



VIEW FROM THE TOP

A Hard Rock hotel has just opened in Goa and the brand will also debut in China in Shenzhen, followed by Haikou. It's rock-and-roll in Asia for EVP and chief development officer-hotels Marco Roca, who speaks to [Raini Hamdi](#)



UNIQUELY S'PORE STAYCATIONS

Singapore's small population base belies a strong domestic market which is helping hotels at a time they most need it. By [Raini Hamdi](#)



One Farrer Hotel & Spa, Singapore



INTEGRATED RESORTS: WHAT'S HOT (AND NOT)

Travel agents discuss the strengths, weaknesses and what needs to be changed at integrated resorts across Asia-Pacific



BELITUNG SITTING ON TOURISM GOLD MINE

A successful novel turned movie has inspired a former tin-mining town in Indonesia to seek new fortunes in tourism, writes [Mimi Hudoyo](#)



A SPORTING CHANCE FOR HONG KONG

Mega sports events are putting Hong Kong on the world stage, but tour operators have yet to get a handle on this niche market, finds [Prudence Lui](#)



TREATMENTS ON THE FLY IN ASIA

As medical tourism booms in Asia, [TTG Asia](#) examines the state of health and medical tourism in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines

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PLAYING TOURIST CLOSE TO HOME



A second look is also what NTOs should give to domestic travellers...Countries with a strong domestic tourism are generally better equipped to withstand fluctuations in the international demand.

During the recent Lunar New Year break, my family and I visited Koh Chang, Thailand's second largest island near the Cambodian borders in the Gulf of Thailand. I was initially disappointed to see the many 7-Eleven stores which have popped up since my first visit close to a decade ago, as well as the visibly greater number of tourists to the island. The visitor profile is no longer restricted to locals or in-the-know Western families; joining the fray are Asian tourists, in particular Chinese FITs, a clear reflection of how the tourism fortunes of Thailand – like so many places elsewhere in the world – have so swiftly changed in a matter of years.

But disappointment soon gave away to delight when I discovered that White Sand Beach – where we were staying – was the location for the Sea Sand Song @ Koh Chang tourism fair, a collaborative project between the Office of Tourism and Sports and the Tourism Authority of Thailand Trat Office. When dusk fell, beachgoers came out in droves to check out the beachside stalls offering grilled seafood, cocktails and snacks, while a female singer belted soothing jazz tunes from a mini stage. I soon found myself swaying to the rhythms of the music and lull of the waves – even my nine-month-old was contented to sit on the picnic mat without fussing.

At that moment, I see a beautiful Koh Chang that has attracted visitors from far and near: long strips of sandy white beach, crystalline water, lush greenery, tumbling waterfalls, picturesque views and a smorgasbord of places and activities. This was one of the most memorable seaside vacations I had in a

while, and I'm glad I gave Koh Chang a second look.

A second look is also what NTOs should give to domestic travellers. While Thailand can fete its record 29.9 million international arrivals in 2015, the kingdom will be ill-advised to neglect the domestic market – the backbone of any tourist industry. Countries with a strong domestic tourism sector are generally better equipped to withstand fluctuations in the international demand. The recent rouble trouble had caused Russian numbers to tumble, who knows if a global recession would cause the latest wave of Chinese travellers to break too?

Even Singapore, with a small population base, is seeing the significance of its domestic market (see page 5). Singaporeans are increasingly seeking out staycations, presenting opportunities for local hotels to make up for the shortfall of foreign visitors amid a challenging economic climate.

We should all play tourist every now and then in our country, as that will allow us to be reacquainted with our home and see it in new light. Visiting a foreign country and learning about its culture is one of the joys of travelling, but our own country can be a worthy place for exploration and appreciation too. Let's not be dismissive of the beauty of our own country, just because it is our own country.

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COMING UP



ANALYSIS Is there a future for intermediaries? Sure. Find out why

VFTT Ivan Walter, CEO of GTA, shares his Vision 2020 even as parent company Kuoni Group is up for sale. In fact, it's all positive news, he tells *TTG Asia*

BUSINESS TRAVEL As the world teeters on the edge of

a global economic recession, how is corporate travel in Asia holding up?

MALAYSIA Kedah digs into its ancient past to develop archaeological sites at Bujang Valley for tourism

MACAU MGTO steps out of the shadow of its successful integrated resorts to look out community tourism





Reno-Tahoe Outdoor Adventure

New Insights into Nevada

Who does not know Las Vegas? But did you know the state also offers alpine scenery, cowboy and western folklife experiences and price points from value to luxury? Find out what else **Claudia Vecchio**, Director, Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Nevada, has to share.

What factors make your destination appealing to travelers?

Nevada has a wonderful diversity of experiences for group and individual travelers. From the world-renowned excitement of Las Vegas to the beautiful alpine landscape of Lake Tahoe to cowboy and western folklife in Elko, Nevada offers visitors a chance to experience lots of different activities in one trip. And, Nevada offers hotels, restaurants, attractions and shopping of all pricing levels from value to luxury.

Nevada offers more than 300 days of brilliant blue skies so visitors can enjoy the state's beauty in full color!

What are some significant traveler trends? What are the key reasons for such trends?

We have seen several interesting travel trends that have impacted international visitation.

1. An increasing number of Free Independent Traveler (FIT) visitors are traveling on long-haul vacations from around the world. The ease of gaining a visa has created new opportunities for people to travel more often. Many of these visitors are young, adventurous travelers who are ideal for the Nevada travel experience.

2. International travelers look for authentic experiences. These savvy travelers seek out experiences that provide a true sense of a place and a connection to the people, food, traditions and cultures that are truly American.

3. More and more hotels, attractions and destinations are providing food, arts and entertainment that appeal to the Asian customer. From lavish Spring Festival celebrations to year-round performances and entertainment, Nevada's tourism entities understand the importance of offering familiar elements to the trip.

4. The fluctuating value of the U.S. currency against international currencies is impacting visitors' purchasing power while here. Nevada's strength is that a trip to Nevada can cost less than many of the other major western states due to the great variety of lodging, restaurant, attractions and shopping offerings.

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

Nevada is easy to get to from Southeast Asia. From any of the western U.S. gateway cities, either Las Vegas or Reno is just one connecting flight. Once there, visitors have access to authentic western experiences, world-class entertainment and wonderful outdoor experiences such as golf, skiing, hiking, biking and exploring.

What attractions and what kind of itinerary do you suggest for the first-time visitor? How about repeat visitors? Why?



Left: Authentic Native American Events
Below: Valley of Fire State Park in Southern Nevada



Nevada is easy to get to from Southeast Asia. From any of the western U.S. gateway cities, either Las Vegas or Reno is just one connecting flight. Once there, visitors have access to the authentic western experiences, world-class entertainment and wonderful outdoor experiences such as golf, skiing, hiking, biking and exploring.

For almost all travelers, Las Vegas is at the top of their wish list. So we definitely recommend visiting Las Vegas on the first trip to the United States. A popular itinerary for return visitors is to arrive into Los Angeles, then travel to Las Vegas. Stay at least two nights in Las Vegas to experience the excitement of the world-famous Strip in downtown Las Vegas and all the entertainment found in the city. On the second day, fly by helicopter to the Grand Canyon or take a tour to the



Snowboarding in Lake Tahoe

Hoover Dam, Boulder City and the spectacular Valley of Fire State Park.

From Las Vegas, continue to travel along I-15 to the national parks in southern Utah, north through Utah into Wyoming to visit Yellowstone National Park.

Travel west on I-80 to northern Nevada with a stop in Elko and a visit to the Western Folklife Center. Then travel across the state to Reno/Lake Tahoe. Spend the morning exploring Reno and the afternoon on a cruise around Lake Tahoe. Spend the next day visiting the historic western towns of Virginia City, Carson City and Genoa.

Travel south on Highway 95 to Las Vegas. Stop for the night in Tonopah or Beatty where visitors can experience a western shoot-out. Travel back to Los Angeles and then home.



CLAUDIA VECCHIO
Director
Department of Tourism
and Cultural Affairs
Nevada

What do you recommend for travelers seeking an experience off the beaten track?

Nevada is filled with breathtaking outdoor attractions! In the north is the beautiful Lake Tahoe. Visitors can ski in the winter, take a cruise in the summer and enjoy the beauty of the lake year round. Nevada is a very mountainous state, so visitors can enjoy hiking, mountain biking and off road adventures throughout the state. Nevada is the gateway to the Grand Canyon National Park as well as Death Valley National Park. Visitors can stay in Nevada and take day trips into the national parks. Nevada is home to the Great Basin National Park, a spectacular, but fairly remote national park on the Utah border. In southern Nevada, the red rocks create a striking ribbon of color when set against Nevada's brilliant blue sky.

For more information,
please go to
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Analysis

The new crop of travel trade shows in northern Thailand gives second-tier destinations like Chiang Mai a chance to shine, writes **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

A BUDDING REGION



With international arrivals reaching just under 30 million in 2015, a figure that was barely conceivable just a few years ago, Thailand's tourism experts are now projecting 32 million arrivals this year. A bigger target, however, also brings with it the inevitable question of how to cope with the ever-increasing arrival numbers and manage tourism in a more sustainable way.

It is with the aim of diversifying market sources and spreading tourist footfalls beyond the key destinations of Bangkok and Phuket that the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) finally turns its attention to Chiang Mai, which will be the host destination of Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) this year.

"This is a good opportunity for Chiang Mai," said Juthaporn Rerngronasa, TAT's deputy governor for international marketing Europe, Africa, Middle East and Americas. "Chiang Mai is ready to host major events, as it has a new convention centre and many boutique hotels. It is also the closest Thai city to the Greater Mekong Sub-region countries."

With the exception of one year when TTM+ was held in Pattaya, 13 of the past 14 editions had been held in the Thai capital since the show's launch in 2001. This year's show will be held at Chiang Mai International Exhibition and Convention Centre from June 8-10 under the theme, *Smile with Us*.

The novelty of Chiang Mai as a new event destination is also a strong drawcard for TTM+, claimed Juthaporn, with this year's edition netting a stronger reception from buyers than previous years. As of February 11, there were 321 buyers and 305 sellers, marking the highest numbers for the show since its inauguration, according to officials.

Although Chiang Mai has in recent years acquired a glowing shine among mainland Chinese travellers following the success of the Chinese movie *Lost in*

Thailand, Juthaporn admits that the city has yet to attain similar level of interest from other international markets like Europe.

TAT governor Yuthasak Supasorn said in a press statement: "The level of interest is also a very good indicator of the growing interest in Chiang Mai and the Northern Thailand region. Traditionally, the travel trade has featured the beach resorts of South Thailand in their programmes. Clearly, that will now change and help us meet one of our major objectives of shifting the location, which is to better balance the distribution of visitors all around the country and reduce congestion at the popular tourist spots."

In February, PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart was held in Chiang Rai, the northernmost province in Thailand, reflecting the association's strategic "dispersal of tourists" move, said PATA CEO Mario Hardy.

"Chiang Rai is one of these destinations that has great potential," he said. "I'm really pleased to know that the regions of Thailand are developing the MICE market; it's a great way to get these destinations to be known by a larger number of people. It will boost their profile and hopefully encourage other event organisers to consider them in the future."

However, with the proliferation of trade shows the likes of ASEAN Tourism Forum and ITB Asia in the region, in addition to other Mekong countries such as Vietnam and Cambodia launching their own tourism fairs, it remains to be seen if these events in northern Thailand will spark greater interest in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai as travel destinations.

Trade members have also constantly urged the development of more domestic air links such as Chiang Mai-Phuket and Chiang Mai-Hua Hin, which will allow travellers to bypass Bangkok and pair the northern cultural cities with the beach destinations in the south.



Juthaporn: choice of Chiang Mai a diversification strategy



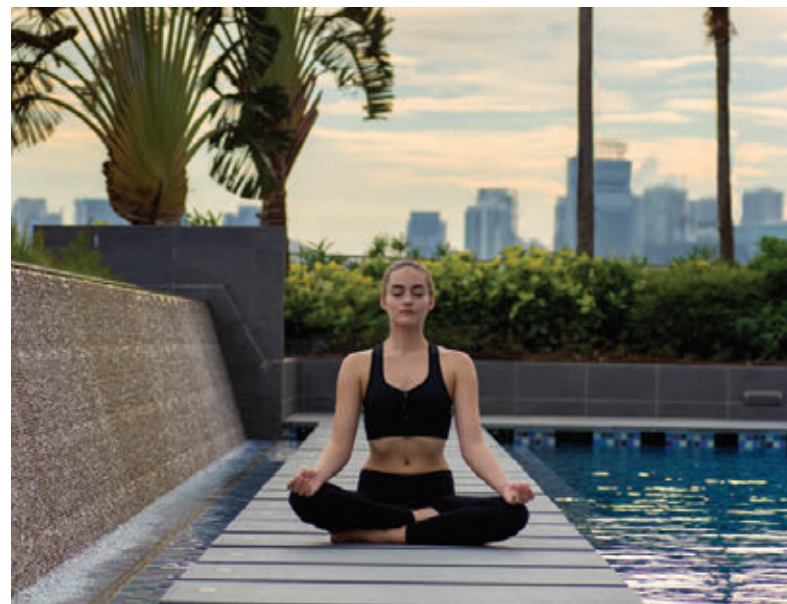
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Analysis

Singapore's small population base belies a strong domestic market which is helping hotels at a time they most need it. By **Raini Hamdi**



Why go farther than home? Left, artist impression of soon-to-open M Social Singapore; above, total lifestyle environment at One Farrer Hotel & Spa

UNIQUELY S'PORE STAYCATIONS

A rich nation that has produced a bumper crop of vacation-hungry residents, Singapore is also now recognised as a domestic market in its own right, with local hotels sighting rising staycations over the last two to three years.

With global economic uncertainties expected to impact the local tourism sector, and as hotels brace for more downward pressure on AOR and ADR from incoming supply this year and next, the presence of a strong domestic market is a welcome sight for urban resorts, including luxury hotels.

CBRE's latest research shows although arrivals to Singapore YTD November 2015 rose 0.4 per cent year-on-year to 13.8 million, hotel performance remains a challenge as ADR, AOR and RevPAR plunge across all segments to S\$245.57 (US\$175.42), 85.3 per cent and S\$209.57 respectively.

"For 2016, visitor arrivals is expected to improve with STB's (Singapore Tourism Board) marketing campaigns and strategic partnerships. However, global economic uncertainties will continue to impact the local tourism sector," said the firm.

STB, hotels, tourism attractions and even inbound agencies may do well to give domestic travel marketing a makeover. Hotels are already having a heyday with it; in fact the local staycation market is a new driver of more creative programmes from the sector and some of these programmes apply to markets which agents can sell to, such as stopovers. Some examples:

- Shangri-La Hotel Singapore woos ladies with a Girls' Night Out package (includes a bottle of bubbly, personalised wardrobes, facial treatments at CHI, The Spa and afternoon tea); a Families Stay Free scheme (includes a Saturday Night Pool Party with movie under the stars and pool games); and even tries to get social events guests who attend weddings or balls to stay the weekend at the hotel with preferred staycation rates.

- One Farrer Hotel & Spa targets sophisticated adults with its concept of 'total

lifestyle environment' (see page 30) of art, spa, farm-to-table experiences, culinary demonstrations, indoor shopping, even a personalised visit to one of Singapore's few remaining wet markets nearby.

"Singapore is now a mature travel market. Even in their own city, Singaporeans want to live it out in style. This is the staycation market we're after," said Richard Helfer, chairman, One Farrer Hotel & Spa.

- Park Regis Singapore has a Weekend Wheel & Deal package for locals and stopover traffic. The hotel now offers bicycles for guests to explore Singapore on two wheels.

Allen Law, CEO, Park Hotel Group, which operates four hotels in the city, said the group's latest hotel, Park Alexandra (see page 28), and Park Hotel Clarke Quay are particularly popular for staycationers, the latter due to its bustling riverfront location while the former unintentionally partly due to its proximity to Sentosa.

"People would rather stay with us than in Sentosa which can be expensive during the weekends," said Law. The hotel provides daily free shuttles to Sentosa.

"The staycation market became evident from around two years ago; the word itself is

fairly new. It's become a uniquely Singapore habit; there is definitely a lot more potential," Law added.

Hoteliers cited several factors for staycations to continue to rise this year.

Firstly, hotels themselves are hankering after the market as the business climate looks challenging this year. If times were good, it's unlikely hotels will be coveting staycations as actively.

On the demand side, having been bitten by the travel bug, Singaporeans see staycations as a holiday sandwiched between overseas vacations.

Eighty per cent of the population also live in public housing where facilities such as a great pool are absent. Staycations are ideal for families, and for adults who feel the need to get away from families.

With a softer market, hotels are expected to encourage the growth of staycations further this year.

Shangri-La Hotel Singapore's director of sales and marketing, Christopher Kang, said: "With the economic slowdown we expect in 2016, strong Singapore currency and increase in hotel room supply, we are definitely expecting a challenging year ahead, however we are very certain of the potential growth in the staycation segment.

"Currently, a minimal percentage of our business stems from staycations hence there is a great opportunity in this segment. We are seeing a 15 per cent year-on-year growth from 2014 to 2015.

"Aside from packages, we are working non-stop to enhance our product. With 15 acres (six hectares) of land, we feature one of the largest swimming pool facilities among Singapore hotels and this is extremely attractive to our guests.

"Moving forward, we will continue to boost our leisure facilities. An orchid grafting programme is underway, and it will be complemented with a self-guided orchid tour and the completion of The Orchid, an architectural wonder of an orchid greenhouse on our grounds," Kang added.

Millennium Hotels & Resorts' first M Social hotel, which will open soon in Clarke Quay, expects a fifth of business to comprise staycations, said Paul James, senior vice president global marketing and branding. The hotel, designed by Philippe Starck, has 100 loft-style rooms and 200 standard rooms of 20m² average room size. Ninety of them residences.

Rates are expected to be well above S\$200 for a start, said James.



"Singapore is now a mature travel market. Even in their own city, Singaporeans want to live it out in style. This is the staycation market we're after."

Richard Helfer
Chairman
One Farrer Hotel & Spa



"...we are definitely expecting a challenging year ahead, however we are very certain of the potential growth in the staycation segment."

Christopher Kang
Director of sales & marketing
Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore

Known to be avid holidaymakers, Singaporeans travelled as much as they did in 2015 when compared with 2014. But given the uncertain global economy, the outlook for 2016 remains to be seen, discovers a study by GfK Travelscan

SINGAPOREANS GO PLACES

According to GfK Travelscan data, the Singapore outbound market was flat when comparing the complete year of 2015 with the previous year.

The top three outbound destinations were China, Thailand and Indonesia respectively. Meanwhile, countries with double-digit growth were Thailand, Japan and Vietnam. For developed markets, Japan had the highest growth due to currency exchange effects against the Singapore dollar – which made Japan more attractive in terms of spending power for Singapore travellers. Stronger marketing activities from local travel agencies also helped make Japan more appealing. Based on region, South-east Asia remains the most travelled region as Singapore travellers prefer shorter trips but at a higher frequency.



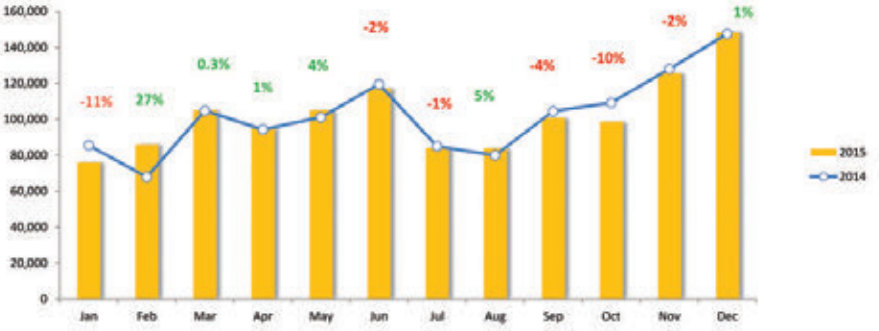
Seasonal trends remain intact except for the months of January, February and October where there is a variance of over 10% in travel bookings. Forward travel bookings have also increased significantly for the next six months (from January 2016 to June 2016) with an 11.5% increase over last year. 1Q2016 saw an increase of 6%, while 2Q2016 saw a jump of 73% over last year. Markets like Japan are leading the way with an 82% increase, with China remains a top destination. One surprise was Thailand, where it seems that both the bombing in Bangkok and MERS reports seem to have taken a toll on travel bookings.

As of end 2015, the sentiments overall for outbound travel bookings have improved based on forward travel bookings for 1H2016. However, given the recent financial turmoil and slow-down in global economic growth, we could be seeing a different picture further into 2016.

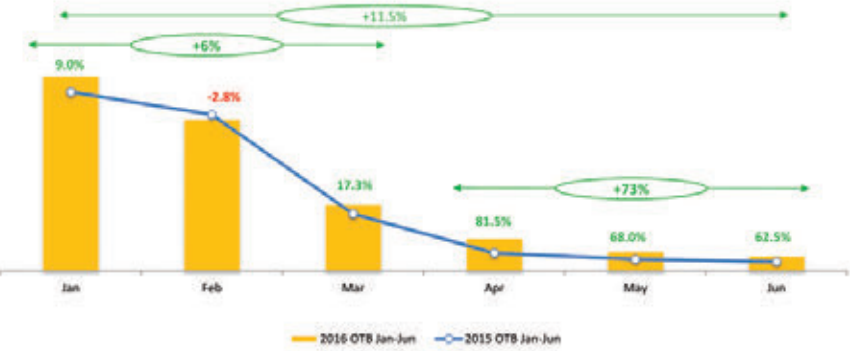
Singapore leisure outbound (pax)
Top 10 destinations FY 2015 vs FY 2014



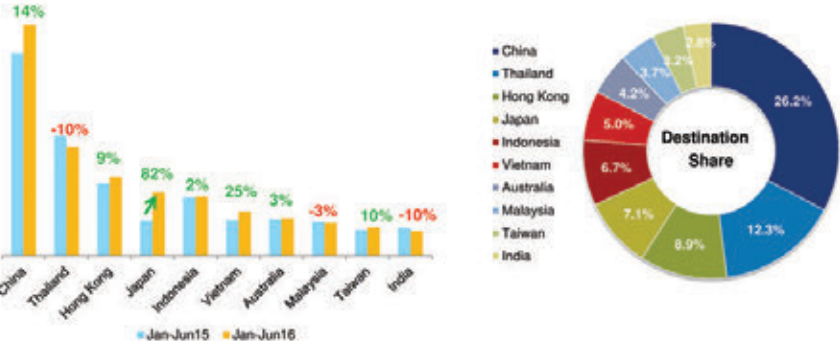
Singapore leisure outbound (pax)
Jan-Dec 2015 monthly departures



Singapore leisure outbound (pax)
Forward bookings Jan-Jun 2016 vs Jan-Jun 2015



Singapore leisure outbound (pax)
Forward bookings Jan-Jun 2016 vs Jan-Jun 2015



Source: GfK TravelScan Flight only including "Packages"; estimated coverage 52%
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Smile with Thailand

as TTM+ returns



TTM+ 2016 to take delegates to new places – with a new logo and new location

THE lush, historic northern city of Chiang Mai will set the stage for Thailand's largest B2B tourism and travel trade event this year, as Thai tourism moves from strength to strength with refreshed marketing initiatives.

Slated to run from **June 8-10, Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) Amazing Gateway to the Greater Mekong Subregion** will welcome hundreds of buyers and sellers at the **Chiang Mai International Exhibition and Convention Centre**.

While TTM+ last year focused on encouraging visitors to 'Experience with Us' Thai cultural treasures and heritage, or 'Thai-ness', the Land of Smiles wants visitors to 'Smile with Us' in 2016, in line with the Tourism Authority of Thailand's (TAT) new tourism slogan and logo.

The new 'Amazing Thailand' design combines the ornate details of the traditional Thai kanok pattern, a smiling face and soft colours, intentionally created to resemble the smile that has charmed the world and become an enduring symbol of the Kingdom.

TTM+ 2016 aims to give delegates many reasons to smile with its smorgasbord of traditional travel offerings of cultural staples alongside a host of new products for the attendee.

Honeymoon & Wedding

Thailand will once again chase the wedding and honeymoon dollar: couples can choose to marry according to Thai customs in Buffalo Village 129km from Bangkok, where the entire wedding party will have a chance to don traditional Thai garb; or ditch the white gown and tux for wetsuits instead by sealing your vows underwater on Valentine's Day in Trang with a huge beachside fiesta after.

Also on offer will be promotions and specially planned itineraries for lovers and couples who want to mark their anniversaries in a special way - no lovers will be left out.

Green Tourism

Another core thrust of TTM+ 2016's strategy will be green tourism for the socially and environmentally conscious traveller who wants to contribute to the local community while also learning and having fun.

Tourism products aimed at this segment of the travellers include the chance to build and maintain coral nurseries and artificial reefs in Ko Tao to

restore the underwater ecosystem, seagrass planting, or working in the verdant rainforests of Pak Song to raise funds for the Thai Child Development Foundation.

12 Hidden Gems Plus

Awaiting discovery at TTM+ 2016 is the return of the 12 Hidden Gems Plus, this time with a focus on 'folklore tourism' - 12 secondary destinations, each a site of local myth and legend, will be paired with the 12 Hidden Gems of Thailand that were unveiled last year to complement the original 12 Hidden Gems and encourage extra tourist footfalls.

The Black Sand Beach in Trat, for instance, is believed to have possess restorative powers for its black volcanic sand, while locals believe that crossing the Zutongpae Bridge in Mae Hong Son will reward one with success in life.

Complementary destinations include Lampang with Lamphun, and Buriram with Surin, and Trat with Rayong.

Other points of focus at TTM+ 2016 include intra-ASEAN offerings under the slogan ASEAN for All which will see a range of packages twinning Thailand with other ASEAN destinations such as Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos or Vietnam to emphasise a wholly South-east Asian experience as Two Countries, One Destination.

The centrality of health and wellness in Thai tourism still continues strong, with Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary and Holistic Spa on Koh Samui having won the Spa of the Year (Southeast Asia and the Pacific) from the Asia Spa Awards 2015; golf tourism will be in full swing at TTM+ 2016 again with more than 250 of Thailand's world-class golf courses on offer; while the TAT continues to retain a strong focus on community-based tourism as important income distributors with opportunities to contribute to the country at Ban Na Ton Chan Community in Sukhothai province, Ko Klang Community in Krabi province.

Thailand broke its own tourism record to receive 29.8 million international arrivals, a 20 per cent increase over 2014, who racked up some 1.4 trillion baht or US\$39.2 billion in tourism revenue, a sharp 23 per cent year-on-year increase over the previous year.

In the year ahead, the TAT is aiming to generate 1.5 trillion baht from international visitors by focusing on attracting high-yielding tourists.



TTM+ 2016
Smile with Us

Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) 2016

8 - 10 June 2016 | Chiang Mai, Thailand

Chiang Mai International Exhibition & Convention Centre

For more information, please visit

<http://www.thailandtravelmartplus.com>

View from the top



Other brands are trying to be relevant. If you were a lifestyle brand three years ago, how do you stay relevant? It scares me to see those groups that are trying to be relevant through design and technology – just look at the speed of change!

ROCKING AND ROLLING IN ASIA

Are you having a rocking good time expanding Hard Rock Hotels?

Oh yes. I've set a goal of 100 Hard Rock Hotels – opened or signed agreements – globally by 2020, when I'll be 60 years old. This will be my last stop after 32 years in the hospitality business and I love the brand, so I've my heart set on that target.

How far are you with it and how does Asia figure in it?

We have 22 opened hotels, including our casinos, and 18 executed agreements, so there are 60 left to be done.

Of the 60, I figure 50 per cent will be in the US, 25 per cent Asia and 25 per cent in the Middle East and Europe. We've brought in senior vice president hotel development (Asia & India), Leong Wy Joon, a few months ago, to look at expansion in key resorts and key global cities in the region such as Hong Kong, Tokyo, Beijing and Shanghai.

Why did it take Hard Rock so long to place that role here so you could grow?

That's a correct assessment. But nobody saw Lehman coming and things went kind of dormant for everyone from 2007 to 2011.

After that, we all needed to reconstruct and reposition ourselves for new growth. Hard Rock did a tremendous undertaking to get our backbone – the operating standards, manuals and other essentials – right.

There was still growth at the time but it was slow, methodical, with iconic additions such as a collection of all-inclusive hotels in Latin America that has been immensely successful. So we got the fundamentals right. You can't push greatness; it has to happen when its moment comes.

Why is Hard Rock still relevant?

Music will always be relevant. We consider

ourselves a lifestyle hotel, but we didn't go out to create a brand to fit a 'lifestyle' niche. We are all about the music, and we create our hotels around music. We are the largest curator of musical memorabilia, with 80,000 original pieces in our collection, and they cut across generations, genres and cultures of music. We don't only have Beatles guitars or Michael Jackson's jacket, but an entire collection, from Shakira to Asian artistes now. We're a music museum with rooms and we appeal to people from eight years old to 80. Who does not love music; it is the international language of love.

Other brands are trying to be relevant. If you were a lifestyle brand three years ago, how do you stay relevant? It scares me to see those groups that are trying to be relevant through design and technology – just look at the speed of change!

Yes, but has anything changed with Hard Rock? Surely you need to evolve to cater to the new generation?

Yes, absolutely, and I would point to our original cafes, which had a lot of wood and brass. Our newer cafes are more with the times.

Similarly, our hotels are contemporary and, as we open more of them, I'm excited for you to see some of the design aspects and how we're integrating the whole music platform with modern technology and all the things people expect of an upper upscale brand today.

How are you relevant to millennials?

We're very popular with millennials. My children love Hard Rock.

But of course, they are your children!

They love Hard Rock before I joined the company. In fact I beame much cooler once I got the job!

A Hard Rock hotel has just opened in Goa and the brand will also debut in China in Shenzhen, followed by Haikou. It's rock-and-roll in Asia for EVP and chief development officer-hotels Marco Roca, who speaks to [Raini Hamdi](#)

10 NEED TO KNOW'S ABOUT MARCO ROCA

■ **Who's in your family?** I have three wonderful boys aged 16, 19 and 21. My loving wife Claudia of 25 years runs our family retail business.

■ **What do you do for fun?** Spending time with the family both at home and abroad. We travel a good bit and we enjoy the many cultural aspects of all places in the world.

■ **Your ideal vacation?** We enjoy active vacations – from zip lines in the rainforest of Costa Rica to cruises in the Mediterranean or rappelling off the Great Wall of China.

■ **How do you book your own leisure trips?** My wife Claudia is amazing at planning great experiences that are off the beaten path. She spends a lot of time planning and investigating through the Internet and never ceases to surprise us with her findings.

■ **What are you reading right now?** I am enjoying a great book *Wine and War* which takes you on a great adventure of how the French protected their beloved wine from Nazi Germany.

■ **How do you stay healthy?** We are careful with what we eat, and my wife and I try to work out whenever time permits.

■ **Favourite food?** Tacos al Pastor in Mexico City.

■ **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Not getting enough sleep. Everyone lives a very hectic schedule in today's world and with global travel sleep comes at a premium.

■ **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Lack of punctuality. I find it a lack of respect to others.

■ **Most people don't know that you...** are a US and French citizen. My family all have a third nationality – Mexican.

Are Hard Rock Cafes doing well in today's proliferation of cafes?

I would point to you that the number one most collected item in the world is the Hard Rock T-shirt – 7.4 million T-shirts sold around the world per year. We have 15.6 million articles of merchandise with the Hard Rock logo – people are paying to exhibit our brand. I do a lot of high fives when I walk around airports (laughs).

We would not be as successful without the legacy of the cafes. There are some 160 cafes globally today.

You're in charge of Hard Rock Hotels development. Is there synergy from the cafes development side?

Sometimes we integrate cafes into hotels. We also give each other leads. So it's a tight community between restaurants and hotels. A restaurant developer may evolve into a hotel developer and many times a hotel developer may decide to do a restaurant, so there is a lot of crossovers between the two. That has helped us a great deal.

Are you seeking to franchise or manage hotels?

Both. Most of our 22 hotels in operation today are franchised, although we manage all of our casino hotels in the US. Of the 18 signed agreements, 12 are managed, six franchised, so as we grow there is a preference to manage, simply because we have a unique brand. Tell me one other brand that has a position in a hotel called a vibe manager? That's a full-time position and the manager creates the ambience – the intensity of lighting, sound, the kind of music to play, infusion of smell, etc.

But hospitality schools don't produce vibe managers. So it's difficult to find a partner to manage a franchise or know the DNA of the brand as we do, although

there are such partners. With the right owner and the right opportunity we are still open to franchising. Plus, when we franchise, we're different from other companies in that we work really closely with partners to ensure the product matches the brand – we want to be iconic, edgy and inspirational.

So would a cool brand mean cool fees too for owners?

(Laughs) We are cool and hip but we are traditional in the way we do business, so don't let the way we dress in jeans make you feel we are less serious or hardworking.

Models of management and franchises have evolved over time and the industry is fairly competitive in a small range of fees. Perhaps what's cool is that our management contracts are not as long as everybody else's or as boring.

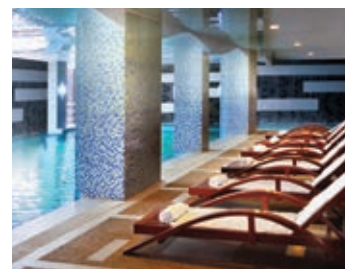
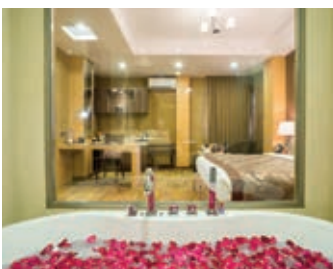
What are the challenges of expanding Hard Rock in Asia?

The brand is mostly known for its cafes. Currently we have five hotels operating in Asia, so we need to build brand recognition for the hospitality aspect of Hard Rock. And Asia as you know is one of the most competitive markets in the world.



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ASK THE EXPERT

BUILDING WELL-BEING IN THE WORKPLACE

Well-being is key to keeping staff motivated and retaining them. Flight Centre Travel Group managing director Singapore, Suyin Lee, shares how employers can invest in staff well-being:

How does FCTG retain staff?

- **Attention to detail** Be mindful of employees' needs, from their health and personal well-being to family and work-life balance. FCTG ensures comfortable and spacious workspaces, sufficient breakout areas for quiet time, pantries stocked with healthy snacks, casual Friday drink sessions in the office, and our Healthwise Fitness Studio provides personal training and group classes.
- **Recognition** Every employee should get recognition for hard work. Leaders need to take time to give recognition, from a compliment to a note of thanks. Each month, we organise a Buzz Night to celebrate the success and contributions of individuals who have far exceeded their targets and personal bests.
- **Technology** We work on automating manual and tedious processes so that our



People are more committed when they work for a greater purpose...

Suyin Lee, managing director Singapore, Flight Centre Travel Group

staff can focus on delivering an amazing customer experience. Utilisation of technology is key to improving our productivity.

- **Bright future** Employees should see a clear pathway to achieve their career goals through learning and development. Promotions and transfers ensure they continue to grow.
- **Communication** We welcome input from employees and maintain an open door policy by fostering a transparent and open culture. Everyone should feel comfortable in sharing their views and new ideas for improvement.

How does FCTG achieve this?

- **Travel Academy** Launching in 2017, the Travel Academy will allow the company to reach out to a wider pool of candidates in the travel industry and provide a platform for continuing professional education in the sector.
- **Healthwise** FCTG's corporate health and wellness programme, Healthwise can help employers reduce the cost of absenteeism. In Australia, the programme reduced the average number of sick days taken by employees to 3.4 days, in comparison to the travel and

hospitality industry average of 10.4 sick days.

FCTG has signed 18,000 employees up to Healthwise and estimates savings of A\$30 million (US\$21.3 million) over the past five years by reducing employee absenteeism.

What challenges are there and how can they be overcome?

- **Participation** Many young people do not see an exciting career in the travel industry. Having a quality travel education programme will be a step in the right direction but we need to promote the benefits of the travel sector jointly with industry bodies.

For Healthwise, getting employees to take the first step will be the greatest challenge. For example, FCTG Singapore launched a Step Challenge recently. Participants were provided with a Fitbit or step counter and the individual or team that walked the most steps in that month won a travel prize.

- **Investment** Financial investment, time and resources are needed for the successful implementation of these programmes and to ensure momentum is maintained.

Mickey and the Wondrous Book

10th Anniversary of Hong Kong Disneyland

To celebrate Hong Kong Disneyland 10th Anniversary, we are presenting our most spectacular live show ever! New attractions and entertainment offerings deliver a truly "Happily Ever After" celebration with the biggest musical numbers performed live by the greatest Disney stars and countless heart-warming moments.

Relive the greatest Disney stories of all time at the brand-new, Broadway-style stage performance of **"Mickey and the Wondrous Book"** - an epic journey through an enchanted storybook where you'll discover endless adventures and happily-ever-afters, with the turn of every page. Step into the whimsical

and enchanting new **"Fairy Tale Forest"** - Presented by **PANDORA**, where your most cherished Disney fairytales are charmingly reimagined in miniature. Conclude your night with a resplendent and grand finale, **"Disney in the Stars" fireworks**. The spectacular show is now enhanced with all-new projections on Sleeping Beauty Castle which takes the sparkling fireworks display to a new height.

Give you and your guests the perfect excuse to celebrate the holidays in style, with a "Happily Ever After" at Hong Kong Disneyland!

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

Please email reservations@hongkongdisneyland.com for enquiries and room reservations.

*Block-out dates and Terms & Conditions apply. Special room rate are subject to 10% service charge.

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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



GTA SHOWS APPRECIATION FOR TRADE

GTA invited some 50 travel agents from Indonesia for an appreciation dinner at The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore, in recognition of the trade support in making Singapore the top Asia-Pacific city destination for the company in 2015. In attendance were (from left) TTG Asia Media's Michael Chow, and GTA's Daryl Lee, Cyndi Ng and Sun Kok Sheng.

BEST WESTERN TURNS 15

To mark the 15th anniversary of Best Western Hotels & Resorts' arrival in Asia, the group's managing director of international operations - Asia Olivier Berrivin (third from right), together with the company's senior executives, associates, industry partners and members of the media, came together for an evening of fun at The Mercury Ville in Bangkok last month.



A FITTING CELEBRATION FOR BANGKOK'S GRANDE DAME

A lavish gala dinner was the call of the day when Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok commemorated its 140th anniversary in January. The gala event was hosted by heads of the hotel's majority owning companies, including (from left) OHTL's Pisit Leeahtam and Surachai Sirivallop; Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group's Edouard Ettegui; OHTL's Amanda Hyndman; Italian-Thai Development's Nijaporn Charanachitta; Jardine Matheson's Adam Keswick; and OHTL's Stuart Dickie, Aswin Kongsiri and Yuthachai Charanachitta.

TRADE CALENDAR *SEE YOU AT...*



WTTC Global Summit

April 6-7, Dallas, Texas

Themed Travel Beyond Boundaries, the 25th edition focuses on how travel and tourism will respond to the issues of migration, climate change, terrorism, security and border policies. The year's summit will host over 500 industry leaders, including Tony Fernandes, Bill Marriott and Penny Pritzker.



IT&CM China

April 6-8, Shanghai

Bringing together 3,000 Chinese and international MICE professionals at Shanghai Exhibition & Convention Center of International Sourcing, the three-day event will welcome CVBs like Abu Dhabi, Fukuoka, Berlin and Jeju, plus corporates such as Minor Hotel Group and Silversea Cruises.



Arabian Travel Market

April 25-28, Dubai

Mid-market travel – a key growth segment for the Middle Eastern hospitality and tourism sector – has been identified as the theme for this year's show at the Dubai International Convention & Exhibition Centre, with representation from mid-market brands such as Louvre Hotels, flydubai and Flynas.



Beijing International Tourism Expo

May 20-22, Beijing

Part of the four international tourism exhibitions held across China – the other three provinces being Guilin, Xi'an and Chengdu – the Beijing show attracted more than 987 exhibitors and over 120,000 visitors in 2015. This expo will take place at the National Agriculture Exhibition Center this year.



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HOTELS

SO SOFTEL KUALA LUMPUR

In partnership with Singapore-listed lifestyle property developer Oxley Holdings, AccorHotels is poised to open the 207-room So Sofitel Kuala Lumpur Hotel and 590-key So Sofitel

Kuala Lumpur Residences in 2020. Both properties will be part of a larger mixed-use development complete with offices and a mall. It is located near the Petronas Twin Towers and Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.



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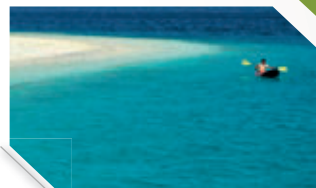
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Immerse yourself in the cultural festivities and colourful performances of the host destination



Generously hosted by the Ministry of Tourism Indonesia, PTM 2016 is being held at the **Indonesia Convention Exhibition (ICE)** in Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia's biggest convention and exhibition centre with eco-friendly and energy-efficient features. The venue is only 20 minutes away from Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport.

The surrounding province of Banten features rich cultural heritage and pristine natural resources - from the archaeological remains of the Islamic Banten Kingdom to secluded islands and landscaped resorts. Join us in growing your travel business alongside fellow tourism industry professionals in Asia Pacific.

Register now at **PATA.org/PTM-2016**

Seller, buyer and media registrations available.

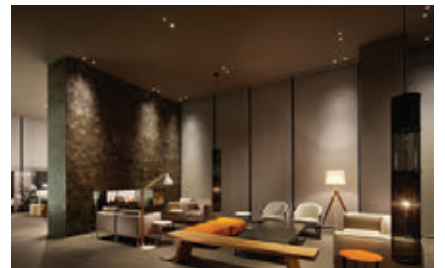
AMARI HAVODDA MALDIVES

Lush greenery, azure lagoons and white sandy beaches await at the recently-opened 120-villa Amari Havodda Maldives. Located in the Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll about 400km south of the capital Malé, the island is surrounded by a pristine house reef, making the area an underwater haven for divers and snorkellers.



SHANGRI-LA AT THE FORT, MANILA

Shangri-La at the Fort in the Bonifacio Global City mixed-used development opened on March 1 with 576 rooms. Within the complex, Kerry Sports Manila provides over 8,000m² of facilities such as a spa, a children's Adventure Zone, and an NBA-grade indoor basketball court. There are also 21 event spaces, and 14 restaurants and bars on site.



SHILLA STAY GURO, SEOUL

Shilla Stay has opened its eighth property in Seoul's digital district – the 25-storey, 310-room Shilla Stay Guro. Each guestroom will feature 100 per cent Hungarian goose-down bedding and bathroom amenities from Aveda. Facilities include a business corner, a fitness centre on the 21st floor and an F&B outlet on the second floor.

ACTIVITY



KIDZANIA SINGAPORE

Come April, Kidzania Singapore will welcome children and adults alike to this indoor theme park at Palawan Beach on Sentosa Island. Spanning 7,600m², there are over 80 role-playing activities where children will be exposed to real-life situations and learn about how a society functions. Activities include piloting an airplane and becoming a CSI agent.



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Report Medical tourism

A HEALTHY PROGNOSIS

THE PHILIPPINES

What started out as wellness tourism – with a smattering of beauty and pampering fixes – has become full-fledged medical tourism now that hospitals in the Philippines are offering cancer, cardiology, stem cell and other treatments.

At least four Manila-based hospitals – Asian Hospital and Medical Center; St Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City and Bonifacio Global City; The Medical City; and Makati Medical Center – were accredited by Joint Commission International (JCI) in recent years. These JCI-accredited hospitals have also launched a “one-country” package combining medical treatment and tourist activities.

Angel Ramos Bognot, president and managing director of Afro-Asian Travel and Tours, said: “Medical tourism has huge potential but it has not been given much attention. It is very silent.”

Bognot explained: “We should be thinking of medical tourism not only for beauty. Nip and tuck is only one element. We have hospitals recognised for their top-notch facilities, and competitive pricing for the wide range of medical procedures they can perform.”

While Philippine medical tourism is not as well-known when compared with Singapore, Thailand, India and South Korea, it leverages on its competitive pricing; highly skilled and culturally sensitive doctors and nurses; modern facilities; and English-proficient healthcare workers.

Several travel consultants interviewed noted that overseas Filipinos and foreigners from the US and US territories of Guam and Saipan, as well as Asians, flock to the Philippines for orthodontics, ophthalmology and dermatology, drawn by the significantly lower prices than those in their countries of origin.

According to the Philippine Department of Tourism's (DoT) medical tourism booklet, an ophthalmology package starts at US\$978; a surgery package at US\$1,848; an orthopaedic surgery at US\$4,111; and a cardiology, thoracic and vascular surgery package at US\$18,222.

This niche product is starting to obtain “keen interest from travel agents and tour operators from several countries”, according to Philippine tourism secretary Ramon Jimenez Jr.

Jimenez noted that during the World Medical Tourism and Global Congress Healthcare Congress held in Washington DC last year, a US-based international buyer from the insurance industry select-



ed the Philippines over Singapore, Thailand, Costa Rica, Brazil and Bolivia as a medical tourism destination of choice.

The DoT, in tandem with participating private hospitals, is also promoting medical tourism more extensively abroad. This includes having a presence at last year's World Medical Tourism and Global Healthcare Congress in the US and the International Medical Travel Exhibition & Conference in Dubai.

Among the most sought-after hospital procedures in the Philippine Medical Tourism programme are cardiology care, minimally invasive surgery, orthopaedic care, aesthetics and cosmetics like dental services, ophthalmology and executive health check-ups, according to Jimenez.

Meanwhile, the Medical City's health-

care facility in Clark, Pampanga, is being aided by the DoT's push for air route development section, said Jimenez.

Belo Medical Group, one of the biggest and most successful medical aesthetic ambulatory clinics in the country, is also starting to link up with tour operators to promote their services.

Simon Ang, managing director-operations of Celebrate Life TLC, confirmed that included in their premium package offerings abroad are Belo Medical Group's surgical and non-surgical beauty breakthroughs and products.

To tap the potential of Philippines' medical tourism, Asia Premium Travel Mart will include this niche, together with luxury travel, come its third B2B show in 2017. – **Rosa Ocampo**

MALAYSIA

By 2020, Malaysia aims to surpass Thailand and Singapore to become the top medical tourism destination in South-east Asia.

Currently ranked third in South-east Asia in terms of the number of health travellers, Sherene Azura Azli, CEO, Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC), said the main challenge is the lack of awareness of Malaysia as a health tourism destination.

She elaborated: “Middle Eastern travellers come to Malaysia for holidays but go to Thailand for medical treatments. We don't shout loud enough about our unique value proposition in our marketing and communications.”

Citing Malaysia's unique selling propo-

sition for medical tourism, Sherene said: “Malaysia is one of the few countries in the world in which the healthcare travel industry is directly supported by the government. This translates to unparalleled support in the development of infrastructures for the industry, as well as for other initiatives, such as extended medical visas for healthcare travellers who may need longer-term treatments.”

In addition, many leading Malaysian hospitals and healthcare facilities possess accreditation from international bodies such as the Joint Commission International and International Society for Quality in Healthcare.

The Ministry of Health Malaysia also imposes stringent regulations on hospitals and healthcare facilities, particularly in matters related to quality and safety, which the institutions strictly abide by.

“Another point tipping the balance in Malaysia's favour is that English is widely spoken in Malaysia and this builds confidence in patients who are able to communicate with confidence directly to their doctors,” added Sherene.

She describes healthcare in Malaysia as being “highly affordable”, primarily due to the Ministry of Health's regulations on ceiling rates for healthcare treatments in the country.

According to Sherene, Malaysia presently has a large market share in Indonesia, India, Bangladesh and the Middle East, with moderate share from Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Japan and South-east Asia.

“Moving forward, apart from strengthening our presence in the aforementioned countries, MHTC looks to focus efforts on promoting Malaysia healthcare to more markets internationally. Key target markets identified for growth are China,

Europe, central Asia and ASEAN,” she said.

Healthcare travellers to Malaysia have been increasing steadily at approximately 20 per cent compound annual growth rate since 2009. MHTC's target for 2015 was to attract one million healthcare travellers and generate a revenue of RM1 billion (US\$238 million), up from RM730 million in 2014.

Among the most sought-after treatments by international health travellers to Malaysia are cardiology, orthopaedics, in-vitro fertilisation, neurology, health screening, oncology, cosmetic surgery and dentistry.

Sherene added: “The (value) of the ringgit against the currencies of developed countries also results in healthcare rates here to be highly competitive as compared to those in their home countries, with no compromise on the quality of care.”

KL Tan, general manager of Borneo Trails Tours & Travel in Kota Kinabalu, agreed that the weakened ringgit, coupled with consultation appointments that are easy to obtain, has helped boost demand for cosmetic surgery as well as non-surgical procedures from his key markets – China, the Philippines, Indonesia and Australia – where there is direct air access to Kota Kinabalu.

Borneo Trails provides medical tourists with an itinerary, combining holiday packages with an appointment with Charles Lee, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon at KPJ Sabah Specialist Hospital. – **S Puvaneswary**



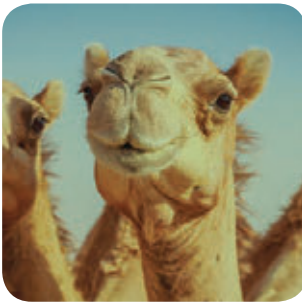
Middle Eastern travellers come to Malaysia for holidays but go to Thailand for medical treatments. We don't shout loud enough about our unique value proposition in our marketing and communications.

Sherene Azura Azli
CEO
Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council



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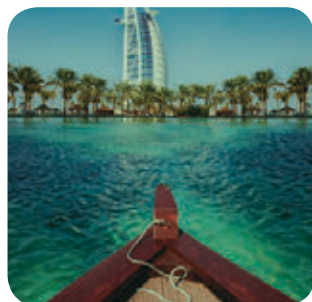
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Travel for a
Better World



TTG Asia examines the state of health and medical tourism in four thriving markets in South-east Asia

THAILAND

Thailand's medical tourism sector continues to grow and will remain strong with help from both the government and private sector, sources told *TTG Asia*.

A Kasikorn Research Center report stated that the number of medical treatments provided to medical tourists by Thai private hospitals is expected to reach 2.8 million in 2015, up 10.2 per cent year-on-year.

The same report also stated that Thailand's major medical tourist markets include Myanmar, Japan, the Middle East and Europe, with Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and China showing strong potential.

Bangkok Dusit Medical Services, Thailand's largest private healthcare provider, published on its website its recent analysis: "During 3Q2015, Thai and international patients grew 10 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. This resulted in the revenue proportion between Thai (74 per cent to 73 per cent) and international patients (26 per cent to 27 per cent) changing slightly from 3Q2014 to 3Q2015.

Established hospitals in the country are also expanding the scope of their

treatments to meet the requirements of a growing global clientele.

Sudi Narasimhan, Bumrungrad International Hospital's corporate director of marketing and business development, said: "We are expanding our programmes and specialities that will address more types of treatment. For example, we opened a dedicated liver centre last year. Our dedicated focus on liver treatment matches the increasing trend of patients with liver issues.

He added: "Another example is the Newlife Healthy Aging Clinic, which also opened last year, focusing on the holistic treatment of different issues that arise in elderly patients."

The broadening range of medical treatments available is also a good fit with the government's plans to promote Thailand as a quality leisure destination.

Visanu Jaroensilp, Tourism Authority of Thailand's (TAT) deputy governor for tourism products and business, said: "TAT would like to promote Thailand (as more) than just a medical tourist market. We are looking to expand into the health and wellness sector, which refers to both the preventive and curative sides of the market."

He added: "Thailand is one of the world's most popular health and wellness destinations and it will likely remain so

for the foreseeable future. It will grow well in the future for several reasons.

"One, the ageing populations globally and regionally. Two, there is increased attention being paid to health and wellness as a lifestyle choice across all groups. Three, there is an availability of a broad

range of products, services and facilities in Thailand to cater to this entire market," he explained.

TAT showed its support for the sector at the Thailand Health and Wellness Tourism Showcase in September 2015, which took place under the theme of Anti-Aging: The Next Big Thing in Health Tourism.

Fifty-six invited buyers specialising in health and wellness tourism had the opportunity to meet with top anti-ageing and aesthetic providers in Thailand.

Thailand's Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs are also simplifying the visa application process for health and wellness visitors and accompanying persons alike. Health visitors from the GCC countries, and up to four accompanying people, are eligible for a visa-free stay of 90 days.

— Michael Mackey



TAT would like to promote Thailand (as more) than just a medical tourist market. We are looking to expand into the health and wellness sector, which refers to both the preventive and curative sides of the market.

Visanu Jaroensilp
Deputy governor for tourism products and business
Tourism Authority of Thailand

SINGAPORE

Singapore's well-heelled reputation as a medical hub continues to shine, in light of the city taking second spot in the world for the *Health outcomes and cost: a 166-country comparison* report by The Economist Intelligence Unit in November 2014.

According to Soo Siew Keong, director, enrichment, Singapore Tourism Board (STB), the proportion of medical tourism receipts was about four per cent of the overall tourism receipts in 2014. The top source markets include Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

He said: "Visitors from the region continue to come to Singapore for a wide range of medical care, from health screenings to advanced procedures in areas such as cardiology, neurology, obstetrics and gynaecology, oncology, ophthalmology and orthopaedics."

According to Arifin Ng, general manager & senior vice president of Singapore Medical Group International Partners, around 30 to 40 per cent of their patients are foreigners from countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia and Russia.

Ng said: "Patients normally come to Singapore for more complicated cases, and they come for treatments such as cancer, orthopaedics, obstetrics, gynaecology, eye, dental and aesthetics."

Highlighting how facilities like the Farrer Park Hospital and the new Raffles Medical Centre will boost the appeal of medical tourism, Soo said that "Singapore remains a destination of choice for quality medical care".

The privately-run Farrer Park Hospital, designed with the capacity for 145 beds, is also part of a lifestyle concept combining healthcare and hospitality. The hospital is set in Connexion, a relatively new 20-storey building housing a

hotel, spa and retail mall.

As for the 1,600m² Raffles Medical Centre, which serves as an integrated multidisciplinary medical centre at Shaw Centre, its aim is to provide one-stop medical care in the heart of Orchard Road.

In response to how STB will continue to grow the city's appeal of medical tourism, Soo said: "STB will continue to work together with private healthcare providers to strengthen their reach in key target markets. We will also support in-market intermediaries (such as financial institutions, airlines, associations and insurers) in profiling Singapore as an advanced medical care destination.

"In addition, STB supports efforts by medical associations and conference organisers to secure healthcare-related international conferences to facilitate knowledge exchange between Singapore healthcare providers and their in-market counterparts," he added. — **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Patients normally come to Singapore for more complicated cases, and they come for treatments such as cancer, orthopaedics, obstetrics, gynaecology, eye, dental and aesthetics.

Arifin Ng
General manager & senior vice president
Singapore Medical Group International Partners

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MEET THE ASIAN BUSINESS TRAVELLER

Business travel spend in Asia now makes up 38% of the global business travel market, which is worth more than US\$1 trillion. It is being led by China, where annual business travel spend has increased 400% since 2005. The other Asian country to watch is India, where business travel spend will jump from US\$26 billion in 2014 to US\$45 billion in 2019¹.

Understanding the Asian business traveller was just one of the many focal points at TravelRave 2015. The following feature puts the spotlight on this and other key insights discussed at the conference.



2

DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES

CHINA

Concerned about prestige, the Chinese are the only ones who ranked award-winning service among the top three factors for selecting a flight or a hotel.

INDIA

Digitally savvy and willing to spend, Indians are most willing to use online and mobile booking tools.

SINGAPORE

Described as “budget luxe”, Singaporeans rank in-flight comfort as the most valued attribute when selecting flights.

INDONESIA

Travel is regarded as a perk of a job, which is why Indonesians are most likely to extend their business trip with a leisure one.

JAPAN

To the policy- and price-conscious Japanese, work and leisure do not mix. They were least likely to consider business travel a perk of the job or deviate from travel policy.



1

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: THE ASIAN BUSINESS TRAVELLER



SERVICE SEEKER

The Service Seeker values award-winning services, work and leisure facilities, and the feeling of being valued as a customer.

59%

are Indonesian or Chinese.

94%

are willing to pay for ancillary services on flight/hotel.



STEREOTYPICAL SUIT

Convenience is most important to the Stereotypical Suit, whose defining preferences are direct flights, convenient arrival/departure times, and convenient hotel location.

61%

are over the age of 35.

Found across Singapore, India, China, Indonesia, and Japan in roughly equal proportions.



BELT TIGHTENER

Acutely price-sensitive and value-sensitive, the Belt Tightener's defining preferences are lowest fare and value for money.

55%

are in junior positions.

73%

predominantly travel domestically.



POINTS MAXIMISER

The Points Maximiser prioritises loyalty points and comfort, preferring loyalty and reward programmes, comfortable seats, and luxurious rooms.

67%

are Singaporean or Japanese.

65%

travel more than 3 times a year.

LOOKING AHEAD: THE CHANGING FACE OF GLOBAL TRAVEL



Mobile first or mobile only?

This is a question industry stalwarts are asking when it comes to developing native apps.

Outsiders are taking a bite

Alitrip of Alibaba is creating an online travel ecosystem that will challenge the capabilities of the online travel agents (OTAs).



Hotel brands are innovating

Monetising the web space is becoming a reality for key brands.



Distribution of content

User-generated content has led to a hunger for authentic stories that let a brand speak of its values.



Loyalty through big data

Established players are relooking at how they can harness big data to reward the right people at the right time.

EXTENSION

EXPANSION

EVOLUTION

The shared economy ecosystem

Enterprising individuals are creating a host of B2B spin-off businesses that enhance the guest experience.

A whole new ballgame

The travel technology landscape is embracing radical new players, while established players are rebooting their businesses.

OTAs are redefining what they do

Independent hotels are now unveiling new services that could dilute the OTA's core capabilities, but some observers see these developments as a natural progression.

Meta search continues to crash the OTA party

Meta search engines like Tripadvisor now see themselves as quasi-booking sites.

FOR MORE INSIGHTS, DOWNLOAD THE REPORT
– CATALYSING TRAVEL AND TOURISM IN ASIA –
AT WWW.YOURSINGAPORE.COM/MICE/TOURISMREPORTS.

Insights were gathered from "Asian Business Travellers: 5 Things You Need To Know" and the TravelRave 2015 report.

¹ GBTA BTI Outlook – Annual Global Report & Forecast: Prospects for Global Business Travel, 2014-2018.



Guide Integrated Resorts

A COMPLETE PACK

SINGAPORE

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

MARINA BAY SANDS

WHAT'S HOT

Home to a 2,561-room hotel, a 120,000m² convention centre, a casino, some 300 retail and F&B outlets and three 57-storey towers that have been hailed as an architectural marvel, Marina Bay Sands (MBS) has been a key icon in the city skyline since its launch in 2010.

Tour East's senior vice-president sales & marketing international market Judy Lum said: "The success of MBS is really the amazing design of the building itself. This, together with the infinity pool on the rooftop that gives an illusion of a swim in the clouds, has made MBS the bucket list item (of many travellers)."

MBS' central location that is easily accessible by public transport also makes it a top draw among tourists, pointed out Daniel Goh, manager at Siam Express. "Moreover, MBS is within walking distance to another tourist attraction, Gardens By The Bay."

WHAT'S HOT

High room rates and stringent booking conditions make MBS, already one of the world's most expensive integrated resorts, a harder sell for travel agents.

Said Goh: "There are additional hotel booking conditions for (travel agents). For example, name changes are not allowed after the cut-off date of about 30 to 45 days prior to check-in, and they are not flexible with their cancellation policy."

Star Holiday Mart general manager, Dominic Ong, agreed: "They have inflexible policies and the premier rate does not



provide a (full) luxury experience. Hotel guests may find it too crowded because apart from the house guests, there are crowds that come for the shopping and attractions nearby."

RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA

WHAT'S HOT

Resorts World Sentosa's (RWS) compelling selection of attractions – including South-east Asia's only Universal Studios theme park, Adventure Cove Waterpark, Dolphin Island and the SEA Aquarium – keeps the destination constantly on the radar among families.

Tour East's senior vice-president sales & marketing international market Judy Lum commented: "The resort has numerous types of hotels that cater to various markets and price brackets, and they are constantly coming out with activities to attract the family market."

Daniel Goh, manager at Siam Express, said: "There is the matter of convenience too as theme parks are located within the premises, which plays an important role in attracting tourists. Secondly the room rates are also reasonable and easy transportation makes RWS very accessible."

WHAT'S HOT

As gaming makes up a major component of its overall revenue, RWS has a tendency to "place priority on markets more inclined to gaming", observed Lum.

Star Holiday Mart general manager Dominic Ong agreed: "RWS is very market-focused and certain nationalities will

get the most attention, hence there is a case of limited inventory to split between the leisure tourists, MICE clients and gaming (visitors)."

For Goh, on the other hand, the main factor that hinders him from selling RWS to clients is the crowd, as the public areas in the hotels are often overcrowded.

MALAYSIA

By S Puvaneswary

RESORTS WORLD GENTING

WHAT'S HOT

Resorts World Genting's (RWG) attractiveness will be further enhanced when the destination rolls out new products in the coming months, as part of the RM5 billion (US\$1.2 billion) Genting Integrated Tourism Plan Investments announced in December 2013.

When Genting Skyway opens in mid-2016, the new 2.8km cable car system will link the mid-hill Awana Hotel to the hilltop. It will comprise 106 gondolas and carry up to 2,000 passengers per hour.

Saini Vermeulen, executive director, Within Earth Holidays, said: "(Genting Skyway) will provide repeat visitors to RWG a different route and scenery by



Hotels, casinos, celebrity restaurants and family-friendly attractions often go hand in hand at Asia's integrated resorts. *TTG Asia* speaks to travel agents to find out what's hot and what's not at these destinations

AGE



Clockwise from left: Universal Studios Singapore, located within Resorts World Sentosa; Marina Bay Sands, Singapore; Manila's Solaire Resort & Casino

cable car. It is also fast, thus reducing the queue during peak periods."

Inbound agents are also looking forward to the opening of two large shopping outlets: Sky Avenue (2H2016) and Genting Premium Outlets (end-2016).

Confidence Travel & Tour executive director, Law Wai Shyang, said: "(The shopping outlets) will bolster demand from China and make it easier to sell. Demand slowed down over the last two years, mainly due to the closure of the theme park, a main highlights for families."

As well, the world's first Twentieth Century Fox World theme park is slated to open at the end of 2017. The 10ha family-friendly destination will boast attractions themed around movies such as *Ice Age*, *Rio*, *Epic* and *Aliens vs Predator*.

WHAT'S NOT

Delay in the opening of the much-anticipated Twentieth Century Fox World, originally set for 2016, had upset the marketing plans of Luxury Tours Malaysia, which had used the theme park as a main draw in multiple packages.

The company's manager Ganneesh Ramaa, said: "We had to redo our marketing strategy where the emphasis was not on Genting. Apart from the casino, there are not many activities for overnight tourists. There is very limited indoor amuse-

ment activities for children. Our challenge is how to keep families who wish to stay overnight at RWG occupied."

Ally Bhoonee, executive director of World Avenues, added: "Genting brands itself as a City of Entertainment but it has not kept its tag line. Major construction work is currently in progress and a lot of shopping outlets and attractions are closed. The casino is still open but this does not appeal to our main market segment of Middle East tourists."

MACAU

By Prudence Lui

SANDS RESORTS COTAI STRIP MACAO

WHAT'S HOT

The addition of the first 'live-action-role-play' theme park Planet J, the *Monkey King - a Mythical Theatre Show* and the 3,000-room Parisian Macao later this year will spur a wave of new entertainment, hotel and dining opportunities for Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao, with approximately 9,000 rooms, 600 luxury boutique stores, 100 dining outlets, and 120,000m² of meeting and exhibition space.

Michael Wu, managing director of Hong Kong-based Gray Line Tours, is

WHAT'S NOT

The Parisian Macao is set to inject 3,000 keys into Sands China's inventory in Macau, but the trade is ambivalent of the new hotel's impact on room rates.

"Gaming still plays a key role, so the additional 3,000 rooms may (draw) the high-spending gamblers rather than leisure traffic," said Ng Hi-on, director of CTS International Science-Technology & Culture Exchange in Hong Kong.

CITY OF DREAMS MACAO

WHAT'S HOT

Already home to diverse attractions like *The House of Dancing Water* show extravaganza, Michelin-star restaurants and three hotels, the City of Dreams (COD) will complete a massive 300,000m² retail expansion this year.

WHAT'S NOT

Information regarding the COD's retail expansion project is still scarce, but trade players reckon that a new mall



13th Beijing International Tourism Expo 2016

Announcement on New Venue and Dates

Beijing International Tourism Expo (BITE) 2016 is now a part of the inaugural World Tourism Development Conference, organised by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), to become the largest B2B and B2C business and leisure tourism platform!

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Guide Integrated Resorts



From left: Resorts World Genting; Crown Melbourne

with simply F&B and retail outlets will not be attractive enough due to similar establishments in the city.

Said W Travel's managing director, Wing Wong: "The city's malls are dominated by luxury shops that target high spenders from China. If COD's new facility caters to high spenders, I don't think general tourists can afford the items there."

Wa Ou Turismo's marketing manager, Elvis Li, agreed: "*The House of Dancing Water* has been up and running for a while and many tourists from China and neighbouring countries have seen it. It's time for (COD) to create something new or have more facilities for kids."

THE PHILIPPINES

By Rosa Ocampo

SOLAIRE RESORT & CASINO

WHAT'S HOT A sophisticated ambience, quality F&B outlets and a convenient location make Solaire Resort and Casino popular with local and foreign travellers alike, said Pia Alfonso, outbound leisure officer of JTB Asia Pacific Philippines.

The rooms, many of which have arresting views of Manila Bay, are more spacious and attractive than other integrated resorts in town. Public areas are tastefully adorned, with giant chandeliers, curated artworks and gleaming marble adding to its luxury vibe.

Under Solaire's management, the restaurants are gaining reputation for delicious food, reliable service and well-trained staff, add Alfonso. Red Lantern, in particular, is popular for its high-quality Chinese cuisine and attentive wait staff.

Solaire's other advantage, according to Alfonso, is its location in the Manila Bay area, near the Mall of Asia, making it easily accessible from business districts like Makati and Bonifacio Global City.

WHAT'S NOT Solaire's expensive rates are reflective of its quality and service, but its designer stores, which are understandably targeted at high rollers, could be intimidating for the usual tourists, according to industry feedback.

Following the intensive marketing blitz and series of inspection trips that accom-

panied its opening three years ago (March 2013), Solaire appears to be giving less focus on marketing but more on service and quality, opined Alfonso.

RESORTS WORLD MANILA

WHAT'S HOT Resorts World Manila (RW Manila) has crafted a reputation for mounting local productions and harnessing local talent, putting up regular entertainment acts for diverse audiences.

"They should be doing more of that. Their shows are more accessible and the audience really appreciate that," said TravelExperts consultant Arnie V Bayag.

The resort is a pioneer in staging local musicals like *Bituing Walang Ningning*, based on the well-loved movie of the same title. It also has a pool of foreign dancers and acrobats, and brought in big-ticket foreign acts like Chris Botti and Sting.

What's also hot, pointed out Bayag, is last year's opening of the 10,000m² Marriott Grand Ballroom, which has hosted a number of RW Manila's bigger shows.

The 480-key Belmont Hotel Manila also opened last year, bringing the complex's inventory to 1,707 rooms, including the 713-key Remington, the 172-key Maxims and the 342-key Marriott Manila.

WHAT'S NOT While the resort is located near Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) just opposite Terminal 3, the area is prone to traffic congestion due to the ongoing construction of the skyway that will link NAIA to various points in the metro, said an industry source.

RW Manila was initially promoted as a destination for travellers to pass time before flights, but access – which requires walking to Terminal 3 and taking a short taxi ride to RW Manila – is rather complicated as the area is chokeful of elevated highways and the roads are not well planned, the source added.

CITY OF DREAMS MANILA

WHAT'S HOT City of Dreams (COD) Manila's three hotels – Crown Towers, Nobu and Hyatt – offer accommodation and at-

tractions to different market segments, said Marlene Insigne, manager – tours division, Southeast Travel Corporation.

COD's quality clubs are a pull factor for Insigne's clients. Chaos boasts world-class DJs and high-tech sound and lighting effects, which can cater to different parties and events. Pangaea, on the other hand, is favoured by a more mature audience due to its exclusivity and lavish interiors.

Meanwhile, the educational and interactive DreamPlay by DreamWorks, according to Insigne, plays the role of an "equaliser" for the casino, attracting families with kids. The recent reduction in its entrance fees has made the attraction even more affordable, she added.

DreamPlay's professional calibre in handling children further elevates its status as a family destination, observed Bayag. "Parents would be very comfortable in going there with their kids or leaving their children in that safe and secure place as they shop or snack," he said.

WHAT'S NOT As the latest entrant in Manila's integrated resorts scene – COD just celebrated its first year anniversary in December – trade members opined that it's too early to assess its weak points.

AUSTRALIA

By Rebecca Elliot

CROWN MELBOURNE

WHAT'S HOT Crown Melbourne occupies two blocks of the city's most prestigious real estate on the south bank of the Yarra River, near to the CBD and major attractions.

"It is the location, available entertainment and the lunch specials they have that's hot about Crown," said Nayaz Noor, CEO of Safir Tours.

It's no wonder that acclaimed chef Heston Blumenthal chose the largest casino complex in the Southern Hemisphere for his latest venture. While Dinner by Heston Blumenthal may be the new headline act, it's still Crown Melbourne's "fabulous selection" of restaurants – including Nobu, The Atlantic and Rockpool Bar & Grill – that make it stand out, said Joanne Alderman, managing director of The Conference Connection.

WHAT'S NOT

Despite the property's size, moving large coaches in and out of the driveways of all three hotels – Crown Metropol, Crown Promenade and Crown Towers – can be somewhat of a challenge, according to Alderman. Roads surrounding the complex are some of the city's busiest, making peak hour a little hectic.

It may boast some of the best tucker in town but be prepared to give the credit card a workout, agents cautioned. Restaurants also "tend to be on the expensive side of the scale," said Alderman. "Some are open to working with group business, others not no much."

INDIA

By Rohit Kaul

THE DELTIN, DAMAN

WHAT'S HOT Marketed as India's largest casino integrated resort, the four-hectare Deltin, Daman boasts 176 rooms, four gourmet restaurants, three bars, 743m² of high-end retail space and a luxury spa.

Arun Anand, managing director, Midtown Travels, said: "F&B options like the Emperor Restaurant, which serves Pan Asian cuisine, is popular among guests. The Deltin's whiskey lounge also finds many takers."

Anand added that the poolside is also popular among guests seeking a get-together with live band performance or for drinks at its pool bar.

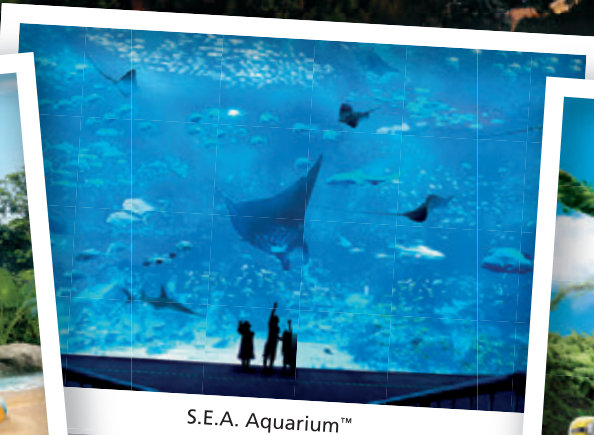
The Deltin, Daman is also known as a wedding venue, which can host between 20 to 2,000 pax. Guests looking to host weddings in an opulent venue away from the hustle and bustle of the city will find property suitable, said Rahul Gupta, owner, Designed Holidays.com.

WHAT'S NOT

"There is not much to do in Daman besides visiting the city and its beaches, so one has to confine himself in the hotel. The prices of the drinks in the hotel restaurants are considered on the higher side by some visitors," said Anand.

Other agents find the property's location a disadvantage. "The hotel is a little far from the beach," said Jayendrasingh Jhala, managing director, Transline Tours & Travels.

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A SPORTING CHANCE

Hong Kong Tourism Board



Cyclists riding through the streets of Hong Kong

Sports fever has swept Hong Kong as the city hosts an increasing multitude of international sporting tournaments in recent years. Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb), recognising the potential of this niche market, has been actively promoting sporting events to showcase the city's diverse offerings and to strengthen its position as the sports tourism hub of Asia.

"Sports events not only enhance the city's image and enrich tourists' experience, they also bring substantial economic benefits to Hong Kong," said HKTb executive director, Anthony Lau.

Established events like the Hong Kong Rugby Sevens, Hong Kong Marathon and the International Dragon Boat Races have successfully drawn many overseas participants as well as large crowds of spectator visitors to Hong Kong, he pointed out.

Riding on the growing popularity of cycling in Asia, HKTb organised the first-ever Hong Kong Cyclothon in October 2015, attracting more than 3,500 participants, including some 100 cyclists from 17 countries and regions.

The latest addition is FIA Formula E Championship, the world's first international series for electric-powered open-wheeled cars, which will take place on October 9 around a 2km-long track between Lung Wo Road and the Star Ferry.

On how the Hong Kong ePrix can position Hong Kong favourably, Lawrence Yu Kam-Kee, president of the Hong Kong Automobile Association, said: "The street circuit will showcase our city to millions around the world, demonstrating that Hong Kong can stage a major international event of the highest calibre."

Acknowledging the benefits of sports tourism, Ng Hi On, director of CTS International Science-Technology & Culture Exchange, calls for more mega sporting events to be held in Hong Kong. He remarked: "The (Hong Kong Marathon) drew both Chinese and South-east Asian visitors. Given the decline in mainland Chinese arrivals, this could be an alternative source of arrivals, making it beneficial for Hong Kong to host more mega sporting events in future."

While Hong Kong has seen a significant

uptick in sports events and attendance, the trade is still grappling with the viability of tapping this niche market.

Michael Ziemer, general manager of The Excelsior Hong Kong, said: "We work closely with travel agents who receive bookings from individual travellers coming for sports activities, (but) we do not specifically target this segment as (its market size is still) considerably smaller at this stage."

Commenting on the challenges that tour operators face when organising sports-centric tours, Alan Wu, managing director of Tour Asia, said: "Activities like cycling and hiking are popular among small groups of eight to 10 pax and FITs from Europe. However, group requests have a long lead time so when these new sports events are finally confirmed, clients have already booked their trips."

The lack of non-English-speaking tour guide is another challenge. "Most French- or German-speaking guides are not young and they do not find this kind of trip lucrative due to the lack of shopping elements to earn commissions," he added.

Destination in numbers

59.3 million

The number of visitor arrivals to Hong Kong in 2015, a drop of 2.5 per cent

45.8 million

The number of arrivals in 2015 from China, Hong Kong's largest source market, representing a three per cent decline

25.1%

The decline in arrivals from Russia, Hong Kong's worst performing market, to 151,469 in 2015

86%

The average occupancy rate of hotels in 2015, down from 90 per cent in 2014

Mega sports events are opening up possibilities for Hong Kong's tourism, but tour operators have yet to grab a handle on this niche market, finds **Prudence Lui**

How to sell

STAY The 63-room **Popway Hotel**, which opened last October, is situated just a stone's throw away from the Museum of History in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui. Choose from five room types and enjoy a 270-degree view of the city skyline from the Uptop Bistro and Bar.

SEE The Hong Kong Architecture Centre polled the Hong Kong public to come up with a list of 10 Most Liked Hong Kong Architecture. Visit iconic landmarks that made the list, including the **Kowloon Walled City, Peak Tram, Star Ferries, Clock Tower, Lui Seng Chun, Tai O Stilt Houses, Chi Lin Nunnery** and **NanLian Garden**.

EAT Enjoy a menu of seasonal Cantonese specialities, including award-winning dishes like Twins Mushroom Platter at Excelsior Hotel's **Yee Tung Heen**. Not to be missed are the restaurant's range of premium teas from China, as well as its authentic dim sum lunch offerings.

DO Spend an afternoon strolling around the historic **Hong Kong University** (HKU) to experience



Viewpoints

What should Hong Kong do to push sports tourism?

Paul Leung, managing director, Holiday World Tours
It's vital for various sports associations to work with HKTB and generate awareness around their respective sports events taking place in Hong Kong. These organisations' associations with (prominent events in town) may lure international travellers to Hong Kong.

Michael Ziemer, general manager, The Excelsior Hong Kong
The lack of sports venues, government funding and industry support have slowed the development of sports tourism compared with neighbouring cities. An individual hotel property relies much on these elements to widen the market.



Yee Tung Heen at Excelsior Hotel



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Destination Hong Kong

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 TramO-ramic city tour

Hong Kong Tramways' new TramO-ramic tour takes visitors through the city on board an open-top tram, outfitted with 1920s memorabilia such as old photos of Hong Kong, a vintage ticket punch, old tram tickets and a uniformed captain. As the tram weaves through the streets, stories and explanations of sites of interest are narrated to passengers through headphones in eight languages.

There are three departures from Western Market Terminus every day (10.30, 14.30 and 18.30) and three from Causeway Bay Terminus (11.40, 15.45 and 19.55). The HK\$95 (US\$12.20) package includes a two-day unrestricted access plus a one-hour ride.

2 Plat du Jour

Swire Restaurants has launched the 160-seat Plat du Jour in Admiralty's Pacific Place Mall. Apart from classic French favourites like escargot bourguignon, lobster bisque and poached tuna niçoise, the restaurant also offers an array of regional options such as coquilles St Jacques and rustic côte de porc. In addition to an all-day à la carte menu, two-course (HK\$235) and three-course (HK\$275) menus are also available for lunch and dinner.

3 Malindo Air

Malindo Air commenced daily flights between Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur on February 5, 2016. Operated on a narrow-body Boeing 737-



800 aircraft with a capacity of 162 passengers (12 business class and 150 economy class), OD606 departs daily from Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong at 10.15 and 15.10 respectively.

4 TurboJET

TurboJET's Premier Grand and Premier Plus passengers can now enjoy a more exclusive pre-boarding experience in the new Premier Lounge. Located next to the vehicle drop-off

point at Shun Tak Centre (G03), the lounge is equipped with removable partitions that allow the space to be transformed into private resting areas or small meeting rooms.

Other features include complimentary snacks and refreshments, magazines and newspapers, free Wi-Fi, and a personal chaperone service during embarkation.

The existing Service Centre at G02 will continue to serve other passengers, TurboJET Jetpass and Stored Value Card holders.

5 Dragonair

Cathay Pacific's sister airline Dragonair will be rebranded as Cathay Dragon to better position itself for the mainland China market.

The rebranding will see a redesigned livery for Cathay Dragon, featuring a Cathay-style brushwing logo, to appear first on one of its Airbus A330-300 aircraft in April before being introduced to the rest of its fleet.

Cathay Pacific and Cathay Dragon will continue operating independently under their own licenses.



MY WAY

What do you do in your free time? Much of my leisure time is spent searching for interesting hotels and dreaming about visiting them.

Hong Kong has several interesting hotels that are overlooked by the mass market. There's the old police station turned Tai O Heritage Hotel on Lantau Island; there's also the YHA Mei Ho House Youth Hostel in Sham Shui Po – the only remaining example of a public resettlement housing block – which has an excel-

lent museum on Hong Kong's housing difficulties in 1954.

What keeps you living in Cheung Chau for so long?

I discovered Cheung Chau and the house I live in today during the first few days of my arrival in Hong Kong in 1976, when several travel agency managers took me to Cheung Chau so that we could get to know each other.

High above the rocky foreshore, I spotted a small block of flats under construc-

tion. I knew immediately that this was where I wanted to live. With a fantastic view over Lantau Island and the South China Sea, the glimmering lights of Macau can be seen on the horizon on a clear evening.

To have the opportunity of living in this fishing village, while actually being in one of the most crowded cities in the world, has been a rare privilege.

What do you miss most about Hong Kong when you are on the road?

You probably won't believe me but when I am away from Hong Kong, the only thing I miss is Cheung Chau Island.

What are your favourite restaurants in Hong Kong?

Apart from Hing Lok Restaurant located on Cheung Chau's waterfront, my favourite watering hole is the Pallet Bar. The simple outdoor restaurant, artfully created with seating made from discarded wooden pallets, is owned by a trained chef from New Zealand. His speciality, fish and chips, took me straight back to my childhood in Melbourne.

What would you recommend for repeat visitors with only two days in town?

I would highly recommend a visit to Cheung Chau where you can take a stroll



Graham Elsom
Managing director,
Concorde Travel

along the pathway that hugs the south-west shore of the island between Sai Wan (famous for the pirate Cheung Po Chai's cave) and what is known locally as Italian Beach. You will need to walk to Sai Wan or take a sampan across the island's harbour from near the main Cheung Chau Pier.

On your second day, you might like to head out to the countryside again and visit the village of Tai O on Lantau Island, where most of the dwellings are in stilts above the water.



TRIED & TESTED

Tai Po Market Foodie Tour

Led by culinary tour operator Hong Kong Foodie, **Prudence Lui** ventures out of the gentrified safety of Hong Kong's tourist belts and into Tai Po, where intriguing stories and culinary gems await

WHY The excursion to Tai Po, in the New Territories, marks Hong Kong Foodie's first culinary tour outside the CBD. According to operations manager Silvana Leung, Tai Po Market is home to some of Hong Kong's favourite foodie haunts, but is less easy to navigate as compared to better-known areas like Sham Shui Po or Sheung Wan. This insider tour helps make the local eateries more accessible, especially to non-Cantonese speakers.

Tai Po Market used to be a traditional market town and despite the government's new town development in the late 1970s, the old town retains its historical charm and authentic local flavors.

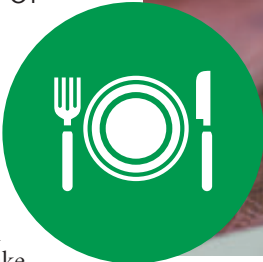
WHAT The guided walking tour covers six family-run eateries and several his-

torical sites on foot in four hours.

The first stop was a time-tested 20-year old eatery, which served up seafood dishes, snake soup, handmade rice rolls, roasted goose rice noodles, Macau-style candies and cookies as well as Chinese desserts.

I liked that Hong Kong Foodie included sightseeing in between tasting sessions to allow us some rest from eating. We stopped by the Tai Po Railway Museum, Town Square, Kwong Fuk Bridge and the Man Mo Temple.

HOW Operating on Fridays at 15.00, the tour is ideal for those who are more open-minded about trying less familiar local fare. The 20-30 minutes given for each stop



was ample to sample signature dishes and learn about their historical significance.

Rubbing shoulders with restaurant owners and local residents when wandering the backstreets of Tai Po Market also provided a great opportunity to learn about how local people live and the agricultural heritage of the area.

SERVICE The tour guide was passionate about sharing her knowledge of the district. The enthusiasm and friendliness of shop owners are impressive too.

VERDICT The itinerary was packed but worthwhile. Those with an appetite for food and adventure will not be disappointed.

Rates
From HK\$640 for children (age 5-14) and HK\$890 for grown-ups (age 15 or above)
Contact details
Tel: (852) 2850 5006
Email: info@hongkongfoodietours.com
Website: www.hongkongfoodietours.com

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Destination Singapore

A SUBURBAN APPEAL

Destination in numbers

15.5 million

The forecast for international visitor arrivals to Singapore in 2015, a three per cent hike from 15.1 million in 2014

1.9 million

The number of visitors from China to Singapore from January to November 2015, a 21 per cent year-on-year increase

S\$24 billion

The forecast for tourism receipts in 2015, equivalent to US\$17.2 billion, a two per cent increase from S\$23.5 billion in 2014

Viewpoints

How can suburban hotels increase their appeal to travellers?



Samson Tan, CEO, GTMC Travel

They need to reach out to targeted travel agencies overseas to provide the agents with the confidence and

convenience in selling the

hotels. For example, they must ensure that there will be rooms available while throwing in deals like upgrades and value-added services.

Daniel Goh, manager, Siam Express

They must organise roadshows in overseas markets to create more awareness as they are pretty new in the market.



Meanwhile, Capri by Fraser, Changi City's location in the far eastern corner of Singapore will enable travellers to seek out "Changi's rich history and its great historical sites", opined Choe Peng Sum, CEO of Frasers Hospitality, which launched the 313-key hotel residence in 2012.

For example, Choe highlighted how the hotel's new cycling expedition in East Coast Park on complimentary bicycles, led by the hotel's general manager, is a hot favourite among the guests.

Commenting on Village Hotel Changi Singapore, Arthur Kiong, CEO of Far East Hospitality, said: "The hotel offers guests a breath of fresh air that is unlike the densely populated urban city centre. It provides guests off-the-beaten-track experiences that enables them to experience the best of Singapore and live like a local."

For visitors interested to see a slice of rustic Singapore, the hotel offers the Ubin Adventure package that provides complimentary bikes to explore Pulau Ubin, an island located a short ferry ride away.

Apart from the immersive experience, the strongest pull towards these suburban hotels is their competitive hotel rates, which can be 10 to 15 per cent lower than city hotels, inbound travel agents told *TTG Asia*.

Hardeep Singh, director of sales and operation in Chariot Travels, said: "These (suburban) hotels are attractive because city hotel rates are high in Singapore, and the good thing about them that they usually provide shuttles to the city so (location) is not a problem at all."

On the other hand, Siam Express' manager Daniel Goh has not received special requests for suburban hotels as they are perceived to be "inconvenient" by his clients.



More suburban hotels like Park Hotel Alexandra (pictured) are wooing visitors with off-the-beaten-track experiences

The emergence of suburban hotels into Singapore's hotel landscape over the past few years has drawn foreign travellers with their offer of a different experience away from the tourist belt.

According to the latest statistics from the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), there were about 14 million room nights available as of November 2015, a seven per cent year-on-year increase, with hotels in suburban areas contributing most to the increase.

The April 2015 launch of Genting Hotel Jurong, sister property to Resorts World Sentosa (RWS), marks the first major hotel in the growing Jurong Lake District. The 557-room hotel is a 15-minute drive from Tuas Checkpoint, which connects Singapore to Johor Bah-

ru in Malaysia.

"We hope (the hotel) will infuse new energy and vibrancy into this thriving business and lifestyle hub," said Chow Keng Hai, vice president of rooms at RWS.

Genting Hotel Jurong has enjoyed a "very healthy occupancy rate" driven by both leisure and business travellers since its opening, with a strong demand from Malaysia and Indonesia, added Chow.

Likewise, the new 443-key Park Hotel Alexandra has been enjoying an average occupancy rate of 70 per cent since its soft opening in June 2015, according to its general manager Angeline Tan.

"Many travellers are increasingly looking for immersive experiences be it on business or leisure travel, and there is more to shopping and sightseeing in Sin-

gapore," observed Tan, who counts Europe, Australia, Hong Kong, China and Malaysia as the hotel's key target markets.

Tan believes that the historical flavour of the Alexandra-Bukit Merah area lends to the property's unique selling points. "The hotel overlooks the lush verdant green belt of the Southern Ridges on one front and the heritage enclave of Queens-town on the other. The area itself is full of history," she added.

Katong's Peranakan heritage, on the other hand, is a stronger drawcard for Grand Mercure Singapore Roxy located on East Coast Road. Said Jennifer Narcis, the hotel's director of sales & marketing: "We are located within the rich cultural district of Katong where traces of Peranakan history are found. The hotel is also a short walk away to the scenic East Coast Park."

Offering a more immersive local experience and lower hotel rates than its counterparts in the city, suburban hotels are gradually growing in popularity among foreign visitors, discovers **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

MY WAY

What do you do in your free time?

As I travel quite frequently, I try to be back home in Singapore on weekends, which are usually spent with my wonderful wife of 28 years and my two lovely daughters, aged 25 and 23.

We are all actively involved in our church activities at Barker Road Methodist Church; my entire family is in the music ministry. In addition, as a lay leader in the church I am also fairly involved in the church's activities in my free time.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy reading – in particular Christian books which allow me to take my mind off work. I usually play church music on my guitar and if time permits, I will hit the gym which I find very therapeutic.

Which is a must-visit attraction in Singapore?

In a short span of time, our Gardens by the Bay has achieved an iconic status globally and in part achieved the vision

of a city in a garden.

The two main conservatories housing the Cloud Forest and the Flower Dome are equally captivating with their myriad fauna and flora collection. To top it off, the stunning waterfall (in the Cloud Forest) further enhances the colourful landscape. This is definitely a must visit when in the city-state.

Any dining spots to recommend?

There are some remarkable restaurants in Singapore – the F&B scene is as varied as it is mature.

A few restaurants that I frequent with family and friends include Salt Grill & Sky Bar at Ion, which has great views of the city; Ristorante Pietrasanta at Portsdown, which offers delicious Tuscan-inspired dishes; and Open Door Policy at Tiong Bahru for its innovative fusion fare.

Which is your favourite place in Singapore?

Sometimes, I take half a day off and head



Gardens by the Bay

to East Coast Park. I enjoy the sea view as it relaxes me and I find the environment conducive for some introspection. It is also a place to read and chill.

Choe Peng Sum
CEO
Fraser's Hospitality



NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 Sofitel Singapore Sentosa Resort & Spa

Singapore's second Sofitel property has opened on Sentosa island, armed with 211 rooms and suites, four villas, four dining outlets, over 1,300m² of MICE facilities and the world's largest So Spa.

The property sports a bold and elegant design that integrates with the surrounding 11ha of tropical woodlands. It is also the only hotel on Sentosa that overlooks the South China Sea, and has easy access to Tanjong Beach.

2 Aerotel Singapore

Plaza Premium Group last October launched its first Aerotel transit hotel at Singapore Changi Airport. The property boasts a resort feel with amenities such as an outdoor swimming pool, Jacuzzi, gym and library lounge, plus a customised pillow menu.

Rates at Aerotel are charged based on a six-hour block, depending on

room sizes. Prices start from S\$90-S\$130 (US\$65-US\$94), with every subsequent hour priced at S\$20 each.

3 National Kitchen

Helmed by local celebrity chef Violet Oon, National Kitchen is a celebration of Peranakan dishes such as dry laksa, beef rendang and sambal prawns.

Choose to dine indoors in an elegant dining hall or enjoy sweeping views of Singapore's skyline on the veranda. Private spaces are available for hire at this 280m² venue as well.

4 Singapore Airlines' new Canberra services

From September 2016, pending regulatory approval, Singapore Airlines will ply the Singapore-Canberra and Canberra-Wellington routes four times weekly each, making it the first carrier to operate regular scheduled international flights from Australia's capital city.



ADVERTORIAL

Qatar tourism receipts to reach \$7.2 billion by 2025



Qatar's tourism and hospitality industry is building momentum as it enters the second half of the decade, with an ambitious target of four million visitors by 2020, supported by US\$40-45 billion worth of sector investment under the country's National Tourism Sector Strategy 2030 plan.

According to a Q3 2015 HVS report entitled In Focus: Doha, Tracking Progress, travel and tourism contributed US\$4.2 billion – or 2% – to the GDP in 2014, with a figure of US\$4.6 billion forecast for 2015 (a rise of 7.3%).

The HVS report notes the addition of 11 new hotel properties with a total of 1,400 rooms to the market in 2015; as part of its commitment to reach 50,000 additional rooms by the 2022, when it will host the FIFA World Cup. Kempinski Marsa Malaz Hotel, Banana Island Resort by Anantara and Melia Doha Hotel were a few of the brands to enter the market last year with Qatar Tourism Authority reporting an estimated 10,000 rooms currently under construction and expected to enter the market by 2018/9.

Official statistics tally current hotel room capacity at 17,900 keys, 84% of which is four and five-star accommodation.

The Gulf state returns to Arabian Travel Mart this year to showcase its expanding hotel and tourism infrastructure pipeline

following a successful 2015 with visitor numbers in the first nine months of 2014 growing to reach 2.2 million in Q3, representing a year-on-year increase of 7.7%, and booming air connectivity which saw Hamad International Airport exceed forecasted capacity of 30 million passengers last year.

ATM 2016 will build on the success of this year's edition with the announcement of an additional hall as Reed Travel Exhibitions looks to add to its record-breaking achievements earlier this year. ATM 2015 witnessed a year-on-year visitor attendance increase of 15% to over 26,000, with exhibiting companies increasing by 5% to 2,873. Business deals worth more than US\$2.5 billion were signed over the four days.

About Arabian Travel Market

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

Arabian Travel Market is part of Reed Travel Exhibition's World Travel Market group of events.

For more information on Arabian Travel Market 2016, please go to: www.arabiantravelmarket.com

Destination Singapore

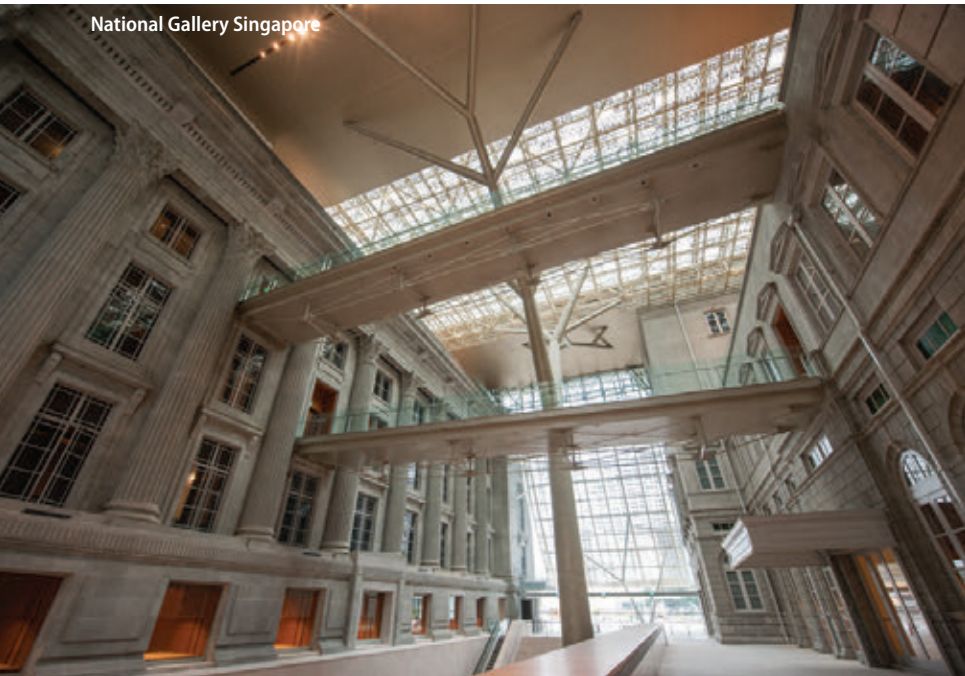
How to sell

STAY Art lovers can look forward to a delightful stay in **Hotel Vagabond**. The luxury boutique hotel is Asia's first property to feature interiors by French designer Jacques Garcia. This experience-driven hotel boasts a salon area designed to immerse guests in the theatre of art, food, drink and conversation.

SEE Visit the **National Gallery Singapore**, which is the first museum in the world dedicated to modern art from Singapore and South-east Asia. The museum is housed in the former City Hall and Supreme Court buildings.

DO Catch a screening at the iconic **Capitol Singapore Theatre**, which reopened in April last year after being closed for almost two decades. The refurbished theatre can seat up to 1,000 pax and boasts one of South-east Asia's largest single screens.

EAT Chilli crabs are a must-try for any foreign visitor to the Lion City. Head to **Crab in da Bag** in the Big Splash complex at East Coast Park. This Louisi-Asian seafood restaurant serves up a wide variety of seafood in plastic bundles, best enjoyed with bare hands for a truly multisensory experience.



TRIED & TESTED Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore

Whoever says old-world luxury is out of fashion either hasn't experienced it, or is hoodwinked into thinking that it is no longer needed, says **Raini Hamdi**

LOCATION A squirrel devouring the jam of a leftover high tea, rare small birds twittering on the ground, a lush, beautiful garden full of tropical plants and flowers, a lawn so immaculate you want to roll in it. Every time I'm here, I marvel how this hotel transports me into a different sphere and clears all distractions and diversions – never mind that Orchard Road is just minutes' walk away.

ROOM I'm in the Valley Wing, the most exclusive of the hotel's three wings. An entry-level room here, such as the Deluxe Room I'm in (Room 1641), is fit for a dignitary. It is so spacious; I'm sure it's at least 50m². Just imagine the scale if I tell you I'm able to do Vinyasa in the *bathroom*. The views of the pool, garden and lawn and the city's greenery add to the plus points of the room, but the real luxury lies

elsewhere: the ability to provide utter comfort. Move aside the Internet of things; let us re-celebrate the Appropriateness of things. Here, they go to the extent of treating the water so that it is extra soft and smooth on the skin. Light switches and sockets are correctly placed, so is the large safe deposit box (I've enough of small safes and ones placed in areas you have to do a yoga bend to access your valuables). They guess correctly that we need a solid work desk and a dresser that can also act as a second work desk (we're a couple). They are correct that we need a jacket/trouser stand, L'Occitane amenities, weighing scale, vanity mirror, plush towels, fruit basket that's generously replenished everyday – who



TRIED & TESTED

One Farrer Hotel & Spa



A luxurious hideaway in one of Singapore's most evocative precincts, One Farrer Hotel & Spa is unique, says **Raini Hamdi** after a spa and art tour there

LOCATION A luxury development a stone's throw to multicoloured Little India, the hotel is minutes' drive to Orchard Road and the CBD area. Adding convenience, it sits above the Farrer Park MRT station.

ROOM A four-in-one product – Urban Hotel, Loft Apartments, Skyline Hotel and Sky Villas – a site inspection shows tastefully furnished contemporary rooms and lofts, and extremely spacious and luxurious villas.

Art is definitely a sweet spot here and I marvel how vast the collection is and how it is obviously curated to fit specific spaces, i.e. no throwing art anywhere around here. The result is a great example of how paintings and unique sculptures can be used to create a coherent, residential and personalised aura in a hotel.

Adding to the homeliness, the collection is also a showcase of Asian talent. The more than 700 original artworks throughout the One Farrer complex, which comprises the hotel, One Farrer Conference Centre, Farrer Park Hos-

pital, Farrer Park Medical Centre and Owen Link (a retail and dining zone), are done by over 60 well-known and emerging artists living and working in Asia. Free one-hour guided tours are given daily from 15.00 at the hotel lobby.

FACILITIES What I like about the hotel is that once inside, it immediately zaps away the glare, heat, noise of the day and re-energises me. Its corridors and surroundings are spacious, green, serene – in one word, Zen-suous!

This sets the tone for my Spa Retreat programme at the hotel, which aims to provide a 'total lifestyle environment'. I get that concept as my eyes scan the gorgeous Olympic-size pool amid lush tropical gardens, towering palm trees and a uniquely Singapore skyline of modern high-rises interplaying with roofs of low-rise pre-war houses. Then, there's the 24/7 state-of-the-art fitness centre, which makes me feel fit even without moving a muscle. And we have not even gotten to the actual spa, the Asian Wellness Spa. Its comprehensive list of treatments combining Western and



From left: The Valley Wing lobby, a Deluxe Room in the Valley Wing

says we don't need these things! And although the hotel is more than 40 years old, the maintenance is so excellent that everything shines like new, Wi-Fi is free and speedy, there's IPTV, Nespresso machine, I could go on.

FACILITIES Nothing beats lounging by the large pool in the garden, although the hotel also has a marvellous gym, tennis courts, CHI, The Spa and is legendary for its meeting/banquet space.

F&B For a group which is a pioneer of

Club benefits, the Valley Wing does not disappoint. Champagne, light snacks and canapes are served in the wing's lounge from – listen to this – 11.00 to 22.30. High tea is served from 14.00 to 17.00. The hotel is also renowned for its Japanese, Chinese, Italian and Line (local) restaurants.

SERVICE My check-in took about 30 minutes and was the most impersonal and unwelcoming experience I've ever had, which perplexed me, as this was supposed to be *the* exclusive wing of the hotel. When I went to the counter to check if anything was wrong with my reservation,

traditional Chinese practices, and targeted programmes including a 30-day fatigue management and a 90-day sleep management, is bound to deliver something for everyone.

My treatment plan combines traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), massage and acupuncture. A young, qualified TCM physician assesses me in great detail (I'll spare you the details) and while I appreciate her earnestness, I find it a little too well-meaning.

After which, Katherine The Great Masseuse takes over and that's the most pleasurable part of my spa – oh, is she caring, gentle yet firm with her massage strokes. The TCM physician returns to do acupuncture and, knowing I'm afraid of anything needle-like, she's very careful. Although I know there's nothing to be worried about, it's just not for me and asks her to stop. After dressing up, I have to return to her, and she diligently lists out the foods, herbs and herbal formulas I should and should not take (reduce alcohol, cold drinks/food and creamy/greasy food).

Once the session is over, I happily head for the poolside bar where a glass of Chardonnay and a beautiful sun-setting ambience soothe my nerves far better than TCM or acupuncture can.

F&B I enjoy the hearty Singapore favourites and grilled specialties served by the poolside restaurant, Flip Flop. There's also Escape serving local/international cuisine.

SERVICE Pleasant and friendly.

VERDICT As industry members, we always clamour for 'something new'. At last, something new has come along. Time to embrace it.



the receptionist said "you're next in line", even though there was no line.

Fortunately, there are many delightful staff, in particular Hari, Sarah and Raja, who restore Shangri-La's service reputation as impeccable and top-notch.

VERDICT Paradise found!

No. of rooms and suites 747
Rates Valley Wing from S\$585++ (US\$418++)
Contact details
 Tel: (65) 6737 3644
 Email: sls@shangri-la.com
 Website: www.shangri-la.com

No. of keys 250
Rates S\$419++ (US\$297) for the 225-minute Spa Retreat
Contact details
 Tel: (65) 6363 0101
 Email: enquiry@onefarrer.com
 Website: www.onefarrer.com



An Urban Room featuring on the wall *Stones at the Pier* by Jonathan Olazo



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Register now at PATA.org/PAS-2016
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Destination **Indonesia**

BELITUNG'S NEW SHINE

A hidden gem in the east coast of Sumatra, Belitung is striving to gain recognition as a tourist destination for regional and international travellers.

Part of the Bangka-Belitung Province, Belitung was home to a thriving tin mining industry in the 1970s, but the economy took a turn in the late 1990s when the state-owned Timah Industri moved its tin operations to the much bigger neighbouring island of Bangka.

It was not until Andrea Hirata's novel *Laskar Pelangi* (English: *The Rainbow Troops*) – set in the author's hometown in Belitung's Gantong Village following the demise of the local tin mining industry – was adapted into a successful movie in 2008 that Belitung started attracting Indonesian and expatriate visitors and the locals had their eyes opened to the island's tourism potential.

The destination came to be dubbed *Bumi Laskar Pelangi* (Land of the Rainbow Troops) and the Andrea Hirata Words Museum was built on the film site in Gantong Village in 2010.

Lending Belitung its tremendous potential for tourism are several sites that stand testament to the island's unique history and natural biodiversity, according to Budi Setiawan, director of Belitung Adventure Tours and Tourism Destination

Board.

Around Tanjung Kelayang in the north, natural granite formations can be found on land and in the ocean – sometimes hundreds of metres deep – while remnants of sunken ships that sailed from China, Arabia and Europe centuries ago lie in the southern islands of Belitung.

"The fact that these ships brought valuable goods such as porcelain of Tang, Ming, Song and other Chinese dynasties has made the area an historic underwater archaeological site," said Budi.

Another highlight is the tarsier, an endangered species of small primates found in Belitung's rainforests.

"The locals used to take (the tarsiers) for granted and chased them out of their gardens. Only when tourists started travelling from far away to see them did the locals get reminded of their value," said Budi, who also heads the Belitung Environment Concern Group.

Budi posits that community-based tourism is the way forward for Belitung, but admits that adjusting to a service-oriented industry like tourism will take time for the locals.

Local engagement is thus key to ensuring the sustainable development of both tourism and livelihoods.

"The locals know the forest and mangrove areas best; they are divers by nature

and they are proud of their homeland," said Budi. "In the past, some of them were pirates; some bombed corals to sell. We trained them to become guides. The dive guides, for example, are certified now."

As part of conservation projects, Budi runs educational tours for travellers, corporate groups and students. Activities available include island hopping, trekking, diving, river tubing, tarsier watching, coral planting and adoptions, turtle release and mangrove touring.

Meanwhile, there are plans to develop Leebong Island – a 37ha isle three kilometres off Belitung's coast – with an eco-friendly approach. Yudianto, owner of Belitung Happy Tour, the sister company of Leebong Island management, said: "We will build a limited number of accommodation and recreational facilities. Currently, we are in the first phase of development and one out of five bungalows and the restaurant is ready."

Also underway are plans by the Bangka Belitung government to expand the runway from 2,225m to 2,550m at the H.A.S. Hanandjoeddin Airport in Tanjung Pandan, the capital of Belitung.

Arief Yahya, Indonesian minister of tourism, commented: "Airport development is crucial if Belitung wants its tourism to grow."

In September last year, Indonesian

Destination in numbers

9.7 million

The number of tourist arrivals to Indonesia in 2015, according to data from Statistics Indonesia

144 trillion

The estimated tourism receipt earned in rupiah in 2015, equivalent to US\$10.3 billion, an increase from 133.9 trillion rupiah in 2014

10

The percentage of tourism industry's contribution to Indonesia's GDP in 2015. It is expected to reach 11 per cent this year

president Joko Widodo inaugurated Tanjung Batu Seaport. Tanjung Kelayang has been named one of the 10 special economic zones to be developed and promoted by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism.

Apart from hotels, a port for yachts will be built at Tanjung Kelayang. The whole project is expected to finalise in five years.

Shallow waters with granite rock formations and white sand beaches make up the typical landscapes of Belitung



A successful novel turned movie has provided the impetus for a small island to step out of its tin-mining past and discover the other treasures it has, writes **Mimi Hudoyo**

Viewpoints

What else does Belitung need to do to attract travellers?



Ricky Setiawanto, director of business development, Panorama Destination

The local players need to go out and promote themselves more. To start with, they can invite inbound players like us on fam trips to see what they have to offer.

Belitung would be one of the destinations in Indonesia to witness the total solar eclipse on March 9 and many travellers will visit there. The destination should make the most out of it to showcase what they have.

Johnnie Sugiarto, vice chairman, Indonesia Hotels and Restaurants Association

There are around 2,000 rooms of all categories in Belitung, which is more than enough for the time being. What hotels need is to improve their human resources and services.

Some hotel owners and staff still dress very casually. I think grooming is important and the quality of service needs improvement.

Belitung also needs to come up with more programmes to encourage travellers to stay longer and fill the hotel rooms. For now, they are doing fine on weekends or holidays but not on weekdays.



How to sell

SEE Not many know that tarsiers, or *pellean* in the local language, are not only found in North Sulawesi but also in Belitung. Visit the **forests of Belitung** at night to see this nocturnal species, also one of the smallest primates, in their natural habitat. Also catch tarsiers at the breeding site in **Batu Mentas** and learn about this endangered species.

DO **Tanjung Kelayang** in northern Belitung offers great snorkelling and diving spots. Apart from colourful fish and corals, the underwater granite forming hills, ravines and caves are also unique attractions in the area.

In the southern part of Belitung, dive into the waters to see the Chinese, Europeans and Middle Eastern **shipwrecks** dating back to the 16th century.

EAT Visit **Rumah Adat Belitung** and dine the local way (*Makan Bedulang*), which involves sitting on the floor and sharing a tray of several dishes including meat, fish, vegetable and soup with white rice. One tray of food is typically shared by four persons. Traditionally, the eldest among the four opens the tray cover and the youngest serves.

STAY Tanjung Pandan, the capital of Belitung Regency, is home to several mid-scale and economy hotels like **BW Suite, Grand Hatika, Pondok Impian** and **Grand Pelangi**.

For more rustic accommodation, Leebong Island has a tree-house accommodation. Cottages and homestays are also available for those seeking interaction with the locals.

NEWS IN A MINUTE

- 1 Garuda Indonesia**

Garuda Indonesia will start a non-stop service between London and Jakarta from March 31, making it the only direct service between Indonesia and the UK.

This service will see the airline moving its operation from Gatwick to Heathrow, increasing frequency from thrice to five times a week and
- cutting out the stopover in Amsterdam. The Jakarta-London leg, however, will transit in Singapore.

The service will continue using the Boeing 777-300ER aircraft in a three-class configuration.
- 2 Anantara Seminyak Bali Resort**

Anantara Seminyak Resort & Spa Bali has been renamed Anantara

MY WAY

What do you do on weekends in Jakarta?

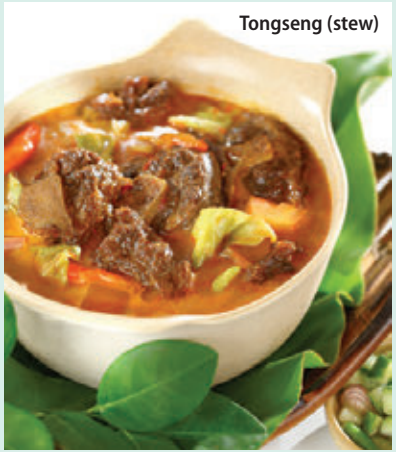
As my family is currently based in Hong Kong, I would spend my weekends restaurant hopping with my good friends. There are always new restaurants opening in Jakarta, such as the areas of Pantai Indah Kapuk, Jalan Senopati or even malls.

Where do you go for authentic Indonesian food?

As I was born and brought up in a Manadoese family, the spicy and rich taste of Manado food is the highlight of my culinary experience. That explains my regular visits to Ikan Tude Restaurant on Jalan Blora and Beautika in Senayan. I also visit Sate Kambing Djono in Pejompongan for its lamb skewer and *tongseng* (stew).

What would you suggest to a frequent visitor to Jakarta to spend a day in the city?

Visitors would need more than a day to see Jakarta. But if they just have a day to spend, I would recommend seeing Monas (National Monument) first as



Eduard Pangkerego
Corporate general manager
Artotel Indonesia

it is a landmark. They can enjoy the city view from Monas and visit the National History Museum later.

If they are interested in buying keepsakes, Sarinah Thamrin offers a wide variety to bring home for family and friends. Relax and chill out in the evening at Artotel Thamrin-Jakarta's Bart, one of the must-visit rooftop bars in Jakarta.

Where would you take guests interested in arts and culture in Jakarta?

Jakarta has many talented artists. Visitors can view art in galleries around the city such as Gallery National Indonesia, Jakarta Biennale at Gudang Sarinah and for contemporary art the Art Space at Artotel Thamrin-Jakarta.

Name three things that visitors must bring with them when travelling in Jakarta

For sightseeing, a camera or a smartphone (with a high-resolution camera and high-speed internet connection) are a must! Also, it is good to have some change on hand when getting around the city by public transport.



Seminyak Bali Resort, following a recent renovation of the 59-key property. The revamp includes an overhaul of its suites and penthouses, a refurbished lobby, a new beachfront restaurant and beach club, plus the brand-new MoonLite Kitchen & Bar on the rooftop deck.

- 3 Soekarno-Hatta International Airport**

Soekarno-Hatta International Airport's Terminal 3 Ultimate is scheduled to open in May, marking the completion of the first phase of the airport's expansion programme. The second phase will finish by this year-end and be ready for operation early next year.

The combined capacity of Terminals 2 and 3, both undergoing expansion, is expected to be 65 million passengers per year.
- 4 Days Hotel & Suites Jakarta Airport**

Wyndham Hotel Group's first Days Inn-branded hotel in Indonesia,

the Days Hotel & Suites Jakarta Airport is situated 5.3km from Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in the Cenkayang district of West Jakarta.

The full-service property is equipped with 119 guestrooms and suites, complete with a rooftop pool, wellness centre and Wi-Fi access throughout the hotel. Complimentary airport shuttle bus transfers are also available.

Other facilities include an all-day dining restaurant, a lobby lounge and bar, as well as eight meeting rooms with banqueting services.

5 Seminyak Village

Seminyak Village, a new shopping mall, opened in the heart of Bali's Seminyak last October.

Developed by Melium Nusantara, a property development company affiliated with Malaysia's luxury fashion purveyor The Melium Group, Seminyak Village boasts 5,574m² of retail space and 48 shops and restaurants over two levels.

Destination Indonesia

TRIED & TESTED

Alila Seminyak, Bali

There is just one word to describe the latest Alila outpost in Seminyak: sexy. By **Raini Hamdi**

LOCATION Simply fantastic, minutes' walk to Seminyak's chic boutiques and restaurants and boasts a long beachfront.

AMBIENCE I arrive in extremely heavy rain. Yet, curtains of water and staff scrambling to keep the lobby dry fail to dampen Alila's stylish vibes. The architecture has the brand's stamp on it – clean lines, minimalist, open spaces – except this newest Alila is larger, more sprawling, more contemporary, posher. Some may argue it needs to be more Balinese but for me the architecture fits like a glove in trendy Seminyak. A beautiful, old temple on prime beachfront is incorporated right into the heart of the development – what better Bali flag is there than that?

ROOM I'm in Deluxe Ocean Suite 134 which is on the third floor of a low-rise building, one of three buildings that comprise the hotel. The size of my suite is a generous 60m² and its sleek, clutter-free design makes the room feel even more spacious and comfortable. The huge balcony with an inviting daybed hits a yearning; I know I will be immersing myself in a book there often, or watching people

along the beach and enjoying the famous Seminyak sunset.

Ironically, there isn't enough space in the very spacious suite – too few drawers for clothes and no working table. But its modern comforts are faultless; I love the complete range of Alila toiletries, free speedy Wi-Fi, LCD TV with satellite channels and plenty of movies, and coffee-/tea-making facilities.

There are several room types and sizes. At the time of visit in early February, 124 of 240 rooms have opened.

F&B Move aside Potato Head next door. Alila's Beach Bar clearly is the new flavour of the month. A large open pavillion with the cosiest daybeds and cushiest floor couches, it's the place to be anytime from 11.00 but especially in the evenings, with beach music being spun by a DJ.

Alila's all-day dining is an open-kitchen beachfront restaurant with many sections, including an Asian noodle bar and a grill & rotisserie. I love the variety it offers. My favourites are the chilli crab claws



and crispy chicken with Szechuan lemon mayonnaise.

FACILITIES Three of five infinity pools have opened – and how gorgeous they are. Equally a dream is the fitness centre near the Beach Bar which is lined with the best machines, yoga room, body-building and relaxation spaces. Other facilities include the Alila Spa and an Event Centre which can host meetings and banquets for up to 350 people.

SERVICE Alila prides itself on being 'Surprisingly Different'. On standby at the lobby are handsome, young 'menpower' dressed in smart white shirts and navy trousers ready to welcome and help guests with luggage, shopping bags, directions, etc. All the staff I encounter are clearly

proud to be part of a swanky hotel; morale is high and they are so eager to be of service. There are real stars among them, like Roma who serves at the all-day dining restaurant, and there are others who are still 'raw' but their enthusiasm more than make up for their inexperience.

VERDICT Hottest chick in town and dripping with tropical cool. A great addition to Alila's portfolio, and that of Design Hotels, of which it is a member.

No. of rooms 240

Rates Check various introductory deals on offer throughout the year on the website

Contact details

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Website: www.alilahotels.com/seminyak

Four Points by Sheraton Bali, Kuta

A buzzy location, thoughtful in-room amenities and rustic decor were what garnered **Mimi Hudoyo's** nod of approval at this new mid-scale property in Bali

LOCATION Nestled in the heart of Kuta on Bali's south-west coast, the hotel is just a 10-minute walk from Kuta Beach while the buzzing shopping and nightlife of Legian is just 200m away.

Jalan Benesari, where the hotel is located,

is a busy street lined with small shops selling handicrafts, souvenirs, beachwear, local restaurants and convenience stores.

ROOMS My Deluxe Lagoon Access room is minimalist in design, with a white-and-beige

colour scheme and full-length glass doors leading to the veranda and the lagoon pool.

In-room facilities meet the expectations of any discerning guest: a very comfortable bed, strong Wi-Fi connection, a large screen TV, tea and coffee making facility, and even an iron and ironing board – something not all resorts of this class provide.

F&B For a property with only 185 rooms, it is impressive that Four Points by Sheraton Bali, Kuta has four F&B outlets.

Breakfast at The Eatery is a sumptuous affair and the live cooking station serves out fresh, piping-hot food. The spaghetti I had for lunch was delicious, whipped up by Italian chef Paul Maurici.

Indonesian food is one of the restaurant's specialities and the *rujak* (Indonesian fruit salad) and *siomai* (dumplings) certainly gave them the bragging rights.

Wrapped, on the lobby level, makes an ideal venue for desserts and ice cream on a hot day; while Best Brews, facing Jalan Benesari, is an urban beer garden which makes a nice spot to kick back in the evening over drinks, oven-wood pizza and kebab, surrounded by live music in the background.

Located on the rooftop, Vertigo offers views of the Legian area and a free-form pool with a swim-up bar.

FACILITIES The hotel has two pool areas, the Lagoon Pools on the ground floor,

along with a Jacuzzi and a kid's pool, plus another one on the rooftop.

I really enjoyed spending time by the pool. I started my morning with coffee on the veranda and a leisurely swim before breakfast. Come afternoon, I would laze around the pool and in the Jacuzzi, catch up on my reading and social media updates.

One interesting feature of the hotel is its rustic decor, such as the carved wooden furniture in the high-ceilinged lobby, vintage suitcases in front of the reception desk, bamboo lampshades in the rooms, and the combination of iron and rattan chairs in the restaurants.

SERVICE The hotel has young, enthusiastic and friendly staff. It was quite a busy weekend when I arrived, but both my check-in and check-out processes were speedy.

There is always room to improve, however. The a la carte service at The Eatery could be faster, considering the restaurant was not too packed during lunch.

VERDICT A hotel that offers space and comfort for relaxation, yet just steps away from the buzzing Legian and Kuta districts.

No. of rooms 185

Rates From US\$85

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



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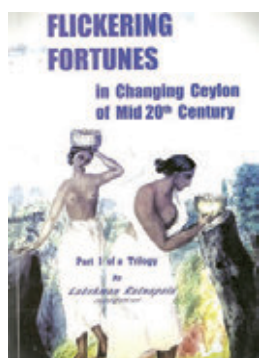
WE LIKE Snippets of happenings good and bad surrounding the travel trade



EX PATA CHIEF PUBLISHES BOOK

Former president and CEO of PATA, Lakshman Ratnapala, has penned an account of his early life as a privileged child in colonial Ceylon, published as an illustrated book now available in Vijitha Yapa bookshops (US\$20.80) in Sri Lanka and globally online on Amazon (US\$30).

Titled *Flickering Fortunes*, the autobiography is sponsored by PATA, among others, including the UN's International Press Service and Phoenix Ogilvy Marketing Communications. It also carries an introduction to the author by two-term PATA president Alwin Zecha.



TRAVELRAVE 2015 REPORT



Data and insights gathered during TravelRave 2015 is now available as a downloadable report. During the week-long travel

event, spearheaded by Singapore Tourism Board, industry experts provided thought leadership on what is shaking up the industry and how all segments of tourism, from business and MICE to leisure and technology, are affecting the future of the trade. Topics such as nurturing human capital in the hospitality industry and impact of the sharing economy are also discussed.

AIRASIA GETS GREEN AND GROUNDED

Thai AirAsia, which has opened a flight base at U-Tapao Airport in Rayong, recently organised a cleanup of Mae Ramphueng Beach in the province in January as part of its Green 24 campaign. The airline hopes to instill a sense of care for natural tourist attractions and to fight climate change through this initiative.



ZIKA A DRAG ON FLIGHTS

Flight bookings to destinations hit by the Zika virus have been consistently slowing, according to research by ForwardKeys, following the US government's travel warning in January and the World Health Organization's declaration of a global health emergency in February.

Bookings to the affected areas, namely Central and Latin America as well as the Caribbean, have as a whole fallen by 3.4 per cent since January 15 and by 10 per cent in early February.

Further analysis shows that tourist destinations such as Guadeloupe (-21 per cent), Martinique (-24 per cent), Puerto Rico (-22 per cent) and the US Virgin Islands (-27 per cent), have been the hardest hit and longhaul source markets most affected.

WHO'S SAYING WHAT



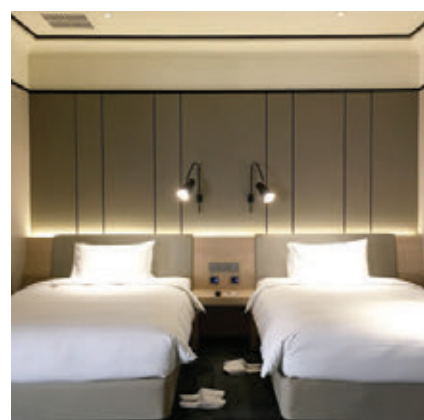
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Goodbye to our dear and loyal intern Nadra who stuck it out with us for the last four months. We will always remember you... for calling us old! [#foreveryoung](#)



Not your average yusheng at our annual TTTG Asia lo hei lunch. Huat ah! [#cny2016](#) [#ttgasia](#)



Congrats to Aerotel on their grand opening in Singapore. Say goodbye to uncomfortably long waits for our connecting flights. [#aerotel](#) [#changiairport](#)



Most commented

SOUTH KOREA EYES INDONESIAN TRAVELLERS

I'm an Indonesian citizen and I have been to South Korea, travelling all the way to popular tourist sites like Nami Island, Mt Seorak, enjoying the blossoming of sakura in the heart of Seoul, and a lot more. South Korea doesn't really need to do much to attract Indonesian travellers because the K-Wave has made its way here from at least a decade ago and I know a lot of Indonesians who are head over heels for everything 'K'.

I myself am not a K-pop fanatic, I must declare. I went to South Korea just because I wanted to and I remember back then when I announced to some of my friends that I'm going to travel to South

Korea, a majority of them went a little overboard, well, girls mostly. They asked me if I could help them buy K-pop stuff, like CDs, posters, everything 'K'. They wanted the super limited edition of everything I could find. Well, I managed to bring them what they asked for back to Indonesia and I felt the hype. — Eka Lee

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- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
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