



VIEW FROM THE TOP

New Zealand's 2025 tourism ambition is still in its infancy but Tourism New Zealand's chief, Kevin Bowler, is reporting good progress. He tells [Karen Yue](#) what the destination has achieved so far

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE...

M&C's acquisition of a Beatles-inspired hotel could open up Asian traffic to Liverpool, [Raini Hamdi](#) reports



TERMINALS OF THE FUTURE

Mobile biometric carts, cloud technology and facial recognition systems are now on airports' radar. By [Sim Kok Chwee](#)



STRADDLING THE MIDDLE GROUND

Travel experts want to see more mid-tier hotels as Asia's middle class are now travelling in bigger numbers than before



INVITATION TO A BIRTHDAY BASH

The trade has much to rave about and promote for Singapore's Golden Jubilee, discovers [Paige Lee Pei Qi](#)

LATEST HOTEL ADDITION IN THE SOUTHWESTERN PART OF SINGAPORE



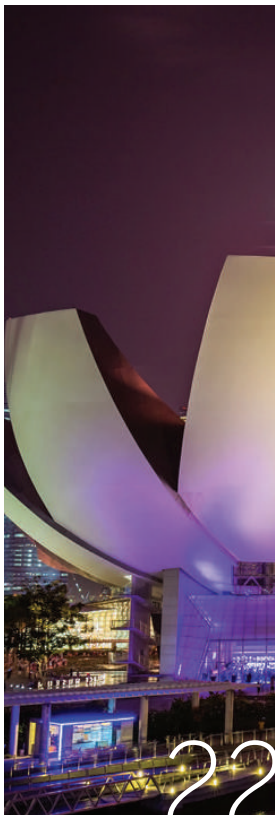


Park Hotel Group, one of Asia Pacific's most progressive hospitality groups, opens the first new-build upscale hotel in the urban Alexandra district – see Singapore Report on page 23



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Even more heartening, these are unique attractions in their own right, a lesson for all theme products that all you need is love to ensure that the visitor experience is real, soulful and captivating.

The Beatles put Liverpool on the world map. Yet, the city is not really 'top of mind'. For all that star power, it ranks only fifth as destination in Great Britain most visited by foreigners, and even by the UK domestic market. Its share of international market is only 38 per cent. In spite of this, there are Beatles fans everywhere from Tokyo to South America.

I wonder if it's because The Beatles no longer resonate with the younger travellers today. Or whether it's because there isn't enough attractions – who wants to travel to Liverpool just to see the birthplace of the Fab Four?

A short visit to Liverpool convinced me those aren't the reasons. More likely it is the lack of resources and marketing prowess to capitalise on a huge brand that can reach masses instantly.

Staying at the Hard Days Night Hotel which has been acquired by Millennium & Copthorne (M&C), the songs flooded back into my head – and refused to leave. Even if you haven't heard of The Beatles, you would have heard many of the songs and known some of the beautiful lyrics. *Imagine*, *Let It Be*, *All You Need Is Love*, *Hey Jude*, *All My Loving*, just to name a few, are 'forever', hummed or sung today in the shower or KTV lounge, beach or mountain, whether you're seven or 70. As for Beatles attractions in Liverpool (see page 4), there are enough to make your clients relive *Yesterday* and fall in love all over again with The Beatles.

It is almost a sin that Liverpool is not more popular as a destination. But that's also because it was for

a long time in a state of decline. Fortunately, things have changed. The catalyst and turning point in the city's regeneration was the year 2008, when it was European Capital of Culture – oh yes, put The Beatles aside for a while, Liverpool has the most World Heritage-listed buildings in the UK outside London. Today, as my visit shows, Liverpool has a fresh, vibrant air about it. And the growth is continuing, hope far from a misplaced expectation, especially with the UK government's Northern Powerhouse' focus.

On the private-sector level, it is also heartening to witness a real collaboration among all the Beatles-related attractions in Liverpool – among them Hard Days Night Hotel, Beatles Story, Cavern Club and Magical Mystery Tour – to try and attract more tourists using the legend as the anchor. Even more heartening, these are unique attractions in their own right, a lesson for all theme products that all you need is love to ensure that the visitor experience is real, soulful and captivating.

With M&C having a foot in it all, there is no reason why there can't be a Beatles mania or a Beatles revival in the travel trade in Asia. Wouldn't that be fun?

It seems The Beatles has not stopped to put Liverpool on the world map.

Raini Hamdi

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COMING UP

NEXT ISSUE:
NOVEMBER
2015

BUSINESS TRAVEL As the Millennials come of age, how are they transforming the corporate travel landscape?

CRUISE LINES A look at the game-changing products and ideas that cruise lines are rolling out for the coming year

PHILIPPINES An influx of premium products and a new tradeshow make the Philippines ripe for luxury travel

WE LIKE



Talk about creative marketing. While Singapore is shrouded in haze these recent weeks, one hotel in Thailand sees clear opportunities in leveraging the situation to its favour. Chiang Mai boutique hotel 137 Pillars House has launched the Escape the Haze package to entice Singaporeans to skip town for a couple of days. The package includes a three-night stay at the Rajah Brooke Suite, round-trip limousine airport transfer, half-day sightseeing tour to Chiang Mai Town and Doi Suthep Temple, among other benefits.





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Analysis

A small hotel buy can translate into something bigger. **Raini Hamdi** reports from Liverpool, where Millennium & Copthorne (M&C)'s acquisition of the world's only Beatles-inspired hotel has been completed

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

The price of £13.8 million (US\$21 million) which M&C paid for the Hard Days Night Hotel (HDNH) in Liverpool is seen as 'small change' for its executive chairman Kwek Leng Beng, but expectations of the value the hotel can bring to M&C, and to Liverpool, are not as puny.

The chain believes the hotel can be even more profitable but, more than that, it has gained a unique marketing instrument that it can use to drum up awareness of its 24 hotels in Britain and Europe. And *Imagine*, in the future there could be other HDNHs in places where The Beatles has a following. That's practically everywhere.

Aloysius Lee, CEO of M&C, is already toying with two travel trade functions in New York and Singapore hinging on HDNH to promote M&C hotels. He is also persuading Asian tour operators to launch a London and Liverpool itinerary. The drive between the two cities is a long three hours, but the pain can be lessened for Asian clients especially with a stop at the Bicester Designer Outlet Village located halfway through the journey, he said.

Lee needs the international market to fill the hotel during weekdays, when occupancy languishes, while weekends are a full house thanks to the domestic market.

Liverpool's Lord Mayor, Tony Conception, hopes M&C will be successful in bringing more Asian visitors to Liverpool. The city has shed its poor image and has been regenerating itself since 2008, when it was conferred the European Capital of Culture status, he said.

A £1 billion shopping mall, One Liverpool, has opened. So has an exhibition centre on the waterfront with a capacity for 6,000 pax. Next door are a convention centre and a concert arena. Hotel room-count has tripled to 7,700 today, from 2,300 in 2008. A partnership among the City Council, police and emergency services to keep the city centre and the night-time economy safe has helped Liverpool earn a Citysafe certification by an independent body year after year, said Conception.

Things are looking up or, as Lee put it, "are coming to a tipping point" for

Liverpool, part of a region George Osborne called the "Northern Powerhouse". The Chancellor, in China recently, opened a pitch book on more than £24 billion of investment opportunities in the region.

And Liverpool can do with continued growth. The City Council has racked up a debt of some £20 million from the reconstruction since 2008 while unemployment rates are still high, City of Liverpool statistics show.

Come together

An estimated 600,000 people each year visit Liverpool to retrace the footsteps of the Fab Four: John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr. They go to Beatles Story, the world's largest permanent exhibition devoted to the lives and times of The Beatles; on a Magical Mystery Tour in a psychedelic bus that stops at world-famous Beatles sites from Penny Lane to Strawberry Field; to the Cavern Club where The Beatles had played nearly 300 times; to the International Beatleweek Festival, the biggest *Come Together* in the world featuring over 200 bands from across the globe.

Said Dave Jones, owner of the Cavern Club: "It was obvious to me back in the 80s, when tourism was first included in the economic planning, that Liverpool's USP was Beatles by a mile, followed by sports, beautiful buildings, museums, maritime history, etc. But people weren't going to come just to look at buildings; there had to be something global, and which no other city could claim birthrights to. For me, it's a no-brainer: why waste time selling cathedrals when you've got brand Beatles?"

Strangely though, no one had thought to come up with a Beatles-themed hotel until Tony Criss, who acquired the lease on a heritage building next to the Cavern Club in 2006, developed HDNH from scratch and opened the hotel in 2008.

Criss put it up in the market last March; it was speculated Marriott's Autograph Collection was in talks with him in 2013 but nothing came of it. One look at the hotel and Kwek was sold, closing the deal in under two hours and paying more than the reported asking price of £11 million for the 113 years left on the hotel's lease.

Fundamentally, HDNH is a stylish design hotel that looks brand new and has the wherewithals to please the modern leisure and business traveller. It rests easily in the lifestyle category – the current rage of hotel chains which are scared to lose out on the New Gen. A night's stay shows it is neither a tacky theme hotel nor a Beatles museum hotel that takes itself too seriously. On the contrary, it gives the sense it is paying homage to a legend in subtle, creative ways and, being in the birthplace of The Beatles, achieves a sense of place that many hotels can only dream about.

"When we opened, we called ourselves a Beatles-themed hotel and that was a mistake. People think theme hotels are tacky; trying to convince them we're a serious hotel is a challenge. That's why we call ourselves a Beatles-inspired hotel," said general manager Michael Dewey. "No matter how much you tell them how stylish it is, they've got to cross the threshold to believe it."

In the seven years of operation, many did. "We compete with other brands such as Hilton and Crowne Plaza and outperformed them on all three measures, not that often on occupancies but always on rates and RevPAR. And we did that as an independent, i.e., without M&C, and without affiliations

or alliances, but with brand Beatles," said Dewey, who claimed an AOR of 78 per cent and an ARR of £89 in a year, 80 per cent leisure and 20 per cent corporate.

The city's AOR rose to 75.5 per cent last year from 71.2 per cent in 2013, while RevPAR rose to £46.33 in 2014 from £41 in 2013.

Americans are HDNH's biggest foreign market, and there is a sprinkling of Asian customers. Visit Liverpool data shows 62 per cent of visitors are domestic and 38 per cent are international, mainly from Ireland, Spain, Australia, America and France. While Liverpool continues to see growth in domestic arrivals and visitors from France and America, those from Japan, Ireland, Spain and Germany are continuing to decline. The smaller Asian markets such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Hong Kong are also on a decline.

The entry of an international chain with Asian roots is akin to *Here Comes the Sun* for HDNH and Liverpool.

Said Dewey: "My market is everywhere, as everywhere in the world there are Beatles fans. But as an independent, we don't have loads of money. And that's why M&C suddenly gives us an international platform. I can't see us doing anything but grow from strength to strength. We will be the busiest hotel, and there will be an increase in international customers."

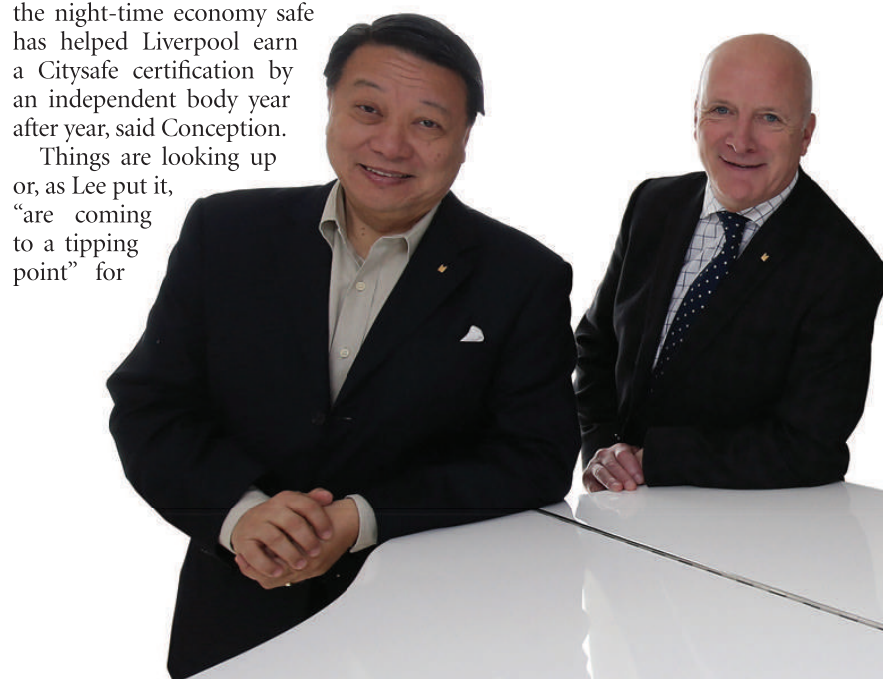
The big question, however, is whether The Beatles continues to resonate with younger travellers. Dewey said: "If you're a Beatles fan, you're 65 years old plus, easily. But the generation span that loves the songs ranges from 12 years old to ... old.

Just take the Magical Mystery Tour and you'll see how extraordinary the age span is."

Julia Baird, John Lennon's sister, told *TTG Asia*: "It's less and less about The Beatles per se, or each individual in it. It's more and more about the music. Why do people study Beethoven? Because the music is wonderful and it transcends geographic boundaries – many Chinese are studying it and are excellent at it. Beatles is going that way. The music lives on."

As for what she would hope M&C would do with HDNH, Baird said: "Not change things too much. Not put the Millennium stamp on it. That would be a mistake. It is its own brand. You've got a format here and it really works, you wouldn't have bought it if it didn't."

"May be you could repeat it in New York, Tokyo, Shanghai or Beijing but don't change it. I'm sure there's a market for this everywhere." In other words, *Let It Be*.



Analysis

In the post-war era, a new chapter of economic and tourism development is unfolding in Sri Lanka's Jaffna. By **Feizal Samath**



BATTLING FOR TOURISM DOLLARS

When the 500-seater train from Colombo pulls into Jaffna railway station every afternoon, some 50 to 75 foreign backpackers usually get off.

"The morning train to Jaffna has a sizable number of Western tourists," Vipula Wanigasekera, general manager and CEO of Sri Lanka Conventions Bureau told *TTG Asia*. "These FITs normally explore the city using a motorcycle hired in Jaffna."

That is a sharp contrast to the Jaffna barely six years ago, where tourism in this war-torn region was almost non-existent. Located in Sri Lanka's far north, Jaffna was once the epicentre of the country's decades-long ethno-political conflict, enduring bombardments and heavy loss of life and property.

Now the historic Tamil city is waking up to a different picture. The heritage-rich city is receiving growing attention from intrepid travellers and foreign backpackers. Roads, malls and guesthouses have also sprung up since the civil war ended in 2009.

The city's infrastructure and accommodation, though



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Analysis

still not up to international standards, have improved from a few rooms a decade ago to some 500 rooms now.

Malraj B Kiriella, director general of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, said the government is working on an integrated plan to develop and improve accommodation and attractions in Jaffna. "When required, we have facilitated investments in new hotels and guesthouses in the city," he said.

The authorities are currently planning to transform the city's military-controlled airport to a civilian facility with flights from southern India, which is less than an hour away.

Calling for improvement in Jaffna's accommodation standards, S Paramanathan, president, Travel Agents Association of Sri Lanka, said: "There are accommodation facilities with 10 to 20 rooms, and while the rooms are decent, they are not as good as in Colombo. Foreigners are seeking hotels with facilities and services similar to what is available in the capital."

Things look set to change when Jaffna's first high-class property, the 55-room Jetwing Yarl from the Jetwing chain, opens in December this year. "(Jaffna) is becoming a popular destination but may need a little more promotion," said Hiran Cooray, chairman of Jetwing Hotels Group. "Economic activity will soon take off and draw many travellers."

To some extent that is already happening. Large DMCs like Aitken Spence Travels are urging foreign tour operators to include Jaffna in their Sri Lanka brochures, while foreign travel consultants have started visiting Jaffna and the north to familiarise themselves with the region's facilities and sights.

"The industry wants to popularise Jaffna as it is a new



The standard of hotels needs to be improved. There are accommodation facilities with 10 to 20 rooms, and while the rooms are decent, they are not as good as in Colombo. Foreigners are seeking hotels with facilities and services similar to what is available in the capital."

S Paramanathan
President, Travel Agents Association of Sri Lanka

destination and something different from the other often-visited locations," said Nalin Jayasundera, managing director of Aitken Spence Travels, which handled 300-400 foreign visitors to Jaffna from March 2014 to April 2015.

Jaffna's star attractions are its beautiful beaches, rich tapestry of food and culture, decades-old Hindu temples, Keerimalai natural water springs and Jaffna Fort built by the Portuguese.

The city is also well known for local wines prepared from large vineyards – a particular draw for French tourists. Telson Fernando, general manager at STP Holdings, which owns two boutique hotels in Jaffna under the Heritage brand, said: "French visitors are keen to see vineyards during the season."

S Hariharan, managing director at the 30-room Subhas Hotel, the city's oldest hotel, said that many tourists

also visit the nearby Delft island to "look for the history of their ancestors". The island has an abundance of Dutch-period artefacts and 1,000 wild ponies.

Even surrounding areas like Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Mannar are considered new attractions in Sri Lanka, many of which are unexplored territories for both foreigners and locals alike.

However, some trade members caution against rushed development. Said A M Jaufer, president, Chamber of Tourism and Industry Sri Lanka: "There is a need to identify and develop the potential areas for tourism in Jaffna. However, the most important aspect is in educating the local community on how they can earn and improve livelihoods. It is important that steps are taken to ensure the community benefits from tourism before actively promoting the destination."

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5. Ken Scott, Managing Director, ScottAsia Communications
6. Stewart Hunter, Director (Asia-Pacific), Sojern
7. Todd W. Arthur, Managing Director (Asia-Pacific), HRS

The United States comes calling

David Whitaker joined Brand USA as Chief Marketing Officer in May and in his first interview with the trade media in South-east Asia, he talks about the commitment and the opportunities the United States offers

■ **Please share your vision and mission as Brand USA invests in growing the number of travellers from the region.**
First and foremost, it is such an honor to join such an important mission and help represent the United States and our industry. The vision is simple—to be a part of continuing to build on the success of the past several years, expanding our efforts where we can and continuing on our goal to nurture and build international visitation.

■ **The USA is a big destination and offers wide and varied experiences for all kinds of visitors. Where do our readers begin if they are interested to sell the country?**
The diversity of the product and experience offerings of a vacation or visit to the United States is both our greatest asset and our greatest challenge. How do you narrow down the vastness of what is the United States—and our partners in total—and quickly match the wants and needs of our customers and visitors?

I like to think of this as the simple fact that the total experience found in a vacation to the United States is far greater than the sum of any individual parts. We are increasingly encouraging visitors to research the totality of our product offerings and realize the real value proposition is that one can actually find multiple vacation and travel experiences easily accessible to one another—both on the iconic and often familiar but as well the new and undiscovered.

There is a new “mapping feature” on our website at **VisitTheUSA.com** called Road-Trips and there is no better way to discover the value and ease of a multiple city-multiple destination trip—be it urban in nature or the great outdoors—or ideally both.

■ **What makes the USA stand out and why is it easy to sell?**
In an age where travel products can often be commoditized—at the end of the day—it is the people who live, work, play and serve in our great destinations that truly sets us apart. And increasingly the diversity of our communities and our cultures match if not surpass the buildings or facilities that house them. The United States has over the past decades increasingly become a global community for both our citizens, residents and visitors alike. I cannot think of another nation that offers from border to border this rich diversity all

under an umbrella of freedom of expression and what I like to say is a “freedom of experience” that brings an added value like no other.

■ **How do our readers become Brand USA specialists?**
Without sounding flippant, come experience a trip to the United States for yourself. Regardless of where you land or where you conclude—bring your smart phone or your tablet and be ready to activate all your social and sharing tools—I promise you at the end of your vacation you will have become one of our 80 million international ambassadors who share their experiences within their own circle of friends and influence. Remember what really sets apart a visitor badge of honor is that we “are what we consume” and there is no better way to brag about that than sharing one’s own experiences.

■ **Who are Brand USA’s partners and what partnership programs are being planned to boost travel to the United States?**
Brand USA currently has the privilege of the active cooperation and support of over 500 partners all collaborating and marketing with us in equally hundreds of marketing and promotional partnerships. While far too many to list, what is increasingly important is these are being shared and served up in our digital space in 14 consumer-brand activated markets and over 20 additional countries where we invest heavily in our traditional travel trade partnerships. What is expanding in our new effort is what is called an “always on” strategy that can best be experienced by visiting us at “VisitTheUSA.com”.

■ **How is Brand USA reaching out to the industry in South-east Asia?**
Brand USA is currently being represented by BrandStory Inc., serving the South-east Asia region from their Singapore office, and it is predominantly focusing on travel trade outreach while we continue to grow our brand presence and awareness in-market. Travel to the United States grew 8.8% to 741,000 in 2014, fueled partly by growing per capita income resulting in very high per-traveler spending of US\$5,100 to \$9,100 for a total of US\$4.2 billion. English is widely used in these markets which can be tapped via well-established travel agents, strong mobile internet penetration and B2C



The great outdoors at Canyonlands National Park: The real value of the US is that one can find multiple experiences easily accessible to one another—both the iconic as well the undiscovered

IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

“Brand USA is currently working on creating trade and media fam trips, focusing on the city and great outdoors experiences, and is working closely with the airlines in-market and the U.S. exhibitors to create innovative itineraries.”



DAVID WHITAKER
Chief Marketing Officer
Brand USA

travel fairs. This region also has significant MICE and education segments. As part of our travel trade outreach Brand USA continues to have a presence at ITB Asia, the leading B2B travel trade event in the region. Brand USA is exhibiting at ITB Asia for the third time and is seeing increased interest from U.S. exhibitors to attend the event. This year Brand USA will be hosting the press conference which will provide the US exhibitors with the opportunity to highlight exciting announcements for the coming year. Additionally, Brand USA will also be hosting the South-east Asia Travel Exchange and Reception, geared towards U.S. exhibitors and key buyers from the region. In general

U.S. exhibitors are interested to learn more about these growing markets in South-east Asia—from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Brand USA is following trends from these regions closely, and analyzing the consumer and travel trade, as each market is culturally different. To enhance Brand USA efforts in these various markets as a private-public partnership, we will continue to collaborate closely with other U.S. entities in-market such as the U.S. Commercial Service and the U.S. Embassy to market the welcome. Together they support the travel trade by offering educational seminars. This year most of the educational seminars will be focusing on the culinary and the great outdoors, and

provide a platform to discuss how Brand USA can support the travel agents and tour operators. Brand USA is currently working on creating trade and media fam trips, focusing on the city and great outdoors experiences, and is working closely with the airlines in-market and the U.S. exhibitors to create innovative itineraries and showcase all that the destination has to offer. ■

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Asia-Pacific’s burgeoning passenger traffic

The international passenger throughput at Asia-Pacific’s main airports this year is growing fast – 9% compared with 6% worldwide. Faster growth in Asia-Pacific matches general perception, although the region has been slower than the world-wide average this decade – an annual average +10% in the region since 2010, compared with +11% worldwide.

The diagram below represents almost 85% of the regional total. Main airports missing – usually those not reporting to Airports Council International – are Bali and Ho Chi Minh City. Other sources indicate Bali traffic grew about 9% in the first half, making its total over four million.

The three fastest-growing airports are all driven by big increases in passenger traffic from China – Bangkok (+29%), Tokyo Haneda (+28%) and Osaka (+21%).

There was also good growth for the three biggest airports in China; in order of size: Shanghai (+20%), Beijing (+9%) and Guangzhou (+16%).

In terms of additional passengers, the order was the same, but Shanghai’s growth meant two million more passengers, which is more than Beijing and Guangzhou combined – each had 700,000 more passengers.

There are some surprising declines. Tokyo Narita dipped a substantial 10%, indicating that Tokyo Haneda is growing and taking some traffic from Narita.

Both Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur saw declines too. Kuala Lumpur’s fall indicates that it is not just related to the traffic fall on Malaysia Airlines but also a loss for the destination. The political fallout in Malaysia this year may also have had a negative effect, although the problems were less pronounced in the first half of the year.

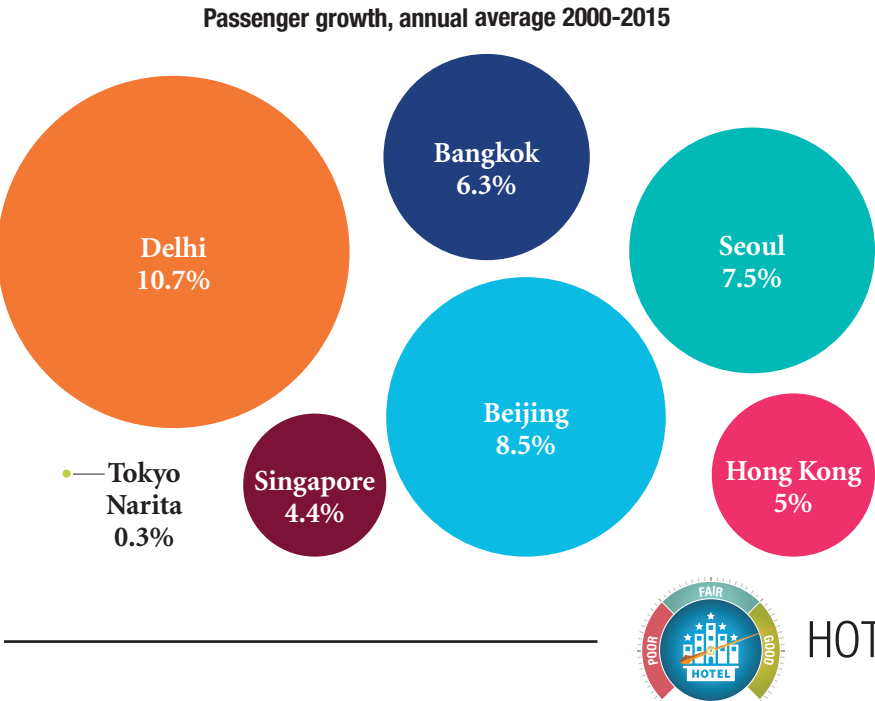
Not surprising was Singapore, which had a 1% fall in airport passengers, the same percentage fall as Kuala Lumpur.

Despite the Mers scare earlier this year, Seoul surprisingly did not see a fall but a 12% growth. That said, the first Mers case was towards end-May, which affected only a small part of this period. There was an 11% fall in passengers only in June.

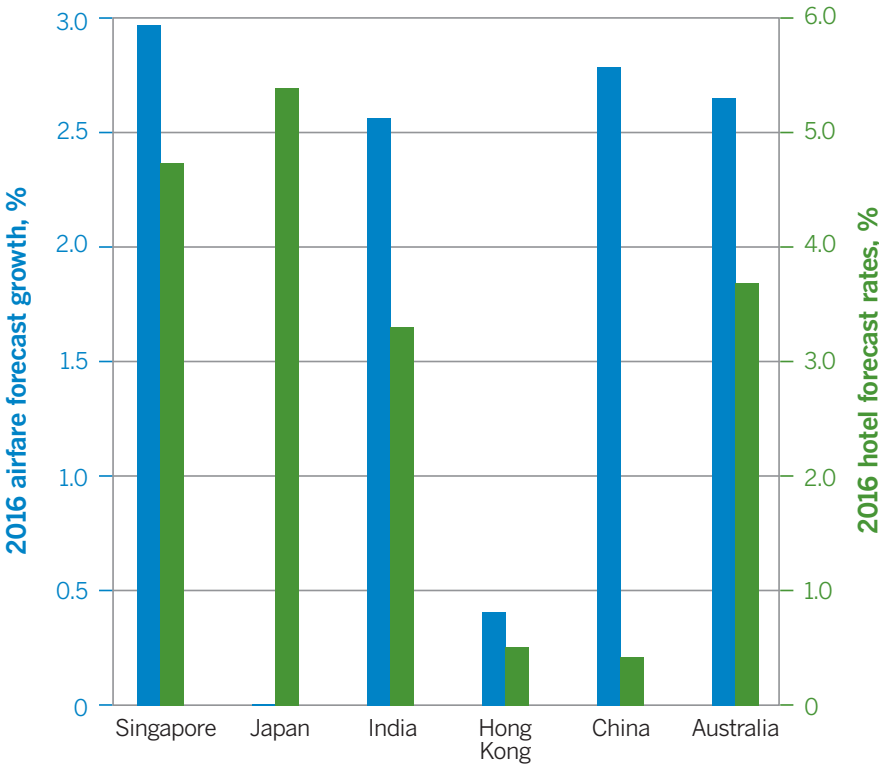
Among the eight bigger airports (above 10 million) this decade, showing the fastest annual average growth rate (AAGR) are Bangkok’s two airports (+12%), followed by Shanghai’s two (+11%) and Taipei +10%. The only airport falling was Tokyo Narita (-4%).

In the 15 years since 2000, the outstanding performer among the bigger airports is Kuala Lumpur. Its AAGR since 2000 has been a remarkable 14%, of which most can be credited to AirAsia as well as the other airlines and passengers it has motivated to travel.

Among the smaller airports, three have managed an annual average above 10%, i.e. Colombo, Delhi and Phuket.



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Forecast for 2016 travel prices

For the second year, GBTA has joined with Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) to produce CWT’s annual travel prices forecast. As CWT/GBTA do not issue results to compare with earlier-year forecasts, we are thus restricted to make comparisons with earlier years, and the link with general inflation is collected from another source.

- Singapore +3.0%. “Due to lower energy prices and a less restrictive monetary policy.” A high 2.6pts above current inflation.

Hotels
CWT/GBTA forecast rates to grow 3.0%, with higher rates in Australia, Japan and Singapore.

Airfares
CWT/GBTA forecast that increased business travel demand will result in “significant” airfare growth of above 2.5% in Australia, China, India and Singapore. The forecast is as follows:

- Australia +2.7%. “Due to improving business conditions boosting domestic air travel.” 1pt above current inflation.
- China +2.8%. “Due to domestic demand and strong demand despite slowing economic growth and business travel volume.” 1.3pts above current inflation.
- India +2.6%. “Due to increased business and consumer confidence.” A high 2.7pts below current inflation.

Comparisons
Japan’s airfares are expected to remain flat for the second year running; even the two years earlier were under 1%.
China hotel rates are forecast to remain sluggish – 0.3% in 2016, following a 0.1% forecast for this year.
Asia-Pacific’s airfares are expected to grow faster than worldwide average – 1.2% compared with 0.5%. For this year, the pattern was expected to be the other way round – 0.5% Asia-Pacific, 2.2% worldwide.
The pattern is similar for hotel rates – 3.0% Asia-Pacific, 2.5% worldwide. Forecast for 2015 rates was 2.7% Asia-Pacific, 2.6% worldwide.

Stronger US\$ pushes room rates, RevPAR down

In Asia-Pacific overall, hotel occupancy in June was down 1% to 70% and the average room rate in US dollars was down a big 14% to US\$124, but there are distortions caused by changes in exchange rates. Those results pushed RevPAR in US dollars down 15% to US\$86.

Among the 14 centres that we track, occupancy was down substantially in Jakarta by nearly 16%. Some other locations also reported falls, but these were minor (under 4%), and thus may be related to specific travel market moves rather than external factors.

Bangkok continued to impress – although this was before the bombing in August. Growth in June was 27%.

In average rates, figures in US dollars were down in most centres, except in Ho Chi Minh City and the Maldives.

The biggest falls, again in US dollars, were in Australia (Melbourne -20%, Sydney -22%) and Indonesia (Bali -26%, Jakarta -20%). There were of course similar patterns for RevPAR – Bali was -28%, Jakarta -33%.

As noted above, there were sizeable differences for many locations when rates are compared in local currencies. Of those with the biggest differences, Bali was down 26% in US dollars but only 1% in rupiah, and Jakarta -20% but +6%.

For other differences between local currencies and US dollars, Melbourne was



HOTEL BAROMETER

Hotel operating results in selected centres, June 2015

Location	Occupancy, %	Growth, %	ARR, US\$*	Growth, %	RevPAR, US\$*	Growth, %
Beijing	74.6	5.1	95	-3.7	71	1.2
Jakarta	59.0	-15.8	91	-20.0	54	-32.6
Maldives	59.0	-4.6	581	6.6	343	1.7
Singapore	81.4	-0.1	157	-15.7	127	-15.8
Sydney	81.9	-0.8	160	-22.0	131	-22.6
Tokyo	80.6	2.7	201	-8.5	162	-6.1

Notes: Compared with same month, a year earlier. ARR = average room rate, RevPAR = revenue per available room. *Calculated at exchange rate for specific month to US dollars. Source: hotels to TBA.

-20% but +3% in Australian dollars, and Sydney -22% and +1%.
Bangkok’s US dollar fall of 10% became +1% in baht. For Singapore, the -16% be-

came -5%. Tokyo’s -9% became +8%.
Of the 12 locations where rates fell in US dollars, in the end it was only three locations that reported a fall in local currency.

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GALLERY

TTG TRAVEL AWARDS 2015

Held on October 1 in Bangkok, the 26th edition of this prestigious annual award event lauded 83 top-performing travel and tourism winners in Asia-Pacific. Look out for more highlights in our supplement!

Clockwise from right: This year's awards ceremony was graced by guest of honour, Thai tourism and sports minister Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul (centre), and the region's top tourism honchos; the VIPs enjoying an exquisite dinner; a group selfie moment; and a fiery performance



Diethelm Travel Group clinched the Best Travel Agency in Indochina accolade



Mira Moon was named the Best Boutique Hotel



Creative Travel was picked as the Best Travel Agency in India



Vietjet bagged the Best Asian Low-Cost Carrier award

Royal Plaza on Scotts won top honours as the Best Independent Hotel in Asia-Pacific



The Best Marketing & Relationship award was given to Tourism Promotion Board Philippines

APPOINTMENTS



Augustine M Silva

AUGUSTINE M SILVA
NOW Senior general manager, Sunway Putra Hotel, Malaysia
THEN Head of asset management and fund manager, Ascendas Hospitality Trust



Florian Leven



Fay Gauna Lugue

FLORIAN LEVEN
NOW Resident manager of The Nam Hai, Vietnam
THEN The hotel's executive assistant manager



Suzyana Sujod

RUPERT HALLAM
NOW Vice president, sales, Asia-Pacific, Hilton Worldwide
THEN Regional director of sales, South-east Asia, Hilton Worldwide

FAY GAUNA LUGUE
NOW Director of sales and marketing, The Sanchaya, Bitan, Indonesia
THEN COO of In2Nite Singapore

YVONNE MAK
NOW Vice president of sales and marketing, Urban Resort Concepts
THEN Director of sales and marketing, The PuLi Hotel and Spa

SUZYANA SUJOD
NOW Director of Sales, Silka Cheras, Malaysia
THEN Director of Sales, Best Western Petaling Jaya

KAREN TAN
NOW Senior vice president, sales and revenue performance, Pan Pacific Hotels Group
THEN Executive director, sales & marketing, Asia-Pacific, FRHI Hotels & Resorts

STEFAN THUMIGER
NOW COO of Treasure Bay Bintan
THEN Area general manager for Banyan Tree and Angsana Bintan

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HOTELS



NOVOTEL MANILA ARANETA CENTRE, PHILIPPINES

Located 15km away from Ninoy Aquino International Airport, the 401-key hotel boasts the In Balance Wellness Centre which houses a gym, spa and swimming pool, while meeting facilities include a pillarless grand ballroom which can hold 1,200 guests and a 2,500m² landscaped outdoor garden.



SEDONA HOTEL YANGON, MYANMAR

The recently refurbished 29-storey hotel underwent renovation works which included the addition of the Inya wing, designed by renowned Singapore firm Forum Architects and US-based Studio HBA, adding another 431 rooms and suites. The hotel is located close to the Shwedagon Pagoda and Inya Lake.



ALILA SEMINYAK BALI, INDONESIA

Alila Hotels and Resorts' fifth property in Bali, this 240-key resort is situated on the island's south-western coast near nightspots such as Ku De Ta, La Lucciola and Potato Head. The rooms, suites and penthouse use eco-friendly solutions such as recyclable building materials and low-energy light fixtures.



SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, BENGALURU, INDIA

Launched in late September, the 397-key hotel is a 30-minute drive from Bengaluru International Airport and sited near the Bangalore Palace and Cubbon Park. Facilities include a 24-hour gym with a sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi, and as well as The Spa, which specialises in Ayurveda treatments.

TECHNOLOGY

HRS ROLLS OUT CORPORATE APP FOR CLIENTS

Corporate clients for global hotel solutions provider HRS can now search for hotels based on pre-set locations and access information such as maps, negotiated rates and room availability using the recently launched HRS Corporate App.

Features soon to be added to the app include a payment function with company-specific options, including pre-defined payment and billing methods. Hotel bookings can also be entered into the mobile device calendar.

ACTIVITIES

ASIA'S FIRST COSPLAY CRUISE TO SET SAIL ON MARINER OF THE SEAS

The Singapore Cosplay Club will be organising a cosplay festival aboard Royal Caribbean's *Mariner of the Seas* as part of the club's 15th anniversary celebrations. Named Cosfest Sea: The Rising Tide, the cruise is set to depart Singapore's shores on January 8, 2016 and arrive at Malaysia's Port Klang three days later.

Highlights include photo opportunities with Taiwanese celebrity cosplayer, Neneko, a cosplay parade on the ship's promenade, costume dressing sessions for children and a Cosplay Café.

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FRESH OPTIMISM



It has been a year since Tourism 2025 was first announced at TRENZ 2014. What has TNZ achieved so far in aligning its activities to the goals of the framework?

It is very important to first understand that Tourism 2025 is owned by the industry and co-created by the industry along with the government. It is unusual in that aspect as most tourism strategies are government-led. It is a good thing though, as we now have the private sector understanding that they need to own it and the framework will outlive political cycles.

What have we achieved? Firstly, to achieve the framework's objectives, we need to maintain a growth rate of about six per cent, and in the last 12 months we've had about 20 per cent growth in international visitor spend and about 6.9 per cent increase in the number of visitors. We're in pretty good shape.

One of the components of the framework is to foster air connections and that has been going very well. I think this is a chicken and egg situation. We have the demand so the airlines are supportive, and their support is in turn driving more demand and making airfares more competitive. We have seen great growth since the joint venture between Singapore Airlines and Air New Zealand.

Air New Zealand will add year-round services to Houston and Buenos Aires this December, so this air connectivity piece is going strongly for us.

The second component is to achieve high-value visitors, and our growth in value is exceeding our growth in volume.

Another component is visitor experience, and we are making headway in adjusting for new markets. Our China readiness focus for the industry is an example of efforts we've taken.

The fourth focus in the framework is productivity. We are emphasising the shoulder season now, which is a big change from what we've been doing. If we can increase demand during the shoulder season when there is excess capacity, we will increase productivity considerably. To achieve this, we are focusing on markets that have a lower high season profile. India is a great example: the peak travel season for Indian travellers to New Zealand is November to December and then April to May, which fits perfectly with our shoulder season.

We are also investing in MICE and special interest markets like golf and cycling, which tend to be outside peak (period).

The final point is the insights. There has been a big programme on improving market data but there's still much to be done before we can come out and say we've got great insights.

Tell us more about what you are doing to get ready for China.

TNZ has been very active in running workshops around New Zealand to help operators understand the needs of the Chinese market – not just travellers from China, but those from other parts of Asia too – and what changes should be made in terms of food, language and activities.

The Chinese love shopping and they often say to us that the shops in New Zealand

open too late and close too early. We are increasingly conscious about having to adjust that. We are also aware of the need to adjust food service that suits the Chinese. Here's a good example: we are working with our premium golf courses to provide hot lunches because wealthy Chinese golfers like to have a little hot meal whereas New Zealanders will be quite happy to grab a sandwich.

The Hurun Report recently noted that young, wealthy Chinese prefer experiential travel and exotic destinations. This should excite TNZ since it wants to grow its value of tourism.

I must say that the rate of change in China is extraordinary. Five years ago most of our Chinese travellers came for low-value shopping trips, mostly on Australia and New Zealand itineraries.

We are getting a different profile these days although only a few of them are in the ultra-premium segment – less than two per cent of the business at our luxury lodges are from China.

Frankly, the expansion of our focus on high-end travellers hasn't really extended to China. Where we are getting our value improvements from China is from longer-length stays and more travelling around the country. I think part of this is because the ultra high-end Chinese customer is still looking for traditional luxury accommodation as opposed to lodges which are more rural. New Zealand has a more rural perspective around luxury accommodation which may not be what everyone is looking for. Some of these lodges are very

small, with only six rooms, quite different from a six-star hotel in the Middle East.

Our view is that our high net worth traveller market will develop and (our luxury lodges will) target travellers who like outdoor activities. Now we are still at the very beginning of that phase.

The other challenge we have (in attracting high net worth travellers) is that because these lodges are small, they sell out pretty fast. I've been informed that they are almost all taken for the next summer peak period, mostly by US visitors who really like this experience.

Wealthy Indians are also desiring the same. Are you seeing the same shifts in this market yourself?

Oh yes, a little bit more so for the Indian market. We are already catering strongly to the Indian market, especially the honeymoon segment which favours our luxury lodges. We are very encouraged by the results in India – we've almost doubled our Indian arrivals in the last five years.

We've just co-hosted the 2015 Cricket World Cup with Australia and that gave us a boost. Indians love cricket, and there are a number of New Zealand coaches in India. We have a little bit more of a cultural connection with India that way.

Which other Asian markets are top performers for New Zealand's high-end travel segment?

Japan and Singapore. While these markets will remain strong, we feel that China will become a much more important source over the next five years.

Many Asian destinations are courting these source markets too. How will New Zealand stand out in the region?

New Zealand offers such different experiences from the rest of the region that we are probably more up against Africa or even South America. Africa's luxury lodges and safaris, for instance, are the sort of products that we are competing with.

What drove the creation of TNZ's Every day a different journey campaign and how does it serve the new framework?

It is an evolution of a campaign that has lasted for 16 years. *100% Pure New Zealand* has a long history now and over the period of its life we've been able to continue to keep it contemporary and move messages to the opportunities we see. The most recent one was connecting New Zealand with Middle Earth. We had three years of emphasising how Middle Earth was *100% Pure New Zealand*. We've been very successful. Of course, with the three movies all out, we needed to think what our next message would be.

Our research told us that a large number of people liked the idea of visiting New Zealand but there was quite a low level of awareness about the variety of things that could be experienced and as a consequence of that, we've done a campaign which emphasises the variety and diversity of activities one could do.

Our research has also found that differ-

New Zealand's 2025 tourism ambition is still in its infancy but Tourism New Zealand's (TNZ) chief, Kevin Bowler, is reporting good progress. He tells **Karen Yue** what has been achieved so far

ent activities, places and things appealed to different key markets, and that drove the prioritisation of which ads are shown. They range from walking on ice glaciers, to swimming in subtropical beaches.

We use the line *Every day a different journey* to bring all that to life.

When you boil down the things that make New Zealand different from other parts of the world, two things stand out: diversity of activities and how easily accessible they are, and our indigenous culture.

Hence, the other part of our new campaign is to work closely with our Maori community to find ways to visually distinguish us from other destinations. We've worked with a Maori carver who's carved our logo out of timber. The reproduction of our logo now comes from this wonderful piece of wood, allowing the grain to show up. The logo will appear on everything that we print and produce. It will be a lovely and more distinctive connection with New Zealand.

How is TNZ deploying this campaign to spread demand to shoulder season?

While we usually begin our media investments in September, this year we are running it from July to promote spring and autumn travel. In fact, 80 per cent of our efforts will now focus on the shoulder season. Previously, it was about 20 per cent.

I think it is the natural things that will also help us (achieve more footfalls in the other months). Prices will be more reasonable during the shoulder seasons and availability will be much better as well.

New Zealand is loved for its natural environment and rich culture. How does TNZ ensure that tourism development does not erode all that?

We have been fortunate there, as our arrivals are small compared to our land area. We have almost the same land area as Japan, four million inhabitants and about three million visitors. Furthermore, we have a strong legislative framework for protecting the environment. Expansion of businesses require a lot of permission, and a lot of care and consideration for the environment go into these decisions.

We are also a majority shareholder of a company called Qualmark, which deals in quality assessment of local businesses and issues the Enviro Award which encourages operators to accomplish a higher level of sustainability. We've had that programme for about seven years and are just reviewing it now. We may lift its standards further. We will know the outcomes of this review a year from now.

It is great that there are a lot of sustainability ambitions and aspirations in the industry. We are working very closely

with industry players and getting excellent encouragement to continue to raise the benchmarks on sustainability.

How is the reconstruction of Christchurch coming along, and what other infrastructure developments are worth watching out for?

We are well into rebuilding Christchurch, but are probably four or five years away from restoring (its pre-earthquake) accommodation capacity. Once work is completed, Christchurch will be our most modern, most beautiful city.

Because of the nature of the earthquake, a lot of services that run underground such as storm water, sewage and electricity have taken many years to rebuild. We are only now starting on the buildings.

We are keeping the Christchurch airport operating at 100 per cent capacity so there is still a gateway to the South Island.

One of the biggest development to come is our convention centre in Christchurch, and that will stimulate the emergence of more hotels. It should be announced this year along with a completion date.

We have another convention centre in Auckland. It is in the design phase now, and will open in 2019 or 2020. It will have capacity for 3,500 people – the biggest that we've got at the moment.

10 NEED TO KNOWS ABOUT KEVIN BOWLER

■ **Who's in your family?** I have a younger brother.

■ **What do you do for fun?** I like sports such as surfing, mountain biking and running. I also have a stand-up paddle board that gets a lot of use in summer.

■ **Your ideal vacation?** I like to be very active so something that includes plenty of water-based activities.

■ **How do you book your own leisure trips?** Mostly independently, having researched my interests online and spoken to friends or colleagues for ideas.

■ **What are you reading right now?** Board papers.

■ **How do you stay healthy?** Lots of exercise.

■ **Favourite food?** I love food and it's impossible to pick a favourite. But my last memorable meal was an amazing *yum cha* in Auckland with good friends.

■ **A bad habit you cannot kick?** Email.

■ **Your pet peeve?** Lateness. I hate being late and I'm very intolerant of others being late.

■ **Most people don't know that you...** own a horse called Harry. Well it's my daughter's horse really, but we both enjoy looking after him and my daughter loves to ride and jump him.



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ASK THE EXPERT

IN WINTER, DREAM ABOUT SUMMER

The traveller's cycle of dream-research-booking is getting ever more convoluted and diverse. The bad news? There is no such thing as an average traveller. The good news? Plentiful data now gives you a powerful opportunity to understand your customers better than ever before.

Here are three tips that should help you prepare for next summer – and if you think it's too early for that, think again:



Tip 1: Understand when your customers book their summer vacations and you'll know what they need.

The further ahead travellers book their vacations, the more ambitious they are likely to be about their destinations and length of the trip; the last quarter of the year is a magical “dreaming period”.

Take advantage of it by helping clients this ‘winter’ dream bigger for ‘summer’ 2016. Across all the regions we studied in our *Q2 Global Travel Insights* report, we saw much more international dreaming in 4Q2014, and then the trend shifted to domestic markets, before it moved dramatically higher in the rankings in 1Q and even more in 2Q.

Tip 2: Stay on top of global travel trends. Your partners will thank you.

To take advantage of fluctuating currency exchange rates and rising destinations, you need to be aware of them. If you kept your finger on the pulse of global events, you know that, for example, Russia is becoming a popular destination with Asia-Pacific travellers due to its perceived affordability. In December 2014, when the Russian Trading System took serious hits, searches for the country from China and South Korea jumped 80 per cent.

Myanmar is another destination to keep an eye on. At the end of August, Thailand lifted its visa requirements for travel to the country, which is likely to accelerate the de-

velopment of Myanmar’s tourism industry. This make it a more accessible destination to the average traveller and not just for the adventurous.

Tip 3. Become a data analyst in order to stay a (successful) travel expert.

Using big data, you can improve your business in a number of ways. You can maximise margins by monitoring transactions and maximise revenues for each booking, while predicting the likelihood of upselling other travel options. You can even use the data to negotiate better rates with suppliers.

Big data also offers a way to segment based on legacy data. By identifying a segment that actively seeks out adventure vacations, you can work with your travel suppliers to put together a package that is geared towards customers’ preferences. On the other hand, older travellers may want to enjoy more relaxing and guided activities that are shorter in duration.

By segmenting these traveller profiles, you can design a package for a particular group of customers to obtain additional volume discounts on flights and tour vendors through the creation of packages that are more geared towards their tastes.

When a customer’s behaviour is better understood, the easier it is to offer true personalisation while obtaining more targeted sales and maximising profitability.

The further ahead travellers book their vacations, the more ambitious they are likely to be about their destinations and trip length; the last quarter of the year is a magical “dreaming period”.

Stewart Hunter
Director Asia-Pacific, Sojern

WHO GETS THE BOOKING?

My wife and I recently moved to Ho Chi Minh City. With some time off from work, we were seeking a one-week tour of Cambodia, including Siem Reap and Phnom Penh. I checked out the websites of two tour companies that came recommended by well-travelled friends. By **Dave Fox**



G Adventures	Buffalo Tours
SEARCHING EXPERIENCE A search on GAdventures.com brought up 13 Cambodia itineraries ranging from four to 42 days. Comparing options was easy – a single web page showed small maps of all 13 routes, along with bullet-point items such as the price, length of tour and level of physical activity.	SEARCHING EXPERIENCE BuffaloTours.com offered more than a dozen multi-day itineraries plus a large menu of day excursions, but the website did not list any prices. To get a basic price quote, I had to fill out an online form, which required both my email address and phone number.
PRODUCT The itinerary that best fit our plans was the seven-day Discover Cambodia tour. Bafflingly, this small-group trip began with an evening welcome meeting in Bangkok. An all-day drive the next day to Siem Reap crossed what their website called “one of the most hectic border crossings”. The rest of the journey offered two sightseeing days around Siem Reap and one-and-a-half days in Phnom Penh.	PRODUCT Their seven-day Highlights of Cambodia trip began in Phnom Penh and ended in Siem Reap. It included typical sightseeing highlights and a visit to a small village. In my inquiry, I mentioned we were interested in a bicycle ride and they were happy to build that into our plans.
EASE OF BOOKING GAdventures.com was delightfully user-friendly, with clear prices and dates. We could sign up with a credit card in a single booking session. Extra days could be added with a couple of clicks, but information about the accommodation add-ons was vague. I had no idea what I would get if I opted for extra hotel days in Phnom Penh at US\$80 per night.	EASE OF BOOKING After I requested a price quote and described the type of accommodation we desired, they responded not by giving me a price but by asking me what our budget was. Two emails and 24 hours later, they finally sent an attractive itinerary, which included specifics about the hotels we would stay at.
PRICE This 7D6N small-group trip cost US\$999 per person. It included accommodation in hotels and guesthouses, six breakfast meals, land transport with our group of around 12 pax, a tour escort throughout, and local guides and entrances at key sights. Other activities could be added for extra fees.	PRICE This 7D6N trip had a base price of US\$485 per person. It included hotels in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, a few meals, ground transport, local guides and entrances at key sights, and a Tonle Sap boat tour. For additional fees, we could add a Silk Island boat tour near Phnom Penh (US\$104) and a half-day bicycle ride to Tonle Sap (US\$52).
VERDICT While getting the initial price quote from Buffalo Tours was complicated, it was not nearly as complicated as G Adventures’ plan to start our Cambodia tour in Bangkok. Once Buffalo Tours sent me detailed information, I appreciated their willingness to customise a trip based on our interests, as well as the detailed hotel information and more attractive price.	



Guide Airports

Mobile biometric carts, cloud technology and facial recognition systems aim to make the airport passenger experience less of a hassle. **Sim Kok Chwee** takes a look at new ideas in airport design and planning

TERMINALS OF THE FUTURE



Every flight for a traveller begins and ends with an airport experience and the quality of that experience has the potential to make or break the trip. Memories of yesteryear when one could breeze through all the formalities and board a plane are just distant memories as travellers today brave long queues at immigration and cumbersome security screening.

The post-9/11 airport landscape has seen added layers of security and long snaking queues at immigration and customs clearance, turning checkpoints into choke points. The impacts are felt not only by airlines which have to deploy staff to “extricate and expedite” passengers on flights that are departing shortly, but also the retail and dining concessionaires as every minute that travellers are stuck in a queue is a minute not spent browsing the retail outlets or dining at an F&B venue.

Frost & Sullivan’s *Global Airport Passenger Screening Market* report indicated that a slew of new technologies such as portal scanners, biometric collection devices and pre-clearance based on background investigations will transform the passenger screening process and result in unobtrusive screening. The investment in such technologies is hefty, estimated at US\$1.4 billion in 2014 and increasing slightly to US\$1.6 billion in 2020.

Frost & Sullivan’s senior industry analyst, John Hernandez, said: “One solution could be to supply passengers with alternate venues and automated tools to pre-screen them before they arrive at the airport.”

Identification of high-risk passengers prior to their arrival at the airport is a key element in improving security and airports are also considering innovative technologies capable of screening large numbers of passengers quickly and accurately.

Near field communication (NFC)

Many airlines and airports today work

with 2D QR-coded boarding passes sent to mobile devices but there is an inherent distrust in this system as boarding passes can be forwarded, duplicated and manipulated. And when this code is not recognised or retrieved, travellers will need to have their identity verified and their boarding passes printed. This is a time-consuming process.

A short-range communication system using wireless technology that connects two devices, NFC got off to an uncertain start but momentum has been gained since 2005.

SITA and Orange have entered into a partnership to roll out a SIM-based solution that loads the boarding pass into a travel wallet in the traveller’s mobile phone at the end of a counter or kiosk check-in. This can then be used to tap into a device that grants access to lounges and boarding gates. There is no need for any mobile phone applications, boarding pass or data connectivity. This even works when the mobile phone is turned off.

In 2014, SITA and Orange partnered Air France to put Touch&Pass on a six-month trial at Toulouse-Blagnac Airport, where selected passengers with NFC-enabled smartphones flying between Toulouse and Paris Orly were able to pass through airport checkpoints by tapping their phones against dedicated readers. A previous trial was also conducted at Nice Airport. The system being trialed conformed to standards from IATA and GSMA (which represents the interest of mobile operators worldwide).

Meanwhile, NFC is already in use at Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane airports where passengers with Android devices can download content from digital screens while waiting to board their flights.

IATA Checkpoint of the Future (CoF)

Goals of the IATA CoF initiative are pivoted towards strengthening security, increasing operational efficiency, improv-



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The Fast and Seamless Travel (FAST) initiative will be rolled out progressively throughout Changi Airport's terminals

ing passenger experience through the reduction of queue and waiting times, and the use of technology for a less invasive and disruptive search.

CoF entered its concept definition stage in 2012 where the regulatory requirements, policies, operational scenarios and technologies used were considered. The development of CoF has since included the participation of Airports Council International and specific targets were contained in the CoF2014 blueprint, with a further CoF2017 blueprint as the next objective.

By 2020, when the CoF2020 blueprint is reached, it is envisaged that “the passenger will be able to flow through the security checkpoint without interruption unless the advanced technology identifies a potential threat”. Each passenger will be assigned a level of security screening based on states of departure and arrival through real-time bilateral risk assessments.

Changi Airport's Terminal 4

Singapore's Changi Airport is one of the world's more progressive airports with a proven track record of building capacity ahead of demand. It is currently operating at more than 80 per cent of its designed capacity of 66 million passengers per annum.

In 2017, Terminal 4 (T4) will be opened with a capacity for 16 million passengers annually. Six airlines – Cathay Pacific, Korean Air, Vietnam Airlines, AirAsia, Indonesia AirAsia and Thai AirAsia – will migrate to this new terminal. In 2014, these airlines collectively carried seven million passengers.

The development of T4 has presented Singapore with the opportunity to implement its Fast and Seamless Travel (FAST) initiative, which is anchored by a suite of self-service and automated options from check-in and baggage handling to immigration clearance and boarding.

FAST is supplemented by biometric facial recognition technology to eliminate the current need for manual identity veri-

fication at a minimum of five touchpoints. In a major shift in concept, a centralised and more efficient security screening system will be introduced at T4, a change from T1, T2 and T3 where security screening takes place at each boarding gate.

Changi Airport Group's executive vice-president, Yam Kum Weng, said: “With T4's emphasis on innovation and productivity, passengers can expect passage through the various touchpoints to be smoother and stress-free, giving them more time to enjoy the facilities and wide array of shopping and dining options.”

Biocarts at Japanese airports

Passengers arriving at Japanese airports in the future (possibly sometime after 2017) could see relief at the immigration hall. The increase in foreign visitors in recent years has resulted in longer queues and the Justice Ministry is seeking an allocation for “biocarts” in the fiscal 2016 budget. These are mobile stations that capture passport information, a visitor's mugshot and fingerprint, which will be digitally transmitted to the immigration desk.

The time a visitor spends at the desk could be reduced by half, according to a senior Justice Ministry official. From January to June 2015, the longest waiting time for immigration was 36 minutes at Osaka Kansai, 20 minutes at Tokyo Narita, and 24 minutes at Tokyo Haneda and Nagoya Chubu.

“Cloud” over Perth Airport

As part of Perth Airport's AU\$1 billion (US\$714 million) investment in “an overall transformation of infrastructure”, it has signed an agreement with Amadeus to introduce ACUS (Airport Common Use Service).

This cloud-based technology makes use of application virtualisation that allows passenger processing systems to be accessed and deployed anywhere on demand, and on platforms ranging from desktops to laptops, tablets and other mobile devices. Passengers may be checked-

in and their boarding passes printed from any location. The same devices can handle passenger processing for multiple airlines at the same time.

Concierge on the ground and in the air

SabreSonic CSS is offering airlines and airports its Mobile Concierge mobile check-in solution that promises to bring check-in agents from behind their counters to become roving customer service agents.

Working on mobile devices, agents can check in passengers, print boarding passes and baggage tags while at the same time provide a more personalised service. The system is also able to identify when a high-value customer has entered the airport vicinity and requires check-in.

The integration of a credit card and passport reader facilitates the capture of passenger information and ancillary purchases. The end result of the implementation of this technology is the reduction of passenger queueing and reduced costs by saving time and allowing ground staff to be more efficient. This system can also be

further expanded to identify and deliver additional services for high-value customers in the airports and airplane cabin.

Privacy concerns, security of personal information and state security dictate that the roll-out of most such evolving technologies will take time. Until then, there are steps that airports and travellers can take to mitigate the bottlenecks and frustrations at security check points.

These include standardisation of requirements and processes at airports around the world; sign-posting security requirements a distance ahead of security checkpoints; and providing space for travellers to remove all necessary items before joining security screening queues.

Travellers can also do their bit by minimising the amount of metallic jewellery and accessories worn, and keeping mobile devices such as laptops and tablets more accessible as these must be taken out of hand luggage during security screenings.

Aviareps' chairman and CEO Michael Gaebler noted that today's travellers are much more connected and Asian airports are ahead of their European counterparts in providing Wi-Fi connection. With airports turning into mega malls in many cities, Gaebler feels that passengers will greatly appreciate high ceilings with more natural light and, most importantly, quiet zones.

Thankfully, there are airports in the Asia-Pacific region that already have light and airy terminals, themed gardens, quiet snoozing corners and spa facilities with swimming pools. Travellers at Incheon Airport can even gain hands-on experience in Korean arts and crafts, and witness a royal procession as it weaves through the terminal several times a day.

Indeed, the already pampered traveller's airport experience is all set for a game-changing revolution in the coming decade. Hub airports and those aspiring to be one will have to make that big leap in mindset and investment to offer a more pleasant experience from kerbside to aerobridge and vice versa.

This column is brought to you by TravelRave, Asia's premier travel and tourism week offering a dynamic platform for business leaders and industry professionals to convene and share insights on pertinent issues and key trends in the travel industry. The events, co-located in Singapore under the auspices of the Singapore Tourism Board (which also organises the Asia Travel Leaders Summit), will be held from October 19-23.



Suvarnabhumi International Airport, like many of its counterparts in Asia, offers Wi-Fi connection to keep passengers connected

Report **Midscale hotels**

Asia's growing middle class is driving a surge of mid-tier hotel investment in the region, but do travel consultants face any challenges in securing rooms in this market segment? *TTG Asia* finds out

STRADDLING THE MIDDLE GROUND

TOKYO – Julian Ryall

Tokyo already faces a shortage of mid-tier hotels, a problem that is becoming more acute as the number of visitors increases sharply and is set to reach new highs with the Olympic Games 2020.

On the plus side, city authorities and developers are aware of the situation and a number of new properties with rooms around the US\$200-per-night mark are due to open their doors before the world's largest sporting event comes into town.

"There are several reasons why we have a shortfall in accommodation at the moment, but the biggest problem is the limited number of potential sites and the high prices that are being quoted for that land," said Koji Takabayashi, managing director of Horwath HTL's Japan office.

"This is a serious problem, especially given that the Japanese government wants to increase the number of overseas visitors to 20 million by 2020," he added.

Domestic tour operators are also feeling the squeeze.

"It is getting harder and harder to secure accommodation and it is only going to get more difficult as we get closer to the Olympic Games," Motohisa Tachikawa, a spokesman for JTB Corp told *TTG Asia*.

"The issue is particularly acute for Asian travellers because they have similar dates for their holidays, meaning there is a

lot of pressure at certain times of the year," he said. "Our clients sometimes have to change hotels, move up a hotel grade or alter the timing of their visit because there are just not enough hotels in Tokyo."

An alternative remedy is to encourage visitors to stay in the outlying areas of the capital, such as Narita, which is close to the main airport serving Tokyo.

A recent study by the Japan Travel Bureau Foundation underlines the scale of the problem, suggesting that if inbound tourists reach the government's target of 20 million by 2020, then Tokyo alone will have a shortage of 10,000 beds every night.

"A shortage of hotel rooms is going to be a bottleneck for inviting more tourists to Japan," said Naoki Yoshiyama, senior director for CBRE's hotel sector. In a 2014 report, CBRE estimated there would be a shortage of 14,000 rooms per night by 2020.

"Tokyo's GDP is the largest in the world, but the city does not have hotel brands such as W, St Regis or JW Marriott," he said. "Offices have traditionally been the best users of CBD real estate, while office owners in Japan strongly prefer leasing to management contracts, which is a challenge for international hotel operators."

That lack of accommodation, however, is an opportunity for developers.

Hotel Gracery Shinjuku, which opened in April in Tokyo's Kabukicho entertainment district, is notable for the 12m-tall head of Godzilla poking through its 30th storey roof. Other new midscale arrivals in the city include Hotel Sunroute Ginza and

Richmond Hotel Premier Tokyo Oshiage.

In the summer of 2016, the Prince Gallery Tokyo Kioicho hotel is scheduled to open in the city's Chiyoda Ward, while work is underway to demolish Okura Hotel to make way for a new property that will launch by 2019 in time for the Olympics. Hilton has also taken

over a property in the Odaiba waterfront district and will be opening later this year.

According to Horwath's Takabayashi, Japan's major developers like Mitsui & Co and Mori Building Co are actively seeking general contractors to secure sites and build more midscale hotels before 2020.

"At the moment, a lot of travel consultants are having problems securing rooms for groups, and some are resorting to online reservations, which is a concern," admitted Susan Ong, deputy director of the Japan National Tourism Organization's office in Singapore.

"But we are hopeful moving forward because some new hotels are scheduled to open soon."



Hotel Gracery Shinjuku



"Opened in March 2012, the Richmond Hotel Asakusa is a reasonably new superior business hotel in a fantastic location. The famous Kaminarimon gate and Sensoji temple are just a short walk away, and numerous restaurants are on its doorstep. The hotel is also ideally placed for visits to Tokyo Skytree, while numerous subway lines are just a couple of minutes away on foot providing easy access to Shibuya, Akihabara, Shinjuku and Ginza."

Alastair Donnelly
Co-director and founder
Inside Japan Tours

SINGAPORE – Paige Lee Pei Qi

The continuous roll-out of midscale hotels in Singapore not only injects new supply into the industry, but also provides alternative options for travellers, travel consultants told *TTG Asia*.

According to CBRE Hotels (Asia-Pacific), executive director, Robert McIntosh,

about 45 per cent of Singapore's upcoming hotel supply until end-2018 will belong to the midscale sector. "The current stock of 3.5- to four-star hotels amounts to about 31 per cent of the whole supply, which indicates that there will be a significant relative growth in this segment," he said.

"This shows the demand is growing strongly for such hotels that offer value for money, efficient service and simple, modern facilities," remarked McIntosh.

Highlighting the appeal of the mid-tier hotel segment, Judy Lum, group vice president sales & marketing of Tour East Singapore, said: "These hotels are less intimidating to Asian travellers who prefer a casual atmosphere, and our midscale hotels here are pretty decent hotels with room amenities."

These hotels are largely popular among travellers from regional markets like China and Hong Kong, added Lum.

Likewise, for Luxury Tours & Travel, Chinese groups form the bulk of travellers that opt for midscale hotels, said Singapore director, Michael Lee. He said: "These travellers are simply looking for a comfortable stay without all those extra comfort items, so it is suitable for them."

Samson Tan, CEO of GTMC Travel, commented: "There is very good demand for these properties, especially from the Asian market because of its competitive offerings with affordable prices."

"I do not face any challenges in securing these rooms because I think the supply is more than the demand," he added.

CBRE's latest *Singapore Hotel Market-View* report revealed that "in light of the appreciating dollar, tourists have become more price-sensitive, thus increasing the demand for lower-tier hotels". The occu-

pancy rates for midscale hotels rose 2.8 per cent year-on-year to 83.8 per cent, according to the report.

The first half of 2015 saw new midscale hotel openings like the 443-room Park Hotel Alexandra, 557-key Genting Hotel Jurong and the 488-room Hotel Chancellor@Orchard.

In 2016, Singapore is set to welcome mid-tier properties the likes of ibis Singapore on Stevens with 528 rooms and ibis Styles @ Macpherson with 298 rooms.



"I pick the four-star Park Hotel Clarke Quay for its good location, good service, and well-furnished rooms despite being only 24m² to 26m². I have received good feedback on the hotel's service and cleanliness. They have also provided timely check-in for my clients and attentive service. It may only be a mid-tier hotel but with the right service culture, guests will keep coming back for the great experience."

Judy Lum
Group vice president sales & marketing
Tour East Singapore



Genting Hotel Jurong

HONG KONG DISNEYLAND RESORT CELEBRATION OF SALES EXCELLENCE 2014

Sep 9, 2015



(from left to right, top to bottom) Winners of the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort Celebration of Sales Excellence Awards 2014 take center stage in the cool recognition event, with congratulations from Queen Elsa and Princess Anna, Andrew Kam, Managing Director of Hong Kong Disneyland Resort (back row, 9th from right), Ken Wong, Vice President, Asia Pacific Regional Sales of Walt Disney Parks & Resorts (back row, 11th from left), and Terruce Wang, Vice President of Sales and Distribution Marketing of Hong Kong Disneyland Resort (back row, 8th from right).

HONG KONG DISNEYLAND RESORT HONORS TOP TRAVEL TRADE PARTNERS DISNEY STYLE WINNERS APPLAUDED IN COOL CELEBRATION OF SALES EXCELLENCE AWARDS GALA

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort dazzled its top-performing travel trade partners with double the magic this year. The Resort honored winners of the annual Celebration of Sales Excellence 2014 Awards in parts of a two-day spectacle on September 9-10. The event imbued with the Disney Touch marked the Resort's 10th Anniversary and gave trade partners a sneak preview of the exciting anniversary attractions lineup.

The annual Awards, inaugurated in 2011, recognize trade partners' exceptional performance in spreading the Disney magic and celebrate the win-win partnerships between the Resort and the travel trade partners. A total of 26 awards were presented for the 2014 Awards – 20 travel trade partners received the Sales Excellence Awards, 5 trade partners received the Sales AdvancEAR Awards, and the winner of the Top Sales AchievEAR Award for 2014 is Shenzhen Sightseeing Company Limited.

Having made it a tradition to create extraordinary experiences to show appreciation to the top trade partners, the Resort turned up the volume this year, serenading the trade partners with the "Frozen" Festival Show, specially staged that evening for the winners in Hong Kong Disneyland's winter wonderland, the "Frozen" Village.

Award winners were given the royal treatment as the beloved Frozen belles, Queen Elsa and Princess Anna, presented the awards before and after they regaled the preeminent audience with popular Frozen songs in the "Frozen" Festival Show musical.

Adorned in limited edition blue and purple outfits tailor-designed for the occasion, the trade Guests were dressed to get into the mood for some snow-filled fun in the blue hued "Frozen" Village. Some took a thrilling toboggan ride at "Frozen" Village and all enjoyed Frozen-themed desserts in the cool ambiance.

Winners of the Celebration of Sales Excellence 2014 also renewed friendships with some 200 trade and media Guests in the anniversary trade event, the Disney Travel Trade Summit. Award-winning Disney chefs said thank you to the distinguished



Queen Elsa and Princess Anna are on hand to present the award to the winner of Top Sales AchievEAR Award for 2014, Shenzhen Sightseeing Company Limited, represented by Managing Director Wang Yun (2nd from left). Also presenting the award are Andrew Kam, Managing Director of Hong Kong Disneyland Resort (2nd from right), Ken Wong, Vice President, Asia Pacific Regional Sales of Walt Disney Parks & Resorts (1st from left), and Terruce Wang, Vice President of Sales and Distribution Marketing of Hong Kong Disneyland Resort (1st from right).



Adventurous Guests go for a thrilling toboggan ride at "Frozen" Village.

Guests in the way they know best – with a sumptuous spread of delectable savories and a feast of visually stunning Disney-inspired desserts at the gala dinner in the Royal Banquet Hall of Fantasyland. Guests also enjoyed the illuminous “Disney Paint the Night” Parade in the front-row VIP zone prior to the Awards ceremony. The evening came to a jovial finale with cocktails at Walt’s Café of Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel.

Terruce Wang, Vice President, Sales and Distribution Marketing, Hong Kong Disneyland Resort said: “This year marks the important 10th anniversary milestone for Hong Kong Disneyland Resort. Looking back on the success of the past decade, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude towards our travel trade partners for their unstinting support and trust, enabling us to evolve and diversify products that create memorable magical experiences for countless Guests. We are delighted to celebrate this special occasion with our partners, and we look forward to establishing an even stronger relationship to continue our magical journey together.”



Trade partners get VIP treatment all the way, and enjoy front-row views of the aluminous “Disney Paint the Night” Parade.

WINNERS SAY...

“Hong Kong Disneyland is a favorite destination for Taiwanese visitors, and we will work hard in the year ahead, to get the award again after being awarded for three years.”

Juliana Hsieh
General Manager of Cola Tour

“It’s a real honor to have been receiving this award since day one.”

Anthea Lo
Financial Director of Million Tour Limited

“We are delighted to have received the CSE awards for the second time.”

Richard Liu
CEO of Guangzhou Qu-Happy Business Service Company Limited



The elaborate Awards evening kicks off with a relaxing cocktail reception and a sumptuous gala dinner at the Royal Banquet Hall in Fantasyland.



Trade partners enjoy an evening full of surprises in the award spectacular staged at “Frozen” Village.



The Frozen theme is carried through the gala celebration, with sweet delights featuring beloved Queen Elsa.



Disney Magician adds to the magic of the evening, bringing lots of joy and laughter to the Guests as they indulge in Disney chefs’ master creations.

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort 2014 Top Sales AchievEAR of the Year Shenzhen Sightseeing Company Limited

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort 2014 Sales Excellence Award

China Travel Service (Hong Kong) Limited
Expedia
Guangdong Nanhu International Travel Service Company Limited
Guangzhou Huanlv Travel Services Co., Ltd
GZL International Travel Service Limited
HS Travel International Company Limited
Lymama Synwalk Travel Co., Ltd
Nanjing Tuniu International Travel Service Co., Ltd
Shenzhen GangAo International Travel Service Company Limited
Shenzhen Yikai Business International Travel Service Company Limited

Cola Tour
Gray Line Tours of Hong Kong Limited
Guangdong SZL International Travel Service Co., Ltd.
Guangzhou Qu-Happy Business Service Company Limited
Holiday World Tours Limited
Hua Yi Tour Limited
Million Tour Limited
Shanghai Ctrip International Travel Service Co., Ltd
Shenzhen Sightseeing Company Limited
Vacation Asia (Hong Kong) Limited

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort 2013 Sales AdvancEAR Award

Asia Travel Network
Ggogo
Shandong Jiahua Culture International Travel Service Co., Ltd

Dream Tour (HK) Limited
Mangocity.com Limited

(In alphabetical order)

www.hkdlttravelagents.com

Report Midscale hotels

JAKARTA – Mimi Hudoyo

According to inbound players in Indonesian, Jakarta has a good supply of midscale and upscale rooms with a variety of facilities and locations that meet the needs of visitors.

STR Global's data showed that in the first half of 2015, there were 186 hotels with a total 32,181 rooms in the "middle ground" category in Jakarta. Another 12 properties are expected to open by this year-end, adding 2,416 rooms to the city.

Ismail Ali, executive director of Marintur Indonesia, said: "Unlike Bali, whose tourism majority is inbound travel, leisure business to Jakarta is not that big. The majority of hotels in Jakarta set aside up to 15 per cent of room allotment to inbound leisure business (travellers)."

"As a DMC (catering to European and Middle Eastern markets) there are sufficient rooms available so far. There is a good choice of international and national hotel chains which have the facilities and the service quality to meet travellers' demands," he added.

Jongky Adiyasa, executive director INA Leisure, agreed there were sufficient hotel rooms for his European, Middle East and Indian markets in the upscale and upper midscale categories.

However, this was not without its challenge, commented Adiyasa. Hotel rooms could be full during weekdays when there

are big MICE events in Jakarta.

Anthony Johannes, senior manager of Fokus Indonesia Tours added that Jakarta has a good choice of hotels in the upscale category suitable for his Middle Eastern market, and many of these properties have been around for many years. They usually have spacious rooms equipped with today's standard facilities such as speedy Internet connections.

However, occupancy in the first half of the year in the upscale category was down more than 12 per cent, revealed STR Global's data.

Matt Gebbie, director Pacific Asia of Horwath HTL, said: "The decrease in government MICE demand, corporate budget tightening and the fasting month (from mid June to mid-July) were contributing factors."

"Improvements are expected in the second half of the year. The government budget spending is up and meetings are being held in hotels again. While it is unlikely to reach 2014 levels, it will still be an improvement when compared to the first six months of the year."

Asked if Jakarta has enough hotel rooms in this category to cater for the next few years, Christy Megawati, business development manager of STR Global, said: "With Jakarta (still) developing its infrastructure, the opportunity for business market is still positive. Also, if we take a look at the distribution pattern of hotel development, investors are not only looking at the city centre but also spreading out to (all corners) of the city."

KUALA LUMPUR – S Puvaneswary

The Malaysian capital has no shortage of mid-tier hotels but price parity and a lack of clear rating system continue to be some of the biggest gripes among inbound tour operators.

Aariana Hospitality International president & CEO, Reginald T Pereira, said: "Our intelligence indicates that there are sufficient mid and upscale hotels, and occupancies of these properties hover close to 70 per cent."

"The rates need to increase to regional levels in order for the hotels to be profitable and attract more investors," he said. "Looking at the proposed new developments of hotels, there will continue to be a sufficient hotel rooms in Kuala Lumpur."

"Moving forward, what has to be done is to increase the number of tourist arrivals and focus on attracting more MICE business in order to move rates and occupancy levels to higher levels," added Pereira.

According to Arokia Das, senior manager at Luxury Tours Malaysia, most mid-



With more business than leisure travellers, Jakarta's supply is tighter on weekdays than weekends



"As an international hotel group, AccorHotels has the system in place, the service standard and well-trained staff."

Santika Indonesia is a home-grown

hotel group which has been growing not only in number of properties, but also in implementing the standard of facilities and services that meet the expectations of international travellers."

Ismail Ali
Executive director
Marintur Indonesia



Vistana Kuala Lumpur Titiwangsa

scale hotels are reporting occupancy rates lower than 65 per cent so far this year due to an oversupply, resulting in "very competitive rates".

Das added: "Many hotels in this range look for immediate results, so very often there are tactical promotions. Some hoteliers, desperate to sell rooms, give OTAs better rates than the traditional consultants or offer better rates on their websites for last-minute tactical promotions."

"Clients will (then) demand to know why our quotes are more expensive and this situation looks set to continue in 2016," he remarked.

Like Pereira, Das urges the creation of more international MICE events in Kuala Lumpur to draw more arrivals and fill up rooms.

For some travel consultants, the lack of a unified hotel rating system in Malaysia makes it harder for them to sell rooms to their clients.

Ally Bhoonee, managing director of World Avenues, said: "One of the challenges we face is differences between the local hotel brands and the international hotel chains."

"Some local

brands have been classified as five-star hotels by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia as they have met the necessary criteria such as a minimum room size of 13m², a beauty salon and spa, a swimming pool and 24-hour room service. Such properties are marketed as five-star but lack the appropriate service levels.

"As travel consultants, we have to professionally explain to our clients the difference between a super deluxe five-star and a deluxe five-star property as this will help them make an informed decision."

"Foreign guests who buy travel packages from tour operators overseas do not have an itemised bill, thus they do not know how much they have paid for the hotel. Hence, it is very important to brief our overseas partners, so that they in turn can brief their clients."

In Kuala Lumpur, contract rates for mid-tier hotels generally range between RM320 (US\$74.30) and RM350, sources told *TTG Asia*.



"Vistana Kuala Lumpur Titiwangsa – the staff are service oriented and the property is centrally located and easily accessible by public transportation. It is also a short drive to attractions such as Sunway Putra Mall and the Petronas Twin Towers. The surrounding area is also peaceful, yet near to the trendy Bukit Bintang area in Kuala Lumpur."

Nanda Kumar
Managing director
Hidden Asia Travel & Tours

HONG KONG – Prudence Lui

Space-starved Hong Kong has constantly grappled with steep hotel rates and room shortage, vexing tourists and travel consultants alike.

“Our incentive clients from the region define middle-ground rates as around US\$130,” said Alan Tang, manager of East and West Travel, which specialises in South-east Asia traffic. “As Chinese arrivals are currently not doing well, we are able to secure the midscale properties. But once Chinese travellers rebound, the shortage problem may reoccur.”

“Since July 2015 we (have had) trouble booking rooms in Hong Kong Disneyland Resort. We’ve been asking for rooms this coming December but no rooms were available,” he said. “In the long term, the city needs more supply to grow tourism.”

Momentous Asia’s general manager Doris Lam told *TTG Asia* that her long-haul clients seek four-star properties of around US\$180 to US\$200, but good

hotels at this rate are not easy to find, especially when their dates clash with other events in Hong Kong.

Price comparison with cheaper cities in the region pose a challenge too. “If hotel rates from other destinations offer better value for money, (clients) may pick other destinations instead of Hong Kong,” said Lam. “We hope for more supply and competition, (so that) the hotel rates become more competitive.”

“Many clients also look at the terms and conditions, and cancellation policy. We need more flexibility from hotels, in particular for MICE groups. Many clients are looking for full-service hotels with proper restaurants and business centres but it seems most new hotels fail to meet the needs of these clients.”

Hong Kong Hotel Association, executive director, James Lu, said: “Mid-range hotels are always in demand and more than half of the city’s new hotels undergoing development and the existing hotel room inventory fall into this category, so there is no shortage of supply.”

“Due to the current business down-



Good midscale hotels in Hong Kong can be especially hard to secure during big events

turn caused by fewer overnight visitors to Hong Kong, the price range has been adjusted downward by some 15 to 20 per cent but it will eventually go back to normal. In the long run, everything will balance out.”

Hong Kong’s midscale hotels generally offer standard rooms at HK\$1,000 (US\$129) to HK\$1,500 per night, according to Lu.

According to statistics from Hong Kong Tourism Board, the city’s supply is expected to grow from 279 hotels (77,825 rooms) in 2016 to 298 hotels (82,598 rooms) in 2017, with most new properties belonging to the midscale categories located outside traditional downtown areas.



“We have used Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn a number of times, and Novotel in China too. (These brands) are better equipped with more than one restaurant, offer a full buffet breakfast and business centre, among other facilities. When we ask for quotations, they also come up with a proper proposal with hotel descriptions that help us when we present the properties to clients.”

Doris Lam
General manager
Momentous Asia

BANGKOK – Michael Mackey

An oversupply of rooms in Bangkok has created opportunities for both inbound agencies and consumers in the midscale hotel market.

Bangkok has a surfeit of four- and five-star rooms as major international chains can be found in the city, usually in multiple locations. This has led to a severe downward pressure on rates as chains such as Hotel ibis Bangkok Riverside cost just US\$50 per night with breakfast.

“Hotels in Bangkok have more challenges in filling rooms due to the oversupply,” said Zhang Yulin, China market manager for Asian Trails.

Moreover, there are still more hotels entering the oversaturated Bangkok market, which does nothing to ease the

rate pressure.

“There are many new hotels which cater to the midscale budget business or leisure travellers seeking a value-for-money and conveniently located property,” said Hans van den Born, managing director of Diethelm Travel Thailand.

“There are so many new rooms com-

ing online that you ask yourself (whether) these investors have done their due diligence,” said van den Born, who believes this situation will remain the same for the next five years.

“We don’t have any problems (securing rooms), not even in the high season,” he added.



Room supply continues to outpace demand in Bangkok

Bill Barnett, managing director of C9 Hotelworks, noted that travellers seeking midscale hotels aim for the cheapest prices and sometimes move to get the desired rate – even on the same trip.

He added: “(There is a lot of) movement and little loyalty or in-house spend, (resulting in) a commodity war in this segment.”



“One recommendation would be the Aetas Bangkok. It has very spacious rooms, friendly and efficient staff, a small swimming pool, various F&B outlets – basically everything you need for a few days stay in the capital of Thailand.”

Hans van den Born
Managing director
Diethelm Travel Thailand

MANILA – Rosa Ocampo

With Manila’s mid-range hotels varying greatly in rates and facilities, the Philippine trade opposes categorising hotels according to their rates and should instead be based on the standard of their facilities and amenities. A property with five-star facilities can be rated four-star and vice versa,

resulting in a big gap between a hotel’s actual and OTA rates.

Metro Manila is also susceptible to wide rate fluctuations so it is not uncommon for a five-star hotel to downgrade to a four-star during the low season, and for a budget hotel to upgrade its prices to a four-star level during the high season.

The danger of categorising hotels based on pricing is that a property might not meet guests’ expectations and lead to disappointment, travel consultants opined.

Paul So, managing director, Great Sights Travel and Tours, remarked that in the midscale pricing category, facilities and amenities are “not very clear cut” and often fail to meet consumer expectations. A common complaint is the lack of or slow Wi-Fi, which is an issue for the entire hotel industry in the Philippines and even luxury hotels are also not spared.

Some mid and upscale hotels drop their rates too low, while some lack basic amenities like having hot water for coffee or tea, further adding to the disparity of service and facility standards in the segment.

Categorising hotels based on rates is therefore not the best criteria, argued Perry Perez, team manager of Hana Tour, who said his company has its own standards in choosing hotels.

Manila generally has enough supply of mid and upscale hotels that range from 7,000 pesos (US\$150) to 8,000 pesos. But it can be tricky during the high season and convention months when supply becomes scarce, said Jerome Coronado, inbound supervisor, Swire Travel Philippines.

However, residences are growing in popularity in the metro area, offering a fitting alternative to mid and upscale hotels,

said Coronado.

According to the Department of Tourism’s statistics, mid-market hotels currently comprise about 30 per cent of total supply in Manila. Most new and recent hotel developments are in the five-star bracket, augmenting their supply to about 60 per cent of the total hotel pie.

While Philippine brands like Henann, Linden and Crimson fill up the mid-market segment, international brands are noticeably lacking. However, that is about to change with the influx of mid-market hotels over the next few years, including boutique, local and international brands.



“New World Hotel Makati is reasonably priced for its level of services and facilities. It is considered five-star but the price is four-star. It offers quality in terms of services, amenities and food. It keeps upgrading and renovating.”

Angel Ramos Bognot
President and managing director
Afro-Asian Travel and Tours



Destination **Singapore**

The local trade has much to rave about and promote for the city-state's Golden Jubilee, discovers **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

INVITATION TO A BIRTHDAY BASH

In a bid to reverse slowing visitor figures, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has launched a S\$20 million (US\$14.8 million) global marketing campaign to ride the wave of interest on the nation's 50th founding anniversary.

Lynette Pang, assistant chief executive of STB's marketing group, said: "2015 is not only a tremendous milestone for Singapore, but also an opportunity for STB to leverage the international attention to ramp up marketing efforts for destination Singapore. SG50 is a once-in-a-lifetime event for Singapore and has caught the interest of the world, placing us on numerous lists of top places to visit."

Inbound tour operators and hotels in Singapore have been eager to roll out packages in conjunction with the nation's 50th birthday.

Judy Lum, Tour East's group vice president of sales and marketing, said: "We are currently looking at reiterating SG50 to convey the message that some packages

come once in 50 years. For instance, tourists would be more compelled to retrace the Singapore history during the World War II with visits to the Changi Chapel and Museum and Kranji War Memorial."

More than 35 hotels, including Park Hotel Group and Sheraton Towers Singapore, have already committed to offering a Pay Two, Stay Three offer, while children will have complimentary access to several Singaporean attractions.

The Pan Pacific Hotels Group (PPHG) has launched a SG50 promotion at its two Pan Pacific and three Parkroyal hotels in Singapore to offer selected travel consultants who book through the group's website 50 per cent savings.

Timur Senturk, PPHG's vice president, operations, ASEAN, said: "With many large-scale celebratory events planned throughout the year, we see SG50 as a great opportunity to heighten awareness and excitement of Singapore."

"We will be unveiling more rooms and

dining promotions throughout the year that can be enjoyed by both Singaporeans and visitors to the country," he added.

Over at the Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore, a new Celebrate Singapore, Celebrate You room package was rolled out at the beginning of the year "to leverage the jubilant nationwide atmosphere", said Andreas Kohn, director of sales & marketing, The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore.

Kohn said: "To date, the performance of our Celebrate Singapore, Celebrate You room package has exceeded the projected annual number of room nights. In the month of August alone, the total number of bookings for the month outperformed the total number of bookings in the preceding seven months of the year."

"This is likely attributed to the four-day National Day jubilee weekend which made it an additional incentive for locals to book a staycation at our hotel in order to enjoy the fireworks and fringe festivities in the Marina Bay area," Kohn explained.

Destination in numbers

6.1 million

The number of visitors Singapore welcomed from January to May 2015, a 4.1 per cent year-on-year decrease

85.5 per cent

The average occupancy rate of Singapore hotels in 2014, a 0.9 per cent dip from the previous year

S\$257.70

The average room rate, equivalent to US\$180, of Singapore hotels in 2014, a slight 0.2 per cent decline from the previous year

Viewpoints How are you leveraging SG50 to sell Singapore?



Timur Senturk, vice president, operations, ASEAN, Pan Pacific Hotels Group

We want to honour the meaning of SG50, which is about celebrating the pioneering spirit and Singapore's past achievements, so we are also looking at heritage-themed promotions and packages that encourage both locals and visitors to journey through its history and rediscover Singapore.



Selina Chavry, regional director Asia, Pacific World

Singapore may be short in history but the country has succeeded gloriously in its development during its 50 years of independence. We can explore bringing the group through the transformation of Singapore by highlighting housing from a kampung slum in Pulau Ubin to a cosmopolitan city in The Pinnacle@Duxton.



Hotels and travel companies are marking Singapore's 50th birthday with a multitude of related products and offers



PARK HOTEL ALEXANDRA



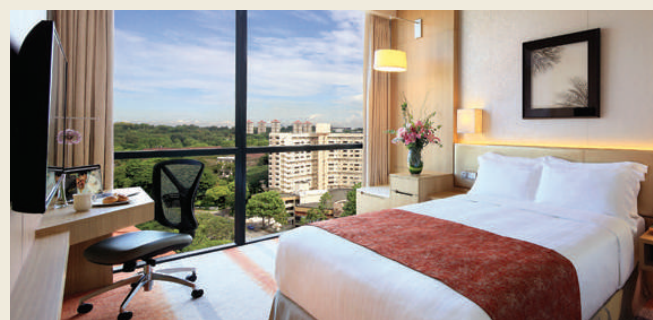
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Discover Love

Destination Singapore

How to sell



Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum

DO Visit **Bukit Timah Hill** to feast your eyes upon the sanctuary of trees. The highest natural point of Singapore is at the peak of this 164m-high hill, yet it contains more species of trees than the entire North American continent.

SEE Dinosaurs are here to stay at the new **Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum**. Home to over a million plant and animal specimens, the seven-storey 8,500m² museum in the National University of Singapore's Faculty of Science is the city-state's first and only natural history museum. Visitors can view more than 2,000 specimens, divided into 15 zones, in the exhibition gallery.

EAT Visitors to the **National Gallery Singapore** can now enjoy a comprehensive museum experience that extends beyond the arts to the culinary front. The five renowned Singapore brands in the museum are the Aura Restaurant and Sky Lounge by ilLido Group, National Kitchen by Violet Oon, Odette by The Lo & Behold Group, SAHA and The Altimate by The Padang FNB, and Yan and Smoke & Mirrors by Park Hotel Group.



The South Beach

STAY The **South Beach** hotel has soft-opened in September as a preview phase, with an official opening planned for later this year. This 654-key property features Philippe Starck-designed rooms and suites, and includes amenities such as two sky gardens, two infinity swimming pools and a gym.

MY WAY

What do you do during your free time?

I don't have much free time, but when I do, I spend it with my one-year-old baby girl and my wife peregrinating East Coast Park.

What is your favourite hobby?

I enjoy an occasional game of tennis and golf but that has been taken over by the women in my life. They are my top priority now.

Which is your favourite attraction in Singapore?

Gardens by the Bay is a great way to connect with nature in a controlled environment.

What would be a must-do or must-see in Singapore?

Next to Furama RiverFront is the start of the heritage trail to Tiong Bahru. Singapore's first housing estate is a fascinating neighbourhood with pre-war architecture, heritage and culture, and has been undergoing rapid gentrification with hipster cafés and restaurants



East Coast Park

moving in alongside traditional provision shops. I enjoy the local fare such as *chwee kueh* (steamed rice cake) at the Tiong Bahru Market.

Just a stroll from Furama City Centre is Everton Park, another one of Singapore's earliest estates with a juxtaposition of old and new. As a regular coffee drinker, I appreciate quaint cafes such as Nylon Coffee Roasters, which have added some caffeine respite to the quiet neighbourhood that also has the best reputed *ang ku kueh* (tortoise-shaped Chinese snack).

How about some dining spots to recommend?

I am currently residing near the Katong area which has many affordable dining options. (I would) not recommend any one restaurant in particular, (as) I believe that part of the fun is trying out different outlets and sampling a variety of dishes.



Welly Jamin
Vice president of operations
Furama Hotels International

TRIED & TESTED Colony

Rachel AJ Lee troops down the buffet line with her taste buds ready for a culinary voyage

LOCATION Level three of The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore.

AMBIENCE The name of the restaurant pays homage to the treacherous sea voyages the British once undertook during their travels to South-east Asia for trade in the 18th century. Hence, vintage maps and postcards adorn the walls behind brown banquettes and armchairs.

The atmosphere is warm and casual, yet opulent and streamlined at the same time. Ask for a table near the floor-to-ceiling windows, where it looks out to a serene bamboo garden.

MENU There are eight different open concept kitchens with live culinary showmanship. For example, there will be a chef searing foie gras while another shucks briny oysters from Normandy.

Colony is split into two sections, the cold area featuring desserts, cold cuts, cheeses, salad and a variety of crustaceans, and the hot area tucked at the back of the restaurant, where the cooked food is.

I started with The Ice Bar with slivers of jamon and smoked salmon, before I

tackled the creamy brie cheese, freshly-shucked oysters and sashimi.

From The Grill & Rotisserie, I loved the beef wellington and the lightly-seared foie gras with pear jam and pine nuts.

Located opposite was The Steam Basket, where I ordered hand-pulled noodles in chicken broth and *laksa*. Both bowls came with a fist-sized homemade lobster ball. The *laksa* was definitely the star here, thanks to the rich, coconut-based broth that left my taste buds tingling.

I ended the sumptuous buffet on a sugar high, thanks to the mind-boggling array of sweet treats at The Patisserie. I had two squares of handmade dark chocolates, a small tiramisu and two scoops of ice cream – both the *chendol* and *gula melaka* were delicious.

Colony offers breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner daily, and Champagne brunch on Sundays. In the evenings, a roving mixologist will craft speciality cocktails tableside.

SERVICE Impeccable. I was milling around the lobby and within a span of five minutes, two of the hotel staff approached me to ask if I was already being taken care of.

Within the restaurant, there was no shortage of chefs behind the various culinary stations who were quick to refill empty woks or whip a dish up for guests. The service staff also made sure my water was constantly refilled.

VERDICT Colony serves a value-for-money buffet in a five-star hotel setting and offers an elegant location to take overseas visitors to taste well-executed local dishes without dealing with the humidity of a hawker centre.

Name Colony
Location 7 Raffles Avenue
Contact details
Tel: (65) 6434-5288
Website: www.ritzcarlton.com



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Destination Singapore

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 Universal Studios Singapore

Hop on the world's first Puss In Boots' Giant Journey suspended coaster and join Puss and Kitty on this anti-gravity, swashbuckling adventure in search of the legendary golden eggs. With a maximum speed of 36km/h and a minimum height requirement of 100cm, this two-minute ride promises to entertain both adults and children alike.



2 The Club

Located on Ann Siang Hill in a colonial building, this luxury boutique hotel has completed an extensive renovation to roll out refreshed guestrooms and new dining outlets.

The Club's 20 guestrooms now feature soothing earth tones, eclectic art accessories and bespoke furniture. Its popular B28 underground whisky bar is now joined by a lounge café and bar, a champagne yard, a rooftop bar and the second restaurant by The Disgruntled Chef.

Available for private event hire are Tiger's Milk and The Champagne Yard, with the former able to accommodate private gatherings of 110 guests and the latter offering space for 24 guests in cocktail style.

3 Bread Street Kitchen

Celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay has brought his culinary magic to The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands. Set in an industrial warehouse-designed restaurant, the two-storey Bread Street Kitchen is modelled after its London counterpart and serves a British-European menu.

Signature dishes include the pork belly, shepherd's pie, roasted veal carpaccio and the BSK burger, which features melted Monterey Jack cheese and spicy sriracha mayo in a brioche bun.



Opened in June, the restaurant boasts a total seating capacity of 149 including a 14-seater private dining area.

4 Grand Hotels International

Grand Hotels International is gearing up to open two new properties in the city.

Both located on the corner of Cavenagh Road and Kramat Lane, the 488-room Hotel Chancellor@Orchard soft-opened in May while the 264-room Hotel Grand Central will be ready by end-October.

At Hotel Chancellor@Orchard, four meeting rooms are available

while Hotel Grand Central has two board meeting rooms. Room rates for both hotels start from S\$180.

5 Park Hotel Alexandra

Located on the fringe of Singapore's CBD, the 443-key Park Hotel Alexandra offers six different room types – Superior Room, Deluxe Room, Premier Room, Crystal Club Room, Executive Suite and Park Suite.

The hotel has four function rooms that can be combined to accommodate up to 150 pax, while cocktail receptions and private events can be held at the elevated pool deck that features a 25m infinity pool.

TRIED & TESTED

Hotel Jen Orchardgateway Singapore

Paige Lee Pei Qi spends a night at this hotel tucked in the city's shopping belt and gives its vibrant location and fuss-free services the thumbs up

LOCATION Situated along Orchard Road, the hotel is conveniently interconnected with three other shopping malls. Public transportation is also a breeze, with direct lift access from the hotel lobby to Somerset MRT train station.

ROOMS This four-star property, which soars up to 20 storeys, features 502 rooms that start from 27m² for the superior room category. The more expansive panorama club room, which I stayed in, starts from 41m². I was awed by the majestic city view of the Singapore landscape from the 20th storey. The room featured amenities like a work desk, TV, ironing board and complimentary Wi-Fi.

However, the open-concept bathroom took me by surprise when I saw that the shower area, toilet and bathroom sink were all in three separate compartments. Moreover, there was no proper door, save for a sliding panel that did little to conceal the bathroom area. Hence, business travellers staying with their co-workers might want to take note.

FACILITIES There are a host of flexible meeting options, with a total of six meeting rooms in the hotel that offers facilities



like translation systems and video conferencing services. Phoenix rooms I, II and III can be combined to hold a total of 100 pax theatre style. This is the largest capacity available.

Meanwhile, what caught my fancy was the unorthodox Zen Garden next to the meeting rooms. This outdoor area is decorated with lush greenery, and it can hold 40 guests – the perfect spot for networking

and coffee breaks in a more casual setting.

The hotel also offers a fitness centre and boasts a rooftop infinity pool on the 19th floor with an unobstructed view of the city skyline.

F&B Makan@Jen is the main restaurant which offers both à la carte and buffet-style options from 06.30 to 11.00 daily.

I enjoyed the widespread buffet break-

fast during my stay here and I like how the menu pays tribute to local delights like *roti prata* and *nasi lemak*. They even offered *teh tarik* and *miho* via a dispenser.

Lounge@Jen is the other restaurant option, which offers cocktails and coffee as well as high tea buffets – complete with scones, cakes and danishes – on weekends.

SERVICE Unlike the traditional hotel staff who are dressed in spiffy suits, the young and energetic staff here were dressed casually in red cotton shirts neatly tucked into jeans. This casual vibe was refreshing and it made them feel more approachable.

VERDICT Highly recommended for a mid-scale hotel stay. I like their modern take on facilities and fuss-free services. Also, its unbeatable location – in the heart of the city – is a huge draw.

Name Hotel Jen Orchardgateway Singapore

Rates From S\$215 (US\$153)

No. of rooms 502

Contact details

Tel: (65) 6708 8888

Email: hjog@hoteljen.com

Website: www.hoteljen.com



Destination China

Blessed with year-round good weather, impressive scenery and diverse culture, the capital of Yunnan is attracting more international visitors to tee off on its meandering greens, says **Caroline Boey**

Kunming is home to a large collection of golf courses



HITTING THE SWEET SPOTS

Dubbed Spring City, Kunming has all the right elements to be the golf capital of China – pleasant weather year-round, stunning vistas, interesting cuisine, unique culture and easy access to the courses.

Now the city's appeal is further elevated with more international hotels and improved access, as Kunming became the 10th city in China to allow foreign visitors three-day visa-free stays since last year, said Nick Zhao, director, sales and marketing (operation), Spring City Golf & Lake Resort.

"Kunming has one of the largest collections of golf courses in Asia and there are several courses located within two hours' drive of the city. It is the golf capital of China," he said. "There is convenient access by land and air, and is the gateway between China and South-east Asia, plus there is pleasant weather all year round."

Ho Hsiao Ho, founder of Golf Holiday, a wholesaler and retailer, said demand for golf holidays in Kunming has been rising 15 to 20 per cent annually since he started the golf holiday business 35 years ago, barring the 2008 global financial crisis and 2012 economic downturn.

Ho said: "Initially, all the golfers were from Taiwan. Today they come from all over the world. In Asia, Taiwan, China, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Australia are the main source markets."

According to Ho, there are more than 10 golf courses within a 30-minute drive from Kunming; most golfers will stay two nights in Spring City Golf & Lake Resort and another two nights in Kunming.

"It may surprise you but Yunnan and

Kunming are considered the most expensive in Asia for golf. It costs around RMB10,000 (US\$1,574) for a five-day trip with four rounds of golf compared to RMB6,000 in Japan," Ho said.

Lower prices are on the horizon for golfing in Kunming. Ho added: "Golf holiday prices are starting to fall this year and I believe they will continue to fall because of economic uncertainty. It is now 20 to 25 per cent cheaper."

To attract more golf visitors, Ho said Kunming could do with more air seats, more competitive airfares with the entry of LCCs, plus stronger destination promotion.

Spring City Golf & Lake Resort's Zhao agreed: "The promotion of Kunming as a tourist destination to a wide variety of travellers can be further strengthened using rich visuals and testimonials of people who have visited the place."

Spring City Golf & Lake Resort, which has put Kunming and China on the world map as a coveted golfing destination, will also be doing more to attract visitors.

Zhao added: "We are planning to improve entertainment and recreation facilities in the resort, establish partnerships with local tour agencies, as well as provide sightseeing vehicle hiring services for non-golfers."

Lu Hao Shuo, deputy general manager, inbound travel division, Kunming CITS, pointed out that golf trips are popular not only in Kunming, but all over Yunnan.

"There are good golf courses in tourist destinations such as Dali, Lijiang and Tengchong," said Lu, citing examples such as Stoneforest International Country Club in Kunming and Jade Dragon Snow

Mountain Golf Club in Lijiang.

Lu added that Kunming CITS customises tour programmes for mixed groups of golfers and non-golfers.

"While the golfers are playing, we can arrange other activities for the non-golfers such as cycling, rock climbing, photography, botany, zoology or minority culture tours, depending on their interest."

"In general, the number of golf visitors is expanding, especially among the South Koreans and Japanese."

Viewpoints

As Kunming's infrastructure has improved, what else does the city need to boost tourism?



Jim Burton, area general manager, InterContinental Hotels Group

The Yunnan provincial government has done a lot to improve the infrastructure. Metro Line No. 3 from the city centre to the Kunming Changshui International Airport, for example, will open at the end of the year.

However, marketing efforts overseas need to be stepped up with promotional budgets and the presence at tradeshow increased as the number of overseas visitors has remained the same.



Oliver Huang, marketing division director, Yunnan Provincial Tourism Development Committee

Kunming's infrastructure, in particular transportation, started improving about three years ago with the opening of the airport.

To promote Yunnan, which is still not well-known, we are investing RMB1 million to promote Kunming and the province. We are also in discussions with TripAdvisor.

In addition, the setting up of representative offices in Chiang Mai, Luang Prabang and Siem Reap is being considered as these places attract a lot of foreigners. With the good road and air access, these are good source markets.

Destination in numbers

1.2 million

The number of overseas visitors to Kunming in 2014, a drop of 3.2 per cent from 2013

32.2 million

The passenger throughput of Kunming Changshui International Airport in 2014, an 8.6 per cent increase from the previous year

52.2 per cent

The average occupancy rate of star-rated hotels in Kunming in 2014, a drop of 0.9 per cent year-on-year

RMB280.87

The average room rate in Kunming in 2014, equivalent to US\$44.34, 0.5 per cent lower than 2013

Destination China

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 Yunnan Provincial Museum
Kunming's new museum, which opened on May 18, is located near the city's Guandu Old Town. It consists of six basic and four themed exhibitions housed in an ultra-modern building. On display are more than 10,000 items, including porcelain ware, ancient paintings and contemporary artwork.
Visitors must show valid documents to register for free admission. It is open between 09.00 and 16.30 from Tuesday to Sunday, except public holidays.

2 Wild mushroom season
Yunnan is home to more than 100 varieties of wild mushrooms and the season runs from June to November.
During this period, the Holiday Inn Kunming City Centre's Yun Yue Chinese Restaurant offers a set menu featuring dishes with four different types of wild mushrooms for RMB500 (US\$78) per person.

3 The Flying Tigers
This year marks the 70th anniversary

of the end of World War II and visitors can find out more about the history between the American Volunteer Group (AVG) – nicknamed the Flying Tigers – and the Chinese Air Force flight school in Kunming set up in 1940.
Experienced English-speaking tour guides can escort aviation and history buffs to AVG's barracks, office, hostel and club. There is also a Flying Tigers Exhibition in the Kunming City Museum.

4 Anantara Xishuangbanna
Visitors looking for a day-trip away from Kunming can enjoy a luxury experience at Anantara Xishuangbanna, about 520km south, and learn more about the Jinuo tribe with a "culture guru".
The half-day tour includes a visit to a tea plantation in Pu'er to enjoy the scenery, learn and appreciate tea culture, meet Jinuo farmers, have lunch at a Jinuo family house, forage for wild mushrooms and visit a botanical garden on the way back.



5 Holiday Inn DCEC
InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG) will open a 1,300-room Holiday Inn in 2017, in the vicinity of the Kunming Dianchi International Convention and Exhibition Center, a 30-minute drive away from the city centre.
Jim Burton, area general manager, Yunnan Cluster, said the Dianchi project, which also includes offices, residences and a theme park, will be ready in three to five years' time.



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MY WAY

How do you spend your free time?
Whenever I'm in the city (I split my time between Kunming and Hong Kong), I like being active and spend time at the gym, swim and jog. I also enjoy going to the museums, library and temples. I also like hiking. The weather is usually nice and I can enjoy Kunming's beautiful scenery.

Where do you go to have your favourite dish?
In Kunming, everyone's favourite is *guoqiao mixian*, a tasty and satisfying broth that consists of noodles, thin slices of meat, vegetables and other ingredients. I usually go to Qiao Xiang Yuan for *guoqiao mixian*. It is a popular chain with shops all over China and the nearest one is at the park entrance of Green Lake.
For an exotic experience, Zhu Li Guan is famous for Yunnan or Dian cuisine. They serve delicacies such as silkworms, bamboo worms and locusts. The restaurant is located near Green Lake.

Where would you take first-time visitors?
The Stone Forest, 90km away from the city, is a must visit for its sheer uniqueness and magnificence. The limestone formations are a sight to behold, and the scenic area is easily accessed by highway and railway.
I also like to take visitors to Western Hills, which is not only excellent for hiking but also offers scenic vistas of the western suburbs.

What Kunming specialities or souvenirs can visitors take home?
A traditional and well-known product is pu'er tea. For something more unique, visitors can buy a flower cake. Made with fresh roses, it is a Yunnan speciality and can be found in the supermarket.

Tell us something that few people know about Kunming.
Only a five-minute walk from Grand Park Kunming is the Yunnan Military Academy, a relatively well-preserved military school. Founded almost a century ago, it is now a protected cultural relic.
For nightlife, just a 10-minute walk from the hotel is Wenlin Street, a thriving dining and entertainment precinct with a melting pot of exotic restaurants, cafes and bars. From local street snacks to international cuisine, there is a lot to explore, eat and see.

Elizabeth Law
General manager,
Grand Park Kunming



TRIED & TESTED

Crowne Plaza Kunming City Centre

Despite not utilising the full gamut of facilities, **Caroline Boey** finds her stay at this refurbished hotel an enjoyable and satisfying experience

LOCATION The hotel is situated in the heart of the CBD, at the intersection of Youth and Golden roads, along the Pan-long River. It is a 30-minute ride to and from the airport in good traffic.

Leisure and business travellers will find the location ideal as it is walking distance to a wide variety of eating, shopping and entertainment choices. Guests can also walk to Metro Line No. 1 Desheng Bridge station and the Kunming Railway Station is just three kilometres away.

ROOMS The refurbished and rebranded former Bank Hotel reopened in April 2014 and features large deluxe rooms that have separate bath and shower facilities. The simple contemporary design and touches of Yunnan culture give the room a sense of place.

I appreciated the well-placed lighting, ergonomic work environment and the ability to adjust the room temperate to a comfortable level.

That night, I slid under the gentle embrace of the soft duvet, which offered perfect comfort with the thermostat set a little lower. I prefer a firmer mattress but that did not detract from the blissful sleep I had.

F&B The room service menu offers a range of Asian, Chinese and Western choices. The two Chinese meals I ordered were tasty and the sort of comfort food I enjoy.

I did not do justice to the lavish breakfast buffet spread and cooking stations at Atrium Café, which had all sinful fa-

vourites. I managed to resist them as the healthier breakfast options from the dim sum cart were equally tempting.

I did succumb on the last day and had some fried dough sticks dunked in delicious hot soya milk.



FACILITIES I regret not packing my workout gear as the fitness centre, although compact, was equipped with state-of-the-art exercise machines.

Also on the fifth floor is the outdoor swimming pool, which looked really inviting. I also regretted not taking a swimming costume with me.

SERVICE The front office and other staff I encountered were friendly and helpful, where they provided warm and hospitable service.

However, the good-natured young man who checked me in did not seem to have the mobile smarts of his generation. Nevertheless, he managed to help me top up my China SIM card.

VERDICT The stay was a memorable experience and a good home away from home, be it for leisure or business.

Name Crowne Plaza Kunming City Centre
Rates From RMB700 (US\$110)
No. of rooms 303
Contact details
Tel: (86) 871-6315-8888
Email: reservation@cpkmg.com
Website: www.crowneplaza.cn

How to sell

DO Formed by erosion over millions of years, **The Stone Forest** features many stone peaks, pillars and stalagmites rising abruptly from the ground. Go with a guide and hear the legends behind these unique formations

SEE In the vicinity of the Western Hills and scenic Dianchi Lake is the 514ha **Yunnan Nationalities Village**, which features the culture and customs of 25 ethnic minorities in static displays and live performances.

STAY **Grand Park Kunming** is a 300-room hotel located at the doorstep

of Green Lake and Kundu Square. The area is packed with pubs and bars. For those who enjoy exploring a city on foot, the hotel is a 10-minute walk to Yunnan University, which has a 100-year history and is the most prestigious university in the province. The university is also next to the Yuantong Zoo, known for its rare animal and bird species.

EAT As its name suggests, purveyors of every type of wild fungi can be found along **Guanshang Wild Mushroom Street**, about 30 minutes away by car from the city centre. The restaurants here specialise in dishes made from wild mushrooms.



Yunnan Nationalities Village



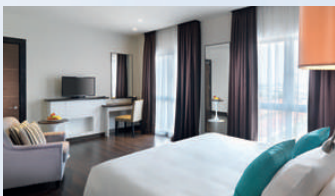
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Destination Malaysia



Malaysia's trio of shopping festivals are a good draw for Asian and Middle Eastern tourists

To leverage the love for shopping among Asians and Middle Eastern travelers, which made up 91.2 per cent of Malaysia's tourist arrivals in 2014, the government and private sector have rolled out a slew of initiatives to encourage higher visitor spending.

The chief reasons that make Malaysia a value-for-money shopping destination is the weakened ringgit against major currencies as well as a hassle-free tourist refund scheme implemented at eight international airports since April 1, 2015. There are also duty exemptions on a wide range of merchandise like jewellery, cosmetics, fragrances and computers.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture has timed three sales periods to coincide with peak travel periods in Malaysia: the week when the annual Formula 1 Petronas Malaysia Grand Prix is held in April, the Middle East summer holidays around mid-year and the year-end holiday season. These nationwide sales periods are promoted by Tourism Malaysia to overseas markets.

Noraza Yusof, head of tourism, Kuala Lumpur City Hall, said City Hall is also looking at introducing shorter sales periods that coincide with international brands to increase sale impact. This will further cement Kuala Lumpur's position as a preferred shopping destination with a strong value-for-money proposition, she added.

Travel consultants too are benefiting from the nationwide sales periods.

Adam Kamal, CEO of Rakyat Travel, has created shopping packages that coincide with the 1Malaysia GP Sale, 1Malaysia Mega Sale Carnival (July to August) and 1Malaysia Year-end Sale (mid-November to January).

He said: "Tourists from the Philippines, Indonesia and Brunei have been very receptive to these three-day, two-night packages. We offer a range of accommodation in the Bukit Bintang area and airport transfers. Those who buy our packages come here only to shop, as savings can be as much as 70 per cent off normal retail prices."

Ally Bhoonee, executive director of World Avenues, a major player in the Middle East inbound market, said: "This recognition has helped the tourism industry to promote shopping more aggressively, especially now that the weakened ringgit provides more bargains and reasons for tourists to visit Malaysia. At the same time, it brings in more revenue to the country."

To make shopping in major areas more conducive for pedestrians, Kuala Lumpur City Hall built covered walkways linking shopping malls in the Bukit Bintang area with its surrounds in late 2014. Shoppers can now walk in comfort through a 4.5km covered elevated pedestrian walkway that links Berjaya Times Square mall to Pavilion Kuala Lumpur through Sungei Wang Plaza mall.

In July, Kuala Lumpur's first outlet mall, Mitsui Outlet Park Klia Sepang, opened less than a 10-minute drive from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport and the LCC terminal Klia2. This is the second outlet mall to open in Malaysia, following Johor Premium Outlets which opened in 2011.

Conceived as a last-minute shopping venue, Mitsui Outlet Park Klia Sepang provides a free baggage storage service, where shoppers can leave their luggages while they shop. The outlet also offers a flight check-in centre which allows visitors to obtain their boarding passes, while a flight information display system allows travellers to check flight information without leaving the site.

Welcoming the debut of an outlet mall near the airport, John Chan, business consultant, Kris International Traveltours, said: "We bring tourists here as a last shopping stop prior to their departure. The offerings are a boon to travellers as it offers very good buys. It also allows them to dispose of their excess ringgit prior to departure, and this benefits the local economy."

Furthermore, overseas visitors will benefit from the Super Pass, a travel guide-cum-discount booklet. It was published in April and acts as a discount voucher book with savings of up to 70 per cent on retail, attractions and F&B.

"(The Super Pass) helps travellers to plan their holiday better before arriving in Malaysia," said Alex Wong, senior manager - global marketing at Apollo Knight.

A PARADISE FOR BARGAIN HUNTERS

Viewpoints What more can be done to promote Malaysia as a shopping destination?

Ganneesh Ramaa, manager, Luxury Tours Malaysia

We need more premium outlets as these will offer more shopping choices for tourists. We should also increase our shopping promotions to tap markets within a three-hour radius and capitalise on regional tourists looking for a weekend getaway. With good LCC connections, travel (to Malaysia) is very affordable.



John Chan, business consultant, Kris International Traveltours

Malaysia should capitalise on the halal market segment which has untapped potential and highlight products made in Malaysia such as cosmetics, food and fashion merchandise. This will enhance Malaysia's image as a top Muslim travel destination.



The weakened ringgit, a new outlet mall in Kuala Lumpur’s outskirts and year-round sales are compelling reasons for avid shoppers to visit Malaysia, writes [S Puvaneswary](#)

Destination in numbers

RM4.9 billion

The amount, equivalent to US\$1.1 billion, that foreign tourists spent on shopping in 1Q2015, an increase of 10.8 per cent from the same period in 2014

28.1 per cent

The percentage that foreign tourists spent on shopping in 1Q2015, compared with accommodation which garnered a 26.3 per cent share

RM2,700

The average per capita expenditure of foreign tourists in 1Q2015, a 3.5 per cent hike from RM2,609 during the same period in 2014

6.7 nights

The average length of stay of foreign tourists in 1Q2015, up from five nights during the same period in 2014

MY WAY

What is your interest and where do you go to pursue it?

I like jungle trekking and one of the places I go to is Gasing Hill in Petaling Jaya. I try and make it a point to visit on weekends as it provides great exercise and a good sweat. After a morning trek, I normally have a good breakfast.

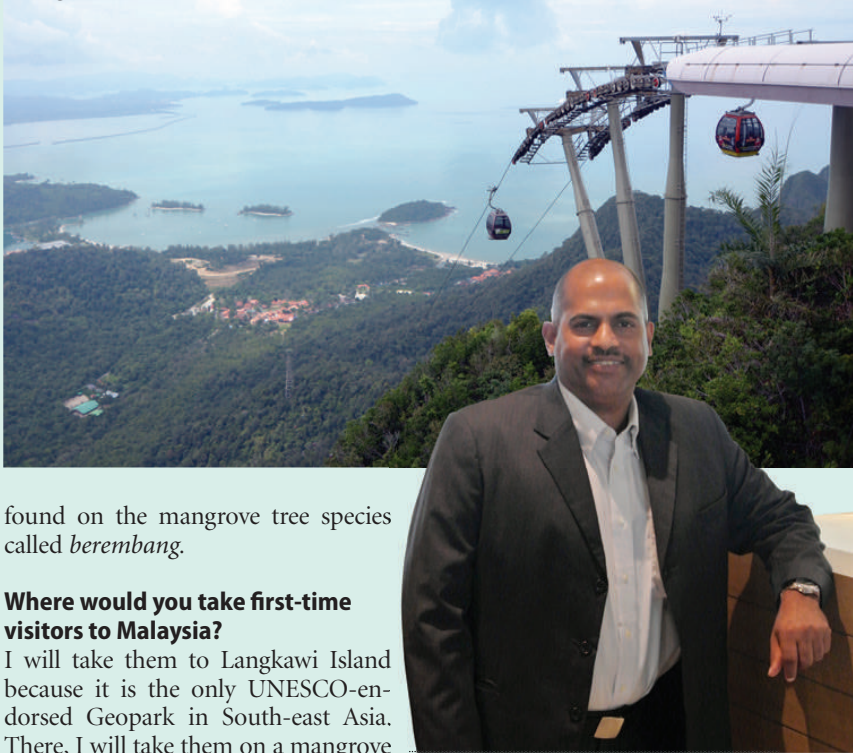
Where do you go to have a fix of your favourite local dish?

For a good *ikan bakar* (charcoal-grilled fish) selection, I will head to Jaring Restaurant at Bandar Sunway in Petaling Jaya.

Where would you recommend a day trip in Selangor?

A visit to Kuala Selangor to eat seafood and to spot fireflies along the river. A small coastal village located about an hour’s drive from Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Selangor is one of the best places to catch a glimpse of fireflies in Selangor. The fireflies are

Langkawi Cable Car



found on the mangrove tree species called *berembang*.

Where would you take first-time visitors to Malaysia?

I will take them to Langkawi Island because it is the only UNESCO-endorsed Geopark in South-east Asia. There, I will take them on a mangrove tour, explore limestone caves and secluded coves by boat. A ride on Langkawi Cable Car (known as SkyCab) is also a must.

Kumar Renoo
General manager,
Four Points by Sheraton Puchong

Discover
Kedah 2016

Many centuries before the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British arrived, Kedah Darul Aman (Abode of Peace) was already a gateway for traders across Asia. As evidenced by recent discoveries of ancient ruins in the Bujang Valley, Kedah is one of the oldest civilisations in Southeast Asia. Blessed with unique natural beauty – from mountains, rivers, jungles, paddy fields to islands of ancient myths and legends – all waiting to be explored. Rich in history, natural beauty and tradition, it’s time you discovered why Kedah is fondly known as the “Rice Bowl of Malaysia”.



Kedah
Malaysia
where it all began

www.discover-kedah.my

Destination Malaysia

How to sell

DO Located at Putrajaya's IOI City Mall, **District 21** is a 6,500m² post-apocalyptic themed action adventure park, located in an air-conditioned atrium. It comprises activities that will get visitors climbing, jumping, riding, sliding and flying. It also offers a low ropes course, a roller glider, an indoor maze, tube rides and a large trampoline field.

SEE The **Forest Research Institute of Malaysia** in Kepong, 30 minutes from Kuala Lumpur, is the largest man-made tropical forest in the world and one of the top ecotourism destinations in Malaysia. It offers various attractions such as nature trails, waterfalls, and camping and picnic sites. Visitors can walk through the six arboretums to view 15 million trees from 2,500 different species such as bamboo and fruit trees.

EAT Located at Hulu Kelang in Selangor, **Istana Bambu Restaurant** serves local, Thai and Western cuisine in a traditional bamboo village setting. Built in the middle of a paddy field, the restaurant boasts a main dining hall and individual gazebos. Most of the furniture and fixtures use bamboo, hence the name of the restaurant, which means "Bamboo Palace" when translated to English.

STAY **Avani Sepang Goldcoast Resort** features 315 villas on stilts over the Straits of Malacca. It has facilities such as an infinity pool, spa, eight F&B outlets, a grand ballroom and six function rooms. The resort is a 45-minute drive from Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 AirAsia's Kuala Lumpur-Malé flight

AirAsia will begin thrice-weekly flights from Kuala Lumpur to Malé from October 22, becoming the only airline to operate this route after Malaysia Airlines suspended its daily service to the Maldives in August.

Spencer Lee, head of commercial at AirAsia, said that the flight schedule for the Kuala Lumpur-Malé route allows travellers to connect easily via the carrier's Fly-Thru service. Destinations that offers the Fly-Thru connectivity include Osaka, Incheon, Bangkok and Penang.

2 G Hotel Kelawai

Opened in Penang in February 2015, the 208-rooms G Hotel Kelawai is located a mere two minutes walk from its sister property, G Hotel Gurney. Cross usage and signing of facilities

are available for guests staying in either property.

Both G Hotel Gurney and G Hotel Kelawai have a combined room inventory of 520 rooms, 15 function rooms, nine F&B outlets and a grand ballroom.

3 First World Hotel

Resorts World Genting's First World Hotel has added a new block of 1,286 rooms, bringing the property's total inventory to 7,351 keys to earn it the distinction of being the world's biggest hotel in the Guinness World Records.

The additional rooms in Tower 2 Annexe are equipped with separate cubicles for the shower and toilet, USB facilities and an open hanging cupboard. Another new feature is the express check-in and check-out kiosks.

4 The Andaman's Marine Life Laboratory

The Andaman, a Luxury Collection Resort, Langkawi opened its Marine Life Laboratory in June.

Serving as a research lab for marine science and biology students, it will help to increase their understanding of coral reef ecosystems and effective artificial reef management. The facility also serves as the main research lab for the resort's Artificial Reef Module System launched last year.

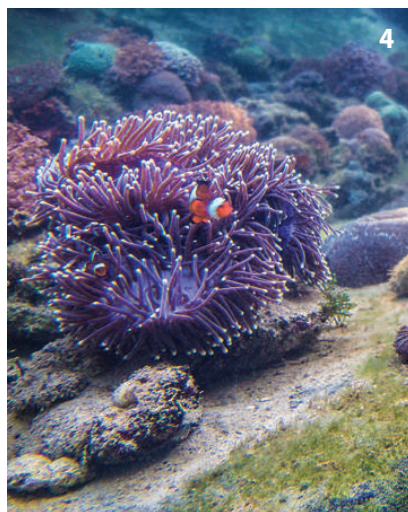
For resort guests, the laboratory offers an opportunity to learn more about marine life. Workbenches in the facility provide space for guests to have hands-on experience with coral transplanting.

5 Malaysia as a medical tourist destination

Malaysia is aiming to surpass Thailand and Singapore as the top medical tourist destination in South-east Asia by 2020.

Currently in third place in terms of number of health travellers in the region, Sherene Azura Azli, CEO of Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council, said the main challenge is the lack of awareness about Malaysia as a health tourism destination.

Plans include strengthening public partnership with all private hospitals involved in medical tourism and doing more collective marketing in key markets like the Middle East, Kazakhstan and China to promote Malaysia as a top-of-mind medical tourism destination.



TRIED & TESTED

The Saujana Hotel Kuala Lumpur

A recent refurbishment makes this 30-year-old resort the perfect staycation choice for **S Puvaneswary** to relax and recharge

LOCATION This urban resort property resides in a great location. It is accessible via the Federal Highway and the New Klang Valley Expressway. Via good roads, it is a mere five minutes' drive to Subang Skypark, 10 minutes' drive to Sunway Lagoon theme park and Sunway Pyramid shopping mall, and half-an-hour's drive to Kuala Lumpur City Centre and Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

ROOMS All the 250 guest rooms are newly refurbished. The executive deluxe room I spent a night in was very spacious and well-furnished. There were two su-

per single beds, a comfortable lounge chair and a side table. The long work table, complemented with an ergonomic chair and multimedia hub, offered plenty of space for me to work in comfort.

The 50-inch flat screen TV also doubled as a large screen where I could project pictures from my smartphone onto the set. This was easily set up after I downloaded a free app specially designed for use in this hotel. There was also an iPod docking station on the bedside table for in-room entertainment.

F&B Seven restaurants, each specialising in a different cuisine, ensure a wide array of dining options for hotel guests. The Italian restaurant, Senja, has a live band playing every night, a lounge area, a cocktail bar and a dining area.

Charcoal, a Malaysian open grill dining concept, is a new restaurant that opened last year and serves prime meats and quality seafood grilled to perfection, plus a wide selection of Peranakan cuisine. It also has a private dining area that can seat 60 people comfortably.

Kogetsu recreates the classic Japanese countryside set-up with a show kitchen in the main area, separate sushi and teppanyaki counters for alternative seating options, and three tatami rooms for private functions.

FACILITIES There were eight luxurious massage villas that offered great views of the surrounding tropical forest, and it was so quiet here it was easy to forget that one was close to the city. The masseuse was well-trained and professional.

There is also a fully equipped outdoor gym that overlooks the swimming pool. There is complimentary shuttle service to nearby malls such as Sunway Pyramid, Paradigm Mall, 1 Utama Shopping Centre and Citta Mall.

Other facilities include complimentary Wi-Fi throughout the resort and free parking – this is the only hotel I know of in Malaysia that offers free parking for all guests.

Major refurbishments of the entire property, including all rooms, meeting spaces, restaurants and open areas, were completed in June. One would never guess this property is almost 30 years old.

SERVICE This property excels in both the hardware and software aspects, with friendly staff who do their best to ensure guests are happy. Service was efficient and friendly. I was never left wanting.

VERDICT This urban resort is the perfect staycation choice.

Name The Saujana Hotel Kuala Lumpur
Rates From RM250 (US\$58) with breakfast
No. of rooms 250
Contact details
Tel: (60) 3-7843-1234
Email: info@thesaujana.com
Website: www.shr.my/the-saujana-hotel

TRIED & TESTED

Mutiara Taman Negara

A jungle stay does not equate to roughing it out, discovers [S Puvaneswary](#) who spends two nights in a cosy resort surrounded by wondrous nature

LOCATION Mutiara Taman Negara is the only resort located within Taman Negara, Malaysia's largest national park that straddles the three states of Kelantan, Pahang and Terengganu.

From Mutiara's sister property, Hotel Istana Kuala Lumpur, I took the coach which departed punctually at 09.00 for Kuala Tahan Jetty. From there, I took a short boat ride across the river and arrived at the resort at 12.30. A coach will depart from Kuala Tahan Jetty at 09.00 every day.

ROOMS It is hard to believe that the well-maintained property is 26 years old. The 4,343m² resort, including 103 chalets and

eight dormitories, was refurbished in 2013.

Despite being in a rain-forest, my chalet had a 32-inch flat screen TV with channels like BBC World News, Fox Movies and Fox Sports. The room was very spacious with two single beds, a refrigerator, a safe, a fan and an air conditioner.

But honestly, no one stays in the chalets unless it rains or to rest. Surrounded by a 130 million-year-old rainforest, there was just too much to experience during my two-night stay.

F&B Seri Mutiara Restaurant is the only restaurant. The buffet line is extensive and mainly serves local food, while the à la carte menu offers both western and local dishes. I highly recommend the barbecue and pasta stations, which are available during dinner.

For the adventurous, there are 12 floating restaurants a boat ride away, where guests can sample authentic Pahang cui-



sine cooked by locals living just outside the national park.

FACILITIES Other facilities include a ballroom that fits 200 people in a banquet setting, and can support teambuilding activities and more serious meetings held at the resort. There is also a campsite with a kitchen and toilet facilities.

At the recreation centre in the lobby, guests can book nature-based activities conducted within the national park. For instance, there is an hour-long guided night jungle walk to see nocturnal creatures. Daytime activities include a jungle trail that leads to the world's longest canopy walkway at 530m, but when the time came, I chickened out.

However, I enjoyed the visit to an aboriginal village where the Batak natives demonstrated the use of a blowpipe and

how to start a fire without matches. I also enjoyed soaking in the clear cool, cascading river at Lata Berkoh.

SERVICE It was excellent. The staff were service oriented and keen to ensure I had a wonderful experience.

VERDICT An unforgettable five-star experience in the heart of an ancient rainforest.

Name Mutiara Taman Negara
Rates From RM250 (US\$58) with breakfast
No. of rooms 103 chalets and eight dormitories
Contact details
Tel: (60) 9-266-2200
Email: saltn@mutiarahotels.com
Website: www.mutiarahotels.com/taman-negara





Style Redefined

G HOTEL KELAWAI, PENANG

G Hotel Kelawai, is where iconic design and cutting edge lifestyle set the stage for exclusive and extraordinary experiences. With 208 rooms, the hotel is uniquely inspired by innovative design to create energizing space for guest to work or play, be it day or night. Strategically located next to upscale shopping malls, renowned hawker eateries and nearby to tourist attractions, UNESCO world heritage sites and beaches, G Hotel Kelawai is the place to explore, discover and enjoy.





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WHO'S SAYING WHAT

Instagram



It was a night of glitz, glam and gold. A big congratulations to all our winners at the TtG Asia Travel Awards 2015! See you again next year!
#ITCMA2015 #TTGTravelAwards



One of many friendly hosts who can't wait to welcome delegates attending this year's ITB Asia.
#HalloweenHorrorNights #HHN5
#ResortsWorldSentosa #Univer-
salStudiosSingapore



One of the eight live cooking stations at Ritz-Carlton Millenia's newly opened buffet restaurant Colony. Be sure to try the local roasted meats and the foie gras at the station next door.
#DiningAtColony

Most commented



MALAYSIA TRIES TO REDRESS SINGAPORE ARRIVALS DECLINE

Once you get used to restaurants charging you for items you did not consume, Malaysia is a beautiful country. – Wen Liame

PHILTOA PUSHES FOR COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM

This is a great article! Community-based tourism has been around in the Philippines for many years, but it wasn't getting enough attention. It's time to push for this kind of tourism that provides direct benefits to communities. – Rowee

TRAVEL PURSUITS

QUIZ

1. What is the new name of Malaysia Airlines?
2. True or False: UNWTO is the abbreviation for United Nations World Tourism Organization?
3. Which is the odd one out – Seoul Incheon, Shanghai Hongqiao, Tokyo Narita?
4. History: What was the name of the Peninsula Group's hotel on the island of Hong Kong?
5. Outside Asia: Which country has just signed an extended agreement with China to mutually promote leisure travel?

LETALITE

A light-hearted section where we take a word, alter it by adding, cutting or changing just one letter – and giving it a new definition:

- Emidates** Arab fruit served on Mideast airline.
- Nemirates** Vietnamese dish served on Mideast airline.
- Semirates** Not-quite full-fares on Mideast airline.
- Exirates** Adult movies shown on Mideast airline.
- Enirates** Choose your fare on this Mideast airline.

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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:

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

TtG Asia Media is pleased to announce that it has set up a virtual TtG Travel Hall of Fame (www.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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10th Anniversary of Hong Kong Disneyland



As Hong Kong Disneyland embarks on its 10th Anniversary journey with a celebration of Happily Ever After, we are bringing this once in a lifetime invitation to our guests and valued trade partners to join in the Biggest Celebration Ever and create even more Happily Ever After moments.



Mickey and the Wondrous Book
The major highlight of the 10th anniversary opening in mid-November. This all-new concert-style stage show celebrates some of Disney's most loved characters and stories. Guests will follow Mickey Mouse, Goofy and Olaf into their journey inside an enchanted book packed with seven beloved Disney tales.



"Disney in the Stars" Fireworks
Be dazzled by an enhanced "Disney in the Stars" Fireworks show, made even more vibrant by cutting-edge technology and state-of-the-art video projection shown on Sleeping Beauty Castle from November onwards.



"Frozen" Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony
From mid-November onwards, join Queen Elsa and Princess Anna to celebrate Christmas while they light up the Christmas tree adorning Main Street, U.S.A.



Fairy Tale Forest
A new attraction coming to Fantasyland in December, Fairy Tale Forest will let guests walk through a winding, living storybook realm based on Disney fairy tales. Using creative landscaping, these whimsical passages will feature interactive miniature scenes from the stories.



“Disney Paint the Night” Parade
A symphony of music and color transforms the entire part into a whole new light as night falls. Immerse yourself in the spectacular view with your favorite Disney friends.



Mystic Point
Step into a museum of extraordinary encounters during your visit to Lord Henry's Mystic Manor where he keeps his precious private collection from his exploration and adventures.

FIRST OF ITS KIND



Grizzly Gulch
Immerse yourself in the bustling, quintessential western gold rush township known as Grizzly Gulch, and enjoy a thrilling expedition of your own.

FIRST OF ITS KIND



Toy Story Land
Shrink into the size of a toy and join your favorite Toy Story friends for playtime in Andy's backyard where everyone can explore this oversized world with its larger-than-life attractions.

PIONEER IN ASIA

© Mattel, Inc.



Festive Dining Indulgences

During Hong Kong Disneyland's 10th Anniversary, we have a year full of reasons for you and your guests to indulge in an extravagant dinner for the whole family or a resplendent romantic evening for two. If a banquet is not what you are seeking, we have everything you need to delight and gratify your taste buds.



Festive Gifts of Happily Ever After

The 10th Anniversary is full year round celebration with more choices of gifts than ever before. We will have an all new range of limited edition and extraordinary, co-branded items from some of the most highly regarded and demanded brands in fashion and accessories. There must be something special for you, your guests and your loved ones, to evoke a Happily Ever After moment!



Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel



Disney's Hollywood Hotel



Stay In the Midst Of Magic

You and your guests can also continue the enchantment by staying and dining at the two themed hotels just a few steps away from the park. Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel offers charming elegance and Victorian hospitality. Here you can complete your fairytale evening with lavish amenities and a variety of luxurious rooms for the most discerning princes and princesses. You can also meet your favorite Disney Characters at the Enchanted Garden Restaurant! Disney's Hollywood Hotel is the perfect resort for a California movie-star vacation. You might meet the star Chef Mickey while enjoying an international buffet in Mickey's style!

Messages to Travel Trade Partners

International Toll Free Numbers

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort continues to strive for seamless communications with our trade partners. To enhance easy accessibility for our overseas trade partners, the resort launched customized international toll free numbers in the below markets for information updates, instant hotel reservation and ticket(s) purchase for our overseas travel agents.

Country	Toll Free Number
Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore & Thailand	(800) 1830 8000
India	000-800-852-8011
Indonesia	001-803-852-8011

Operating Hours: Daily from 9am-8pm (Hong Kong Time)

Localized Website of Hong Kong Disneyland

The website of Hong Kong Disneyland has been updated in both Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Malaysia, making it easier for more countries to receive its news first-hand.

Sneak Peek of the 10th Anniversary

More than 700 guests will be invited to enjoy an exclusive sneak peek of the stage show, "Mickey and the Wondrous Book" in early November, before the official launch, and immerse into Disney magic at the resort. For more details, please contact the contracted wholesalers of Hong Kong Disneyland.

Join us for our 10th Anniversary Celebration! You and your guests can also create more of your Happily Ever After moments with advantages of the 2-Day Ticket to visit the Park twice within a 7-day period!

Travel Trade Salute Offers

To express our gratitude towards our valued trade partners, employees across designated travel trade industry sectors are welcome to enjoy exclusive early bird discount, up to 40% off, at Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel and Disney's Hollywood Hotel. There is also a 10% off on the published price of 1-Day or 2-Day Tickets from now till December 31, 2015.

Please email reservations@hongkongdisneyland.com for enquiries and room reservations. For further details, please visit www.hkdlttravelagents.com