 2015 Sales Excellence Award

China Travel Service (Hong Kong) Limited	www.lv mama.com
Cola Tour	Million Tour Limited
Expedia	Nanjing Tuniu International Travel Service Co., Ltd
Gray Line Tours of Hong Kong Limited	Shanghai Ctrip International Travel Service Co., Ltd
Guangdong Nanhu International Travel Service Company Limited	Shenzhen GangAo International Travel Service Company Limited
Guangdong SZL International Travel Service Co., Ltd.	Shenzhen Sightseeing Co., Ltd
Guangzhou Huanlv Travel Services Co., Ltd	Shenzhen Easywin International Travel Service Co., Ltd
GZL International Travel Service Limited	Tong Cheng International Travel Service Co., Ltd
Holiday World Tours Limited	Vacation Asia (Hong Kong) Limited
HS Travel International Company Limited	
Hua Yi Tour Limited	

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort 2015 Sales AdvancEAR Award

China Travel Service Gongbei Port Guangdong Co. Ltd	Trans-Island Limousine Service Limited
H.I.S. (Hong Kong) Company Limited	United Holidays Company Limited
Lion Travel	

Check out more event detail and photos at www.hkdtravelagents.com

(In alphabetical order)



Download the official mobile app for Hong Kong Disneyland!
See wait times for attractions, browse maps, see schedules and much more!
<http://hkd.hk/trade>

* Terms and conditions apply.

www.hkdtravelagents.com

©Disney ©Disney/Lucasfilm Ltd. © & ™ Lucasfilm Ltd.

Analysis

Indonesia's fragmented governance policy is weighing on tourism investment, just as the sector is picking up steam. By **Mimi Hudoyo**

Divided over investment rules



The multivalence of regulations and taxation imposed by Indonesia's regional governments, if not handled properly, could offset recent strides made in the country's current positive tourism investment climate.

Tourism investment surged 17 per cent to US\$268.5 million in 1Q2016, 95.5 per cent of which were foreign investments, according to Henky Manurung, head of tourism business investment division, Indonesia Ministry of Tourism.

"Favoured destinations are not only Bali and Jakarta, but also West Nusa Tenggara, Central Java and Yogyakarta," he shared.

Investment opportunities are also growing as the central government is channelling efforts into developing the infrastructure in 10 secondary and tertiary destinations such as Lake Toba, Tanjung Kelayang (Belitung) and Tanjung Lesung (Banten).

While Indonesia's decentralisation policy – which started in 2005 – has in some ways stimulated regional business and demand for hotels, several industry players also pointed to down-sides arising from the political and economic devolution.

Ida Bagus Ngurah Wijaya, a hotel owner and former chairman of Tourism Industry Association Bali, said: "(Previously), hotel licences were set by the central government, so there was more uniformity in the requirements. Today, each regency government can set their own rules."

Maulana Yusran, vice chairman – research, information technology and organisational affairs at Indonesia Hotel and Restaurant Association (IHRA), added: "The overlapping rules, regulations and taxation imposed by the regional governments have added burden to hotels' operational revenue."

For example, Papua's ban on

alcoholic distribution and consumption has aroused concern among hoteliers catering to the international community.

Elsewhere in the country, a hotel is required to obtain its own permits for location and environment impact assessment even if it sits in a designated area that already has the equivalent permits.

Krishnadi, chairman of IHRA Jakarta chapter, said: "Spa and entertainment spaces should be considered part of the hotel facilities, but (the Jakarta tax office) applied different tax rates for these (on top of) the hotel tax."

"The regional governments are finding ways to increase their income and hotels have become their targets."

Maulana Yusran
Vice chairman – research, information technology and organisational affairs, Indonesia Hotel and Restaurant Association

He added the Regional Revenue Office of Jakarta had implemented a new rule that taxes promotions based on rack rates instead of discounted rates. In other words, a 10 per cent tax will still be slapped on a room priced at 500,000 rupiah (US\$37.64), even when it is sold at 400,000 rupiah after a 20 per cent discount.

Maulana lamented: "The regional governments are finding ways to increase their income and hotels have become their targets."

Ng Suwito, president director

at Red Planet Indonesia, was less cynical about the government's regional autonomy policy but urged the better implementation of regulations.

"For an investor and operator like us, regulation changes are part and parcel of doing business, but we do not like surprises. We need to plan and manage (costs)."

A further consequence, Ng said, is that the tax incidence would fall on the end-consumer.

"At the end of the day, we have to pass (the additional cost) on to somebody else. We have no choice but to increase the ADR and the consumer will (have to) bear it."

This could compound the challenges already faced by hotels, such as an oversupply of rooms in some destinations.

The *Bali Hotel & Branded Residences Report 2015* issued by Horwath HTL and C9 Hotelworks noted that slower demand in 2015 resulted in the market struggle to maintain both occupancy and rate.

Meanwhile, Bali's supply is still increasing, with the same report projecting the addition of 115 new hotels and 15,000 rooms by 2019, taking the total key count to around 55,000.

Arief Yahya, Indonesia Minister of Tourism, agreed that government regulations had hampered Indonesia's development, including the hospitality sector.

He said: "One of our weaknesses as a country is that we are very slow. Regulations have slowed us down."

Arief added that Indonesian president, Joko Widodo, has set 2016 as the year to accelerate deregulation, and he invited IHRA to submit a list of regulations which they believe were stumbling blocks for businesses.

The ministry has also set up a working group to come up with ways to help the industry to better compete with neighbouring countries.

VisitTheUSA.com

Discover this land,
like never before.



The Smartest Choice for Your Hotel Investment



For more information:

bestwesterndevelopers.com | asiadevelopment@bestwestern.com

[Facebook.com/BestWesternAsia](https://www.facebook.com/BestWesternAsia) | [Available on the App Store](#) | [ANDROID APP ON Google play](#)

Intelligence

A Grant Thornton report analyses the performance of four- and five-star hotel markets in Thailand and South-east Asia, while Sabre reveals seven major trends in business travel

Thailand hotel market on upward trajectory

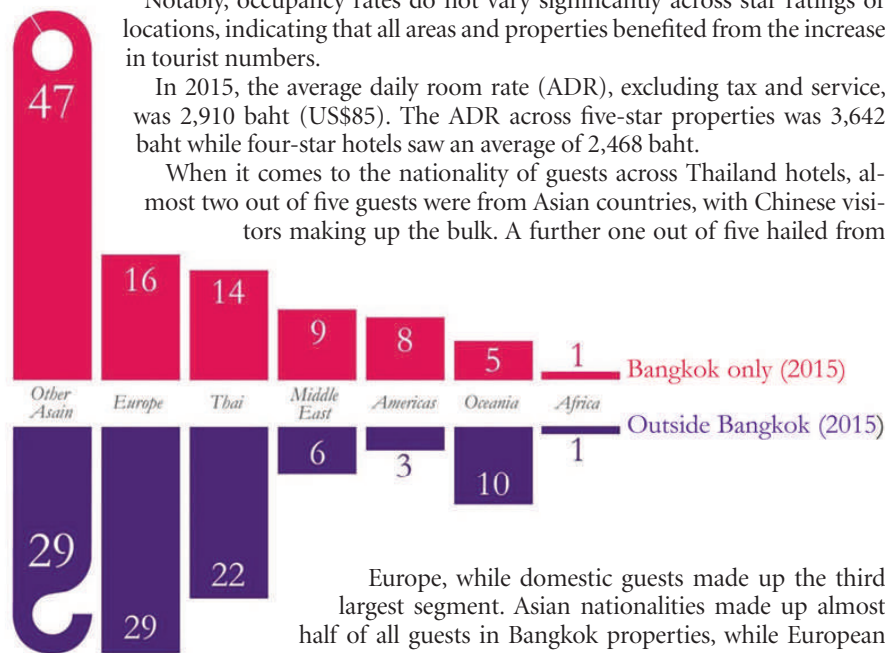
There was good news across the board for Thailand's hospitality sector in 2015, with occupancy rates rising to around 76% across the year, increasing more than 10% from average rates seen over 2014, according to Grant Thornton's annual Thailand hotel industry survey of 66 four- and five-star hotels in the country.

Despite suffering many challenges throughout 2014 during the country's political turmoil, Thailand's hotel industry made a confident comeback in 2015 with a record number of nearly 30 million visitors and a growing wave of mainland Chinese tourists – more than one in four are Chinese, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand.

Notably, occupancy rates do not vary significantly across star ratings or locations, indicating that all areas and properties benefited from the increase in tourist numbers.

In 2015, the average daily room rate (ADR), excluding tax and service, was 2,910 baht (US\$85). The ADR across five-star properties was 3,642 baht while four-star hotels saw an average of 2,468 baht.

When it comes to the nationality of guests across Thailand hotels, almost two out of five guests were from Asian countries, with Chinese visitors making up the bulk. A further one out of five hailed from



Europe, while domestic guests made up the third largest segment. Asian nationalities made up almost half of all guests in Bangkok properties, while European and Thai guests figured more prominently outside Bangkok.

Half of all guests were FITs, with a further one in five visiting for business, while tour groups and conference attendees together made up more than one in four guests. As expected, Bangkok saw far more business travellers (more than 25%), while conference guests made up one in five bookings outside of Bangkok.

OTAs such as Agoda and Booking.com currently lead as the most used booking channel, taking up 31% of bookings. However, direct hotel bookings were not far behind with 27%. Meanwhile, traditional travel agents still account for one in four guest bookings among four- and five-star properties in Thailand, but appear to have more influence outside of Bangkok.

While OTA bookings were similar across the country and within the star ratings, five-star properties as well as hotels in Bangkok are far more likely to benefit from direct bookings, perhaps influenced by the larger numbers of business travellers and the ease of booking systems on the properties' own websites.

This could indicate the start of a shift away from OTA bookings or mean that hotels are making it easier for guests to book directly, even if guests have searched for properties on OTAs initially.

A comparison of hotel markets in Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines

In addition to Thailand, Grant Thornton also conducted an inaugural survey of four- and five-star properties across several ASEAN countries, including Vietnam, the Phil-

ippines, Singapore and Cambodia. However, due to limited responses in the latter two, this survey focused on the first three only.

Overall, most countries in ASEAN saw an increase year-on-year for tourist arrivals. Thailand achieved the most impressive growth in 2015 with around 20% more overseas arrivals than 2014, while the Philippines also saw double-digit growth to achieve over five million for the first time. Although Vietnam saw a mere 1% growth year-on-year, it still managed to achieve nearly eight million visitors.

Occupancy rates were very similar across Thailand and the Philippines, with an average occupancy of 75-76% in both countries across 2015. This compares with only 62% in Vietnam – an indication not just of limited tourist growth, but also of the abundance of new hotels in the country.

However, the picture was slightly different for ADR. Both Thailand and Vietnam achieved similar ADRs, where four-star hotels brought in an average of US\$72 while five-star properties reached US\$106 in Thailand and US\$111 in Vietnam. The Philippines saw far higher rates, with four-star properties bringing in an ADR of US\$85, while their five-star counterparts reached US\$159.

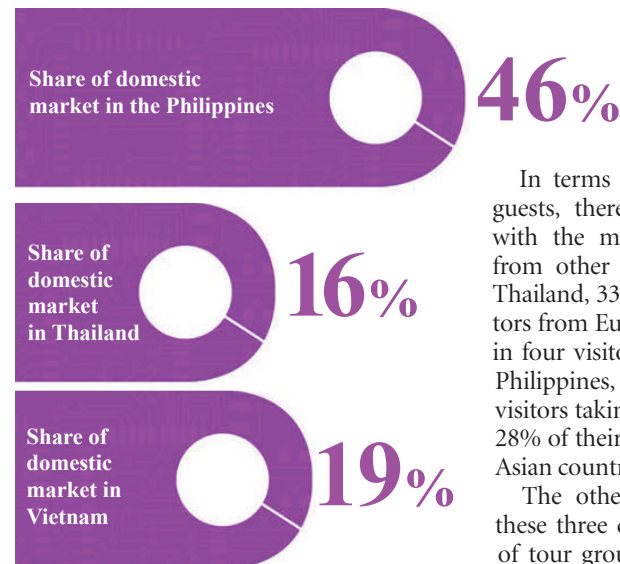
Even more impressive for the Philippines' performance, especially in terms of ADR, was the fact that 46% of their market were domestic guests, compared with 16% and 19% for Thailand and Vietnam respectively.

In terms of the source markets of guests, there were many similarities, with the majority of guests coming from other Asian countries (40% in Thailand, 33% in Vietnam), while visitors from Europe made up around one in four visitors to both countries. The Philippines, in contrast, had European visitors taking up half the number and 28% of their guests coming from other Asian countries.

The other key difference between these three countries was the number of tour groups seen within four- and five-star properties, with Vietnam ex-

periencing 29% from this guest type compared with Thailand's 15%.

Finally, the survey also looked at the reservation channels used. Some 31% of visitors to Thailand were more likely to book their hotel through OTAs, compared with 22% in both Vietnam and the Philippines. Hotels in Vietnam were also far more reliant on traditional travel agencies with 40% of bookings made this way, compared with 25% in Thailand and 30% in the Philippines. Owing to the larger number of domestic guests, the Philippines also managed to achieve 36% of direct hotel bookings, versus just one in four direct bookings for both Vietnam and Thailand.



Managing travel right

As corporate travel in Asia-Pacific goes on an accelerated growth trajectory fuelled by unprecedented demand, there is a need for greater insight, integration and control in the sector, finds Sabre Corporate Travel Practices Survey 2015 of over 100 respondents across 15 key markets in the region. Sabre's findings are summarised into seven top trends:

1. The premium economy class of travel is increasing in popularity. Almost a quarter (23%) of respondents have been asked to change clients' regular economy bookings to premium economy seats, and 41% observed downgrade requests from business class to premium seats.

2. Secondary expenses, including ancillary services, are now under tighter control. Previously, there was a directive to book the lowest available fare, which resulted in considering LCCs over full-service carriers, but the focus has since shifted to ancillaries, where a third of respondents now control reimbursable ancillary costs such as paid baggage, pre-assigned seating, meals and lounge access.

3. In an era where the prevalence of web-enabled mobile devices and apps have helped off-policy bookings grow, practitioners are now investing in better pre-

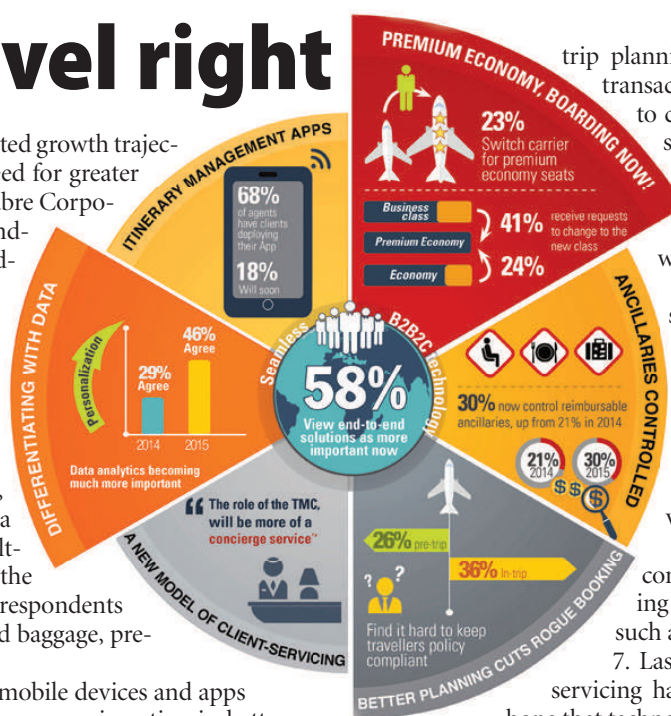
trip planning and stronger itinerary management. Most of such transactions take place while travellers are on the road and wish to change their travel plans, and this is when 36% of agents struggle to maintain control. But agents now have the tools to pick the products their travellers want, with broader choices to align with their schedule. Travellers are more motivated to cooperate when the itinerary is aligned with their personal preferences and plans.

4. Mobile itinerary management apps are now mainstream, where 68% of agents have clients deploying itinerary management apps. When travel plans are at the travellers' fingertips, off-policy bookings also decrease.

5. Data analytics will be key to more personalised services, where 46% want the business intelligence both for their clients and themselves, as clients expect more "travel analysis and assistance to enforce travel policy – and (provide) duty of care support".

6. With a greater reliance on agents, some anticipate a concierge model – with higher service expectations – emerging as corporates are more comfortable in getting all services such as air tickets and car reservations under one roof.

7. Lastly, technological integration in terms of B2B2C client-servicing has increased in importance, where 62% of respondents hope that technology will help cut costs and drive productivity gains.



Discover the Many Faces of New Orleans

Beautiful, mysterious, festive and just plain fun is how **Stephen Perry**, President and CEO of the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau describes the city. Find out more.

What makes your destination appealing to travelers?

New Orleans has long been a favorite of visitors. Our rich history, unmatched Southern hospitality and unrivaled authenticity can't be found anywhere else in the world. The most distinctive, unparalleled cuisine in America combines with our rich original jazz and music scene to create a sensory wonderland of exploration for all visitors.

How many visitors did your destination receive in 2015?

New Orleans welcomed nearly 10 million visitors in 2015, of which 675,000 were international visitors and 31,000 were from Asia.

What makes your destination stand out?

New Orleans has historic establishments, cosmopolitan new hotels, restaurants and cocktail programs. Only in New Orleans can visitors experience the oldest restaurant in America alongside innovative James Beard award-winning chefs, or see Grammy award-winning artists perform and then discover a new musician.

There is also cruising on the Mississippi River, new tax-free shopping options downtown with The Outlet Collection at the Riverwalk, and expanded music options in every neighborhood.

What is one message you want to convey to the trade to promote your destination?

We are working with Brand USA to promote New Orleans which is extremely unique compared to other American cities. Our European flair and history make it like no other place to visit. It's a walkable city, open 24 hours a day and is filled with boutique shopping offering one-of-a-kind treasures.

What attractions and what kind of itinerary, including the outdoors and travel experiences off the beaten path, can visitors expect?

Our suggested five-day itinerary offers some of the best highlights of NOLA, short for New Orleans, Louisiana.

On Day 1, discover 17 unique neighborhoods, accessible by foot, bicycle, carriage



Jackson Square, New Orleans. Photo: Richard Nowitz

Our European flair and history make it like no other place to visit. It's a walkable city, open 24 hours a day and is filled with boutique shopping offering one-of-a-kind treasures.



STEPHEN PERRY
President and CEO
New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau



Street music in New Orleans. Photo: Chris Granger



Left: Seafood Gumbo.
Photo: Joyce Bracey

ride, trolley, bus or even kayak, and the New Orleans CVB's Self-Guided

French Quarter Walking Tour is a must. In the evening, enjoy rolling good times on Bourbon Street, a bastion of great bars and clubs.

On Day 2 explore the Plantations on a daytrip where several historic homes, including the one used to film *Interview with a Vampire*, are within a 75 mile drive, or stay overnight at a B&B inn. Also factor in a two-hour lunchtime cruise on a Mississippi River paddle wheeler.

Set aside Day 3 for discovering NOLA's unique and often mysterious culture like voodoo burial traditions at the

Lafayette Cemetery and the neighborhood's majestic homes.

Stay in the Garden District and venture to Magazine Street for lunch and visit Mardi Gras World where the floats are designed and built.

It's always jazz night in New Orleans. Catch big names perform at Snug Harbor or head to St. Peter Street in the French Quarter for an inspired session at Preservation Hall.

On Day 4 see NOLA's bayou, reclaimed swampland of estuaries, egrets and alligators on a boat tour, or take a land tour of the Jean Lafitte National Park Wetlands Preserve.

In the evening, eat at one of New Orleans' dinner and dance venues where dance instructors teach visitors the Cajun Waltz while they dine on Cajun specialties and listen to live Cajun and Zydeco music.

Late-night opportunities can be Cajun, bluesy or funky.

And if Day 5 happens to be a Sunday, soak up the spirit of New Orleans with "Gospel" or "Jazz" high-end cuisine or a down-home soul food brunch, then wander to Jackson Square and have your portrait sketched by an artist, gaze on the mighty Mississippi, listen to the trills of the paddle wheelers and relax to the clickety-clack of carriage horses as they make their way through charming avenues.

For more information, please go to VisitTheUSA.com



VisitTheUSA.com

View from the top

Thailand's minister of tourism & sports Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul tells **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena** why creating sustainable inclusive growth in tourism remains an enduring aim and challenge

What's life after 30 (million arrivals) for Thailand?

We aim to be a quality leisure destination, and that's definitely the route we would like to pursue. We no longer care much about the number of arrivals. The revenue, spending per head per day, length of stay, and quality of activities that we can offer tourists, etc, are our ultimate goals.

Are you making progress so far in being a quality destination?

Yes, we have improved. If comparing 1Q, 2Q or even last year with the previous year, we have seen an increase not only in terms of revenue but also spending per head. The length of stay grew a bit and we can still do more. That is why we are working very hard to introduce new destinations, and this partly explains why we are in Chiang Mai (for Thailand Travel Mart Plus; TTM+ where the interview was done) to showcase new destinations in the country.

For example, Lampang was introduced under TAT's (Tourism Authority of Thailand) *12 Hidden Gems* campaign last year, so this year's *12 Hidden Gems Plus* campaign introduced Lamphun (next to Lampang). This will help to extend the length of stay and work towards our mission of spreading tourism out for greater inclusion and wealth distribution.

Going beyond growing pains

We are also working on this under the National Tourism Board, which is a collaboration of 10 ministries headed by the deputy prime minister to oversee short- and long-term planning and budget for tourism. The roads, trains, national parks, airports, etc, should all be geared towards the same goal of sustainability and quality tourism.

'Thainess' is used to convey the tourism message. What's Thainess to you?

It's the way of the Thai people. There is no one Thainess – there can never be, because Thailand comprises so many ethnic groups and they're all Thai. Chiang Mai used to be the capital of the Lanna kingdom; likewise for the south, which was another country in the olden days. Thainess means the ways of each region in Thailand, each reflecting their own identity.

To me, the *Discover Thainess* campaign is not just for international tourists but also to educate young Thais to value what we have and carry on the torch. This generation was born with computers, Internet, etc; they will only watch (TV shows like) Kim Kardashian, *Gossip Girl* and *MasterChef*; and think that's value.

I used to hate *ram* Thai classical dance in school and now I appreciate it very much. You will pass the stage where you think the outside world is more modern and civilised.

How do you perceive Thailand's marketing efforts on the global front? Will *Amazing Thailand* be changed soon?



I think we are on the right track. I have received many comments that we should change (the slogan), but I believe in the good things that we have. We should have one identity, but develop from that and keep the goodness of what we have.

Personally, I like the new *Amazing Thailand* logo reflecting the Land of Smiles. At the end of day it's about the people, that Thai people love to serve, give our best and give happiness to our friends and guests – it's in our blood.

What's the greatest challenge in the Thai tourism landscape now?

It's the management. With the increment of tourist arrivals, questions on how to manage the safety, convenience or even the identity of the place come into play. For example, by promoting community tourism we hope farmers will be less reliant on agriculture for a living, but if there are too many visitors, (communities) might start to lose their identity and sell their land for quick cash.

Is it hard to manage the China market, which is coming in droves?

It's hard but manageable, and Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai are good examples. The success of the *Lost in Thailand* movie brought big numbers of Chinese, but the local community has learnt how to manage and communicate with the Chinese despite their initial complaints. If we understand (visitors' motivations and intentions), that they come because they love Thailand and our culture, then that's a

good starting point already. We should seek to educate (the Chinese visitors), let them know the proper etiquette, say, refrain from talking loudly in temples or using the toilet in a certain way.

They (a discussion during TTM+) said only five per cent of Chinese have passports [laughs], and we have to ask ourselves if we want another five per cent to come to Thailand.

And do you want them?

[Pauses] Yes, but we have to prepare ourselves. I think they will learn faster than the first generation, just like Thais. I had the same problem when I took my Thai dealers abroad 20 years ago (Kobkarn was formerly the head of Toshiba Thailand) – they were loud, full of complaints, grabbed everything when they shop, must have Thai food every day, etc. The second generation (of Thai dealers) is much more sophisticated. I think it's the same thing for Chinese. Once the country opens up, they will learn faster and faster.

How do you deal with the regular negative coverage of Thailand's tourism sector and regain trust from visitors?

We have to face the problem, take it seriously and talk to the people – the team, the locals, those concerned – and not give up. If we look at it from a broader view, the percentage (of incidents) has decreased (against arrival numbers). We have to continuously improve our safety measures. We will never have enough police, tourist police, equipment, so joint ef-

10 NEED TO KNOW'S ABOUT KOBKARN WATTANAVRANGKUL

■ **Who's in your family?** My husband is a policeman. My son is learning about computer design, while my daughter just completed her freshman year.

■ **What do you do for fun?** I love books, old maps, architecture and visiting museums. I also collect stones and leaves from nature – to me that's happiness.

■ **What's your ideal vacation?** I hope to revisit many places in Thailand with my children.

■ **How do you book your leisure trips?** If I had to do it myself, maybe offline? An agency perhaps. I have no chance to book any tour myself at the moment.

■ **What are you reading right now?** *Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann. The movie was very beautiful.

■ **Favourite food?** *Nam phrik num* and *gaeng ho* – northern Thai food.

■ **How do you stay healthy?** I used to jog around Lumpini Park four or five times a week but now only once a week.

■ **What's a bad habit you cannot kick?** I eat chocolates at night.

■ **A pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you.** Gossip. I cannot understand why people spend so much time gossiping. Time is so valuable that we should pay attention to what we should do, rather than what others are doing.

■ **Most people don't know you...** I'm a very clumsy person. Every time I walk up the stage, I'm worried I would fall down.

forts are important – how everyone can help to take care of tourists in each destination. A good thing is (stakeholders) now believe tourism is their duty; in the past everyone would point their finger at the other person.

What have you achieved so far to challenge your critics that you came into this role without experience in tourism?

The growth of the industry is an achievement of the team. I don't know everything, but I believe in teamwork and supporting a good team. We have many good things and plans in place already. If anyone coming (into this position) always comes up with new things, continuity will become a problem because plans change according to the new minister, governor or the political party.

You don't need the best ideas as much as commitment and actual implementation. (Continuity) is something the National Tourism Board has put an emphasis on in order to solve some of the past problems. I know I'll be changed after elections next year, but the ideas and planning should not be changed so there's continuity.

What do you want your legacy to be?

If people only think of (creating a legacy) there will be no continuity [tears]... If I were to think 'this should be (for) me', the new minister would think the same thing and we would go back to (square one). We should think for the country, not for the individual – it's important to put the country above self.

Shop

Need ideas on what to buy? Take your pick and load your cart with the array of new products showcased on this page

HOTELS



W GOA, INDIA
The W brand will make its debut in India this September with a 160-room property overlooking Vagator Beach in North Goa. F&B options include pan-Asian eatery Spice Traders, fusion restaurant The Kitchen Table, and The Rock Pool and WetDeck bars. W Hotels' signature Fit gym and Spa by Clarins will also be available.



FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON SINGAPORE, RIVERVIEW
The property near Robertson Quay was launched after a redevelopment of the former Riverview Hotel's common areas, meeting spaces, facilities and all 476 guestrooms. Amenities include the all-day dining The Eatery, a lobby bar, a 24-hour fitness centre, a pool and complimentary Wi-Fi.



AMBA TAIPEI SONGSHAN, TAIWAN
The 189-room amba Taipei Songshan has opened near the Taipei 101 tower, with room categories ranging from the 27m² Smart Rooms to 107m² Studios. Each room offers complimentary Wi-Fi, a 48-inch HD TV, Bluetooth speaker and a Nespresso machine. Facilities include a modern chophouse, Que restaurant, and an event space for banquets.



PAN PACIFIC BEIJING, CHINA
Come 1H2017, Pan Pacific Beijing will rise in Xicheng District to feature 223 rooms and suites starting from 45m². Facilities include a 20m indoor swimming pool, the conservatory-style Winter Garden, signature restaurants Hai Tien Lo and Keyaki, and the exclusive Bai Yun Club offering views that extend to the Forbidden City.

ACTIVITY

KHIRI TRAVEL LAUNCHES TOURS TO JAFFNA
Bangkok-based DMC Khiri Travel has introduced a tour itinerary to the city of Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka, an area that once suffered from civil war that lasted until 2009. Now that peace has returned to the area, Khiri Travel says the time is right for tour operators to add Jaffna to their Sri Lankan itineraries, launching a 4D/3N package that

explores the destination by train, bicycle, jeep or catamaran. Programme highlights include a train ride aboard the *Queen of Jaffna* that passes through the Vavuniya region where much of the conflicts took place, a visit to Casuarina Beach, a full-day ride on a catamaran to Delft Island to visit a Dutch fort, and a feasting of local Tamil delights, among others.



ForwardKeys
Traveller data intelligence

ForwardKeys Global Air Travel Trends Update

Get Updated on the Latest
APAC Travel Trends!

ITB Day 1, 3.30pm Presentation Hub

- 2016 Year-to-Date Performance
- China Golden Week Performance
- 6 Months On-The-Book Snapshot
- And more

19 Oct 2016
3.30 to 5.30pm at the
Presentation Hub,
Basement Two

www.forwardkeys.com • info@forwardkeys.com

Social

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



GALLERY

PLAZA PREMIUM NABS AWARD

At the Skytrax 2016 World Airline Awards, Plaza Premium scooped the accolade for Best Independent Airport Lounge with special highlight given to its London Heathrow and

Hong Kong operations. Song Hoi-see, founder and CEO of Plaza Premium Group (third from left), received the award from Edward Plaisted, CEO of Skytrax (second from left), during the award ceremony held at the Farnborough International Airshow on July 12.

HATA SNIFFS OUT KUCHING

A group of 20 members from the Hong Kong Association of Travel Agents (HATA) descended in Kuching for a study tour in June following Hong Kong Airlines' launch of direct flights to the city in late May. Led by James So of Zion Travel, the tour covered site inspections and visits to the countryside, where agents got to see traditional longhouses as well as experience the local hospitality and ethnic diversity.



APPOINTMENTS



Wanda Corazon Teo



Peter Bellew

WANDA CORAZON TULFO TEO
NOW Secretary, Department of Tourism, Philippines
THEN President, National Association of Independent Travel Agencies, Philippines

PETER BELLEW
NOW CEO and group managing director, Malaysia Airlines
THEN COO, Malaysia Airlines

DEXTER COMENDADOR
NOW Interim CEO, Philippines AirAsia
THEN COO, Philippines AirAsia

RONNI DALHOFF
NOW Managing director, Diethelm Travel Cambodia
THEN Operations manager, Hatien Vegas Entertainment Resort

CHRIS CAHILL
NOW CEO, AccorHotels Luxury Brands
THEN Vice president for global operations, Las Vegas Sands Corp

FABRICE COLLOT
NOW General manager, Banyan Tree Macau
THEN General manager, Wanda Realm Ma'anshan and Wanda Vista Tianjin (China)

DUNCAN PALMER
NOW Managing director, The Murray, Hong Kong
THEN Regional vice president - Europe and managing director, The Langham, London

SIM KIANG PANG
NOW General manager, South-east Asia, Carlson Wagonlit Travel
THEN Senior vice president and regional head of industry technology, Asia-Pacific, Panalpina Group

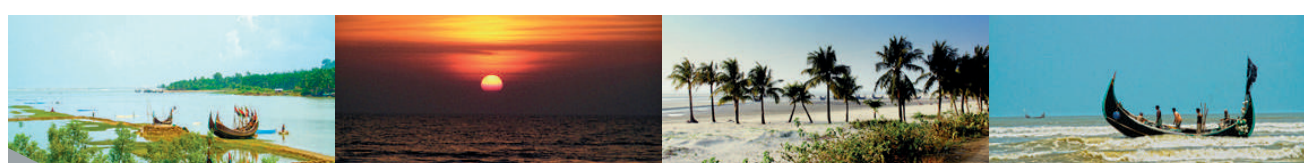
Learn new ways to market and manage tourism growth to emerging destinations

The PATA New Tourism Frontiers Forum (NTFF) gathers the top minds in destination travel for inspiring and insightful discussions on the key issues in marketing and managing tourism growth to lesser-known destinations. Aligning with the advocacy theme of tourism dispersal, the Forum introduces delegates to lesser-known yet attractive corners of the world through its choice of venue.

Generously hosted by the Bangladesh Tourism Board, NTFF 2016 will take place in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh - a fascinating mix of enchanting history, vibrant cultures, sandy beaches, abundant wildlife, and rich flora and fauna. Specifically, Cox's Bazar combines the world's longest unbroken beach with the unique lifestyle of ethnic minority groups in the neighbouring hills.

The three-day event will touch upon the topics of fair trade, living heritage communities, coastal and marine tourism, heritage trails, and domestic/regional tourism markets, including a on-ground session on brand-building and marketing for emerging destinations.

On the occasion of 'Visit Bangladesh 2016', we look forward to welcoming you at NTFF this November.



Register now or visit the event page at
www.PATA.org/NTFF-2016

On the radar

Learn from the experts, take heed of technology currently shaping the travel landscape and pick up new ideas on how to do business better

TRAVEL TECHNOLOGY

By Dannon Har

At your e-service

A number of virtual concierge solutions have recently hit the market, offering hoteliers a range of customer-service apps that integrate with their existing property management systems (PMS).

Priscilla, launched by MediaConcepts earlier this year, allows guests to interact with hotel services ranging from in-room dining to housekeeping, all via their own smartphones.

When integrated with Jasmine – the company’s other product that powers white-labelled hotel websites including their important direct booking engines – Priscilla provides hotels with data points throughout a guest’s stay.

This will enable hoteliers to track all guest interactions – time taken to respond to requests, peak and trough times, etc – from a singular system and admin console.

“(The concept) is still fairly new, but it is a fast-growing industry,” said John Bowen, founder and CEO, MediaConcepts.

“Priscilla doesn’t need to be deeply integrated into the property; hotels can take on as much as they are ready to. (They) can

start off with no added infrastructure and still book taxis, for instance. And if they go for deep integration, we can do more such as allocating guestrooms, but that’s just the cream on the cake,” he added.

Priscilla is sold at a flat fee, depending on the amount of integration the hotel wants, plus a monthly maintenance cost.

ButlerTech Group, which entered the Asian market late last year with its ButlerPad product, does not charge hoteliers to integrate the app with their PMS. Instead, the technology is funded through the app’s city guide function, CityButler, where featured merchants are charged a success fee.

“We’ve removed the barrier to entry by removing the cost of (using) our technology by funding it through the city guide. We provide hotels the technology and they provide us with the users,” said Michael Philip Mazza, CEO and founder of ButlerTech.

Mazza said hoteliers have seen benefits such as an increase in in-room dining after taking on the app. It is also popular with guests, with Amara Bangkok Hotel



receiving 8,000 hits in the first week of implementation.

StayPlease, on the other hand, finds native apps a poor approach, and have instead created a virtual concierge offering that sits on popular platforms the likes of WeChat, WhatsApp, Line, Facebook Messenger, Skype and Telegram.

StayPlease, founded by former hotelier Alan Sun who is now CEO of the company, counts Onyx Hospitality among its biggest clients. Like its competitors, it has found success by partnering with hotels in South-east Asia, especially in Thailand.

Sun believes the use of existing chat apps on people’s devices allows for a less jarring experience and at the same time enables the full utilisation of chat bot technology –

translation, for instance – to aid hoteliers in the guest interaction process.

“Our customers themselves tell us that app adoption is low and expensive, and the barrier to installation is high,” explained Sun.

StayPlease’s business model is akin to Priscilla’s, charging hotels a subscription fee on a per room, per year basis.

While all three solutions providers differ in their business and technological approaches, what they have in common is their belief that virtual concierge services will become a necessity for hotels in the near future.

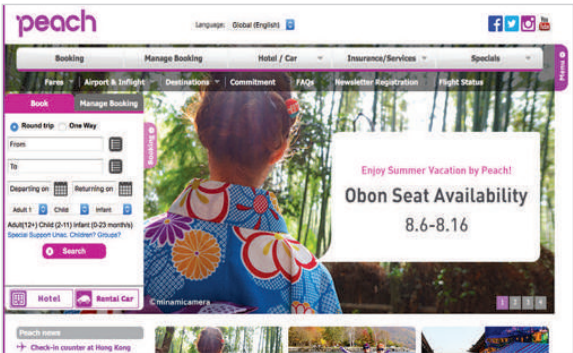
Said Mazza: “If you can’t provide a digital experience (that customers expect) over the next two to three years, then nobody will want to stay in your hotel. It will become part of what is expected.”

If you can’t provide a digital experience (that customers expect) over the next two to three years, then nobody will want to stay in your hotel. It will become part of what is expected.

Philip Mazza, CEO and founder, ButlerTech

WHO GETS THE BOOKING?

Planning for a week-long vacation to Hong Kong with his wife and young child, Tokyo-based **Julian Ryall** checks out the flight options and prices offered by two Japanese LCCs – Peach Aviation and Vanilla Air – and makes his choice



Peach Aviation

APPEARANCE I’m not certain if purple is ever a great corporate colour, as the homepage is a little jarring to look at with lots of bling. It is also a challenge following the changing promotion displays.

PRODUCT I chose round-trip flights departing for Hong Kong on Friday, July 29 and returning on Friday, August 5 for two adults and a child.

The Happy Peach Plus fare comes with a rather measly baggage allowance of 10kg and one free checked bag per person. The total came up to 98,160 yen (US\$925). Standard seats come at no extra cost but a top-of-the-range “fast seat” would cost an additional 2,200 yen.

Meal options are limited to a picnic boxed lunch (900 yen) or the even less appetising eel-flavoured catfish (1,350 yen). The beverage list includes beer (500 yen), a small bottle of sparkling rose wine (1,000 yen) and apple juice (200 yen).

EASE OF BOOKING Beyond the garish landing page, things become easier on the eyes. All the information on a specific flight is easy to see and the site compares very favourably with those operated by full-served carriers.

PRICE As with LCCs the world over, what you initially see is not what you end up paying. Still, the basic Happy Peach one-way fare of 8,380 yen is still very reasonable. It is a marginal 440 yen lower than Vanilla’s price, but departs Osaka instead of Tokyo. Taxes add an extra 1,540 yen to the total.

VERDICT It is a close call when it comes to products and prices. Based on the online booking experience, I prefer the simplicity of Vanilla over the purple prose of Peach.

Vanilla Air

APPEARANCE Vanilla Air provides a much more sedate welcome than its rival, with an image of a picture-perfect ocean (at time of writer’s visit) and a clean and clear set of booking options greeting visitors on the homepage.

PRODUCT My booking for two adults and a child flying on the same dates – with up to 20kg of luggage, complimentary standard seat and a 500 yen charge for changing the flight – came up to 110,190 yen.

Extra baggage allowance, with up to 40kg, adds an additional 4,000 yen. Reserving a “relax seat” would have cost an extra 1,300 yen. Infants under the age of one would fly with no ticket charge and a 1,500 yen handling fee.

A can of beer costs 400 yen, a sparkling white wine costs 600 yen, and apple juice was 200 yen. Meals are primarily of the snack variety, although a spicy tomato curry was on the menu at 750 yen and pork cutlet sandwiches at 650 yen.

EASE OF BOOKING Very straightforward, plus the website offers some appealing on-screen graphics to look at while waiting to complete the booking. It took three attempts to load the page for the return flight though, but that’s a minor quibble as the pages are well designed and make it easy to compare prices.

PRICE The teaser price on the homepage promises a flight from Tokyo’s Narita airport to Hong Kong for 8,840 yen, but that seat is not available until the last day in September. Unlike Peach, Vanilla’s base fares do not include checked baggage. Nevertheless, prices are still pretty competitive.



Prizes for Asia's travel agents

Costa's 10-year cruise pass

A 10-year cruise pass to go wherever you want with Costa Asia – that's what Asia's leading cruise company wants its sales agents in Asia to enjoy as part of its 10th anniversary celebrations. If you have been selling Costa Cruises, the "Mr/Ms Costa Free Voyage Contest" is for you. The best entry from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, The Philippines, Thailand and Hong Kong will each win this great prize that you can enjoy for the next 10 years!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Costa Cruises is celebrating 10 extraordinary years in Asia. Recognising the important role travel agents have played in its success, Costa Cruises is celebrating this milestone with an equally extraordinary prize – a 10-year cruise pass that will allow travel agents to experience Costa Cruises on a most personal level.

With the pass, the six

winners – the best submission from Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Thailand and Hong Kong – will get to choose from not only existing cruise holidays in Asia but also be among the first to enjoy innovative new ones to be launched over the next 10 years. It's Costa's way of thanking agents for their support and giving them the opportunity to enjoy the

company's unique "Italy at Sea" brand of cruise holidays.

THE COSTA HERITAGE

Costa Cruises was established in 1948 in Genoa, Italy. Today, it is the top cruise brand in Europe. Costa Group's parent company, Carnival Corporation & Plc, is the largest cruise company in the world with a 45% market share of the world's 22 million cruise guests.



"Over the past decade, we have invested in Asia's cruise market to introduce guests to our unique 'Italy at Sea' cruise experience. We wish to express our gratitude to local communities for their consistent support."

Mr Buhdy Bok
President
Costa Group Asia

COSTA IN ASIA

A pioneer of Asia's cruise industry, Costa has played a key role in nurturing the cruise holiday market in Asia. It is the first international cruise company to earn a Wholly-owned Foreign Enterprise (WOFE) status in China.

Building on its position as the leading cruise company in Europe with proven expertise in multinational operations, new market development, and localisation of products, Costa Cruises continues to innovate to win over new customers in Asia with its modern fleet.

INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS

Costa Cruises is best known for its unique Italian touch based on Italy's finest concepts in hospitality, gastronomy, design, leisure and entertainment.

Following last year's launch of a 86-day round-the-world cruise from Asia, the follow up is a 46-day South Pacific Islands cruise from Tianjin to be launched this year.

The Costa Asia brand identity

Costa Cruises in Asia are designed to be "Italy at Sea", offering guests a holiday experience enriched by the best of Italy in terms of hospitality, gastronomy, art, entertainment and leisure activities.



■ **Costa Victoria** is Asia's first "Fashion Cruise", where style and elegance is the focus. Guests will discover Italian creativity and artistry in everything from the design of their cabins to the spa.



■ **Costa Atlantica** is "Venice at Sea" and spotlights the great city of Venice through art and activities such as the Carnival of Venice party and Venetian mask painting workshops.



■ **Costa Serena's** "Ancient Rome at Sea" theme highlights Olympian Gods and Roman mythology with its sumptuous spaces, exceptional Italian cuisine and wines, along with high-tech entertainment.



■ The newly arrived **Costa Fortuna** is a "Museum at Sea", complete with 4,860 artworks, antiques and artefacts that honour Italy's seafaring history.



■ **Costa neoRomantica** will join Costa's Asia fleet in 2017. The ship underwent a 90-million-Euro transformation that resulted in her relaunch in 2012.

Mr/Ms Costa Free Voyage Contest

10-YEAR CRUISE PASS!

For Travel Agent Partners

Open to employees of a travel agency which sells Costa Asia cruises in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Thailand and Hong Kong. The employee must be 18 or older. The best entry from each of these countries will win a 10-year cruise pass from Costa Asia.

Simply follow the steps below.

STEP 1

In a short statement, please tell us which of Costa’s ships is your favourite and why?

Example: *I love Costa Victoria! It is the best ship I have ever cruise with. In terms of size, activities, entertainment and hospitality. It is prefect!*

STEP 2

Include a photo or selfie with a Costa element. Example:



STEP 3

Include your personal information:

- Full name
- Nationality
- Company name
- Job title
- How many years in selling Costa Cruises?

STEP 4

Email your answer, photo and personal information to:

chiu@costa.it (Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia)
wong@costa.it (Hong Kong, Thailand, The Philippines)

Contest opens: August 11, 2016
Closing date: September 2, 2016
Winner announcement: September 12, 2016



TERMS & CONDITIONS

- This promotion is open to Costa Cruises’ sales agents in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, The Philippines and Hong Kong only.
- Each participant can participate once only. If more than one email is received from same participant, Costa Cruises will count only the first email received.
- The prize is one cruise (Balcony twin cabin) per year in Asia sailing only, starting from Year 2016 to Year 2025.
- The prize is for cruise only and excludes festive sailing. Port charges, services charges, visa expenses, insurance, shore excursions fees, airfares, other transportation and any personal expenses are excluded.
- Booking confirmation is subject to cabin availability and Costa management’s prior approval.
- Cabins must be redeemed 30 days prior to departure.
- The cruise pass is non-transferable. No replacement will be made for any loss or theft of the voucher.
- All above terms & conditions are subject to change at any time without prior notice. In case of any dispute, the decision of Costa Cruises Asia is final.
- For reservations, please contact chiu@costa.it (Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia) or wong@costa.it (Hong Kong, Thailand, The Philippines)

Increased capacity, more variety, better customer focus

In Shanghai on July 1, 2016, Costa Cruises celebrated its 10th anniversary in Asia with its 2,000,000th passenger as its guest-of-honour, who was awarded a free ticket for a Costa Cruises holiday.

The growth in passenger number is expected to accelerate next year when Costa Cruises’ fifth ship in Asia, **Costa neoRomantica**, enters service. Capacity will take another leap when **two new ships purpose-built for the Asia market** arrive in 2019 and 2020.

Next year will also see the arrival of **AIDA Cruises** — a leading German cruise brand from Costa Cruises Group — with one ship home-ported in Shanghai. This will give Costa’s customers another new cruise experience.

These new developments will give travel agents a greater variety of products to appeal to more holidaymakers, uncovering new demand and keeping Asia’s cruise market on a steady growth path.



Arriving in 2017: Costa neoRomantica.



Report Longhaul travel

Switzerland

Enriching the yo

By Raini Hamdi

A market segment comprising rich Chinese millennials who want more out of their travel is good news for Swiss luxury hoteliers, who are also smiling at Switzerland's latest efforts to make it easier for mainland Chinese to apply for visas to visit the country.

In mid-July, Switzerland opened nine more visa application centres (VACs) in mainland China. The nine new centres are in Changsha, Chongqing, Fuzhou, Hangzhou, Jinan, Kunming, Nanjing, Shenzhen and Xi'an, joining six existing VACs in Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang and Wuhan.

In addition, it is trialling a portable biometric visa service that will enable Chinese tour operators, corporates and end-consumers from cities without a VAC to get their biometric fingerprints collected in their city of residence in the future. A Switzerland Tourism circular said the service is being tested with selected travel trade partners this summer. Details such as costs and timings will be announced soon.

Swiss Deluxe Hotels, which comprises 41 luxury hotels in Switzerland, expects more guests from China, a market that has grown 20 to 30 per cent in the last seven years, and now numbers around 1.5 million travellers a year, according to managing director, Siro Barino, interviewed during the recent ILTM Asia in Shanghai.

Barino said: "More VACs will help, but the main reason why the market will grow in the next 10 years is because the wealthy Chinese are switching from spending on luxury items such as buying watches to spending on travel itself when they are in Switzerland. They want to get to know the destination in more in-depth ways, i.e.

travel becomes the reason itself.

"This mega trend is normal. The first generation travels to see a destination. The second travels to see the details of the destination, with the possibility of returning two or three times."

Hurun's *The Chinese Luxury Traveler 2016* report, which focuses on rich Chinese millennials this year, shows leisure travel has dropped as the major motivator for travel for them, with 68 per cent citing



Dolder Grand Zurich



We're also seeing changing Chinese customers who are younger... They are more immersive and we're able to cater to this changing clientele.

Mark Jacob
Managing director, Dolder Grand Zurich

France

Paris rendezvous and beyond

By Rosa Ocampo

To get a bigger slice of the South-east Asian outbound market, France has adopted a multipronged approach involving promotional tours in the region, spotlighting cultural festivals and lesser-known destinations and attractions.

France's short-term goal is to beef up arrivals this year, which dipped 10 per cent in January and February after the terror attacks in Paris last November. Its target for 2020 is 100 million visitors, up from 85 million in 2015.

Atout France recently launched a tourism promotion office in Singapore and a bureau in Jakarta, while plans are afoot for the Paris-Ile-de France Regional Tourism Board to visit the region next year.

Francois Navarro, managing director of

Paris-Ile-de-France, said South-east Asian countries including Singapore and Thailand are "small but important markets". While there is no targeted arrival number from South-east Asia, the board plans to visit the region next year as the growing middle-class travellers segment still "don't know Paris – and France – very well".

He noted that the three biggest Asian markets are China, which has increased by 50 per cent this year; Japan, which dropped by 25 per cent last year, and South Korea, which is growing every year.

Patricia Barthelemy, marketing director of Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau, said they will also visit South-east Asia next year following a successful roadshow in 2015 when they included the Philip-

pines and Vietnam for the first time.

Paris remains the top draw for Asian travellers, but other regions are also courting South-east Asians, shared sellers at the Rendez-vous France tradeshow in Montpellier this year.

Mohita Gupta
Tessier, CEO of
DMC MGTC,

Barthelemy:
deeper
inroads
into SE Asia
markets



From luxury spa hotels in the Swiss Alps to the wine valleys of California, Asian visitors are sought after more than ever by international tourism bureaus, with the courtship especially apparent in China and South-east Asia, discovers **TTG Asia**

ung rich



cent), polar exploration (22 per cent from 16 per cent) and road trips (21 per cent from 12 per cent).

Travel for celebrations and events, study and golf has also dropped.

A total of 525 rich Gen Ys aged 18 to 36 years old were surveyed. They have an average personal wealth of RMB38.8 million (US\$5.8 million), from sources including investment returns (42 per cent), personal salary (23 per cent) and inheritance (20 per cent). Over half (55 per cent) were male, 77 per cent married and, of that, 75 per cent with one child. And their average household travel spend is RM420,000 per year, with the report saying they are set to go on more trips in the next three years.

Swiss tourism players believe Switzerland, which offers a diverse range of attractions, is poised to go down well with this market segment.

Mark Jacob, managing director of the ultra-luxe Dolder Grand Zurich, said: "More VACs will help for sure. The easier it is, the fewer obstacles there are in their way, the more likely travellers will choose the destination. We're also seeing changing Chinese customers who are younger – the second generation who travel as a couple or with friends and stay three or four nights in one location because they are interested in fine dining, learning about the art collection at the hotel, interacting with local people, and such. They are more immersive and we're able to cater to this changing clientele."

Victor Xu, sales director China for several Swiss attractions including Chronoswiss and Lake Lucerne, is pleased with the news as he said this year was looking flat after last year's 40 per cent growth from

China. He attributed this to the slowdown in China's economy.

"On the other hand, Switzerland is seen as safe and now, getting visa will be so much easier," Wu said.

China is now one of the top five international markets for Swiss Deluxe Hotels, accounting for six per cent of its business. Asian markets too have grown (except for Japan which dipped because of its economy) and now contributes eight to 10 per cent of business, said Barino.

The only snag is Switzerland's high prices, as rich Chinese millennials do not spend indiscriminately and there is also competition from other European cities for them. Paris, for instance, is currently a bargain with heavy hotel room discounting, according to bedbanks JacTravel.

But Simon Bosshart, director global accounts and director Asia-Pacific of Switzerland Tourism, isn't too concerned about the price issue.

"Of course, we do very much regret any measures of price dumping in the tourism market (referring to Paris), as for the short-term relief they bring, they damage the tourism market and its players in the long term.

"Switzerland is not a destination that competes solely on price but on the high quality of the experiences it offers. In Asia, Switzerland Tourism focuses its promotional activities on the FITs to address the specific needs of travellers in the area of outdoor sports – in China, skiing in particular – or arts and culture, with the aim to entice Asian tourists to discover new (and lesser-known) destinations in Switzerland, and to prolong their stay in our country," Bosshart elaborated.

"For the current case with Paris, there is no factual evidence of a direct impact on the Swiss market, and we do not expect any negative effect for two reasons. In a global perspective, Paris and Switzerland are not in direct competition, as we are not offering the same experience. In Asia specifically, low prices in Paris might even positively influence our business, as many programmes connect Switzerland with France and other destinations, so Paris might even help to subsidise the overall package price."

was looking to connect with Asian agents to promote French destinations that can be combined with Paris. These include Nice, Bordeaux, Côte d'Azur, Aix-en-Provence, Limoges and Burgundy, most of which are just a few hours from Paris and offer attractions such as sightseeing, vineyards and wine tasting that would appeal to Asians, she pointed out.

For Adeline Pascal-Rouquette of Sites d'exception en Languedoc (a network of 20 sites in the southern province) "Asian travellers are few but the numbers are increasing" to the extent that they have to get English-speaking tour guides.

Anne-Sylvie Gautier, head of public relations at Festival Aix en Provence, shared: "We don't have a lot of travellers from South-east Asia but Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia are new markets for us. They want new cities, heritage, cheaper trips, a special way of life, (which can be found) in the south of France."

Gautier said efforts to promote southern France's opera offerings are gaining

attention in Asia as information materials are already available in English and soon in Chinese. A theatre tour of opera productions including *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to be staged in Beijing in October is also helping to attract Asian travellers.

Le Grand Tour, which highlights the country's culture and heritage through 50 festivals and events, was held from January to July this year, and will run for the whole of next year.

In addition, Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, ambassador in charge of France's cultural appeal, said they are opening new attractions such as cultural sites and museums in Paris and surrounding areas.

With these activities, France wants to convey the message that it is a safe destination despite the recent terror incidents.

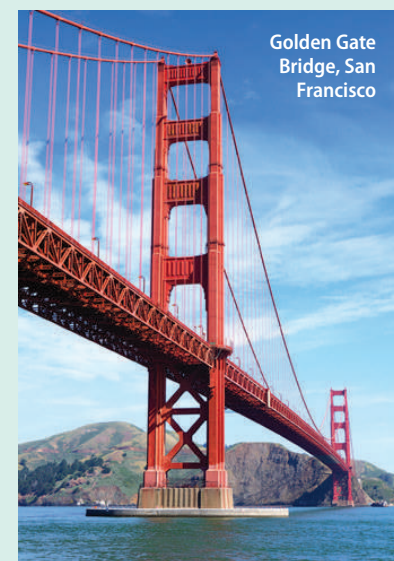
"The government is doing (everything) in its power to ensure the safety of Paris. All main monuments and shops have permanent and absolute surveillance," assured Pierre Schapira, president, Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau.

US

Spinning the American dream in China

With 2016 named US-China Tourism Year, the American trade is pulling out the stops to bring Chinese visitors to the country through traditional and digital platforms, as well as China-ready programmes spanning language interpretation services and Asian-style breakfasts.

Brand USA is deploying the *All Within Your Reach* campaign in 14 key international markets including China. The campaign highlights the proximity of travel experiences within a five-hour drive from popular gateway cities in the US.



Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco

A Brand USA spokesperson told *TTG Asia*: "Brand USA wants to give international visitors the information and tools to create packages that feature both iconic and lesser-known attractions and destinations – all within reach during a single trip to the US."

At the state level, bigger budgets and increased airlift have spurred tourism offices to be more active in their China courtship too.

Visit California recently led a 12-member California CEO mission to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong in May to connect travel industry leaders with the China National Tourism Administration.

Said Caroline Beteta, president and CEO, Visit California: "We have doubled our global operating budget from US\$50 million to US\$115 million this year. (Instead of) trying to do something new in Asia, we are trying to go deeper into markets like China."

Visit California also launched the Dream 365 TV channel on Chinese content sharing platform Youku in April, featuring "inspiring, offbeat and enticing" videos, imagery and photos of the destination.

"It focuses on creating excitement for a California vacation and inspiring people to 'be bold to dream,'" Beteta shared. China is the first in California's network of key international markets to roll out a localised version.

– **Prudence Lui**



Port-Vendres, France

Report Longhaul travel

TRIED AND TESTED

Hotel Villa Honegg

It rains outside but it shines inside. **Raini Hamdi** tells you why this hotel is an all-weather, one-stop Swiss treat

LOCATION Perched 480m above Lake Lucerne, in a place called Ennetburchen on the Burgenstock, this luxurious hideaway changes my views of Lucerne and the environs – literally and figuratively. They will no longer bring to mind just the famous Chapel Bridge in Lucerne or the nearby Pilatus, but the exclusive and unique attributes of Hotel Villa Honegg.

ROOM ‘Hotel villa’ is just the right description for it. There are only 23 rooms, yet it boasts the full service and facilities of large hotels, while its private environs create a secluded villa feel.

It was built in 1905, its lineage going back to the legendary hotel entrepreneur and railway builder, Franz Josef Bucher-Durrer. Now in the hands of a Qatar-based private entity, it has been handsomely refitted and continues its legend of catering to discerning guests from all over the world.

While the exterior looks traditional, inside it is anything but. My room, a Junior Suite Lake View, is art nouveau at its best, so sleek and high-tech, yet soft, plush and natural. If you can cuddle a room and it hugs you tightly back, this is it. The homeliness, comfort and the views of Lake Lucerne make this one of the most beautiful rooms I’ve ever stayed in.

FACILITIES I’m unlucky with the weather as it is drizzling much of the day but that only makes the hotel’s L-shape outdoor pool even more enticing. This pool alone is reason to be here. Perfectly heated to 34°C, it offers panoramic views of the lake and the alps. Strategically-placed spa jets and a whirlpool enable me to enjoy the splendid sights while being massaged. After an hour here, I jump into the indoor pool, which has underwater music.

A full spa and an advanced gym complete the healthy lifestyle offer-

ing, priming me for the apero on the terrace and the gourmet dinner in the restaurant to follow. I notice the hotel does not serve pork at all, a plus point for travel planners who have clients on a pork-free diet.

After a delicious dinner, it’s time to pop into the hotel’s cinema which I’ve booked free-of-charge for a private screening of the movie of my choice. There are 20 leather seats and this state-of-the-art cinema can also be used for product presentations or talks.

The next morning, I head for the easy hiking trail behind the hotel that leads to one of the most jaw-dropping attractions in Switzerland – the Hammetschwand lift. This is Europe’s highest open outdoor lift and what a sensation it is to be carried 153m down the vertical cliff in under a minute. Then, a spectacular path, Felsenweg, along the vertical rock face, makes for an unforgettable easy walk while soaking in unbelievable views of Lake Lucerne

and the Alps, including the Rigi, Stanserhorn and Pilatus. I cannot believe such a splendid attraction is accessible from the footsteps of this hotel.

It’s 13.00 and I’m going to have breakfast, which is served till 14.00 at this hotel.

SERVICE Full of youthful, well-trained professionals under the expert watch of seasoned hotelier Peter Durrer, who has had stints in Asia.

VERDICT In just a two-night stay I have gained a complete Swiss experience – spectacular views, superb quality, considerate hospitality and all other values that Switzerland is admired for. I can’t wait to return for a longer stay!

No. of rooms 23

Rates From CHF530 (US\$538)

Contact details

Tel: (41) 41 618 3200

Email: info@villa-honegg.ch



TTG Asia
TRADE MEDIA
OF THE YEAR 2015
MPAS Awards

TTG Asia
MOBILE APP
OF THE YEAR 2015
(Merit)
MPAS Awards

Read by 48,500 industry professionals across the region and beyond



SUBSCRIBE NOW
www.ttgasia.com/subscribe.php

TTG Publishing
Travel Trade

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

96.5% of our subscribers are key decision makers and influencers who make recommendations to end clients.



www.ttgasia.com



e-Daily



Mobile App



Digital



facebook.com/ttgasia



twitter.com/TTG_Asia



instagram.com/ttgasia

To advertise, please contact us at traveltradesales@ttgasia.com or +65 6395 7575

Iconic City by the Bay, ‘Always San Francisco’

The Golden Gate Bridge, cable cars, Alcatraz and the largest Chinatown in the United States are attractions which **Joe D’Alessandro**, President and CEO of San Francisco Travel, says the first-time visitor must not miss.

What makes your destination appealing to travelers?

San Francisco is known for its scenic beauty, cultural attractions, diverse communities and world-class cuisine. Measuring 49 square miles, this walkable city includes landmarks like the Golden Gate Bridge, cable cars, Alcatraz and the largest Chinatown in the United States.

A stroll of the city’s streets can lead from Union Square to North Beach to Fisherman’s Wharf, Japantown and the Mission District, with intriguing neighborhoods to explore at every turn. Views of the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay are often laced with fog, creating a romantic mood in this most European of American cities. San Francisco has well over 32,000 hotel rooms, from first-class hotels and ultra-chic boutique hotels to familiar names in lodging and budget friendly inns.

What is one message you want to convey to the trade?



Left: Cable car. Above: The most famous bridge in the world, the Golden Gate Bridge.



Alcatraz, where some of the United States’ most notorious criminals were incarcerated.

San Francisco is one of the most iconic and beautiful cities in the world. Discover world-class shopping, culinary excellence, explore the new San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), the largest modern art museum in the world, and experience the freedom of the Summer of Love hippie movement.

Like what we say: “Never the same, always San Francisco.” San Francisco appeals to travelers as it’s always changing.

What kind of itinerary do you suggest for the first-time visitor?

For the first time visitor, we would recommend visiting the San Francisco landmarks.

Golden Gate Bridge, which is the most famous bridge in the world, is said to be one of the most photographed things

on Earth.

Also go to Alcatraz, where some of the United States’ most notorious criminals were incarcerated.

Coit Tower/Telegraph Hill is one of the highest points in the city. Coit Tower offers stunning 360° views of the Bay Area and visitors can ride the cable cars which have been transporting people around San Francisco since the late 19th century.

Union Square is the place for serious shoppers. Major department stores and the most exclusive designer boutiques line streets like Post, Sutter, Geary, Grant, Stockton and Powell.

For dining, Fisherman’s Wharf, which is also home to Pier 39, is a must. It’s a festive waterfront marketplace that is one of the city’s most popular attractions.

What do you suggest for repeat visitors?

We also know that most visitors to San Francisco will return again and again because the city is always changing and they never have the same experience twice.

For the repeat visitor, start the adventure in one of the city’s most famous neighborhoods. The Little Italy of San Francisco, North Beach has dozens of old world-style cafés and eateries, famous landmarks like Saints Peter and Paul Church and a few remnants of the city’s rough-and-tumble 1900s.

For art and culture lovers there is Exploratorium, which is just minutes away from Pier 39, or head to Golden Gate Park and visit the De Young Museum.

For sports lovers, in particular baseball fans, go to AT&T Park, home of the world

San Francisco is one of the most iconic and beautiful cities in the world. Discover world-class shopping, culinary excellence, explore the new SFMOMA, the largest modern art museum in the world, and experience the freedom of the Summer of Love hippie movement.



JOE D’ALESSANDRO
President and CEO
San Francisco Travel

champion San Francisco Giants and be sure to take in a game if you happen to visit while the Giants are playing.

In neighborhoods like the Mission, Castro, and the Sunset District, which is also called “the second Chinatown”, brand new restaurants, bars and shopping opportunities that have not been available until a few years ago await discovery.

What outdoor attractions do you recommend or for those seeking a travel experience off the beaten path?

There are many iconic outdoor experiences in San Francisco as well as in our neighboring areas. Visitors can go bicycling and hiking in Golden Gate Park or go on an Alcatraz island tour.

They can also picnic on the Presidio, a park and former military base on the northern tip of the San Francisco Peninsula and part of the Golden Gate National Recreation. Also part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area is Muir Woods, 12 miles north of San Francisco.

On Angel Island in San Francisco Bay, visitors can explore hiking trails, or they can visit neighboring attractions like Yosemite National Park, Napa Valley, Bodega Bay and Monterey County.

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



Report Sustainable travel

Recognising the high-yield, low-impact benefits of ecotourism, governments in South-east Asia are now putting serious efforts to develop this niche market by including principles of sustainable and responsible travel in national tourism planning frameworks and policies.

At the regional level, the first-ever ASEAN Ecotourism Forum (AEF) which took place in Pakse, Laos in June brought together tourism ministers and senior executives from the 10 ASEAN member countries plus China, Japan and South Korea to discuss regional cooperation regarding sustainable tourism development.

One clear manifestation of AEF is the adoption of the Pakse Declaration on ASEAN Roadmap for Strategic Development of Ecotourism Clusters and Tourism Corridors, which will be submitted to the heads of state for adoption during the 28th ASEAN Summit in Vientiane in September as one of the key deliverables under Laos' ASEAN chairmanship in 2016.

The Pakse Declaration takes its inspirations from the European Green Belt – a pan-Europe ecological network that stretches along the former Iron Curtain – and seeks to develop ecotourism clusters and tourism corridors and facilitate cross-border travel as well as travel into rural areas and nature reserves; unlock economic opportunities along overland and waterways; create employment opportunities; revitalise idle natural resources; and transform impoverished areas, announced the ASEAN tourism ministers in a joint media statement during AEF.

Bosengkham Vongdara, Laos' minister of information, culture and tourism, said during the forum's opening that it was "appropriate and timely for ASEAN to closely join hands in realising the new ASEAN Vision 2025 and ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025".

The Malaysia National Ecotourism Plan 2016-2025 will be using the cluster approach – i.e. grouping a critical mass of competitive and/or complementary tourism products in a geographical area – as a planning tool, informed Amran Hamzah, a professor in tourism planning and director of the Centre for Innovative Planning and Development at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM).

While he declined to reveal more details of the plan at press time as the strategy was still undergoing discussion, Amran said that it will seek to avoid earlier weak points in the National Ecotourism Plan 1996 such as the absence of "buy in" from the private sector.

Frans Teguh, director of infrastructure development & tourism ecosystem at Indonesian Ministry of Tourism, sees "big potential for marine tourism" and projects ecotourism to contribute to 10 per cent of the country's tourism market within the next five years.

The Indonesian government will integrate ecotourism into the national masterplan this year, in addition to identifying destinations like Lake Toba, Labuan Bajo and Mandalika as priority areas for ecotourism development. As well, a special pavilion dedicated to sustainable tourism will debut at PATA Travel Mart this year, Frans told *TTG Asia*.

Myanmar, a late entrant to the ecotourism scene compared with its regional peers, has laid out the Ecotourism Policy and Management Strategy for Protected

Areas last year, following the 2013 Tourism Master Plan, revealed Yee Mon, permanent secretary of Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

Ground-up efforts, public-private partnerships take root

On the ground, industry stakeholders are paying greater attention to public-private partnerships to drive the sector. Governments are recognising that local buy-in and community ownership will lead to better success of projects while private sector players also need the authorities to drive and enforce policies.

SB Chetry Win Tin, managing director of Journeys Adventure Travel and Myanmar Hill Lodges, posits that Myanmar is moving in the right path with a more open and democratic government in the helms, bolstered by funding from government and international development organisations like GIZ. "We were left out from most of ASEAN's regional planning in the past but we're now back on the map and fully engaged," he said.

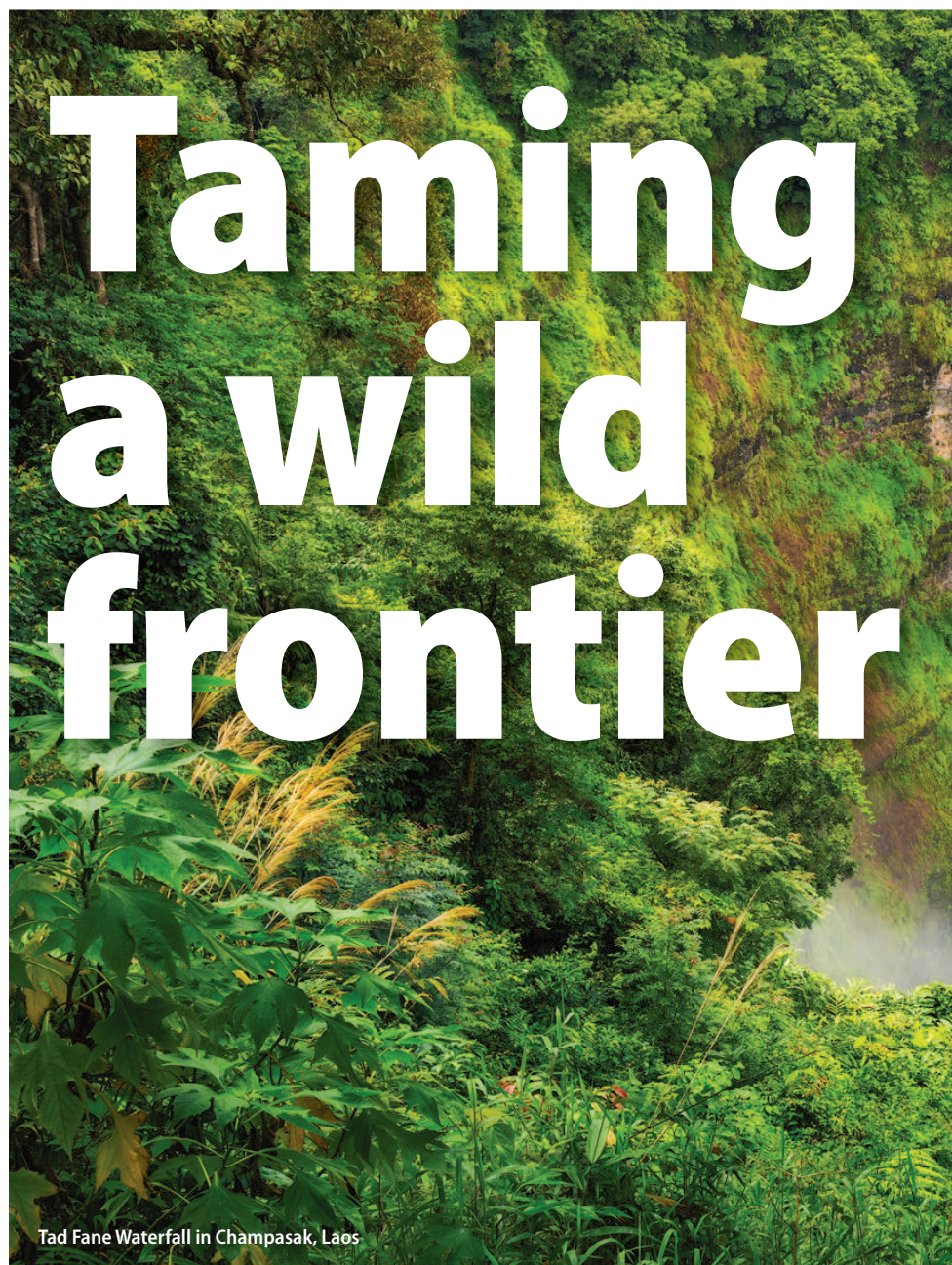
However, the widespread perception of Myanmar as a cultural destination is perhaps the biggest bugbear in growing the adventure and ecotourism sectors, opined Chetry. Few visitors are even aware that South-east Asia's highest peak is found in Myanmar's north, for example, he added.

Suthep Keasang, director, Office of Community-Based Tourism at the Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA) – a government agency set up under the Office of the Prime Minister in Thailand to develop sustainable tourism in the designated areas – opines that ecotourism development in the country is progressively moving in the right direction with stronger support from the government.

"Getting coordination among all stakeholders is an all-time challenge," Suthep admitted. "We must remember communities don't live their lives for just tourism," he added, emphasising the need for community involvement.

Likewise, Inthy Deuansavan, founder and owner of Green Discovery Laos, who is widely credited as a successful ecotourism entrepreneur in the country, stresses the importance of local involvement and livelihood building. Using Tree Top Explorer at Jungle Hotel Paksong as an example, Inthy stated how the zipline adventure project in southern Laos his company initiated has benefited local villages.

"Our staff strength grew from 24 to 100, and the village still has many young people unlike other Lao villages where youngsters move away to cities for work," said Inthy. "Tourism income is now higher than coffee cultivation, which used to be



Tad Fane Waterfall in Champasak, Laos

the main livelihood in this village."

Urging a "more conscious" approach to responsible tourism, Gregorio Rojas, programmer manager at Fairtrek, advocates suppliers to address all aspects of being a responsible travel provider. "Many suppliers only offer ecotourism in one aspect but ignore other components such as garbage disposal," he remarked. "Therefore we need vendors and suppliers to have access to information, while tour operators should educate their suppliers on ecotourism."

Industry players are increasingly cognisant of the role suppliers play in the sustainable development of ecotourism, with Bangkok-based DMCs like Khiri Travel and Exo Travel having successfully achieved Travelife certification, a leading

international sustainability certification for the travel and hospitality industry.

"The Travelife assessment applies to our supply chain, internal operations and hotel assessments," said Exo Travel's sustainability coordinator Thuy Nguyen. "We want a globally recognised standard but at the same time we also give feedback to Travelife, which has a working group in Bangkok, on the criteria to better cater to the local and regional differences," she said.

Establishing ecotourism certification standards for Asia was one of the aims that drove Masaru Takayama, founder of Japan Ecolodge Association and responsible tour outfit Spirit of Japan, to spearhead the formation of the Asian Ecotourism Network last year. The network is located



From left: Akha hill tribe villagers working in a tea plantation in northern Thailand; snow-capped mountains in Putao, Myanmar



Ecotourism and responsible travel are now buzzwords in Asia as trade players recognise the under-explored potential – and benefits – that could be yielded from these fledgling sectors, discovers **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**



Peasanthitstock

in Bangkok under the care of DASTA, with satellite offices in India, Indonesia, Japan and Malaysia.

Takayama remarked: “There are a lot of (sustainable tourism) standards but they are usually developed by EU or the US. We want standards for Asia by Asians.”

The network has entered into a partnership with Global Sustainable Tourism Council and set up as an internal committee to look at setting up global ecotourism standards for Asia by next year.

Forging a path ahead

Ultimately, people remain the most vital link for Asia’s ecotourism sector to flourish, a point that most trade players unanimously agree on.

“Public-private partnerships are definitely important but most critical is the correct people to lead the development,” said Neeracha Wongmasa, managing director of Phunacome Resort and a committee member of Thai Ecotourism & Adventure Travel Association.

What also matters, Neeracha added, is “consistency in policy”, which also leads to questions of sustainability, especially in Thailand which has seen frequent changes in the country’s leadership in recent years. She elaborated: “Authenticity is a dynamic concept, as it will change with time as a destination modifies, so what’s more important is that the aims are clear and remain unchanged even if the people involved change.”

Owing to the “high startup costs” in

ecotourism ventures, Asian Development Bank’s senior portfolio management specialist of Lao PDR Resident Mission, Steven Schipani, urged governments to proactively identify viable tourism projects and provide stronger destination marketing in order to lend a helping hand for SME entrepreneurs in this niche sector.

Meanwhile, Xu Jing, regional director for Asia and the Pacific, would like to see more open visa policies. “Unless visa issues are facilitated and seriously taken up by governments, ecotourism benefits cannot be fully realised,” he commented.

As well, accessibility remains a key issue, pointed out Asian Trails Laos’ managing director Andreas Hofmann who said that better connectivity would enable tour operators and DMCs to better promote an ecotourism destination to time-starved travellers, echoing industry sentiments for more direct flights linking secondary destinations in South-east Asia.

To avoid limiting the sector potential, trade players also caution against boxing ecotourists into strict categories, as the definition of ecotourism runs the gamut from hard to soft and travellers may not be engaged in nature-based activities throughout their vacation.

“Urban ecotourism is no longer an oxymoron,” UTM’s Amran said, pointing to the many ecotourism types in Asia such as Singapore’s Gardens by the Bay.

“There’s no need for good walking shoes there,” he quipped. “And will this be the trend for Asian tourists?”

Managing river flows for tourism and development

As the popularity of Mekong River cruising continues to grow at a rapid pace, industry experts are urging drastic measures to be put in place to ease rising congestion and move the industry forward.

At this year’s Mekong Tourism Forum in Sihanoukville, John Boyd, director of Pandaw Cruises, said: “The main concern is there are too many ships; it’s almost out of control. We’re not against competition but it gets so congested. Passengers are fed up of bumping into other boats.”

Fears were raised that the market will be unable to sustain increased demand if operations and infrastructure are not upgraded along the Mekong. Naidah Yazdani, Asia director, CF Mekong River Cruises, said: “It’s reaching a point now where unless we develop those facilities, we cannot take the industry to the next level.”

Additional and improved docking facilities and allocating slot times for boats are necessary to avoid the “scrabble for the same dock” at destinations such as Phnom Penh, said Maarten Perdok, managing director, Heritage Line.

To ensure this happens, more cross-border communication needs to be carried out between authorities, with operators working closely with local communities to preserve the authentic Mekong experiences that travellers desire.

Yazdani said: “The Mekong is not about experiencing wines or seeing several capital cities; the Mekong is about visiting small villages. It’s about experiencing the contrasts between the countries.”

The Mekong, which spans six countries and diverse cultures, is ripe for ecotourism development. Walter Jamieson, Asian Development Bank consultant and professor at Thailand’s Thammasat University, is helping to draft a tourism strategy with the UNWTO to develop ecotourism and authentic traveller experiences along the Mekong.

Jamieson proposes breaking the waterway down into seven “sizeable products, each with their unique theme” to introduce greater focus and coordination. “We must increase the quality and variety of river-based tourism activities on the Mekong,” he added.

An example is Mekong Dawn Cruises, which offers intimate trips from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap, stopping at villages along the way so passengers can watch local craftsmen ware their goods, explore off-the-beaten-track pagodas and discover traditional floating villages.

Moreover, with river cruise passengers offering a different dynamic to the backpackers the region traditionally attracted, the river cruise market holds a lot of potential. “(River cruise passengers) tend to be older and have higher income,” said Boyd. “This is a very special market for the region, and one that can truly be developed.”

And with the majority of Mekong River cruises currently catering to Western travellers, the mass Chinese and Indian markets are yet to be targeted and offer a huge untapped potential, said trade players. However, this needs to be done such that further developments do not burden the waterway with more traffic and pollution.

“We need to be careful as this will be extremely difficult,” said Yazdani. – **Marissa Carruthers**



Life along the Mekong River

Lova Shrivastava/Shutterstock



18 to 20 April 2017
2017年4月18日至20日

Shanghai, China | 中国 上海
Shanghai Convention & Exhibition Center
of International Sourcing 上海跨国采购会展中心

CTW
中国 China
国际商旅大会

The Leading Corporate Travel Management Conference for China

中国首屈一指的商务旅行管理大会

RELEVANT AND TARGETED CONTENT 高度相关的内容、受众明确

For Chinese corporate travel professionals & professionals with responsibility in China.
针对中国商务旅行精英和负责中国区业务的专业人士。



BEST GLOBAL PRACTICES, TRENDS, BENCHMARKS & CASE STUDIES 汇聚全球最佳实践、行业动态、市场标杆和案例分析

Localised for the Chinese market by more than 30 expert practitioners over 10 sessions.
30多名行业专家通过10余场论坛与中国市场分享本土化经验。

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES WITH KEY INDUSTRY PLAYERS 结交业内精英之良机

Structured platforms for meeting and engaging peers through an exciting programme & sponsored events and tours.
通过精彩的议程、赞助活动与游览等组织良好的平台，与业内人士齐聚一堂，互动交流。



BUSINESS WITH ONLY THE BEST 合作龙头企业

Explore opportunities to collaborate and source with leading corporate travel solution brands.
寻觅良机，让业内一流的商务旅行解决方案品牌企业成为你的合作伙伴或供应商。

GRAB THE LIMELIGHT WITH YOUR BRAND 提升品牌知名度

Exhibit or sponsor and gain exposure to quality travel corporate buyers.
通过展览或赞助的形式面向优质企业商旅买家，增加品牌曝光度。

FROM CTW CHINA 2016... 2016中国国际商旅大会

Expected USD 75 million generated from the event
大会交易额预计将达0.75亿美元。

Expected purchases of USD 1 million and above each for 30% of corporate buyers
30%的企业商旅买家预计其采购额将突破100万美元。

Corporate Travel Buyer 企业商旅买家

CTW China is a good platform to meet professionals and experts from the industry. Learning from their experiences to avoid potential issues and develop better solutions. 中国国际商旅大会是一个结识这个特殊行业内的众多专业人士和专家绝佳平台。从他们的丰富经验里学习，可规避可能出现的问题并制定更好的解决方案。

Ashland China Holdings Co, China 亚什兰（中国）投资有限公司，中国
William Cheng, Senior Procurement Manager 高级采购经理

Exhibitor 参展商

CTW China exposed us to more business opportunities and relevant knowledge. We got to meet buyers and we hope to generate more business through this platform. 中国国际商旅大会是一个开拓商机和学习相关知识的绝佳平台。我们结识了新的企业客户并希望这会为我们带来更多业务。

Delta Airlines 达美航空公司
Meng Li, Account Manager 客户经理



PARTICIPATE IN CTW CHINA 2017 NOW 参加2017中国国际商旅大会

Corporate Travel Buyer* | Exhibitor/Sponsor | Conference Delegate
企业商旅买家* | 参展商/赞助商 | 会议代表

Corporate Travel Buyer Profiles Include 欢迎以下商务旅行管理专业人士参加

差旅经理 | 差旅专员 | 间接采购/采购经理 | 财务经理 | 人事/行政经理 | 办公室经理
Travel Managers | Travel Specialists | Indirect Procurement / Purchasing Managers | Finance Managers | HR / Administration Managers | Office Managers

Hosting places available for eligible Corporate Travel Buyers
合格的企业商旅买家还可享受特邀资格

Find Us On WeChat
(ID: CTW-CH)
通过微信联系我们
(微信号: CTW-CH)



www.corporatetravelworld.com/china

Contact 联络方式: ctwchina@ttgasia.com | Tel 电话: (65) 6395 7575



Organised By 主办机构:

TTG Events

Carlson
Wagonlit
Travel

Industry Partner 行业伙伴:

CWT
Meetings&Events

Official Media 官方媒体:

TTG BT
mice

TTG mice

TTG associations

TTG 杂志

TTG

TTG

LUXURY

TTG Show
Daily

Destination China

Enhanced rail and road networks connecting to other parts of China have given rise to new tourist circuits around Guilin and raised the appeal of travel in the region, writes **Prudence Lui**

Making rail connections

Riding on the region's expanded high-speed rail network, the Guilin Tourism Administration is keen to draw repeated and new FIT traffic by combining Guilin with attractions in neighbouring Sanjiang, Danzhou, Longsheng, Longji and Liuzhou.

According to Guilin Tourism Administration, deputy secretary general, Zhao Gui Xing, new road networks such as the Liuzhou-Sanjiang Expressway have also boosted connectivity in the destination.

He said: "Traditionally, it took four to five days to tour around these towns with lots of time spent on the road. (Now), travel convenience has improved with an enhanced two-pronged rail and road system. Hopefully this will draw more tourist traffic from the Pearl River Delta, Hong Kong and Taiwan in the future."

Since the launch of the inaugural Guiyang-Guangzhou high-speed rail in 2014 to link up China's mountainous south-west with Guangdong, Guilin's network has flourished with more new routes to cities such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Guiyang, Changsha, Wuhan and Zhuhai.

Sheraton Guilin Hotel's director of sales & marketing, Portia Zhou, sees the great-

Destination in numbers

44.7 million

The total number of visitors to Guilin in 2015, a 15.5 per cent growth. Domestic visitors grew 16 per cent to account for 42.5 million arrivals

RMB6.4 billion

The tourism receipt from overseas visitors in 2015 (equivalent to US\$960 million), an increase of 7.2 per cent

2.2 days

Average length of stay in Guilin in 2015

149,029

The number of overseas visitors to Sanjiang in 2015, a hike of 35 per cent, generating RMB\$36.2 million in spending

est benefits from the Guangzhou-Guilin service, which boasts the highest frequency and shaves travel time on this route from 12 hours to two hours 40 minutes.

Said Zhou: "With the train network and construction of new highways, Guilin tourism and hotel markets have won new opportunities from the neighbouring countryside.

She added: "Longsheng and Sanjiang are now packaged together as new sightseeing points, strengthening Guilin's appeal for the leisure market. The FIT segment grew 50 per cent from the previous year."

Sanjiang – a remote town 150km from Guilin – can now look forward to more international visitor traffic with the D2975 (Liuzhou-Sanjiang) train service launched in May 2016. Plying between Sanjiang South Station and Guangzhou South via Guilin, the journey time from Guilin to Sanjiang now takes only 30 minutes, down from the previous three hours 45 minutes.

Commenting on the change, Guangxi Tourism Development Group, vice general manager, Lu Bo, said: "Given the birth of new highways, Sanjiang is now at the crossroads between Hunan, Guizhou, Guiyang and Guilin. Moreover, the town

is home to the Dong people, who boasts the biggest presence among Guangxi's ethnic minority groups.

"Our company is keen to push a Greater Guilin Tourism Area concept, (integrating) small towns nearby like Sanjiang and Danzhou to create a brand emphasising culture, wellness and ecotourism."

This explains why the group has actively pumped investment into Sanjiang's tourism infrastructure, such as revamping the Chenyang Eight Villages (see page 27), constructing a large-scale resort centre at Sanjiang Bay, and upgrading the Sanjiang Bird Nest. The group welcomed its first fam tour from Taiwan in March 2016.

Shangri-La Guilin's general manager, Leslie Wang, has noted an increase in leisure tourists since the expanded railway network places Guilin at the crossroads on the Guiyang-Guangzhou route.

"Our hotel received better results from the expanded railway network, especially in Hunan. It almost doubled our (guest numbers) from 2014," he said.

"We observed a growth in Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Dongguan as well. The high-speed railway definitely accelerates Guilin towards the urban economy with this integration."



18-20 April 2017
Shanghai • China
Shanghai Convention & Exhibition Center
of International Sourcing

IT&CM 中国(上海)
CHINA
国际会展旅游博览会 | Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings

The Leading International MICE Event In China

中国首屈一指的专业会议、奖励旅游、会议和展览的商业和交流平台

For outbound, inbound, and domestic travel in China
汇聚了出境、入境及中国国内MICE



Over 70 business, education and networking sessions
超过70场商务、教育和社交活动

USD 170 million of Procurement Value Generated On The Show Floor
2016年展会预计将产生超过美元1亿7000万采购价值



Over 440 Buyers from MICE, Association and Corporate Sectors
超过440名买家 (MICE, 协会, 企业差旅)



76% of Exhibitors Expect Orders After The Event
超过76% 的参展商预期在2016年展会结束一年内获取订单



80% Chinese to 20% International Buyers
大比率 (80%) 的中国国内买家; 20%国际买家

Variety of Educational and Networking Platforms for Exposure:
各种教育及交流平台的接触机会:

Association Day Forums, Campfire Sessions, Destination Presentations, Media Briefings, Hosted Luncheon, Dinners and Cocktails, Pre- and Post-Event Tours and more!
协会日会议论坛, 专题讨论会, 目的地推介演讲会, 媒体见面会, 招待午餐, 晚宴及鸡尾酒会, 展前及展后旅游等活动!



400 Hosted Delegates
400名特邀买家及媒体享受全程招待的特邀权益



BUYER 买家

The event was very successful. I met potential suppliers who gave detailed explanations about their products and I gained updated knowledge about their offerings.

PT. Multi Holiday, Indonesia

Rudy Techrisna Satyadi, Managing Director

这个展会给我们搭建一个很好的平台。这个平台有很多我们需要的供应商, 也非常适合我这一块业务的发展。

深圳新景界国际会议展览有限公司

吴立辉, 会议文化交流中心主管

EXHIBITOR 展商

It was the first time that we participated at IT&CM China and I felt that the 3-day event was organised efficiently. I interacted with many professional Chinese and International buyers and media and look forward to developing my relationship with them in the future.

Daimaru Matsuzakaya Department Store, Japan

Li Meng Ying, Project Manager

眼见为实。作为本次开幕典礼及欢迎晚宴的主办方, 我们借此机会邀请有影响力的业内人士前来参观我们的酒店, 以及我们举办这种活动的的能力。所以我相信这次合作会给我们带来巨大的惠宜。

上海宝华万豪酒店, 中国

Johnnie Chen, 驻店经理



Buyers 买家 | Exhibitors 展商 | Media 媒体

Scan This QR Code 扫描此二维码

To Learn More About Participating
已获取更多参展信息

Hosting Programme For Buyers and Media Available.
为买家和媒体特设的招待计划现已开放申请。



Contact 联络方式:

Follow Us On WeChat For The Latest Updates 关注我们的微信号

WeChat ID: ITCMCH

For International Delegates 国际代表

Email: itcmchina@ttgasia.com | Tel: (65) 6395 7575

For Chinese Delegates 国内代表

Email: itcmchina@citsmice.com.cn | Tel: (86-10) 8522 7997

TTG Events

CITS 中国国旅

immp

Supported By 支持单位:

上海市旅游局
Shanghai Municipal Tourism Administration

SCEIA

asae
美国社团管理协会

euromic

IAPCO

ICCA
国际会议协会

中国旅游协会

PCAAE

PATA

Site

World PCO Alliance

info salons

Onsite Technology Partner 展会科技伙伴单位:

Official Media 官方媒体:

TTG BT
mice

TTGmice

TTGassociations

TTG 头条

TTG

TTG

LUXURY

TTG Show
Daily

IT&CM events
Leading MICE Events in
Asia-Pacific, China and India

IT&CM Asia
Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings

IT&CM 中国(上海)
CHINA
国际会展旅游博览会 | Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings

IT&CM India
Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings

Destination China

Issue of the day

Lure of a bucolic town

Can Yangshuo seek a place among busier rivals in South China Karst? **Prudence Lui** finds out



Nestled among karst peaks and rivers, Yangshuo is already an established destination for domestic visitors and foreign backpackers, but the government's tourism infrastructure push and entry of global hospitality chains in recent years have raised the appeal of the tourist town to a wider segment of international visitors.

"The local area is benefitting in tourist numbers from new infrastructure and improved roadways," said Glen Cook, general manager of Banyan Tree Yangshuo, which was the first international branded hotel to

debut in the destination in 2014.

"Our hotel has had visitors from the US, Europe and Australia, who are attracted to the karst mountains and Li River."

While it is well known among backpackers, Yangshuo's novelty on the international tourism stage still offers growth opportunities for the destination, Cook posited.

"International travellers have seen Shanghai and Beijing, while Chengdu and Xi'an are already included on basic tour itineraries in China," he remarked.

Yangshuo, located 65km from Guilin, is also growing in popularity among Hong

Kong travellers. The high-speed transit from Shenzhen has reduced travel time to Guilin to 3.5 hours, making it easier to access Yangshuo too.

However, Yangshuo's hospitality scene needs to reflect a greater variety in segmentation and prices before the destination can hold its own against the more-popular Guilin, said Hong Kong outbound agents.

"We observed more clients from Hong Kong doing a day tour in Guilin and then staying two nights in Banyan Tree Yangshuo," noted Eliza Li, senior manager of marketing and products, Wincastle Travel

(HK). "It's not cheap to travel to Yangshuo for FITs so there wasn't much demand.

Hong Thai Travel Services, deputy general manager, Daniel Chan, shared similar sentiments: "Yangshuo is a must-visit destination for Hong Kong travellers visiting Guilin. However, (demand) remains stable despite new international five-star hotels because it's still an expensive destination for group travellers.

"The Banyan Tree is located outside downtown so it's a bit inconvenient for Asian travellers who like exploring around," he added.

NEWS IN A MINUTE

- Shangri-la Hotel, Guilin's zoo**
Shangri-la Hotel, Guilin fenced off 6,300m² of its garden and created a mini zoo in mid-2015. Today, it is home to animals such as peacocks, ostriches, emus, rabbits and black swans. Guests can feed the animals during the scheduled time slots of 09.00-11.00 and 15.00-16.00 every day.
- Motorcycle tour at Club Med Guilin**
Club Med Guilin's 1930s motorcycle sidecar getaway allows guests a close-up look at the surrounding countryside, venturing into villages to experience local culture and limestone peaks unique to the area. Drivers are provided on request and the tour departs thrice daily.
- Alila Yangshuo**
Alila Yangshuo is scheduled to open in 1Q2017 in a repurposed sugar mill. The 118-key property will feature a signature restaurant, exhibition hall, kids club, spa, meeting loft, library and an infinity pool overlooking the Li River.
- Aerial tours in Guilin**
Aerial tours of Guilin by local carriers



such as Guilin Tonghang, Hainan Airlines and Zhanzhao General Aviation have become increasingly popular over the last two years.

Leveraging Zhanzhao General Aviation's routes, Easy Tour China Travel has rolled out three aerial tours – a six-minute flight over Shi

Li Hua Lang (Ten Miles Gallery Scenic Area), a 10-minute Yulong River Area Highlights Flying tour and a 25-minute Li River tour.

- Zhejiang Loong Airlines**
Zhejiang Loong Airlines has commenced the Hangzhou-Guilin-

Kunming route on June 1, 2016. The GJ8671 flight leaves Guilin daily at 17.40 and touches down in Hangzhou at 19.45. The GJ8672 flight sets off from Guilin at 21.35 and arrives in Kunming at 23.20 between Monday and Friday, and departs from Guilin at 22.30 on weekends.

MY WAY



Olivier Marchesin
Managing director,
Exo Travel China

What current challenges are there?

Most tourism stakeholders in the region seem (content) with what they have for now, and are not quite willing to change. Tour guides don't have much knowledge of places outside



Guangzhou so we have had some bad experience with bringing groups on tours outside Guangzhou.

Many people also think that Guangzhou is the only attractive destination within the Guangdong Province.

If I had my way to overcome this, I would... provide more training to tour guides and inspire them to show more passion for their job. It's not just about doing the same things and showing the same sightseeing spots all the time. We should show travellers how beautiful and rich our province is.

To achieve this, it's vital to have the industry band together so we can give the best to guests. We are just a small company here in China so we can't

revolutionise the game on our own.

I would also develop and promote more of Guangdong's (underrated) offerings – there are many possibilities what a visitor can do in the province. In fact, we have much more to offer like the Hakka villages, especially near Meizhou, the ethnic village near Guangxi province and the Diaolou in Kaiping, art spaces or even events in former factories.

Looking on the brighter side, fewer serious competitors mean we are able to showcase Guangdong's hidden gems and offer them as exclusive products. We just have to engage the good guides who know these places well and provide training to improve their guiding skills.

Viewpoints

How has the expanded high-speed rail network helped Guilin's tourism business?



Yu Hai Xia, general manager
Sanjiang,
Guangxi Tourism Development Group

Our key source of traffic used to be

the self-drive market

from Guangdong. With improvements to the rail system, we hope to draw more FITs from the Pearl River Delta region. Moving forward, the town needs more five-star hotels to fuel growth.

OK Yeung, assistant general manager, CAAC Holidays Hong Kong

These new high-speed rail routes from Guangzhou and Shenzhen are a good fit for Hong Kong market. The only downside is the train ticketing system, which requires travellers' passport details at the booking stage. There is always a shortage of tickets so advance booking is highly recommended.

TRIED AND TESTED



Prudence Lui

Chengyang Eight Villages

Prudence Lui hikes into Sanjiang, in Guangxi's north, to discover the colourful Dong ethnic minority group

WHAT Located in the north-east of Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County of Liuzhou in Guangxi Province, the cluster of eight Dong villages dot the banks of the Linxi River in a 12.5km² scenic area surrounded by mountain and fields.

Last year, Guangxi Tourism Development Group took over the management of these villages in Sanjiang and invested RMB500 million (US\$74.8 million) to re-vamp the facilities to cater to tourists. Accessibility to the villages is good as they are located only 18km away from the county seat.

WHY One of China's 56 ethnic minorities, the Dongs dominate over half of Sanjiang's population. Characteristic to the tribe are architectural elements such as drum towers and wind-and-rain bridges.

At these villages, visitors get to see and participate in Dong customs such as polyphony songs and dance. One Hundred Dishes Banquet is a popular activity to honour visiting guests or celebrate festivals. Villagers and guests sit in circles to enjoy the homemade dishes, and it is a tradition to toast wine and dance around



the tables, giving the entire meal a folksy and convivial atmosphere. Tour groups can partake in the occasion with advance bookings.

HOW Due to the spread of the villages and the lack of road access within, the three-hour tour requires some walking. Three key villages – Ma'an, Yanzhai and Pingzhai – are recommended for their proximity to the main entrance.

Visitors are greeted by the signature Yongji Bridge connecting to Ma'an village. This roofed bridge built in 1924 incorporates the pavilion, tower, corridor and bridge. A group of Dong women dressed in traditional costume welcomed visitors with songs, followed by an entertaining cultural performance at the open-

air theatre square.

A guide showed us around the villages to view the architecture and observe the daily lives of the Dongs, which involved the washing of food produce by the riverside, watching kids running around and chickens roaming on the street.

VERDICT There is no better way to understand how Dong people live than by being in their homeland. If you are prepared for a long walk, this is definitely a worthwhile experience.

Rate RMB\$80 (US\$12)

Contact details

Tel: (86) 772 862 3227

Website: www.sjcybz.com

Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus railway station

Not business as usual



One of India's most visited states, Maharashtra has been attracting steady droves of business tourists thanks to the success of the capital city Mumbai as a financial and commerce hub.

But the inbound leisure market has languished in the shadows of Maharashtra's successful business sector, with visitor footfalls largely confined to Mumbai and Aurangabad (home to World Heritage sites Ellora and Ajanta Caves) – something the trade wants to change.

"Mumbai is a busy city primarily for business travellers, (so) leisure travel is growing at a slow pace," said Dipak Deva, managing director, Travel Corporation (India). "Travellers have a lot to explore within these two cities (Mumbai and Aurangabad) but Pune and Nasik are promising destinations too."

International tourists have started to explore new destinations like Guhagar near Ratnagiri and Diveagar in Raigad district, for its serene beaches and coastal cuisine, as well as Chikhaldara, a hill station in the Vidarbha region, according to Paraag Jain Nainuttia, managing director of the Maharashtra Tourism

Development Corporation.

He added: "We are constantly promoting Maharashtra through various campaigns and have been successful in reaching out to the international markets. We emphasise on leisure tours, beach tours, rural tourism and heritage tourism, among others."

However, marketing Maharashtra as a leisure travel destination is not enough; trade players also urge the NTO to seek out new international markets.

"Apart from the current source markets like Europe, the US and Far East, there is a need to promote Maharashtra as a leisure destination to markets like Russia, South-east Asia and China," said Subhash Goyal, chairman, STIC Travel Group.

He added: "The state tourism department should aggressively market the state's diverse tourism products such as wildlife sanctuaries like the Melghat Tiger Reserve, forts like Sindhudurg and beaches like Ganpatipule to international markets."

In order to drive leisure tourists to explore lesser-known attractions in the state, NS Rathore, chairman (western region) of Indian Association of Tour Operators,

stressed the need to improve connectivity, transport and the quality of international language-speaking guides.

On its part, the state government of Maharashtra in March this year rolled out a new tourism policy to attract investments in the sector, offering fiscal incentives to new projects including concessions on stamp duty, electricity duty, entertainment tax, leisure tax and refund of VAT.

Dubbing the new tourism policy "a progressive and positive step", Deva is optimistic that this initiative will provide a stronger impetus for leisure tourist traffic into Maharashtra.

"Critical factors like e-visa may change the focus in time to come. Countries like South Africa, Turkey, Israel, Oman, the US, the UK and Argentina feature high on the list of source markets and hopefully with the ministry undertaking multiple steps to boost tourism in the state, things will change," he added.

Meanwhile, hoteliers are starting to see some positive changes on the ground, with business tourists showing an inclination to spend more time in Mumbai.

Said JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar's gen-

eral manager, Saeid Heidari: "Although many international tourists visit the city for business, they stay back after completing their commitments to pursue leisure and recreational activities."

Destination in numbers

4.4 million

The number of foreign tourists who visited Maharashtra in 2015

84 million

The number of domestic travellers who visited Maharashtra in 2015

22.5%

The percentage of tourists using the e-Tourist Visa facility at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in May 2016

Issue of the day

Wanted: a more robust e-visa facility

Modifications need to be done to the present e-visa scheme to entice more international travellers to visit, writes **Rohit Kaul**

While India's e-visa facility was hailed as a potential game changer when it was launched in November 2014, the scheme has largely failed to live up to industry expectations more than a year into implementation.

The e-visa facility is currently available for citizens of 150 countries to apply for a tourist visa online prior to their visit to India, with entry through the designated 16 airports in the country.

Industry stakeholders are now calling for extensions to the 30-day window required for the e-visa application, as such short application times are restricting the growth of inbound tourist arrivals.

"The mandatory 30-day window is a dampener. A traveller has to wait until the last 30 days before starting his/her trip to apply for an e-visa," said Kapil Goswamy, founder and managing director, Trans India Holidays. "That doesn't make much sense."

He added: "The time frame needs to be increased to 180 days or at least to 90 days. E-visas should also not be restricted to a single entry as many travellers tend to visit other destinations in the Indian sub-continent like Nepal, Bhutan or Sri Lanka as side trips from India, thereby requiring multiple entries."

Pronab Sarkar, president, Indian Association of Tour Operators, said: "We have spoken to the ministry of tourism to extend the 30-day window for the application of the e-visa. We are trying to extend this period to 180 days, with multiple entries and stay extended to 60 days, so that tourists can plan their visit to India well in advance."

According to the statistics from India's Ministry of Tourism, a total of 434,927 tourists arrived on e-visas from January to May 2016, up 293 per cent from 110,657 tourists during the same period in 2015.

It appears that Indian immigration authorities have not been able to keep up with the greater adoption of the e-visa facility.

Vijay Wanchoo, senior executive vice president and general manager at The Imperial New Delhi, commented: "There seems to be an insufficient number of e-visa facilitation desks at airports. Clearance can take 10 minutes per person for the fortunate few and extend up to four hours in certain cases."



Indira Gandhi International Airport, one of the entry points for tourists on e-visas

Furthermore, an increased usage of the e-visa facility among foreign visitors does not necessarily translate into higher international arrivals into India, said trade members.

Goswamy said: "It's not as if thousands more tourists have suddenly decided to travel to India because getting a visa is now easier. In fact, it is the overall perception of the destination. India's infrastructure and safety have to be improved to draw more international tourists."

Some trade members, however, remain cautiously optimistic.

"Foreign tourist arrivals have shown a growth of 11.3, 12.1 and 10.7 per cent in February, March and April 2016 respectively, which is comparatively higher than last year. The e-visa has eased the process for tourists who intend to visit India, as they can easily apply while sitting in their home," said Sunil Sikka, head – marketing & business development, WelcomHeritage Hotels.

Viewpoints

What else does Maharashtra need to promote itself as a leisure destination?



Ravi Gosain, director, Erco Travels

Maharashtra has tourism products such as heritage sites and beautiful beaches. However,

there is a need to educate international

operators about the various products. Local tour operators should also create packages that incorporate destinations that highlight the state's rich history, cuisine and culture.



Arun Anand, managing director, Midtown Travels

Though the state tourism is taking steps to promote Maharashtra as a leisure tourist

destination, a focused

marketing strategy will yield better results. They should identify key spots beyond popular destinations like Mumbai and Aurangabad, and run advertisement campaigns in target markets accordingly. They should also highlight these new potential destinations at major tradeshow.

MY WAY

Karan Anand

Head of relationships,
Cox & Kings

If I had my way to improve the quality of nightlife in Mumbai, I would... demarcate entertainment zones in non-residential areas such as Bandra Kurla Complex, and certain CBD areas which are closed during the night. Pubs, restaurants and entertainment

activities should be allowed to open 24/7 in these areas.

This will lead to an increase in footfalls, increase tourism receipts and help make Mumbai a vibrant destination. This can also be replicated in Pune.

A vibrant nightlife is at the heart of a cosmopolitan city like Mumbai. However, due to restrictions, bars and pubs close at 23.00. This inconveniences both domestic and foreign tourists.

If I had my way to improve Mumbai's standing on the global MICE stage, I would... commission the development of a world-class convention centre. Currently, exhibitions and conferences are held in large hotels or makeshift venues which have capacity constraints and do not comply with globally-recognised standards.

Mumbai still loses out to Delhi, Hy-

derabad and Chennai when it comes to events, and having an exhibition centre will enable Mumbai to bid for major conventions and events. This will in turn help the local economy, and ancillary services in Mumbai and the surrounding areas also stand to benefit.

If I had my way to develop Maharashtra's coastal tourism, I would... improve access and accommodation facilities to attract weekend travellers from Mumbai and Pune. This will help develop the local economy, promote the region's arts and crafts, generate local employment and popularise local cuisine.

Maharashtra has a 530km coastline and many picturesque beaches such as Tarkarli, Ganpatipule and Murud-Janjira which also have potential for development.



Murud-Janjira Fort

Destination India

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 Grand Mercure Mysuru

AccorHotels has introduced the 146-room Grand Mercure Mysuru in Mysuru, south India. Located on Sayaji Rao Road, the property has a viewing gallery on the sixth floor that offers a good vantage spot to witness the traditional Dasara processions, usually in September or October.

La Uppu, one of the three F&B outlets in the hotel, offers a mix of global cuisine and local delicacies. Other facilities include a pool and fitness centre.

2 Vannraj by Ayana

Appropriately named Vannraj, meaning 'king of the forest', this nine-hectare lodge near Pench National Park in Madhya Pradesh is the perfect base camp for wildlife enthusiasts.

Offering three room types – the

Machaan, Traditional cottage and Presidential suite – guests can indulge in meals and cocktails under an old Mahua tree, a romantically-lit pool deck, or suspended deck on the lake. An interactive kitchen also allows guests the opportunity to hone their culinary skills and learn more about the regional cuisine on offer.

3 High Ultra Lounge

Perched 128m above ground atop Bangalore's World Trade Centre is the 930m² modern Asian bar and restaurant High Ultra Lounge.

The restaurant affords breathtaking views of the city and on its menu are classic Pan-Asian dishes with a modern twist. Meanwhile, the lounge offers beverages that use contemporary mixology to create concoctions flavoured with natural spices and herbs.

4 Dashanzi

Overlooking Juhu beach and the sea, JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu's newest restaurant and lounge Dashanzi serves up progressive Chinese and Japanese cuisine alongside an electrifying bar experience.

Signature specialities include the Japanese gurando platter, barbecued lamb chops with braised radish and green asparagus, braised homemade edamame tofu with chilli sauce, and wild mushroom rice with porcini butter and truffle.

Its innovative beverage menu includes sake, soju, boutique gins and craft beers, while the lounge is the city's largest gin bar.

5 Bharat International Tourism Bazaar

ITB Berlin has partnered with Cross Section Media to launch a co-branded travel tradeshow, Bharat International Tourism Bazaar (BITB) in India, which will be held in New Delhi from October 3-6, 2016.

Touted as the first pure outbound show for the Indian market, BITB will feature exhibitors from the on-line and technology space, as well as segments such as weddings, MICE and luxury, along with their corresponding buyers. BITB aims to bring in over 12,000 attendees from India and around the world at its inaugural show.



TRIED AND TESTED

Maharashtra Splendour

Rohit Kaul sets out on a week-long journey aboard the recently revamped *Deccan Odyssey* to trace India's fascinating hinterland in utmost comfort

WHY One of India's most prominent luxury trains, *Deccan Odyssey* is often compared to South Africa's *Blue Train*. A recent soft refurbishment brought about new carpeting, upholstery and blinds and different wall designs for each coach, while the train is now completely Wi-Fi enabled.

Allowing passengers to explore different destinations in India in comfort, itineraries change from year to year and cover both well-known destinations like Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and

Rajasthan, and lesser-known areas such as Nashik and Aurangabad.

Deccan Odyssey was established in 2004, and in 2014 Cox & Kings was appointed by the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation to be the operating partner of the luxury train.

WHAT Travellers board the train either at Mumbai Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus railway station or New Delhi railway station. After completing the check-in formalities, guests are welcomed and shown to their accommodation.

The *Deccan Odyssey* comprises 21 royal coaches (named after significant regions of Maharashtra), with 11 of these containing the guest cabins while the rest are used for different purposes such as dining and spa.

Each of the 11 coaches have four cabins and a common lounge, and each cabin comes with twin beds, an LCD TV, a mobile phone with emergency numbers, and a bath cubicle with a shower. The train also offers four presidential suites and specially-equipped cabins for guests with limited mobility.

Also onboard is the Plumeria spa, where one can relax after a day of sightseeing, a fitness centre and the conference car called Samvad.

Dining facilities include two restaurants, Peshwa I and Peshwa II, and the Mumbai-Hi bar, a perfect spot to relax in and make new friends.

Attendants are stationed in each coach to offer assistance round the clock, and there is also a paramedic on board for emergencies.

HOW Be it the Taj Mahal in the north, world heritage sites like Ajanta and Ellora Caves in the west, or viewing Asiatic lions in Sasan Gir, the numerous itineraries allow tourists the option to choose a trip that fits their time, budget and interest.

Such trips are also perfect for travellers looking to explore destinations beyond the famed Golden Triangle (Delhi-Agra-Jaipur) to learn more about the country's diverse culture. Guests are accorded the local traditional welcome at all stops



throughout the journey, and taken on guided tours that showcase the spirit of the locals and richness of a particular destination.

For example, for the Maharashtra Splendour journey I was on, I visited a vineyard in Nashik and explored a pristine Ratnagiri beach. In Goa, I was taken on a guided tour of a spice farm, and till today the aroma of spices still lingers in my mind.

VERDICT With its unrivalled amenities and services, *Deccan Odyssey* is a product that caters to high-end tourists looking to explore India in comfort and luxury.

The courteous staff on the train made me feel like a royalty, while the food served on board tickled my taste buds. Initially, I found it a little difficult to walk the narrow train corridors, but I soon learnt to enjoy it. My favourite place in the train was my cabin where a large glass window allowed me to watch the passing scenery outside.

It was a journey of a lifetime for me.

Rates From Rs371,900 (US\$5,538) for a deluxe cabin, single occupancy

Contact details

Tel: (91) 98 7359 2201

Email: trains@deccanodyssey.in

Website: www.thedeccanodyssey.com

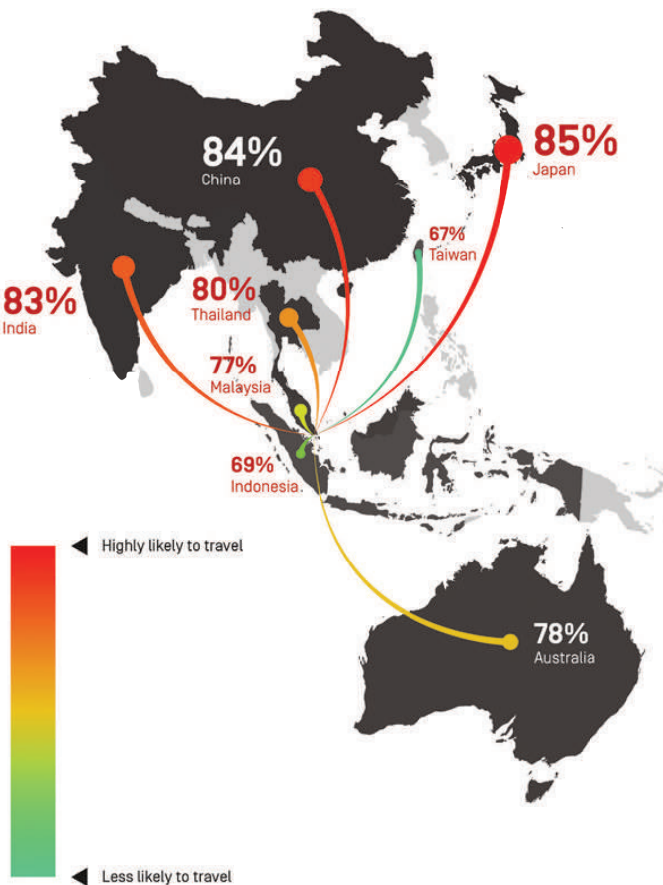


Connect

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

TOURISM DATA

Percentage of respondents who are aware of the Great Singapore Sale (June 3 to August 14, 2016) and their likelihood of travelling to Singapore for the annual event, according to market research company Kadence Singapore.



WHO'S SAYING WHAT

Instagram



Marriott's Craig Smith and CDL's Kwek Leng Beng shake hands after the signing ceremony for the JW Marriott and Edition brands to be brought to Singapore for the first time. [#jwmarriott](https://www.instagram.com/p/1234567890)



At the 45th Skai Asia Congress which took place at Singapore's One Farrer Hotel & Spa, the association's international president Nigel Pilkington urged Asia-Pacific club leaders to bolster their membership. [#traveltrade](https://www.instagram.com/p/1234567890)



New Zealand prime minister John Key in Indonesia for the launch of Tourism New Zealand's new global campaign which features videos made by acclaimed director James Cameron. [#newzealand](https://www.instagram.com/p/1234567890)

TTG Publishing Travel Trade

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

EDITORIAL

Karen Yue Group Editor
karen.yue@ttgasia.com

Xinyi Liang-Pholsena Deputy Editor, TTG Asia & TTG India
liang.xinyi@ttgasia.com

Dannon Har Assistant Editor, TTG Asia Online
dannon.har@ttgasia.com

Paige Lee Pei Qi Assistant Editor, Singapore
lee.peiqi@ttgasia.com

S Puvaneswary Editor, Malaysia/Brunei
puvanes@ttgasia.com

Mimi Hudoyo Editor, Indonesia
idmfasia@cbn.net.id

Rachel AJ Lee, Yixin Ng Sub Editors
rachel.lee@ttgasia.com, ng.yixin@ttgasia.com

Sim Kok Chwee Correspondent-at-large
aviasian.images@gmail.com

Rebecca Elliot Correspondent, Australia
rebeccaelliott@hotmail.com

Rosa Ocampo Correspondent, The Philippines
rosa.ocampo@gmail.com

Prudence Lui Correspondent, Hong Kong
pruliu@yahoo.com

Caroline Boey Senior Correspondent, China & Special Projects
caroline.boey@ttgasia.com

Julian Ryall Correspondent, Japan
jryall2@hotmail.com

Rohit Kaul Correspondent, New Delhi
rohit.kaul@ttgasia.com

Feisal Samath Correspondent, Sri Lanka/Maldives
feizalsam@gmail.com

Redmond Sia, Goh Meng Yong Creative Designers
Lina Tan Editorial Assistant

SALES & MARKETING

Michael Chow Group Publisher
michael.chow@ttgasia.com

Pierre Quek Publisher, Online Section
pierre.quek@ttgasia.com

Shirley Tan Senior Business Manager
shirley.tan@ttgasia.com

Ingrid Chung Business Manager
ingrid.chung@ttgasia.com

Cheryl Tan Corporate Marketing Manager
cheryl.tan@ttgasia.com

Kwek Wan Ling Marketing Executive
kwek.wan.ling@ttgasia.com

Cheryl Lim Advertisement Administration Manager
cheryl.lim@ttgasia.com

Carol Cheng Assistant Manager Administration and Marketing
carol.cheng@ttgasia.com

PUBLISHING SERVICES

Tony Yeo Division Manager

Kristy Lim Publishing Services Executive

Lynn Lim Web Executive

Katherine Leong Circulation Executive

TTG ASIA MEDIA

Darren Ng Managing Director
darren.ng@ttgasia.com

Raini Hamdi Senior Editor
raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com

OFFICES

SINGAPORE 1 Science Park Road #04-07 The Capricorn,
Singapore Science Park II, Singapore 117528
Tel: (65) 6395-7575 Fax: (65) 6536-0896
contact@ttgasia.com; www.ttgasia.com

HONG KONG 8/F, E168, 166-168 Des Voeux Road Central,
Sheung Wan, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2237-7288 Fax: (852) 2237-7227

BPA TTG Asia is a product by TTG Travel Trade Publishing, a business group of TTG Asia Media. It is mailed free on written request to readers who meet predetermined criteria. Paid subscriptions are available to those who do not meet the criteria. Annual airmail subscriptions are US\$180 to Asia and US\$199 elsewhere. Cover price US\$5.
MCI (P) 098/09/2014 • PPS 619/02/2013(022926)

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

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



CONSERVATION OF KOH PHI PHI'S NATURAL ASSETS

Thai developer Singha Estate, Phi Phi Island National Park Division, Thailand's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Marine Science Department, Faculty of Fisheries at Kasetsart University and the Faculty of Science at Chulalongkorn University have come together to control, manage, recover and restore the natural assets of Koh Phi Phi using a park management model incorporating nature-based solutions. For instance, at Phi Phi Island Village Beach Resort, a new reverse osmosis plant has been installed to provide 20,000 litres of clean, sustainable water per hour using a system that requires little maintenance at low long-term cost.



CEBU PACIFIC INVESTS IN FUEL EFFICIENCY

At a time when airlines are tightening budgets, it is commendable that Philippine budget carrier Cebu Pacific is not cutting cost when it comes to being environmentally friendly. The LCC is the first airline in the Asia-Pacific to use SkyBreathe, a fuel efficiency software by OpenAirlines that helps planes save fuel and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The fuel management system uses analytical tools and big data algorithms to achieve these optimisations. Cebu is deploying the system on all its current and future flights.



EUROPE TOURISM FALLS VICTIM TO SURGE OF TERROR ATTACKS

A tenuous recovery was just starting to take hold for tourism in Europe when the successive waves of terrorism attacks hit at the height of the summer rush – first with the Bastille Day truck killing in Nice, followed by the Munich shooting and the knife attack in Normandy barely days later – compounding the challenges for a region that is already grappling with the large influx of migrants and Britain's vote to leave the EU.

Europe's vital tourism sector has also become a victim of the terror attacks, with analysts and travel experts seeing a decline in airline and hotel bookings in the continent, even in destinations that had not suffered recent incidents.

The impacts on the economy and tourism sector, though regrettable, are meaningless compared to the tragedy suffered by the affected families and countries.

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

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

- Singapore Airlines (2002)
- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Hertz Asia Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Sabre Travel Network Asia-Pacific (2009)
- SilkAir (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)
- Regal Airport Hotel (2015)
- Banyan Tree Spa (2015)

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



HICAP

HOTEL INVESTMENT
CONFERENCE **ASIA PACIFIC**

19-21 OCTOBER 2016

INTERCONTINENTAL HONG KONG



Asia Pacific's Essential Hotel Conference Since 1990

PATRONS

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group
Hyatt Hotels & Resorts
IHG
JLL
Jumeirah Group
Wanda Hotels & Resorts

PLATINUM SPONSORS

AccorHotels
Baker & McKenzie
BLINK Design Group
Clyde & Co
EY Japan
Hilton Worldwide
KPMG
Langham Hospitality Group
Marco Polo Hotels

Marriott International, Inc.
Mayer Brown JSM
MEININGER Hotels
Meliá Hotels International
NIDA Rooms
Outrigger Resorts Asia Pacific
Paul Hastings LLP
Proskauer Rose
QUO
Shangri-La International Hotel
Management Ltd
Sidley Austin LLP
The Gettys Group
Trump Hotels
WATG / Wimberly Interiors
Withersworldwide
Wyndham Hotel Group

MEDIA SPONSORS

Asian Hotel & Catering Times

GlobalHotelNetwork.com
Hotel Analyst
Hotel News Now
HOTELS Magazine
JETSETTER Magazine
Serviced Apartment News
Sleeper Magazine
ST Media Group International
Traveltechie.com
TTG Asia Media
WIT

SUPPORTERS

HAMA AP
IFC
ISHC
ITP
PATA

Patrons, Sponsors, and Supporters as of 7 July 2016

Hosts:



STILES
CAPITAL
EVENTS

www.HICAPconference.com