

TTG

A S I A

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Leaving rouble trouble behind

The Russians are coming... back! As the rouble stabilises, Russian holidaymakers are starting to visit Asia again, reigniting industry hopes for a major market comeback.

TTG Asia assesses the trade sentiments



View from the top

Sonia Irvine, founder of Amber Lounge, takes **Raini Hamdi** backstage into a testosterone-charged world and gives insights into what it takes to throw the original F1 party

+

A walk on the wild side in Singapore

Solving ASEAN's tourism skill gaps

Eventful times for Penang



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Can white-glove service in the digital age be provided only by a real human? Or can travel technology be so human and provide white-glove service in the digital age?

Since the mid-’90s, the clarion call to travel agents has been – and still is – for them to embrace technology. So I could not contain my gasp when I hear Grab, one of South-east Asia’s most successful startups, say it is embracing travel agents.

This was during a recent panel session at a new forum called Millennial 20/20 in Singapore when Cheryl Goh, group vice president marketing of the taxi app, said the company had for the first time consolidated its travel programme with an agency. The impetus was safety, as employees are travelling to places where there are bombings and terror attacks. But the experience in using a travel agent made her realise how wide the gap still is between travel technology today and the level of personalisation and convenience that a good agency offers.

“Someone intelligent enough to figure out your habits and what kind of places you stay, give you the best recommendations and make payment seamless – that still does not exist in the way the travel agent works.

“Right now, lower pricing is the impetus for people booking travel online, not the experience.”

To me, this sounds like both an opportunity and a threat to agents. On the one hand, it shows what agents must do to earn a place for themselves in the future, i.e. push the envelope of personalised, intelligent and convenient service. On the other hand, it is without a doubt that existing and new startups will be trying to do just that, and are probably more adept at using new digital technologies such as AI-fuelled bots, which are actually

like people, except they are computers, to make travel planning become more seamless, connected, convenient and personalised.

Who will win? In this, I fully agree with a pointer I read in an Accenture brochure (the company provides consultancy to hospitality and travel industry) on *Connected Travel*.

The savviest players, it said, focus on the essence of hospitality – the guest experience rather than the latest cool gadget. Nothing matters more than the guest experience.

“Think of it as the evolution of white-glove service for the digital age. Innovating with digital is not an end itself. It is a means to transform the guest experience and work more efficiently.”

Can white-glove service in the digital age be provided only by a real human? Or can travel technology be so human and provide white-glove service in the digital age?

Perhaps in the end there could be room for both players. Given their current upperhand in providing customers with added value and an experience, travel agents should work to solidify their position and race forward in giving white-glove service rather than be left behind in the race.

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COMING UP



HOTEL CHAINS They may be the newest kids on the block, but innovative entrants like Bangkok’s Kokotel Surawong (right) have sights set on expansion and filling gaps in the market

SILVER TOURISM Asia-Pacific’s changing demographics are poised to create an emerging traveller type – and new opportunities of growth

CHINA Not content to be perceived as a cultural and historical destination any longer, Beijing goes on a quest to diversify its tourism products

THAILAND Thailand’s crackdown on zero-dollar tours has the travel agent community up in arms over how the new minimum tour pricing will affect the Chinese inbound market



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Analysis



After Russia's outbound tourism industry took a tumble following the economic and political crises in recent years, the trade is finally seeing the first shoots of recovery from the bruised market.

Pointing to the stabilising Russian rouble, Artem Alekseev, CEO of Ros Business Travel in Russia, said he saw at least a 10 per cent recovery in his business this year compared with 2015.

He explained: "There are still a lot of people who want to spend time and money travelling out of the country, and we see that the economic situation is becoming more stable now, which gives Russians confidence to travel again."

Likewise, Viacheslav Akaevich, director of Russia-based Samojet, who observed outbound business picking up in the past six months, said: "There are signs that our people want to travel again and of course we hope the situation will get better. It is already a good sign to see the currency becoming stable."

Akaevich shared that 30 per cent of his

bestselling destinations are in Asia, with a majority in Thailand and Indonesia – especially beach destinations like Phuket and Bali. He is also looking to discover new beach spots in the region to raise greater interest among Russian travellers.

A more favourable outlook of the Russian travel market is also spurring optimism among Asian tour operators and hoteliers on the ground.

Diethelm Travel Thailand general manager Victor Mogilev is hopeful of closing the year with 12 to 15 per cent growth in the high-end Russian market which the company had traditionally focused on.

"We believe it is mainly due to the Russians accepting and adjusting to a new economy back in Russia," Mogilev said, adding that the rouble has risen to about 65-70 to the US dollar compared with 35 two years ago.

"And of course another factor is the continuous growth and promotion of Asia as a region in light of (Russia's) ongoing tension with Europe and the US," he added.

Leaving rouble troubl



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Thank you

As the rouble stabilises, Russian holidaymakers are starting to return to Asian shores again, reigniting industry expectations for the comeback of a significant source market. **TTG Asia** assesses the market sentiment

We have noticed a rise in returning Russians. However, this is different to recent years and more in line with the 'original' Russian guests 10 years or more ago – those who are willing to spend more and who are demanding luxury, quality and service.

Andrew Carroll, global head of sales and marketing, Exotic Voyages

Also witnessing a "slight bounce back of the Russian market" is Catherine Racsko, general manager of Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa.

"Compared with Russian arrivals in 2015, which were down, this year we received an increase in the figures for the same period (in 1Q2016)," she said. "The increase in charter flights to Vietnam also saw Russian guests rise 13.5 per cent in 1Q2016 (according to the Association of Tour Operators of Russia)."

Likewise, Do Thu, director of sales and marketing for Evason Ana Mandara,

Six Senses Ninh Van Bay & Six Senses Con Dao, stated: "Russia has rebounded strongly to reclaim its place as (Vietnam's) biggest source of European visitors. Nha Trang shows an increase of Russians year on year, however, the majority are on charters with package accommodation, which normally use bigger branded hotels and resorts."

C9 Hotelworks' managing director Bill Barnett said Thailand has seen a "modulated recovery" after the Russian market bottomed out in 2013, but the numbers are still "nowhere close" to what they once were.

However, he expects the number of charter flights into the country to rise through the peak season starting from November. And with Russian charter flight passengers spending an average of 12 nights in Thailand, they are much more valuable than Chinese tourists who stay for an average of just over two, Barnett opined.

Although not in the clear yet, industry players are positive that Russia will rebound and thrive again as a major source market for the region, and are seeing signs of a silver lining emerging from the crisis – particularly in the form of well-heeled Russian holidaymakers choosing Asian destinations again.

Julia Lukyanova, director of sales in Corona Travel Russia, said: "It was the middle-class travel segment that was killed the most (by currency slide). The upper premium class are still travelling and in fact this market even grew by five per cent, while the middle class one dipped by 35 per cent in 2014.

"Of course there have been some cost considerations so these luxury clients have reduced their accommodation from five- to four-star hotels, and reduced their length of stay from 14 to 10 days," she continued, noting the changes in travel preferences within the high-end segment.

Svetlana Kamenkova, leading specialist of corporate and business travel depart-

ment in Luxe Travel Russia, said cost remains the top priority for her clients, and exotic experiences in Asia like Bali and Lombok are products she is keen to promote again.

As well, rising from the Russian economic turmoil is a new travel class, one that is showing signs of maturing sophistication.

Andrew Carroll, global head of sales and marketing, Exotic Voyages, remarked: "We have noticed a rise in returning Russians. However, this is different to recent years and more in line with the 'original' Russian guests 10 years or more ago – those who are willing to spend more and who are demanding luxury, quality and service."

Providing further reminder of the importance of Russian tourists, Corona Travel's Lukyanova said: "Russians are good clients because they spend a lot of money and they are still travelling – they should not be forgotten."

The Tourism Authority of Thailand is projecting a turnaround in the Russian visitor market in 2016. Following a record 1.7 million arrivals in 2013, the number of Russian visitors to Thailand plunged to 884,000 last year. This year, Thailand is expecting one million tourist arrivals from Russia, a 13 per cent rise from 2015.

– Reporting by Paige Lee Pei Qi, Marissa Carruthers and Michael Sanderson

le behind

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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

Analysis

Dawn of a new standard

Over a decade in the making, the Mutual Recognition Arrangement of Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP) is finally up and running, achieved through a supporting infrastructure that is touted to step up the game for the standardisation of skills in the region's tourism industry.

Under the MRA-TP, ASEAN has developed benchmarking standards for 32 job types in six labour divisions – namely front office, housekeeping and F&B services in hotels, as well as tour operations, food production and travel agencies – initiated 52 qualifications and 242 training toolboxes.

Eddy Soemawilaga, senior officer for tourism and transportation, ASEAN Secretariat, commented: “(The implementa-

tion of) MRA-TP started in 2012 (but) what we did not have then was the registration platform. With the launch of ASEAN Tourism Professional Registration System (ATPRS) we now have a complete infrastructure to support the running of MRA-TP, although this is still a work in progress.”

Launched during the recent international conference on MRA-TP in Jakarta in August, the ATPRS was first conceived to support the MRA-TP's goals to increase certification among tourism professionals and facilitate their free movement and employment among ASEAN member countries.

One key component of the web-based facility is to serve as a job-matching platform for tourism professionals and

industry stakeholders in ASEAN. The platform also seeks to register and disseminate details of certified tourism professionals, provide and facilitate training programmes, develop a regional pool of trainers and assessors, and market and promote the MRA-TP, in addition to being a revenue source for the regional secretariat stationed in Jakarta.

A recognised criterion?

Despite its ratification by ASEAN member states, the actual adoption of MRA-TP on the ground is much more complicated, compounded by issues such as a paucity of tourism schools in some countries, a lack of awareness among employers and tourism professionals on the importance and benefits of certification, as well as certification costs which are prohibitive for some industry players.

For example, Cambodia's burgeoning tourism sector accounted for 620,000 jobs in 2015 but only 20 per cent of the tourism workforce graduated from tourism universities and schools. It is estimated that 63 per cent and 45 per cent of employees in the country's hotels and travel services respectively are in need of training to meet the ASEAN standards.

Try Chivv, deputy director general of tourism and director of the National Committee for Tourism Professionals under the Ministry of Tourism Cambodia, said: “By 2020 we target to receive more than seven million arrivals (up from 4.7 million in 2015), and we will have 850 jobs (to fill). Having qualified tourism professionals is very important for us.”

Indonesia, on the other hand, sees the reluctance of stakeholders to participate in the certification despite the government's mandatory ruling.

Sumarna Abdurahman, head of the Indonesian Professional Certification Authority (BNSP), said: “We are still working very hard to convince employers to recognise the competency certification in their recruitment (procedures).

“They are still questioning the effectiveness and quality of the certification and whether the certified applicants can perform according to their certification,” he said, adding that higher salary demand from prospective certified employees also weighs on employers' concerns.

Alexander Nayoan, managing director of The Dharmawangsa Jakarta and chairman of the Jakarta Hotels Association, said the resistance also stems from a lack of understanding on the importance of certification. He said: “There are questions of ‘What is it for me?’ and ‘Why should I spend more?’ among tourism employers and professionals alike.”

Also showing disinterest are international branded hotels, which deem themselves to be having higher qualification standards than their national and regional



We are still working very hard to convince employers to recognise the competency certification in their recruitment (procedures).

Sumarna Abdurahman
Head, Indonesian Professional Certification Authority

counterparts, he shared.

And while the ATPRS is lauded as a critical tool in aiding the regional quest for common tourism skills standards, its by-registration operating model means that companies need to advertise their job openings through the platform while professionals need to indicate their interest in seeking jobs.

As such, the success of ATPRS is very much reliant on the regional secretariat's ability to step up awareness among the ASEAN travel trade in order to maximise its potential, which according to Eddy will be automatically promoted to tourism professionals applying for accreditation to register themselves into the system.

“A (greater) challenge is getting tourism providers to join in. The conference was actually an invitation to the industry to buy in,” he said.

Eddy also acknowledges that the MRA-TP is still a work in progress. “ASEAN is the only region in the world with this practice, so we have no reference (for benchmarking). However, there are indicators that MRA-TP is gaining recognition even

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ASEAN has been long been plagued by non-conformity of standards in many areas, so will the MRA-TP set a new benchmark for standardisation of skills in the regional tourism sector? **Mimi Hudoyo** investigates

outside the ASEAN region. We have seen interest from other (non-ASEAN) countries to participate in this (initiative)."

Maria Susan Dela Rama, executive director of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, the certification office of the Philippines, confirmed that she has indeed received queries from several Middle Eastern countries on joining the MRA-TP.

Building up momentum

Individual ASEAN countries have devised their own strategies to overcome the challenges in the tourism sector.

Cambodia has defined 10 directives including launching apprenticeship programmes, promoting in-house training, setting up mobile tourism trainers and encouraging tourism study loans, among others.

Rising up to the challenge of grooming future hospitality talent is NagaWorld in Phnom Penh, which has established an intern programme to hire 1,000 interns in 2014 and more in the following years.

"It does not matter whether or not they will work for NagaWorld," said NagaWorld's managing director for corporate affairs Robert Choo, who shared that the company works with more than 35 industry partners to ensure jobs for all its intern graduates. "It is our CSR (contribution) to the country.

"MRA-TP provides opportunity for all hospitality professionals regardless of their economic or educational background. This is a game-changer in Cambodia as well as in many other countries," he posited.

To overcome challenges hindering the implementation of the MRA-TP, NagaWorld and several other industry players in Cambodia have come together to leverage the online video and audio resources on NagaWorld's website for national training efforts.

Indonesia, meanwhile, is considering the possibility of offering tax incentives or reducing cost to attract more participants to using MRA-TP, said Sumarna.

And with the millennials making up a significant portion of ASEAN's tourism talent pool, the promotion of MRA-TP should adapt to the way they consume information, industry members pointed out.

Moving forward, trade members also called on expanding the categories of MRA-TP to cover other job areas such as MICE and spa & wellness.

Nayoan believes that the benchmarking standards should apply to all levels of the tourism industry instead of being confined to the front-end staff. "I think even owners should seek certification," he remarked.

"Otherwise, how can you get the man-

There are indicators that MRA-TP is gaining recognition even outside the ASEAN region. We have seen interest from other (non-ASEAN) countries to participate in this (initiative).

Eddy Soemawilaga

Senior officer for tourism and transportation, ASEAN Secretariat

agers to be certified if owners themselves do not understand the importance and won't spend money on it?" he questioned.

"What we need is (information and promotion) that will convince the industry how the MRA-TP can be truly beneficial," Nayoan elaborated. "If implemented properly, it will actually increase profits for the industry and tax revenue for the government."



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Cruise Lines International Association charts the astounding growth in the Asian cruise industry while **Tourism Solutions International** polls Singapore hoteliers on their 2017 outlook

Asia's cruise sector sails at record pace

As the world's fastest-growing source of cruise passengers, Asia experienced an unprecedented 24 per cent increase to 2.1 million passenger numbers last year, according to Cruise Lines International Association's (CLIA) Asia Cruise Trends study.

China accounted for almost half the region's cruise passengers, with 986,000 passengers from mainland China taking a cruise in 2015, up 40 per cent from 703,000 in 2014. This figure makes China the world's fastest-growing source country for cruise passengers in 2015, with other leading source markets like Hong Kong (126,800), India (125,900), Japan (179,900), Singapore (182,700) and Taiwan (228,700).

Japan is again the biggest destination country with 1,526 port calls in 2016, followed by China (850), South Korea (745), Vietnam (466), Malaysia (422) and Singapore (391). The most visited port in 2016 will be Jeju Island, South Korea (460 calls), closely followed by Shanghai (437), Singapore (391) and Fukuoka (258).

Other key findings from the report include:

- **Cruise ship increase** - This year, 60 ocean cruise ships will sail in Asia versus 43 ships in 2013, 15 per cent more than the 52 operating in 2015.
- **More cruises offered** - There has been a significant increase in the number of days cruise ships are in operation, from 4,307 operating days in 2013 to 7,918 in 2016.
- **Capacity boost** - The overall passenger capacity on ocean cruise ships continues to grow, surging 54 per cent to reach 3.2 million in 2016.
- **Shorter cruises preferred** - Shorter sailings were by far the most popular in 2015, with the greatest share of passengers sailing four to six nights (50 per cent) followed by two to three nights (30 per cent) and seven to 13 nights (19 per cent).

- **Asian exploration** - Asian cruisers are primarily exploring Asian destinations (84 per cent), while the remaining 16 per cent flew to cruise destinations outside the region, primarily in Europe with 74 per cent of the international volume, followed by Caribbean/Western US/Hawaii (12 per cent) and Alaska/Canada/New England (8 per cent).
- **Under-40 cruisers** - 38 per cent of all cruisers in the region are aged below 40 years.

The 2016 picture



60 Number of ships deployed, up from 52 in 2015

1,560

Number of scheduled sailings, up 43 per cent from 1,095 in 2015



3.1 million

Estimated passenger capacity, up from just over two million in 2015

5,570

Number of cruise calls, an increase of 43 per cent in absolute volume from 3,896 calls in 2015 and almost double that of 2013.



Mixed forecast for Singapore hotel market

Singapore hoteliers are generally looking forward to a better performance next year, with a majority (64.7%) of hotel general managers (GMs) polled by hospitality investment firm Tourism Solutions International (TSI) in August optimistic that 2017 occupancy will increase over expected 2016-year end results.

Most GMs feel that this increase in occupancy will be modest, with 52.9% of respondents expecting occupancy increases to be less than five per cent. The survey indicates a split in opinion as 23.5% of the GMs expect occupancy to drop modestly during the same period.

The GMs were also optimistic when it comes to average daily room rate (ADR) and profitability. Nearly 60% indicated that they believe ADR and profitability (as measured by gross operating profit) will increase modestly in 2017 against 2016 figures. However, opinions are split with nearly 35% of the GMs expecting a decrease in ADR and just over 20% expecting profitability to suffer.

A separate TSI forecast, however, resulted in conflicting expectations of flat to minor dips for all three measures in 2017.

In comparison to 2015, average occupancy in Singapore has increased through June 2016, but only by a minimal 0.5% despite the 12.5% increase in visitor arrivals.

Market-wide ADR through June has decreased three per cent to S\$235.30 (US\$173).

In 2017, with an expected slower growth rate of arrivals, coupled with expected supply growth (3,961 rooms) leads the TSI to forecast that occupancy in 2017

will be modestly less than in 2016.

But things are set to look up beyond 2017. The hotel supply is expected to remain relatively stable for a period due to the lack of available land parcels released by the government in recent years. In addition, upcoming projects such as Terminal 4, Changi Jewel and the Mandai forest redevelopment will keep tourism in Singapore relevant and poised for future growth.



64.7%

The percentage of GMs expecting occupancy growth in 2017 from 2016



0.5%

The minimal increase in average occupancy in 1H2016 despite the 12.5% growth in visitor arrivals during the same period

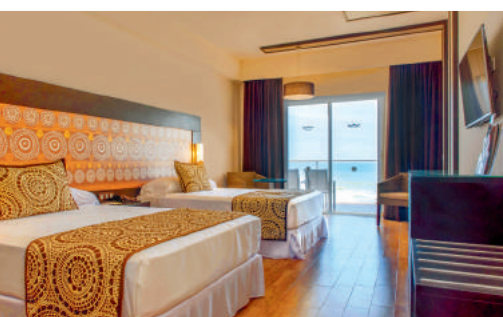


3,961

The number of rooms expected to come online in 2017

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We're all about you

View from the top

Sonia Irvine, founder of Amber Lounge, takes Raini Hamdi backstage into a testosterone-charged world and gives insights into what it takes to throw the original F1 party

The F1 party queen

What to you is Amber Lounge's biggest contribution to F1 and the four F1 destinations each year where you throw the party?

F1 is the most amazing brand and sport which Bernie Ecclestone built. Amber Lounge adds to the experience after the track and the two go together.

In Monaco, people never used to stay the Sunday night. Amber Lounge plays a small role in encouraging them to stay. Here (in Singapore last month, where the interview was done a day before F1 started) definitely people change their meetings on Monday morning (after the party on Sunday) and I know driver commitments are changed from Monday morning to Monday afternoon or to Tuesday. And there are some people who fly in for Amber Lounge, then fly out.

It's the PR we create. We give a lifestyle element to F1. That then hopefully facilitates people wanting to come and participate in the whole F1 experience. But I'm just a small part.

Was it what you dreamt to do as a kid?

I never felt I had a path in my life. I was not one of these kids who knew what they wanted to be when they grew up.

One day, a friend said, I want to be a physiotherapist, and I said, what's that? I looked it up and thought it was exciting. At 15, I ended up in one of those talks with a career teacher and told him I wanted to be a physio. He said I was not intelligent enough! I thought, how dare he said that and so I went home to my mom and dad and said, right, I'm going to be a physio.

I went to Newcastle, England, to study physio and as it turned out, I had a distinction in it, so obviously I was intelligent enough! People also said I had the right personality for it. A good physio is someone who listens, observes and analyses problems. It's a fantastic career. There's something really satisfying about being able to make someone walk again. Money or nothing can do that.

So why and how did you end up launching the F1 party, the first in Monaco in 2003?

As a physio (initially to her brother former F1 driver Eddie Irvine, then the whole Ferrari team), there was a lot of hanging around and I was getting bored. I ended up doing not just physio, but his PR and looking after sponsors' commitments for the team.

There are just things you learn working in F1, the do's and don'ts. For example, just understanding that they have a watch sponsor or a clothing brand and you need to respect their commitments. All these elements came together when I went into Amber.

In those days, there wasn't any one place where

everybody came together. F1 people hate queues, hate to be told they can't get into places, so I thought, wouldn't it be lovely to bring everybody together at the end of the season? I never thought how am I going to bring 22 drivers from 12 different teams to party in one place, and all their competing brands and affiliations under one catwalk? I just thought, let's do it.

I never in my life think I can't do something, otherwise I will never do anything.

How were you able to get competing people to come together – did your brother play a part?

No, Eddie never got involved that way. When I started Amber Lounge, I was independent of him. He supports me, but he does not get involved.

In the end, people just want to have fun and it's about having the right people, right atmosphere, high-end sponsors, etc.

So you're a good listener and are observant. Are those skills useful for this?

Yes, and those were the skills I brought into Amber. It's all about the little details, so you need to listen and you need to observe. For example, when I walk into a venue, I would notice right away if a platform was not high enough, if the branding boards were not where they should be, if the lighting was dead. We also listen and

10 NEED TO KNOW'S ABOUT SONIA IRVINE

■ **Who's in your family?** My parents, who taught me so much, and my lovely and amazing daughters Katie (6) and Megan (14). I spend as much time as I can with them. Then there's my brother, who is my best support. I also have someone in my life, and his name is Calvin.

■ **What do you do for fun?** I go out with my girlfriends. Monaco is the best place to enjoy nice dinners and dancing. This summer, we spent most of our free time at Amber Summer, the new place I opened in June.

■ **Your ideal vacation?** Discovering Asia is something I have always wanted to do, especially the islands. I am sure it will happen soon.

■ **How do you book your own leisure trips?** Surprisingly for a party planner, I am more of a home person. I like to spend time at home with my daughters and my family. My second house in Mougins is my peaceful

place and I spend most of my summers there.

■ **What are you reading right now?** *Raising girls* by Steve Biddulph.

■ **How do you stay healthy?** When I have time, I wake up early and exercise before going to work, eat healthy and spend as much time as I can with my daughters. Shopping is also something I like to do.

■ **Favourite food?** Truffle edamame! Japanese and Asian in general.

■ **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Chocolate and Dom Perignon!

■ **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** When people have not prepared their money at the toll and that you have to wait forever.

■ **Most people don't know that you...** are actually very soft in the inside and a very good listener. I hate seeing people suffer and I would do anything to help them.

cater to clients of all age groups. That's why we give clients a choice of tables. Are you coming for business or party? If business, we put you in a quieter part. I've a client who comes regularly and said, So-

have to go together.

How has the party evolved over the years?

A lot of the elements when I first did it remain. There's no queuing, our system allows you to go straight to your table where all drinks are waiting and you drink as much you want. The white sofas remain, because there's something naughty about standing and dancing on a white sofa and making it dirty, even if that costs me a lot, as many are ruined and we have to clean or redo.

There's always the outdoor terrace, so people can go out and network or talk business there instead of in the lounge. There's a lot of business that goes on in Amber because there are a lot of decision-makers who can make decisions. A lot of production companies don't understand why I push so hard to have an outside space. It's because we want business to happen as well.

Along the way, we brought in more DJs, acts, a fashion show at first with just female models then the F1 drivers in support of charity. And now, the Extravaganza concept where the party just does not stop – dancers, saxophone players, seven DJs, etc – all happening at the same time. Often, places have acts but it's one act, then the party stops, then another it stops again. Here it's all happening and it should never deflect from the party but add to it.

Do you feel travel planners understand Amber Lounge is open to all, not just for F1 goers, and that they can package it as part of a, say, party trip?

It is an event and experience people can have. Our objective is to have people walk away saying that was just incredible, the best party they ever had and they want to come back again next year. We do have people using it for special occasions, such as anniversaries and for charities, outside of our own charity efforts.

I never in my life think I can't do something, otherwise I will never do anything.

nia, can you put me away from the dance floor this year because my wife is pregnant? So when I did the tables, I looked after them a bit more. A lot of thought goes into our setup.

What's your budget in organising Amber Lounge?

A lot – most people won't sleep at night (when pressed, she said well over half a million euros, i.e. over US\$558,570). My Singapore budget is virtually my Monaco budget and I run only two nights here, whereas it's three in Monaco. In Singapore, the tent takes three weeks to build, as there's water where we build. The water has to be drained. The tiles have to be lifted. Then the tent structure starts. It's a big, big operation.

Is it hugely profitable?

If you don't bring in the sponsorships and sell the tables, it does not work. Definitely you need to do a minimum of two nights. Sales and sponsorship



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



TTG ASIA LUXURY WINS PATA GOLD AWARD

TTG Asia Luxury has clinched its first award through a feature-length article in the December 2015 issue, *The New Glamorous*, written by senior editors Mimi Hudoyo (pictured) and Raini Hamdi. The story wins a PATA Gold Award for Travel Journalism – Industry Business Article, which was presented during PATA Travel Mart 2016 in Jakarta last month.

NORTH PATTAYA PLAYS FOR BIGGER WIN

Tourism stakeholders belonging to the North Pattaya Alliance recently met together to plan the January 2017 launch of the new *North Pattaya – Simply Playful* campaign, which aims to step up the area's reputation as a premier beach destination for leisure, business events and Indian weddings.



APPOINTMENTS



Marc Dardenne



Bob Binder

MARC DARDENNE

NOW Group chief operating officer, Jumeirah Group
THEN CEO, Patina Hotels and Resorts

ERKAN TUNCAKAR

NOW General manager, Go Vacation Vietnam
THEN General manager, Go Vacation Sri Lanka

RON CUSITER

NOW Vice president of sales and marketing, Como Hotels and Resorts
THEN Vice president of sales operations, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and South-west Asia, Hyatt International

BOB BINDER

NOW President and CEO, Oceania Cruises; vice chairman, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises
THEN Vice chairman, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises

EUGENE CHAN

NOW Chief commercial officer – distribution, Asia-Pacific, Amadeus
THEN Managing director, Singapore, BCD Travel

PER KREDNER

NOW General manager, Hyatt Regency Hong Kong, Tsim Sha Tsui
THEN Hotel manager, Grand Hyatt Shenzhen

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HOTELS



THE ANAM, VIETNAM
An independently operated luxury resort, The Anam, was soft-launched last month in Nha Trang. The property has 105 villas (some of which come with private pools), each featuring fine Vietnamese hardwood, decorative stone and antique tiling. Facilities include the Sri Mara Spa, a fitness centre, water sports centre, three swimming pools, a kids club, a satay bar, and the signature Indochine Café serving contemporary Asian and European cuisines.



PREMIER INN SINGAPORE BEACH ROAD
The UK's Premier Inn hotel chain has opened the 300-room Premier Inn Singapore Beach Road, located within the city's cultural Kampong Glam district. A 15-minute drive from Changi International Airport, the hotel is also near the Singapore Sports Hub, Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre and Marina Bay. Amenities include complimentary Wi-Fi, a rooftop swimming pool and bar as well as a multi-cuisine restaurant.



COMPASS SKYVIEW HOTEL, THAILAND
Standing in Bangkok's Sukhumvit 24 is the 285-room Compass Skyview Hotel, which soft-opened last month with an official opening tabled for January 2017. Amenities include an infinity salt-water swimming pool and Jacuzzi on the rooftop, a pool bar, gym, meeting rooms and a Sky Ballroom. The property also has a nightclub, plus F&B options such as the steakhouse Prime+ and the Mojjo Cuban Restaurant & Cigar Lounge.



HILTON JINAN SOUTH HOTEL & RESIDENCES, CHINA
This newly-launched property in Jinan, the capital of Shandong province in eastern China, features 420 rooms, of which 316 are hotel guestrooms, while the remaining 104 are one-, two- and three-bedroom residences. Recreational facilities include a swimming pool on level 33, along with a 24-hour fitness centre, sauna and steam rooms. The property also has four restaurants and more than 2,600m² of meeting spaces.

ACTIVITIES



MAKAN BUS TAKES TOURISTS AROUND SINGAPORE FOR LOCAL EATS
Created by operator MeGuideU, this new gastro tour based on Singapore's local delicacies was launched at the end of August. It is a hop-on, hop-off concept using 13-seater

vans, bringing visitors to 10 local neighbourhoods such as Ang Mo Kio and Toa Payoh. These districts are known for their popular hawkers that cook up local dishes such as fried *kway teow*, *mee siam* and *roti prata*. Buses run daily from 11.00 at 20-minute frequencies. Onboard, there are customised maps and tour guides to answer queries. The tour features 10 stops, beginning and ending at Orchard Gateway. Currently, Makan Bus operates in the north-central part of Singapore but there are plans to expand to the east in the coming months.

TRANSPORTATION

AIRASIA FIRST TO LINK PHUKET AND SIEM REAP
AirAsia will start a daily service between Phuket and Siem Reap from November 7, becoming the first airline to link these two popular destinations in South-east Asia together. The flight will depart Phuket at 06.20, landing in Siem Reap at 07.45. The return flight will take off from Siem Reap at 08.40 and arrive in Phuket at 10.05.



JTB FORMS ANIME TOURISM ASSOCIATION WITH JAL, KADOKAWA
JTB is teaming up with Japan Airlines and Kadokawa, one of the nation's leading publishers, to tap into international interest in Japan's famed anime and manga scene. The three companies in September launched the Japan Anime Tourism Association, and the association's very first initiative is the creation of 88 "animation spots" around the country where fans are able to explore the locations used in their favourite tales. The destinations combined form a pilgrimage route for dedicated manga and anime fans, inspired by the famous 88-temple route walked by religious pilgrims on the island of Shikoku. The association will initially focus its marketing efforts on other nations in Asia, where anime and manga already have a firm and widespread following, said Tachikawa. JTB also intends to promote tours that feature pop culture sites, while the association will utilise social media to disseminate information on the project.

JETSTAR TARGETS CORPORATE CLIENTELE WITH NEW BUNDLE
Jetstar has unveiled FlexiBiz, an add-on which provides business travellers greater flexibility with their flight plans. The upgrade allows business travellers to move their flight earlier or later on the same day of travel, take extra carry-on baggage (7kg) and select an upfront seat at no extra charge. Those who cancel their flights will also be entitled to a credit voucher refund that is valid towards a new booking within six months of issue. Corporates who are signed up on Jetstar's Business Hub can choose to include FlexBiz with their ticket purchases at an introductory price of S\$32 (US\$25). The ancillary product is currently only available directly through Jetstar's website.

LUFTHANSA SIGNS ROUTE-SHARING DEAL WITH AIR CHINA
Air China and Lufthansa have entered into a commercial joint venture that will enable the two aviation groups to jointly operate all connections between Europe and China, building upon a MoU signed by the two entities in 2014. As part of the new partnership, the two airlines will expand codesharing routes as well as implement flight timetable coordination and common fares at the start of the 2017 summer schedule. For Air China customers, the expanded codesharing connections will avail more routes to and from various destinations in Europe via the Frankfurt, Munich, Zurich and Vienna hubs. In turn, Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines and Swiss International Air Lines – its two subsidiaries – will gain access via the Chinese national carrier to additional routes in China.





Congratulations Mr & Ms Costa!

Winners of Costa's 10-year cruise pass

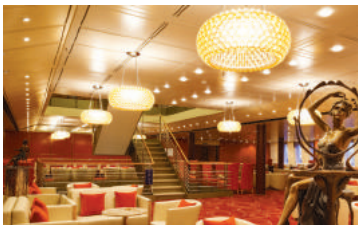
Costa Asia is celebrating its 10th anniversary in Asia-Pacific this year. In appreciation of travel agent partners who have played a key role in the company's extraordinarily successful first decade, it recently organised the Mr./Ms. Costa FREE VOYAGE Contest where the prize was a 10-year cruise pass. The results are in and here are the six winners who will be exploring Asia and the world with Costa Cruises – for free – all the way to 2025!

Hong Kong	Indonesia	Malaysia	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand
					
Ms Sophia Sin Assistant Supervisor (Cruise Center) China Travel Service (HK) Ltd	Mr Frankie Lie Branch Manager Avia Tour & Travel	Ms Chin Huey Yau Cruise Advisor Netquas Holiday Sdn Bhd	Mr Anthony Lester Lizardo Cruise Sales Officer TravelPeople Ltd. Inc	Ms Tina Lee Chuan Chuan Manager (Wholesale) Commonwealth Travel Service Corp Pte Ltd	Mr Meth Metayanurak Outbound Sales Manager N S Travel & Tours Co., Ltd.
“Since my first cruise, I have been impressed. The spaces onboard Costa’s ships are spacious and comfortable. The services are warm and the cuisines from around the world are delicious. The guest activities are fun and eye-opening to me too.”	“Costa Diadema is one of my favourite ships, with a capacity for 4,947 guests and a great collection of more than 7,000 art works. Guests enjoy the multi-cultural atmosphere and foods from all over the world. Parents can relax because there are lots of programmes for the little ones too.”	“Oh My God — What an unbelievable and good news which has never happened in my life! My appreciation to Costa and to all honorable judges, event staffs and candidates! Very happy and excited to be the first Ms. Costa in Malaysia. My beloved Costa Cruises, here I come!”	“I love Costa Victoria because it feels like home. Good food, exceptional people and relaxing. A dream vacation that lets you enjoy the wonders of Asia in comfort. Turning your dreams into reality! Cruising Italian Style.”	“Costa Classica is my favourite ship. Elegant decoration, delicious meals, excellent entertainment and lovely towel animals on the bed at night. I had a most memorable experience on this ship in 2011.”	“Costa Victoria is going to sail among Andaman Sea, Gulf of Thailand and the Pacific Ocean. I believe this is a fabulous opportunity for travellers from Thailand and neighboring countries to discover the great value of a holiday with Costa Cruises. I am glad to be one of them, of course!”

Costa neoClassica: Bringing “Italy at Sea” to India



With a global reputation as a pioneer and innovator in the cruise industry, Costa Cruises achieved a new milestone with the launch of *Costa neoClassica* in **Mumbai**, India in 2016. The company is the first international cruise line homeported in Mumbai to offer cruises to destinations such as **Cochin, Maldives** and **Colombo**. Weekly sailings have been scheduled from December 16, 2016 to March 18, 2017. Onboard are 654 cabins, a casino, theatre, disco, ballroom, Grand Bar, wellness centre, outdoor jogging track, four jacuzzis, two swimming pools and a large duty-free shopping centre. Guests will enjoy both classic Italian gastronomy as well as tasty vegetarian and vegan dishes. As its latest investment in India shows, Costa is committed to developing the full potential of Asia's cruise markets and popularise its unique brand of “Italy at Sea” cruise holidays.



The Grand Bar, Costa neoClassica

On the radar

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

ASK THE EXPERT

Taming chaos with calm

International SOS Singapore managing director Juliana Gim talks corporate travel managers through identifying and preparing for unwelcome surprises that come up when employees travel

What is International SOS advising companies about countries or areas to avoid?

There are always risks that travellers need to be aware of regardless of their destination. It is important for travellers and organisations to understand these travel risks and have processes and systems in place to mitigate them. Preparation and mitigation of travel risks is paramount to ensure a safer travel.

What are the key risks companies should consider before sending employees?

While employers should consider terror attacks as a potential risk, they should also be aware of medical and travel security risks as travellers are far more likely to be involved in an accident or suffer from medical emergencies that require specialised care.

A recent Ipsos Global Advisor study found that although 80 per cent of travellers had

concerns about safety abroad, less than four in 10 research about crime at the destination, neighbourhoods to avoid, safety standards of public transport or security features of their accommodation before they travel.

The study also reported that while 71 per cent of senior executive travellers have experienced a medical problem abroad, only 15 per cent assess adequacy of local healthcare before travelling. In addition, nearly one in three trips abroad are to countries with higher risk ratings than the traveller's home country.

Travel risks can cover a range of issues in addition to 'traditional' occupational safety, health and security considerations. Examples include latent health issues, location-specific infection risks, lost travel documents, the quality of state security and emergency services, political unrest, major accidents, natural disasters, as well as cultural and legal complexities.

What other duty of care should companies observe?

For companies, duty of care to employees is the expectation – not the exception.

In order to fulfil its duty of care responsi-



While employers should consider terror attacks as a potential risk...travellers are far more likely to be involved in an accident or suffer from medical emergencies.

bility to employees, organisations need to consider the different needs of the many types of working travellers. They can be a senior executive travelling to close an important deal, a consulting technician travelling to

service a system or a manual labourer part of a group building a road through a jungle.

When employees feel unwell or unsafe when travelling away from home, they feel extremely vulnerable and organisations need to ensure that adequate measures and support are in place for their employees.

A practical framework for duty of care should include the elements of policy development and implementation; dynamic threat and hazard identification and risk assessment; organising, planning and implementation; evaluation and action for improvement.

Organisations should ensure that adequate health, safety, security and legal protection measures are in place for the following reasons:

- Prevention, timely intervention and mitigation of incidents reduce costly disruption to business activities, improve morale and strengthen productivity.
- Adequate identification of threats and hazards, and the management of risks during an incident may allow for the continuation of activities or the development of new opportunities, who could have otherwise been lost.
- Meeting these responsibilities can mean a positive return on investment.
- This protection is an important part of corporate social responsibility.

It is important to ensure that all relevant legal obligations are met to reduce risks that an organisation could face with litigation.



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The Growing Consumer Class -
Rethinking and Reshaping
the Future Tourism Landscape

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Report **Serviced residences**

Serviced residence chiefs tell **Paige Lee Pei Qi** and **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena** how hospitality consolidation and competition from home rentals are shaping their expansion and distribution plans

Charting new paths to growth



Clockwise from left: Oriental Residence Bangkok; Pan Pacific Beijing; Oasia Residence, in Singapore; Capri by Fraser, Changi City, in Singapore; One Sunland Serviced Suites managed by Lanson Place, in Shanghai; and Tujia Somerset West Coast Haikou



Lee Chee Koon CEO, The Ascott

Ascott has been studying industry trends to stay ahead of the curve. With the rise of the sharing economy and the consolidation of hospitality companies, we have established strategic alliances to leverage our capabilities and create a seamless O2O (offline-to-online and online-to-offline) experience.

We are embracing technology, tailoring the customer experience and transforming our business model to include the sharing economy. Last year, Ascott took a stake in Tujia.com International, China's largest and fastest-growing online apartment sharing platform. On top of listing our properties, we also operate serviced residences in China under the new Tujia Somerset brand to cater to the booming middle-class travel segment. The joint venture will integrate Ascott's strengths in managing properties as well as Tujia's online capabilities.

Ascott's partnership with Tujia is on the right track as Tujia's annual transactions are growing at a phenomenal 300 per cent year-on-year and a record was set with single-day orders exceeding 56,000 roomnights. The growth of the sharing economy is set to continue and Ascott is ready to harness this opportunity.

Early this year, we partnered Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group's online travel service platform, Alitrip, to reach

out to over 100 million Chinese travellers. Ascott is also accepting contactless payment modes to enhance customer experience. For instance, stays booked through Alitrip can be paid via Alibaba's Post Post Pay service at our properties in China, allowing qualified guests to reserve apartments without paying a deposit and enjoy express check-out.

We are also expanding our global network with the support of strong capital partners like Qatar Investment Authority (QIA). Through Ascott's fund with QIA, we have acquired four prime properties in less than a year in London, Paris, Melbourne and Tokyo for US\$270 million. We are on track to achieve our global target of 80,000 units by 2020 through man-

agement contracts, investments, strategic alliances and franchises.

Choe Peng Sum CEO, Frasers Hospitality

We can certainly expect more mergers and acquisitions (in the hospitality sector) to take place. The merger between Marriott and Starwood is a real game changer as they force other chains to re-evaluate their offerings and assess the need to join arms with other players, be it large or small chains, to better equip themselves for this increasingly competitive landscape.

This is exactly what Frasers Hospitality has done with the purchase of Malmaison

Hotel du Vin group, two best-in-class hotel brands, doubling our offerings in Europe and further strengthening our global expansion plans to achieve our goal of 30,000 units by 2019.

Global expansion is very much on the agenda of Frasers Hospitality, and we are always on the lookout for growth opportunities, be it organically or through acquisition. The goal is to strengthen our position in cities where we already have an established presence and explore new opportunities in emerging markets with steady FDI inflows. Frasers Hospitality is open to acquiring established brands that may be small or even small brands that need to be rebranded and not limiting to just Europe.

Airbnb is here to stay and it would be foolish to ignore the impacts they have made on the hospitality industry. It has caused companies to rethink their entire distribution strategy and hotels are now looking to merge with distribution channels to improve their online distribution.

The entire consumer landscape of instant gratification and technology advancements, as reflected in the emergence of brands like Uber and Airbnb, has kept us on our toes. It has pushed us to enhance guests' experience, be more efficient in responding to guests' feedback and is a good reminder that our customers are at the centre of everything we do. This is vital as customers will vote with their feet as choices abound.



On top of listing our properties (on Tujia.com), we also operate serviced residences in China under the new Tujia Somerset brand to cater to the booming middle-class travel segment.

Lee Chee Koon
CEO, The Ascott



Best Western Celebrates a Decade of Success at TTG Awards!

Best Western has been named as Asia's "Best Mid-Range Hotel Brand" for an incredible tenth year in a row! The iconic hotel group, which is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year, toasted an entire decade of success at the 2016 TTG Travel Awards, which are voted for by the readers of Asia's most popular travel trade magazine.



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Wherever Life Takes You, Best Western Is There.®

Report Serviced residences

Richard Tan,
Vice-president, serviced suites,
Pan Pacific Hotels Group

While the entry of alternative accommodation providers may mean more competition for the long-stay pie, it has also inspired us to rethink our value proposition and how we can continue to create and deliver value to our customers.

For us, this means focusing on the basics of good old hospitality and providing consistent, top-notch service to our guests. As a hotel company that owns, develops and manages 40 properties around the world, we are relatively smaller than other hotel chains, but that's also an advantage because we can be closer to our customers and property owners.

Being in the digital age means we don't need to have scale to connect directly with our customers; our online presence gives us global access to market to the rest of the world. This will become increasingly important as more people travel and the availability of alternatives like Airbnb will make travelling even more compelling.

In developing cities, long-staying guests are starting to appreciate the facilities of a hotel and recognising this, we converted a number of hotel rooms (e.g. Pan Pacific Tianjin, Pan Pacific Xiamen and Parkroyal Yangon) to cater to this rising demand. As one of the first few adopters of this "hybrid" model, we are in a good niche to also



We also recently entered into a strategic alliance with Singapore Hospitality Holdings to accelerate the growth of Ozo and Shama brands across the Asia-Pacific, with the aim of having 46 new hotels open by 2024.

Peter Henley
President & CEO, Onyx Hospitality Group

convert hotel guests to long-term residents at our serviced suites, which supports our growth in an organic manner.

We believe in pursuing partnerships strategically and seizing the right opportunity to venture into a new market. Our growth strategy focuses on building a network of hotels in key gateway cities and destinations, so location is one of the most important considerations.

For example, Pan Pacific Serviced Suites Puteri Harbour (opening 2018), which is located at a premium waterfront lifestyle development in Iskandar, Johor, sits in close proximity to medical and healthcare services, educational institutions and en-

tertainment facilities. Pan Pacific London (opening 2019) will feature both hotel and serviced residences, and is located next to Liverpool Street station in the CBD.

Arthur Kiong
CEO, Far East Hospitality

To capture the interest of a new generation of travellers, corporate bookers and "bleisure" travellers, our service residences are providing more customised value-added offerings and differentiate our guest experience across our locations and serviced residence brands. This diversity not only enables us to address the different mar-

ket segments but also provides our guests with an experience beyond the expected.

Our strategy is to provide all this at attractive price points with the prime locations of our serviced residences. In Singapore, for example, we have Far East Hospitality serviced residences in the Orchard district, Clarke Quay, Robertson Quay as well as Hougang, so our guests can choose the ones closest to their offices or the hot spots they would like to explore.

We just launched the Oasia Residence, the first Oasia brand in the serviced residence category, in Singapore's West Coast near business parks and education institutions to meet the rising demand in an area where the current serviced residence supply is relatively low. Integrated into the Seahill residential development, the 140-unit Oasia Residence will offer full service apartments and facilities such as a swimming pool, gymnasium and a tennis court.

The Oasia Residence will add another 140 rooms to our service residences portfolio by the end of this year, coming at an opportune time as the region continues to mature and there is more demand for serviced residences from travellers.

We have several offerings under the Oasia brand that includes hotels (Oasia Hotel Downtown, Oasia Hotel Novena), hybrid models (Oasia Suites Kuala Lumpur, our first overseas venture for the Oasia brand), as well as serviced residences (the upcoming Oasia Residence).

Advertorial

GTEF: Embracing the powerful tourism consumers

Global tourism leaders from the public and private sectors to meet in Macao to exchange views on how Asia-Pacific's growing consumer class is transforming the tourism industry.

The Global Tourism Economy Forum (GTEF) – an influential high-level event promoting sustainable development in the global tourism industry with a focus on China – will gather the world's tourism leaders in Studio City Macau from October 15-16, 2016 under the theme "The Growing Consumer Class, Rethinking and Reshaping the Future Tourism Landscape".

In celebration of its 5th anniversary, GTEF is offering exciting special anniversary programs alongside its signature programs, and networking and business opportunities.

The Forces Shaping China's Economic Future

A very special speaker for our special anniversary occasion, Mr Long Yongtu, Former Vice Minister, Ministry of Foreign Trade & Economic Cooperation, China, and the chief negotiator for China's entry into the WTO, will grace the Forum with his presence and share his insights in the forces that are shaping the economic future of China.

Asia Tourism Trends 2016

Mr Xu Jing, Executive Secretary and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, World Tourism Organization, will present the third annual tourism trends report jointly organized by the United Nations World Tourism Organization and the Global Tourism Economy Research Center.

Mr Xu will provide data that demonstrates the influence Asia-Pacific has on world tourism both as a source market and as a top world destination. He will elaborate on China's dominant role, the trends driven by the consumer class, infrastructure and human capital investments and other key tourism trends.

1 Billion+ Opportunities

GTEF's signature program "Face to Face, Ministers and Private Sector CEOs" will take centre stage again, with Dr Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of UNWTO, as the lead speaker.

This prestigious panel includes ministerial speakers such as Thong Khon, (Cambodia), Li Jinzao (China), István Ujhelyi (European Union), Gusztáv Bienerth (Hungary), Timur Toktabayev (Kazakhstan), U Ohn Maung (Myanmar), and Marleny Josefina Contreras Hernández (Venezuela).

The panel also includes private sector top executives such as Arthur de Haast (UK), Duan Qiang (China), Michael Frenzel (Germany), Gerald Lawless (UAE), Liang Xinjun (China), Philippe Schaus (Hong Kong), Caroline Scheufele (Switzerland), Zhang Ling (China), and Zhang Xuewu (Hong Kong).

Together, these speakers will identify the new challenges and opportunities associated with consumption growth. They will also discuss how governments and industry leaders can work towards a level playing field for all businesses while protecting consumers.

Tourism and Technology

Mario Hardy, CEO of Pacific Asia Travel Association, will moderate a panel of industry leaders including Laure de Boerio (France), Helena Egan (US), Min Fan (China), Lug Giroud (France), Ling Kang (China) and Angeline Tang (Singapore).

These panelists will discuss online business models, operator- and user-generated contents, marketing, how technology affects brand loyalty, and the next innovation that will transform the travel experience.



The Special Keynote Speaker will be Long Yongtu, Former Vice Minister, Ministry of Foreign Trade & Economic Cooperation, China.



The UNWTO/GTERC Annual Report 2016 on Asia Tourism Trends will be presented by Xu Jing, Executive Secretary and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, World Tourism Organization.

Peter Henley
president & CEO,
Onyx Hospitality Group

With the rising popularity (of Airbnb), travellers are increasingly introduced to home-style accommodation. This benefits operators like Onyx Hospitality Group, as we have a significant number of residence-style hotels and serviced apartments in our portfolio and pipeline. Our properties combine the convenience and draw of home-style facilities like fully-equipped kitchens, with the assurance and consistency offered by dedicated and professional teams.

As a fast-growing regional hotel company, Onyx offers a portfolio of brands. This includes Shama, a collection of serviced apartments in key city locations, as well as residential-style properties at selected Amari locations and Oriental Residence Bangkok.

Onyx has a rapidly expanding portfolio of 41 operational hotels, and another 20 in the development pipeline. We have a robust pace of new hotels signing, averaging 10 new deals being signed each year for Amari, Ozo and Shama.

Today, the group has an equal number of hotels within Thailand and internationally. We anticipate this ratio to transition towards 30 per cent within Thailand and 70 per cent internationally by 2018 as we continue to expand regionally.

We also recently entered into a strategic alliance with Singapore Hospitality Holdings to accelerate the growth of Ozo and Shama brands across the Asia-Pacific, with the aim of having 46 new hotels open by 2024.

Singapore Hospitality Holdings is helmed by hospitality entrepreneur Laith Pharaon, and the group's hospitality investments include Amari Havodda Maldives (managed by Onyx), several projects with Soho House, and past experience with Six Senses, Hyatt and Four Seasons branded projects.

Marc Hediger
CEO, Lanson Place Hospitality Management

Lanson Place has specifically introduced a third business model called Lanson Place Serviced Suites to address the changing trends and needs of professionals, millennials as well as the younger families who are relocating within Asia-Pacific.

This lean, efficient and contemporary serviced apartment style not only provides a higher return in investment for developers but most importantly offers residents a niche lifestyle, no matter the location or purpose of their tenancy.

Smaller units are creatively designed with unique combined open living and working spaces, co-sharing public areas are the extension of their homes offer-

As legislation in various jurisdictions become more relaxed as a result of Airbnb, Lanson Place may look to target shorter-term business in some countries within relevant market conditions.

Marc Hediger
CEO, Lanson Place Hospitality Management

ing seamless connectivity throughout the entire development, 'grab n go' F&B concepts and resident activities will promote well-being but also offer more energising activities.

A majority of Lanson Place's pipeline deals are for the Serviced Suites model, and the group will continue to keep abreast of introducing new technical design requirements to adapt to both the millennials and existing customer base.

Lanson Place Hospitality Management will continue to expand its portfolio predominantly through strategic management contracts in key gateway cities across Asia-Pacific for all three core business models (boutique hotels, serviced suites and serviced residences).

The group is very much open to form

a joint venture or an alliance with reputable partners in specific markets. A proportion of our properties already form varying owning structures and this has proved well for the brand with addition to developing future long term relationships in different countries.

Businesses such as Airbnb allows us to constantly review our distribution channels (where potentially, units may be offered through this source). And as legislation in various jurisdictions become more relaxed as a result of Airbnb, Lanson Place may look to target shorter-term business in some countries within relevant market conditions, ensuring it would not affect our strength of achieving longer length of stay and engagement with our residents homes.



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Over 1,300 delegates across 63 nations attended the annual PATA Travel Mart (PTM), one of Asia Pacific’s most anticipated and value adding travel trade event. PTM 2016 officially opened in BSD-Serpong, Indonesia on 7 September. The mart was generously hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Republic of Indonesia in partnership with Banten Province and PATA Indonesia Chapter.

PATA also announced the winners of the 2016 PATA Grand and Gold Awards to organisations such as the Ministry of Tourism, Republic of Indonesia, Tourism Authority of Thailand and TTG Asia Media. These winners were selected for their inspiring and valuable contribution to the tourism industry.

OFFICIAL MEDIA PARTNER:



PATA TRAVEL MART 2016



Blacklane Singapore’s Wong Soon Hwa, Macao Government Tourism Office’s Kathy Long, and Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, TTG Asia Media’s Darren Ng, PATA’s Mam- Puangthip Chotipantawanon, TTG Asia Media’s Michael Chow and Travelpress’s JP Sho



TTG Asia Media’s Mimi Hudoyo and Ministry of Tourism Indonesia ‘s Deputy Minister of International Marketing Development I Gde Pitana



Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board’s (MTPB) Azizah Aziz and Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia’s Mohamed Nazri Bin Abdul Aziz and MTPB’s Ahmad Esa



The Jayakarta SP Jakarta Hotel & Spa’s Agus Zakaria S, and The Jayakarta Suites Bandung’s Julianti and H A Kusdianan

Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia’s Mohamed Nazri Bin Abdul Aziz and MTPB’s Ahmad Esa

TurboJet Tourism Viona, a Centre

Selangor Razali, Jamal Husna



EL
6



y of Tourism and Culture Malaysia's Mohamed
in Abdul Aziz, Themed Attractions Resorts &
Malaysia's Kristine Lim and Edward Chin, and
Mirza Mohammad Taiyab



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or State Secretary office's Ahmad Nazmi Bin
and Tourism Selangor's Khuzaimah Binti
uddin, Noorul Ashikin Bt Mohd Din and Fatimah
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Indonesia Convention Exhibition

Hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Republic of Indonesia in
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Report **Hotel solutions**

Learning on the go

Governments and companies are embracing mobile learning today, reflecting an effort by society to support and accommodate populations that are increasingly more mobile.

In fact, one of the earliest forms of mobile learning still exists today – reading a book while travelling – although back then it was just called ‘learning’, as the acquisition, transference or sharing of knowledge was traditionally done in the classroom.

The invention of the first mobile phone in 1973 and the surging use of the Internet since 1995 by businesses, students and individuals set the foundations for the arrival and subsequent evolution of mobile learning, which has come a long way since the 1980s.

The first modern instances of mobile

learning were conducted through cassette tapes and CDs. Between 1983 and 1987, Singapore telecoms companies even offered Mandarin lessons via telephone.

In the early 1990s, software companies such as Apple and Palm Corporation started developing mobile learning software and European universities started evaluating mobile learning for their own students.

Since these early days, mobile learning has boomed and is afforded much greater attention by institutions and policymakers alike, yet it is still in its infancy. With an already high and still fast-growing smartphone penetration rate and highly developed mobile infrastructure, Asia is in the perfect position to benefit from this phenomenon.

As more smartphones enter the market



and infrastructure continues to develop, this trend is set to grow with more governments and companies realising the value and cost-effectiveness of mobile learning over the time-consuming and expensive methods of traditional teaching.

The Ministry of Education in Singapore has already begun mobile learning pilot projects in one of its schools and Malaysia's YTL is providing 4G wireless access, a countrywide online education system and tablet computers to over 10,000 schools.

Faced with ever-increasing staffing costs and continuous challenges of finding qualified employees, mobile learning has emerged as a low-cost yet highly effective way to train hotel staff, improve service and drive revenues higher. While continued growth in international travel has been a boon for hotels and resorts, it also means that more people from diverse backgrounds and speaking different languages are checking into hotels.

This is where mobile learning comes in to play. Rather than disrupting staff schedules with lengthy classes and forcing employees to attend study sessions for a few hours a week, hotels are subscribing to mobile learning programmes. Mobile

language learning has evolved to provide specialised speech interactive content for each department, providing a near-real simulation of guest interaction with immediate actionable feedback. So, for the first time, hotels have both scale and performance information on the competencies of their employees in real time.

It doesn't stop at language learning either. Hilton Worldwide has recently announced a complete F&B training course that, supported by a mobile learning company, is available online for their staff worldwide. Courses have been developed for a variety of hotel scenarios, including housekeeping, spa, F&B and front office, with even solutions that train a user on how to upsell in a hospitality setting.

But it is the future of mobile learning that poses even more exciting opportunities. Today, militaries around the world use virtual reality (VR) to train their troops, testing them in a variety of realistic battlefield situations and accurately gauging their ability to cope with pressure and stress, and develop their leadership skills. While the front office is a million miles from the battlefield, the same principles can be applied to hotels.

Mobile language learning has evolved to provide specialised speech interactive content for each department, providing a near-real simulation of guest interaction with immediate actionable feedback.

David Topolewski
CEO
Qooco





Covering Asia's Affluent Travelers



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Supporting Organizations



Qooco's **David Topolewski** shares how mobile learning will make an innovative, cost-effective way to transform training delivery in the hospitality sector

There is no reason why a typical hotel scenario – an overbooked hotel, irate guests, children playing in the lobby, etc – can't be replicated through VR, with entire teams working together to fix the problem. This would test the leadership skills of the team leaders, as well as provide a realistic introduction for new employees.

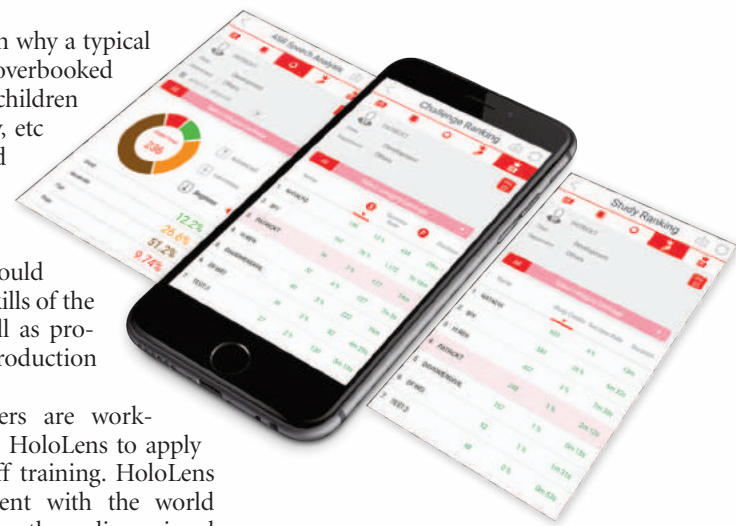
Qooco's developers are working with Microsoft's HoloLens to apply mixed reality to staff training. HoloLens blends digital content with the world around us, projecting three-dimensional graphics around the wearer of the lens. We are exploring how this augmented reality (AR) platform can be used to enhance staff training by incorporating digital scenarios into real-life training situations.

Linked to mobile learning is the effective use of artificial intelligence and big data. Once you have an accurate picture of the individual strengths and weaknesses of your employees, you can better place them in situations where they excel. For example, should a large group of Chinese tourists be due to check in on a certain date, the system will automatically assign the employees who are strong in Mandarin (based on their mobile learning

scores) and who have shown strong organisational and teamwork abilities during the VR training.

In its purest form hospitality is about cultivating an attitude of great service, teamwork and leadership; it is about having initiative, curiosity, flexibility and care for others. Mobile learning provides a way for individuals who are truly serious about hospitality to take the initiative to continuously cultivate those values.

David Topolewski is CEO of Qooco, which provides mobile language learning and vocational training solutions for employees in the hospitality and service industries.



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Eventful times



Destination in numbers

16

The number of international air connections to Penang

RM1,786

The average spend (equivalent to US\$431) of international visitors in Penang per visit, compared with RM918 for domestic visitors

30.2%

The percentage of repeat international visitors to Penang in 2015

Penang saw two major developments this year that augur well for the tourism industry, as it seeks to attract more quality tourists and bolster tourism revenue in the face of a weak ringgit labelled the worst-performing Asian currency for the first half of 2016.

The first was the establishment of the Penang Convention and Exhibition Bureau (PCEB), which came to fruition in January 2016, three years after the chief minister of Penang first announced that the state needed a dedicated bureau to attract more quality events and conventions to Penang.

Lim Guan Eng, Penang's chief minister and PCEB chairperson, explained: "The average MICE tourist spends three times more than a business tourist."

According to him, the average spend of a leisure traveller to Penang is RM2,000 (US\$503), while business tourists spend an average of RM7,000.

The bureau, headed by CEO Ashwin Gunasekaran, is actively participating at international MICE shows overseas to attract more business to Penang. It also lends support to agents who bring MICE

business to Penang.

Local DMCs are thankful for this new development. Saini Vermeulen, executive director, Within Earth Holidays, said: "(The bureau) makes it easier to get support when organising MICE events. It also makes it easier for us to market Penang (as a host destination) to our clients overseas as they know there is a dedicated bureau to support (their events)."

Ally Bhoonee, executive director of World Avenues, added: "With the PCEB's launch, the state is in a better position to bid for international events and compete with neighbouring islands such as Phuket which offers similar products of beach, shopping and food."

The second development took place in May, when Penang hosted the inaugural edition of WTM Connect Asia. The show brought together 50 exhibitors and 70 hosted buyers from 25 countries, including those that were not on Penang's radar in the past like Lithuania, Mexico, Norway, Czech Republic, Canada, Denmark and Slovakia.

Ooi Chok Yan, CEO at Penang Global Tourism, said: "Having a world-class show in Penang is good branding for the

state. It has also offered an opportunity for us to tap new markets."

Commenting on the potential benefits a large-scale international show like WTM will bring, Adam Kamal, secretary-general of Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association, said: "Agents are influential and if convinced that the destination has appeal, they will include Penang in their brochure. That is a big win for Malaysia."

Over the years, Penang has built a reputation as an arts and cultural centre, partly due to state government support that has allowed home-grown events to grow in stature, and attract both local and international visitors.

A major crowd-puller is the month-long annual George Town Festival, inaugurated in 2010 in honour of George Town's designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This event attracts more than 200,000 visitors to Penang each year, which is three to four times more than the monthly average of 50,000 to 60,000 international visitors.

Nanda Kumar, managing director, Hidden Asia Travel & Tours, added that direct flights linking Penang with major cities in Asia as well as Kuala Lumpur and

major domestic points have made it easy to market the destination year-round.

Latest connections include AirAsia's four-times weekly services to Ho Chi Minh City since November 2015 and its thrice-weekly services to Yangon from January 2016.

Penang is served by 214 weekly flights to 16 destinations in Asia, and 390 weekly flights to nine domestic destinations.

Issue of the day

Taxing demand out of the blue

The new levy imposed on tourists visiting Langkawi has ruffled feathers in the agent community over the abrupt manner in which it was introduced. By **S Puvaneswary**

While the new tourism promotion fee imposed on tourists checking into Langkawi hotels – effective since July 1, 2016 – could impact arrivals, agents were more indignant about the manner in which the levy was introduced.

Explaining the fee, Mohd Rawi Abdul Hamid, Kedah state tourism committee chairman, said: “The fee would reduce Langkawi Municipal Council’s dependence on state funding to carry out projects such as island beautification, and enhancements in public facilities and services.

“With around three million tourists to Langkawi annually including domestic ones, we hope to get an additional RM5 million (US\$1.2million) to 6 million (in

tourism revenue fees.”

The fee ranges from RM1 per room night at one- and two-star accommodation, RM3 for three- and four-star hotels, and RM5 for five-star hotels.

While the levy may seem insignificant, some opined that it could affect tourist arrivals from price-sensitive segments.

Arokia Das, senior manager at Luxury Tours Malaysia, said: “For FIT tourists, margins are very slim and we work on volume to get profit. As the fee will be borne by the travellers, this may affect their decision on whether to visit Langkawi.”

He added: “Malindo offers Indian agents good rates if they purchase the Kuala Lumpur-Denpasar sector. We have lost a few honeymooners to Bali. I fear



Langkawi Sky Bridge

more Indian FITs will choose Bali over Langkawi due to this new promotion fee.”

However, it was the abrupt manner in which the fee was announced in June that many agents took issue with.

Kingston Khoo, senior product development/contracting manager at Discovery Overland Holidays, said: “It should have been announced at least six months earlier. It is so last minute that it has caught everyone off guard, and gives agents and tourists a bad impression of the country. Some of our overseas partners questioned why we informed them so late.”

World Avenues executive director Ally Bhooonee lamented the sketchy communi-

cation of the new levy. “Who is responsible for informing the international travel community? I have to inform agents for every new booking, which is a lot of work. If we forget to include this information, we could be threatened with lawsuits.”

Azvil Aziz, director of sales and marketing at The Danna Langkawi, stressed the need for transparency. “Langkawi is promoted as a tax-free island, but there’s this contradictory tax.”

But Aaishah Bohari, director of marketing & sales at The Datai Langkawi, said many overseas agents have since “accepted the new ruling, which is also practised in other countries”.

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Destination Malaysia

Viewpoints

What are the challenges faced in promoting Penang to foreign visitors?



Saini Vermeulen, executive director, Within Earth Holidays

We handle many groups from the Middle East to Penang, and they love to stay in the beach areas. Our main challenge is the limited supply of five- and four-star hotels in these areas, particularly Batu Ferringhi, during the (peak summer holiday period). More good beach hotels will help us market Penang to the Middle East.



Yap Sook Ling, managing director, Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel
(Even though)

Penang is a great destination for culture, culinary tours and wellness programmes, it is still perceived by some, especially the European markets, as mainly a beach destination. There are numerous new attractions and improvements in the city area and these have to be conveyed to tourists.

MY WAY



Faez Fadhilillah
Co-founder and CEO, Tripfez

If I had my way to improve Malaysia's infrastructure... I would make tourism stakeholders walk around Kuala Lumpur for a day, on a monthly

basis, to see what improvements need to be made. We need to put ourselves in the shoes of tourists in order to see the areas of improvement that are needed to ensure a pleasant experience for visitors during their stay in Malaysia. It is also important to ensure that our tourism products are all inclusive and accessible to the disabled.

If I had my way to improve the diversity of Malaysia's tourism products and positioning... I would campaign for tourism stakeholders and site owners to upgrade existing attractions and create new ones in Malaysia. This country should be (known for more than) just the Petronas Twin Towers. Tourism professionals need to realise that different travellers have different needs and expectations when they visit our country.

Shopping and retail is an important segment, but there are also tourists who are interested in culture, adventure and nature. Many of our cultural attractions are little known and advertised. They need more international exposure.

I believe Kuala Lumpur, and Ma-

laysia in general, have attractions that can rival our neighbouring countries. They may also be hard to reach for tourists because of a lack of public infrastructure and connectivity. This is also an area that the government and local authorities should look into.

If I had my way to strengthen the inbound industry... I would organise tourism round-table discussions that are open to the public. The discussions will centre around ways to attract more airlines to fly to the main gateway and secondary cities so as to make Malaysia the top choice for repeat and new visitors. These discussions will provide the perfect platform not just to bounce ideas, but also to (facilitate) collaboration and get feedback from the public.

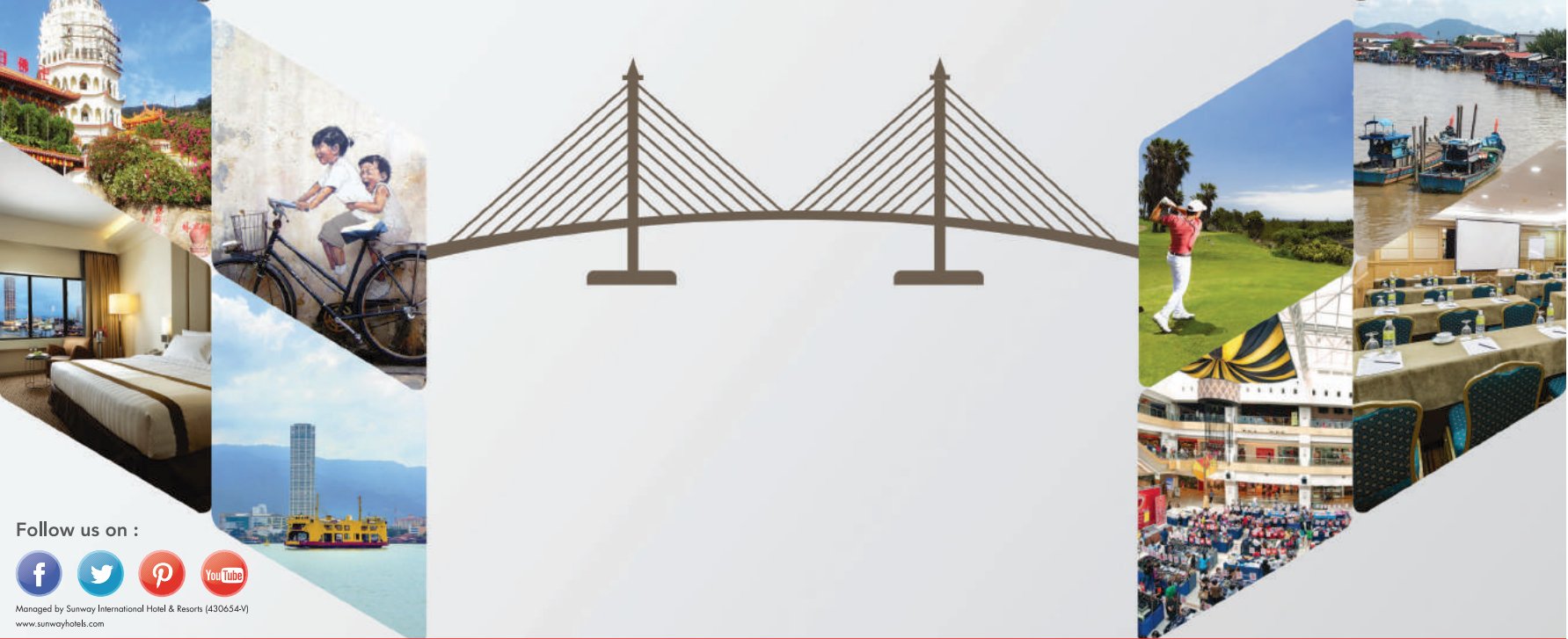
(I would like) representation from all segments in the tourism industry such as government, site owners, local authorities, transportation owners, tour operators and tourist guides.

After all, the tourism industry is like a tree with many branches, all of which combine to help keep the tree alive and grow.



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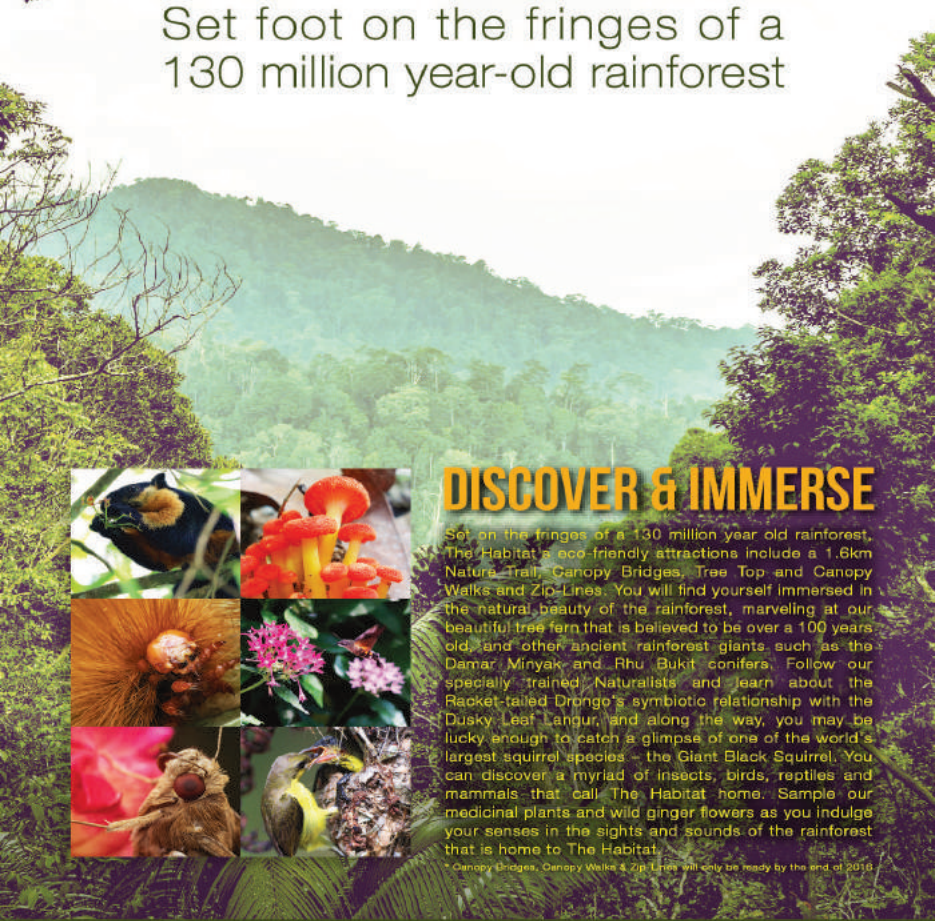
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Destination Malaysia

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 Curtis Crest Treetop Walk
Opened in August at The Habitat Penang Hill, this new treetop walk offers 13m-high viewing platforms, the highest in Penang. In September, the Canopy Discovery Tour was launched with high and low ropes as well as tree-climbing experiences.

Come 2017, The Habitat Penang Hill will also be home to the longest dual zipline over a rainforest in South-east Asia at 800m in both directions.

2 Entopia by Penang Butterfly Farm

The Penang Butterfly Farm on Jalan Teluk Bahang reopened in May as Entopia after undergoing a RM50 million (US\$12,356 million) redevelopment, which saw the facility expanded to over 9,290m² from 2,787m² previously. It is home to the world's first butterfly, dragonfly and firefly sanctuary. Attractions include gardens and a discovery centre.

3 TeddyVille Museum

Using teddy bears, the museum educates visitors on Penang's history and culture. Depictions here include

Thaipusam as celebrated by the Hindus and Fort Cornwallis in colonial times. The museum opened in July at DoubleTree Resort by Hilton Hotel Penang and houses over 1,000 teddy bears in a 836m² space.

4 Penang Amazing World Studios

As the world's first Warner Brothers licensed gallery, this attraction houses more than 30 works of trick art, featuring mainly Warner Brothers cartoon characters. Particularly fun is the virtual reality section where visitors can don a headset and glasses, and be transported on a rollercoaster for an adventure.

5 Best Western Premier Genting Ion Delemen

This hotel will open in November to become the first international branded hotel in Genting Highlands.

The 300-room hotel comprises deluxe rooms as well as one-, two- and three-bedroom suites. Facilities include six F&B outlets, seven meeting rooms and a ballroom for up to 600 people in theatre style, a fully-equipped fitness centre, a heated swimming pool and a spa.

TRIED AND TESTED

G Hotel Gurney, Penang



A recent makeover has turned the eight-year-old G Hotel Gurney into an unmistakably stylish property, discovers **S Puvaneswary**

LOCATION G Hotel Gurney, as well as its sister establishment G Hotel Kelawai, are both located within walking distance of each other on Gurney Drive and the famed Gurney Drive Hawker Centre. Guests of each hotel can utilise the facilities at either property due to the proximity.

Retail options also abound for guests with Gurney Plaza shopping centre and Gurney Paragon Mall – the latest mall to open in Penang – both located nearby.

ROOM I stayed in an executive suite on the topmost floor, which boasts panoramic views of Gurney Drive and the Strait of Malacca. The room was unrecognisable from when I first saw it back in 2013. It now boasts a more modern aesthetic, with cream-coloured wallpapers and wood panelling, as well as plush carpeting.

A wall separates the living room from the bedroom, a privacy feature I would definitely have welcomed if I wasn't staying alone. As well, the Herman Miller work chair provided great back support, which was much appreciated when I had to work over my laptop in the evenings.

My three nights of sleep there were pleasant thanks to the comfortable bedding and pillows.

FACILITIES I enjoyed a speedy check-in

at the executive reception on level 15. Being on the executive floor, I also enjoyed indulgences such as complimentary ice-cream, evening cocktails at the lounge, free shoe shine service and complimentary local city calls.

The infinity pool on level three was inviting and the 24/7 gym was well utilised when I took to the treadmill after a full day of feasting on Penang's well-known delicacies.

F&B The hotel's all-day dining restaurant, Taste Café, had extensive options which took me two days to fully savour. Sitting near the open kitchen area allowed me to enjoy my food while feasting my eyes on the chefs at work. Guests can choose to be seated outdoors as well, bringing them closer to nature.

Another F&B option is the Tree Bar, an alfresco bar which I discovered was a great place to chill out and people watch as Gurney Plaza shoppers walk by. The bar probably got its name from the majestic 80-year-old tree standing tall in the middle.

SERVICE This is where G Hotel Gurney manages to stand out. Its staff are friendly, warm and ever so helpful, which made me feel right at home.

VERDICT It has both the hardware and the software to make for a truly unforgettable holiday.

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Destination Cambodia/Vietnam

Cambodia's least-explored territories are starting to find interest among tour operators and intrepid travellers seeking authentic experiences, writes **Marissa Carruthers**

Call of the wild

Phnom Sombok, a temple in Kratie

Home to ethnic minorities and an abundance of sprawling jungle and pristine wildlife, Cambodia's wild frontiers are quickly becoming hotspots for the booming ecotourism trade as tourists step off the well-trodden tracks of Siem Reap, Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville coastal area.

Somborath Dy, operations manager at Cambodian Rural Development (CRD) Tours, which promotes ecotourism in north-east Cambodia, said: "Cambodia has the potential to develop ecotourism because it not only has rich cultural but also diverse natural resources."

In the *Tourism Development Strategic Plan 2012-2020*, the Cambodian Ministry of Tourism highlighted ecotourism as a market for development. And with recent research revealing millennial travellers are seeking more authentic experiences, industry players observed that this is an area with the potential to thrive in Cambodia.

Speaking at this year's Mekong Tourism Forum in Sihanoukville, James Dion, National Geographic Society's sustainable tourism programme manager, said: "Cultural experiences reign over partying. Authenticity sells and can bring benefits to people and a place. When people come to a place like Cambodia, they're experiencing a culture you will find nowhere else."

Jo Crisp, general manager of Peak DMC, said: "More people are keen to see the country at the pace of a bicycle, kayak or through trekking, and want to venture out into more remote areas where they can see people and sights that are relative-

ly untouched by tourism."

Koh Kong's Cardamom Mountains has become a community-based ecotourism (CBET) hotspot, with trekking, kayaking, mountain biking and camping in the wild offered. Home to some of the last remaining Siamese crocodiles, the biodiverse area also boasts about 30 other endangered species such as hornbills, dragonfish and slow lorises.

Tour operators have started rolling out a range of authentic experiences centred on CBET in the area.

The Wild KK Project is one example. Started as a tool to provide an alternative source of income to the area's 1,300 indigenous people, the tours also raise awareness of the threats the region faces such as illegal logging and hunting.

Wildlife Alliance, an NGO, also runs a successful CBET project in nearby Chi Phat. The community-run initiative sees visitors trek and bike through dense jungle terrains, where elephants and wild boars live. Guests can explore traditional burial sites and caves, and sleep in hammocks in the wild or at village homestays.

The country's rural north-eastern provinces have also proven popular, with intrepid travellers flocking to Monduliri's rolling hills where elephants are a huge draw. Several initiatives provide visitors with the opportunity to get up close and personal with endangered Asian elephants in their natural habitat.

In Kratie, tour operators such as CRD Tours offer trips to view endangered Irrawaddy dolphins in the Mekong River, where they learn about the mammals'

conservation and history. Ibises and Cantor's softshell turtles can also be spotted.

Despite the growth potential, Dy thinks more needs to be done to market ecotourism on both national and international levels. "Tour operators need to be encouraged to not just focus on the temples or city tours but more on nature and ecotourism," he said.

In addition, ecotourism players have to grapple with other challenges such as a lack of infrastructure and environmental issues such as illegal logging and hunting, which is rampant across Cambodia.

"It's true there are some real opportunities (in ecotourism), but on the other hand, deforestation and plastic pollution are growing issues," said Pierre-Andre Romano, general manager of Exo Travel Cambodia.

Destination in numbers

4.8 million

The number of international visitors to Cambodia in 2015, injecting more than US\$3 billion into the economy

13.8%

The rise in the number of international visitors carrying out ecotourism activities in May 2016, compared with the previous year

6.8 days

The average length of stay of foreign tourists in Cambodia in 2015

Viewpoints

What is the appeal of ecotourism in Cambodia?

Somborath Dy, operations manager, Cambodian Rural Development Tours



Ecotourism is the best tool for natural resource conservation and livelihood development in rural areas, as well as protected areas in Cambodia. Cambodia has a lot to offer in terms of ecotourism activities, with (the emergence of) more sustainable tour operators and agencies, eco-lodges and conservation activities.

Amy McLoughlin, co-founder, Ayana Journeys

Visitors worldwide are searching for authentic travel experiences. Cambodia holds many opportunities in this area. We offer a range of experiences for curious travellers that aim to spark interests, seek hidden corners and encourage inquisitiveness to cater to this demand.



Destination Cambodia/Vietnam

Issue of the day

Growing access opens Pandora's box

Improved accessibility has brought greater visibility to Vietnam's central coast alongside other issues. By **Yixin Ng**



Lang Co town and beach, near Danang, Vietnam

An increase in international flights into Danang is allowing Vietnam's central coast to better hold its own alongside Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, but the strengthening appeal is also bringing a new set of challenges for the Vietnamese trade.

In May, Bangkok Airways began four-times-weekly Bangkok-Danang service and Vietnam Airlines followed quickly on its heels with the launch of the same route.

Travellers responded so well to this that

Bangkok Airways – barely three months into the launch – was already in discussion with Danang International Airport about potentially increasing the frequency of the service, a source told *TTG Asia*.

Jetstar Pacific in August started plying between Osaka and Danang, while Jetstar Asia chose Danang as the second Vietnamese gateway to fly to (after HCMC) in November 2015.

On how the prior lack of international flights placed limits on the region's viability as a single destination for tourists

on traditional package holidays, Alexander Leven, director of product development of Asia DMC, commented: "Not many group tours have (central Vietnam stays) in their itineraries. But (those that do) offer mostly Hoi An, and mostly for roundtrips."

But this is looking set to change. Jess Yap, general manager at Country Holidays in Singapore, noted that the agency was "getting more interest these days from clients visiting central Vietnam as a mono destination".

"We have welcomed an increasingly diverse guest profile (and) seen an increase in guests from neighbouring countries who enjoy the direct flights into Danang," observed Michal Zitek, area general manager, Banyan Tree Banyan Tree Lang Co and Angsana Lang Co.

Amid this picture of change, several other developments in the region are hard to miss, such as the establishment of regional tourism promotion body Central Coast Vietnam, Leven shared, and the explosion of international-branded hotel chains onto the scene, particularly in Danang.

"Of course, many reasons (to visit the) region also (run) the risk of attracting the masses. While many like to market the destination as an upmarket golfer paradise, many smaller businesses want quick money and (go after other) target markets," Leven remarked, echoing the industry's prevailing dilemma about the influx of new visitors.

In recent months, several local agents in Danang have gone public with their concerns on the behaviour of tourists and how Chinese-run businesses have encroached on their profits.

The tourist influx is also straining the region's capacity, Leven added. "The rise in arrivals from China is so fast this year that supply of transport, restaurants and tour guides are being put to the test."

Another trade-off of the region's enhanced mainstream appeal, he continued, was the building of high-rise beachfront hotels, which could compromise the luxury sell-points of the region's tranquil coasts.

Yap also expressed similar regret over once-quiet attractions. "The increase in direct flights have allowed better accessibility... Sadly, (this also means) the old town of Hoi An will get more crowded."

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 Temporary visa exemption

In July, Vietnam granted another year of visa exemptions for tourists from the UK, France, Italy, Spain and Germany for single-entry stays of up to 15 days. This waiver was first introduced as a one-year scheme in July 2015. It has been well-received by inbound agents, who say business from the newly visa-exempt source countries have picked up since.

2 Vietnam Mountain Bike Marathon

This three-day mountain bike marathon through the mountainous region surrounding Sapa will take place on November 4-6. On day one, participants will take a 55km leg through the north, home to the flower Hmong minorities. The second stage is 68km and heads to the southern area populated by the Tay and Red Dao peoples. The race then concludes with a sprint back towards Sapa town through Black Hmong villages.

The adventure event is organised by Topas Travel, founder of the Vietnam Mountain Marathon, which has seen participation grow from 250 to

around 1,500 runners four years after its inception.

3 Training capabilities

A Vietnamese tourism training association was founded by the Vietnam Tourism Association on August 1. It plans to gather participation from tourism specialists – including universities, vocational schools, research agencies, businesses, and organisations – and collaboratively develop tourism skill standards and conduct skills training.

Meanwhile in Cambodia, the tourism ministry signed an MoU with the Confucius Institute of the Royal Academy of Cambodia for the institute to provide Chinese language courses and bolster the tourism trade. The ministry also outlined a plan to build more vocational training centres due for completion by 2019.

4 Sokha Siem Reap Resort & Convention Centre

The Cambodian hotel chain in September unveiled a 9,000m² convention centre ahead of the scheduled opening of its 770-room resort complex. The new facility features a



halal-certified kitchen that can cater for large events, which could help it attract Muslim groups such as those from neighbouring Malaysia and Indonesia.

5 Mercure Danang French Village Bana Hills

The mountaintop resort launched a new room category in July, months

after opening in March with 494 European-style rooms and suites. Equipped with two bunk beds, the 25m² Family Room adds to the existing room categories of Standard, Superior and Deluxe, and Family Suite and Royal Suite types.

The resort is perched 1,480m above sea level on the Bana mountain range 25 minutes outside Danang.



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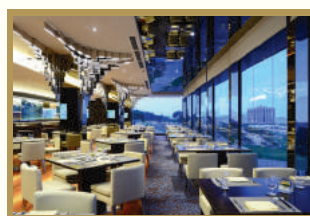
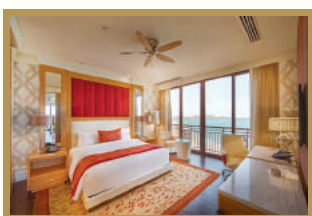


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Destination Cambodia/Vietnam

MY WAY



David Ashworth
General manager, Phum Baitang

If I had my way to increase sales in Cambodia, I would... encourage an increase in direct flights to allow faster and easier accessibility to the country.

Visa-free entry into Cambodia for the top inbound countries will also reduce congestion on arrival and hours spent at passport control. The time-consuming immigration services on arrival do not give a good first impression. I would also like to see an increase in Cambodia's visibility through quality roadshows and mainstream travel and trade fairs.

The main current challenges within the tourism industry are an oversupply of hotels, especially in the three- and four-star market. Overcrowding at key locations, such as the temples, is creating bad feedback for first-time visitors to Cambodia. It is also causing large-scale damage.

To address these challenges, there needs to be closer ties between CHA and the Ministry of Tourism in order to get a better understanding of how to overcome the current challenges. Government bodies need to control the building licences for new hotels to avoid oversupply, and opening and closing hours at the temples should be extended to prevent overcrowding.

Environmental damage is also a concern, with a lack of understanding and control of waste management. Young people also need to be educated on the importance of the environment, and the amount of cleaning that needs to be carried out around key towns and cities, including temple areas. As well, (we could benefit from) more bins in tourist locations and better waste collection services.

I would like to encourage more visitors to come



in the low or green season to better spread occupancies and yield for hotels. Special low-season packages need to be put in place to encourage travellers to see Cambodia out of season, with CHA taking part in travel and trade shows, including partner hotels, to publicise this.

TRIED AND TESTED

Angsana Lang Co, Central Vietnam

This luxurious beachfront retreat impresses **Yixin Ng** with its thoughtful service, serene environs and access to UNESCO World Heritage Sites in central Vietnam

LOCATION The 229-room property, along with Banyan Tree Langco, forms part of the Laguna Langco resort located in Phu Loc, central Vietnam. Situated over an hour's drive from Danang, it is not for those who like to stay right in the tourist centre.

But others may consider it a winning location, being in the proximity of three world cultural heritage attractions – the former imperial capital of Hue, the 2,000-year-old town of Hoi An and the Cham Kingdom Sanctuaries at My Son.

ROOM The Deluxe Room is the lead-in

category, but guests still get to enjoy a tub, a balcony and an impressive 52m² of real estate.

Aromatherapy items were provided, which along with the earthy colour scheme in the room, provided a great setting for relaxation.

I appreciated how in-room dining service is available 24 hours, especially since there were no other late-night food options in the vicinity.

F&B Rice Bar and Rice Bowl provided a complete dining experience, with rice-inspired Vietnamese cuisine complemented

by a dramatic ambience.

The bar includes a cigar lounge and sushi bar, in addition to serving up innovative concoctions made with local produce. I particularly enjoyed their spin on the classic Mojito – where coriander, kumquat, tamarind syrup and a rice-based spirit substituted the traditional mint, lime, rum and brown sugar combination.

Rice Bowl has a menu of fresh and delectable Vietnamese fare and accommodates a good variety of group configurations from couples to large groups.

I thought it was brilliant how the restaurant turned the diner-style booth seating concept on its head to fit into Rice Bowl's upscale dining environment. The "booths" here took the form of large lantern-esque canopies. This partitioning style allows the larger groups to dine in an intimate space while not being boxed up in a stifling private room.

Market Place is where guests go to have their buffet breakfast. I was happy to discover they served both espresso-based and Vietnamese coffee. Food was also diverse, ranging from omelettes to Chinese-style congee.

Moomba is my pick for dining with a view, sitting between the private beach and pool. Upper Deck is the bar terrace above the restaurant which gives beautiful views of the East Sea at sunset.

FACILITIES Guests can get around the resort on buggies (round-the-clock) and shuttle boats (08.30-17.00) to enjoy the

resort's facilities, including an 18-hole championship golf course, spas, retail outlets and an organic garden. The property also offers daily shuttle services to Hoi An and Hue.

I was impressed by the complimentary group activities – including yoga retreats, kayak safaris, bike tours and cooking classes – available every day. Guests can also rent equipment like kayaks, stand-up paddle boards and bicycles at no charge.

The spa menu included Javanese, Hawaiian/Wave and Thai-style massages. I opted for the hour-long Thai massage as I was looking forward to a more intense massage, and was not let down. Semi-outdoor shower facilities complete the resort spa experience.

The pool loops through the resort, allowing some guests to swim or float right up to the corridors leading to their rooms. This would be a total hit with kids. A kids' club is also available here.

SERVICE Hotel staff were courteous and good-natured, which more than made up for their halting English.

VERDICT The resort went well beyond providing rooms and takes care of every aspect of the tourist experience, from food to entertainment to tours. I also found the quaint surrounds and unobstructed views of lakes, rocks and the ocean to be the perfect setting for a luxurious retreat.

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Destination **Singapore**

The Mandai precinct is poised to undergo a massive makeover to become an ecotourism hub with five wildlife parks and eco-lodges, writes **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Natural advantage

An artist's impression of the new Bird Park at Mandai

Ecotourism is set to be the newest feather on Singapore's tourism cap when a 126ha wildlife and nature precinct dedicated to ecotourism comes online in 2023, giving optimism to the trade on new ways to package tours and attract tourists to the city-state.

Currently home to the Singapore Zoo, River Safari and Night Safari, Mandai will from 2020 onwards be joined by two new attractions – the Bird Park, which will be relocated from Jurong; and the all-new Rainforest Park.

Mike Barclay, group chief executive of Mandai Safari Park Holdings (MSPH), said: "We want to give visitors a nature and wildlife destination that they can call their own. Visitors have asked for more novel, engaging and immersive experiences. We hope the new Mandai nature precinct will provide all that and more."

He added: "Our vision is to create an integrated nature and wildlife destination, nestled within our bustling city for all Singaporeans and tourists to enjoy. Generations of Singaporeans have grown up with the Jurong Bird Park and the (existing) wildlife parks in Mandai.

"This project provides an opportunity for renewal, and to deepen our collective affinity with the nature and wildlife of our region."

When completed, visitors will be able to stroll on aerial walkways at the 12.5ha

Rainforest Park, or relax in pods and watch birds take flight in nine aviaries that feature different landscapes – such as a wetland or bamboo forest – at the 17ha Bird Park. The Bird Park will also hold a breeding and research facility, which aims to increase the populations of critically endangered species such as the Bali mynah, black-winged starling and blue-crowned laughing thrush.

As well, the Mandai nature precinct will also boast nature trails, boardwalks, gardens, waterways and playgrounds in its surroundings.

According to MSPH, the hub is designed to be in harmony with nature. The two new parks will be developed on previously occupied land and measures will be taken to minimise impact on the flora and fauna in the area.

Meanwhile, the main hub area will feature an indoor nature-themed education centre, and hold exhibitions aimed at raising awareness and appreciation for the region's biodiversity and natural heritage.

Moreover, an eco-link bridge spanning Mandai Lake Road will also be built. This bridge will allow animals to move between the central and northern reaches of the Central Catchment Nature Reserve.

Sleeping under the stars could become viable for visitors who intend to spend a night or two in Mandai, as eco-friendly

Viewpoints

What are the challenges faced in selling wildlife attractions in Singapore?



Jaclyn Yeoh,
managing
director, **Siam
Express**

The wildlife attractions are highly appealing and have the

potential to sell well

especially to nature lovers, families and the leisure market. But the high admission fees are a deterrent. Also, tourists have a limited time in Singapore.



Dominic Ong,
general manager,
**Star Holiday
Mart**

The Mandai area will be overcrowded in time to come. Personally, I feel

that we have enough attractions in Singapore. We should leave nature as it is because increased vehicle and human traffic will damage the rainforest and affect its natural state.

accommodation options such as tents, camps and family rooms are now on the drawing board.

Applauding Singapore's ecotourism ambitions, GTMC Travel's CEO Samson Tan, said: "This new hub will help capture tourists because it become a one-stop wildlife attraction hub. It will help tourists stay for a full day or (even spend a) night there."

Tour East's senior vice president sales & marketing international market, Judy Lum, expects wildlife attractions to be popular with the family segment, as the existing Night Safari is already a big draw

especially for visitors from India, China and Japan.

"I am excited about this impending project. It will be a wonderful place for visitors to explore and cultivate care for nature, and it is educational for both children and adults alike," Lum enthused.

Currently, MSPH is also exploring a range of options with the Singapore government to improve accessibility to Mandai. These include introducing shuttle buses from the upcoming Springleaf MRT station and direct bus services from areas that are not well-connected to Mandai.

Destination Singapore

Destination in numbers

\$S700 million

The amount – equivalent to US\$523 million – injected into a new five-year tranche of the Tourism Development Fund

5.5 million

The total number of international visitors to Singapore from January to April 2016, a 14.1 year-on-year increase

\$S242.40

The average hotel room rate from January to March 2016, compared with S\$244.60 throughout 2015

Issue of the day

Changing p

Persistent doubts over rewards and reputation are causing Singapore millennials to shy away from a tourism career. **Yixin Ng** finds out what needs to be done



Exciting prospects await Singapore's future tourism workforce, but more needs to be done to push past lingering misconceptions that are dulling the industry's shine for millennials, leading industry stakeholders expressed.

"The tourism sector is competing for talents, in some ways unfairly, with other attractive industries such as banking," Soon-Hwa Wong, chairman of PATA Singapore Chapter told *TTG Asia*, alluding to the longheld beliefs that customer-facing roles are the be-all and end-all of hospitality and tourism careers.

Young Singaporeans may also shy away from tourism pathways because of assumptions held by parents and peers that "low pay, long hours and limited prospects" typify tourism careers, Wong added.

Joan Henderson, associate professor at Nanyang Technological University's Nanyang Business School, also agreed that "salary considerations" have quelled interest.

Perhaps more striking is the low retention rate of hospitality professionals, with "large numbers" of students deciding to pursue other pathways after their tourism industry internships, according to a spokesperson from Temasek Polytechnic's (TP) hospitality faculty.

In practice however, tourism holds coveted prospects, be it up the hotel rungs or in destination planning roles, assured Wong. The emergence of non-traditional business models in recent years has also emphatically broadened this scope.

"The industry now includes mobility players, tech platforms, analytics and big data systems. Even major tech players such as Google and Facebook now have



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perceptions



PATA Singapore Chapter chairman Soon-Hwa Wong (centre), Temasek Polytechnic (TP) School of Business' director Daniel Yeow (second from right) and TTG Asia Media's managing director Darren Ng (rightmost), with TP event helpers at Tourism Innovation Competition 2016

tourism components," he said. "Now is a good time to redefine the boundaries of travel and tourism careers."

Change is already underway to assist young Singaporeans in discovering the multifaceted nature of tourism and how diverse skillsets are valued within the trade.

Earlier in June this year, the Tourism Innovation Competition (TIC) 2016 concluded after students took a week to develop ideas for the Singapore Zoological Gardens with the guidance of mentors from TP's Hospitality and Tourism Management course.

Benjamin Cassim from the organising team at TP told *TTG Asia*: "We view the competition as a very relevant platform

because it offers students the opportunity to learn, be exposed to and participate in tourism-building efforts in an enjoyable way."

While lauding the TIC for generating awareness of the trade in young talents, Wong stressed that sustaining their interest is the larger challenge. One way to

go about this, he suggested, is to highlight industry role models to raise the profile of the industry.

"Also, we could identify cross-sectoral ambassadors who would then talk up the industry – this is a role that associations (such as PATA and hotel associations) can fill."

He added that invigorating industry news could be disseminated online to better engage a larger audience.

"Everyone loves feel-good news, which can lead them to think it's an exciting and dynamic industry and not a tired one (as some might think)," Wong stated.

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Dung "Mos" Dang
Founder and Head of Product, Scott Experience Design



Matt Gibson
Professional Travel Bloggers Association & Xpat Media

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

“Even if a story is the same, each culture will tell it differently because each one has its own genre and cultural rules.”

- Kay Turner, 'Humans of New York'

“The industry now includes mobility players, tech platforms, analytics and big data systems... Now is a good time to redefine the boundaries of travel and tourism careers.”

Soon-Hwa Wong
Chairman, PATA Singapore Chapter

MY WAY



Judy Lum
Senior vice president sales
& marketing international
market, Tour East

What challenges do you currently face in selling Singapore as a destination? A challenge is selling Singapore as a destination to visitors from developed countries, as they have a gross misperception that the country is just a highly organised island city-state and that a visitor can do and see everything in a day or two.

Another challenge is selling Singapore as a holiday destination due to the country's reputation as a business and financial hub. The city is not appealing to leisure holidaymakers who want to experience the sun, sand, sea and enjoy authentic Asian food and drinks at a fraction of the price they would have to pay back in their home countries.

If I had my way to improve things, I would... focus on dining in Singapore. After all, we just received our very first Michelin Guide. At the same time, we need to address the declining standards and increasing prices of our street food before it brings irreparable harm to Singapore's reputation as a food paradise.

We also have a great collection of uniquely designed accommodation which are mostly independently owned and the owners are passionate about delivering experience. I think we should support these three- to five-star boutique hotels via more partnerships to let visitors see the various facets of Singapore.

TRIED AND TESTED

InterContinental Singapore
Heritage Walking Trail

Yixin Ng takes a stroll around the Bugis precinct and learns about the myriad historical attractions that celebrate the roots of the local community

WHAT The relaunch of InterContinental Singapore earlier this year was accompanied by a new guided heritage walk which was charted in consultation with the National Heritage Board and Singapore Tourist Guides Society (STGS).

Taking place from 16.00 to 18.00 every Saturday, the complimentary walk connects participants to a network of over 20 historical sites, national monuments, art institutions and museums in the hotel's vicinity.

While this tour is only available for InterContinental guests, representatives from the hotel have made known that there are intentions to open it up to the public in the near future.

WHY Much of the hotel's recent revamp was centred on evoking a sense of place and heritage. The walk takes this resolve a step further by helping guests learn about the cultural significance inscribed into buildings, roads and architecture by past and present inhabitants.

With the walk, the hotel hopes to "provide an experiential stay" for guests and "pay homage to the character of the vibrant locale".

HOW STGS guide Jean greeted me and other walk registrants at the hotel lobby on an overcast Saturday afternoon. She



had umbrellas and bottled water ready – a small effort that went a long way in Singapore's erratic climate.

Jean did a great job of bringing the district to life with stories of Singapore's historical enclaves and communities, and how they left their mark. We had barely stepped out of the hotel when she began explaining the origins behind the name of the district, which was once populated by Sulawesi immigrants, known as Bugis.

The group was also introduced to national monuments such as the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, and other sites of historical significance such as the Stamford Arts Centre and a former church building on Sculpture Square that is now the Objectifs gallery.

We found Waterloo Street lined with a church, a synagogue, and Hindu and Buddhist temples. Between battling the scent of Buddhist incense and the perfume from Hindu flower garlands, Jean's anecdotes on interconnected local communi-

ties were aptly played out before us.

Being guided through the entire hub-bub helped puncture the tourist bubble, which I thought allowed for more intimate and memorable encounters with the local culture.

Along the way, Jean also pointed out local delicacies such as *sambal petai*, Indian *rojak* and durian. These are great tips for experiential tourists seeking authentic gastronomic experiences beyond gentrified malls and restaurants.

VERDICT Overall, the two-hour walk was an easy but densely packed initiation to what many would consider to be an quintessentially Singaporean experience.

Rates Free; for hotel guests only
Contact details
Tel: (65) 6338 7600
Website: www.intercontinental.com/Singapore

NEWS IN A MINUTE

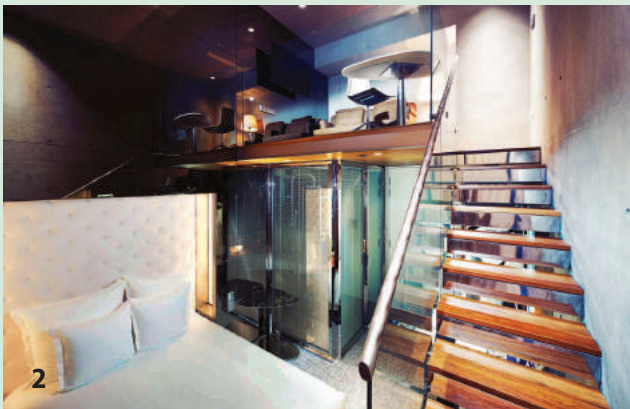
1 Hotel Vagabond
This luxury boutique hotel by Gar-cha Hotels is the first hotel in Asia to feature interiors by French designer Jacques Garcia.
The 41-room property is also the only hotel of its kind to offer a

rotational Artist in Residence programme, where artists will be invited to apply for residences up to three months to showcase their work.

2 M Social Singapore
Millennium Hotels and Resorts has

launched a new lifestyle hotel brand in the country with the opening of M Social Singapore in Robertson Quay.

Featuring a Philippe Starck-designed interior, the 239-key has a mix of duplex-style lofts and terraced rooms. Facilities include a lobby with self check-in kiosks, a swimming pool, fitness centre, and a communal restaurant-bar Beast & Butterflies.



TRIED AND TESTED

Hotel Indigo Singapore Katong

With its bold décor and Peranakan design touches, this property oozes enough cultural charm to make **Rachel AJ Lee** appreciate her Straits Chinese roots even more

LOCATION Sitting just next door to the 112 Katong mall, Hotel Indigo Singapore Katong looms above the rest of the low-rise buildings in the culturally rich neighbourhood of Joo Chiat.

This boutique lifestyle brand by the InterContinental Hotels Group seeks to incorporate the heritage and character of the surrounding Peranakan (Straits Chinese) neighbourhood into its interior décor and style. This includes lobby walls decorated with intricate ceramic patterns, vibrant hand-painted vases and a colourful lantern chandelier hanging daintily above a large rosewood table.

ROOMS All 131 rooms in the hotel, whether in the Deluxe or Premier categories, measure 30m², but the difference is that the latter has a Nespresso machine and larger-sized Biology Smart Skincare toiletries. Of the Premier rooms, 12 have custom-made bathtubs.

Stepping into my Deluxe Room, I felt as though I had walked straight into a Peranakan shophouse. The first thing I noticed was the sketched mural of a Singapore street scene – by local artist Don Low – on the wall, while the bathroom and toilet were adorned with tiles that had decorative Peranakan motifs, complete with a basin for a foot bath, and a spittoon under the sink.

The level of detail in the room was astounding. From the enamel cups used for brushing teeth and Singer sewing machine legs upcycled as a vanity counter to

the carrom board table and batik-print sofa, every corner of the room oozed an eclectic Peranakan vibe, fervently reminding me of the neighbourhood I was in.

Furnishings aside, the bed was comfortable and the pillows fluffy. While the Wi-Fi was speedy, I did encounter some technical difficulties in the room. The TV hung thrice on us (it was easily reset by just turning it off and on again), and one set of ports beside the bed was faulty.

FACILITIES The rooftop on the 16th storey offers an unobstructed view of the colourful shophouses in the vicinity and even the National Stadium. The 25m-long infinity pool, open from 07.00 to 21.00, and the 24-hour gym are both located on this level. The rooftop area is also available for small cocktail events and can accommodate up to 35 people. There are also two meeting rooms.

F&B Baba Chews Bar and Eatery, the sole restaurant on the premises, is housed in the former Joo Chiat Police Station. The all-day dining restaurant, decked out with monochrome-patterned tiles and herringbone-style wood flooring, serves



up Peranakan-inspired dishes such as foie gras *tau kwa pau* and beef short ribs *rendang*.

At breakfast, cold items such as juices, yoghurt, fruits and bread were served buffet-style in an alcove within Baba Chews, while unlimited hot items such as congee and eggs Benedict have to be ordered from the breakfast menu.

Foodies should save some stomach space as the Katong area is home to a veritable trove of local eateries such as 328 Katong Laksa, Chin Mee Chin Confectionery and Delicious Boneless Chicken Rice in Katong Shopping Centre.

SERVICE The staff were all smiles, courteous and helpful. Simran, our neigh-

bourhood host on duty that day, was extremely gracious and friendly, greeting us warmly by name when we crossed paths. She was also quick to offer us a glass of ice-cold latte – a welcome respite in the humid weather – while we were waiting to be checked in.

VERDICT The Katong neighbourhood story has been stitched beautifully into the DNA of this Indigo property. I love the uniqueness of the property, and it gave me – a Singaporean Peranakan – a new appreciation of my heritage.

No. of rooms 131
Rates S\$171 (US\$127)
Contact details
Tel: (65) 6723 7001
Email: info.sink@ihg.com



3 KidZania Singapore

KidZania Singapore, an interactive indoor edutainment centre, has opened at Palawan Beach on Sentosa Island. The 7,600m² facility features 80 role-playing activities suitable for children between the ages of four and 14. They will be exposed to real-life situations and learn about how a society functions in the process. Some activities on offer include piloting an aeroplane, putting out fires and working as a CSI agent.

4 AJ Hackett Sentosa

Bungy operator AJ Hackett International is constructing a 50m-tall bungy tower on Sentosa Island, the first of its kind for Singapore.

The custom-built tower will feature several experiences such as the Double Bungy, a 47m-high jump deck; Duo Giant Swings, the world's first double swings where two groups of participants race each other to the ground; and a Vertical Skywalk

where guests can walk 44m down the centre tower shaft.

There is also a 40m-long vertical Skybridge that will allow participants of all ages to walk along an open-air platform to take in the sights and watch jumpers take the leap. The tower is scheduled to be completed by end-2016.

5 Singapore Airlines

Singapore Airlines will launch a non-stop service between Singapore and San Francisco from October 23, 2016 using an Airbus A350-900 aircraft. The airline currently serves San Francisco twice daily, with one flight operating via Hong Kong and the other via Incheon, Seoul.

With the new direct service linking Singapore and San Francisco, the Singapore-Seoul-San Francisco flight will be re-routed to operate as a Singapore-Seoul-Los Angeles service, also from October 23.

Flight time for the new 13,600km



Singapore-San Francisco services will be between 14 hours 35 minutes and 17 hours 45 minutes, depending on the direction and time of year. They will be the longest flights

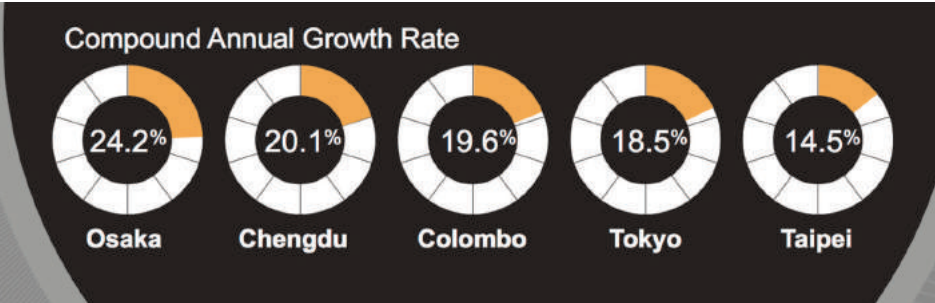
in SIA's network until 2018, when a new variant of the A350-900 will enter service to enable even longer flights between Singapore and both Los Angeles and New York.

Connect

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

TOURISM DATA

The top destination cities as well as five fastest-growing destination cities in Asia-Pacific, according to the 2016 Mastercard Global Destination Cities Index



Percentages represent the compounded annual growth rate in each city from 2009-2016

TOP GLOBAL DESTINATIONS:

1

Bangkok

6

Singapore

7

Kuala Lumpur

9

Tokyo

10

Seoul

WHO'S SAYING WHAT

Instagram



Park Hotel Group and representatives from K2 Hotel at a signing ceremony for the development of Park Hotel Yeongdeungpo opening in Seoul next year. #parkhotel



All smiles from the TTG Asia as the editorial team gets ready to produce the Official Show Daily at PATA Travel Mart 2016 in Jakarta. #ptm2016 #wonderfulindonesia



A small sample of the many ATF Show Dailies published by TTG Asia over the years. TTG Asia is gearing up for a special #ASEAN@50 celebratory project next year.

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



EXO TRAVEL BAGS TRAVELIFE CERTIFICATION IN LAOS, MYANMAR

Exo Travel in Laos and Myanmar have both been awarded the Travelife certification, an accreditation recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and awarded to companies for complying with the established Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. Exo Travel Laos is the first DMC in the country to attain the award, and together with Exo's four other operations in Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand, is the first Asian DMC to receive the accreditation in five destinations.



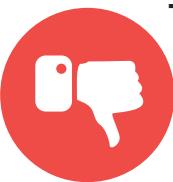
TRIPADVISOR PLEDGES MILLIONS TO REFUGEE AID

TripAdvisor will be contributing at least US\$5 million from the TripAdvisor Charitable Foundation to aid the global humanitarian refugee crisis. Funds will go towards four key areas: meeting urgent humanitarian needs in Europe and the Syria region; enabling access

to critical information via technology solutions for refugees; providing essential education and empowerment opportunities for refugee youths; and supporting and strengthening resettlement opportunities in host communities.

SCOOT NAMES JAIPUR-BOUND PLANE KAMASCOOTRA

In a cheeky move, KamaScootra is the name given to Scoot's 12th Boeing 787 Dreamliner addition – which has been reserved for its inaugural service from Singapore to Jaipur on October 2 – taking inspiration from the ancient Indian manuscript Kamasutra. It's not the first time the Singapore-based LCC has given such quirky names for the planes in its fleet though. Names for its Singapore aircraft so far include monikers such as Barry, Bo-eng, Scootalicious and Maju-lah.



TAIWAN TRADE TAKE TO THE STREETS OVER PLUNGING CHINESE ARRIVALS

Thirteen travel industry unions in Taiwan on September 12 joined hands to stage a demonstration to air their grievances over dwindling Chinese visitation since the Democratic Progressive Party took office in May. Official statistics showed that Chinese travel to Taiwan experienced double-digit declines from May to July and is showing no signs of stopping. An estimated 20,000 industry members representing over 200 travel agencies, hotels, bus companies and tour operators showed up for the protests.

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Travel Hall of Fame

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

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

- Singapore Airlines (2002)
- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Hertz Asia Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Sabre Travel Network Asia-Pacific (2009)
- SilkAir (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)
- Regal Airport Hotel (2015)
- Banyan Tree Spa (2015)
- Qatar Airways (2016)
- Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (2016)
- Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (2016)

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



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