



Longhaul demand returns

Lesser-known Asian destinations and those with improved access stand to gain

By Mimi Hudoyo and Prudence Lui

European and Canadian buyers at PATA Travel Mart 2017 are reporting growing interest among their clients for travel to Asia this year.

Increasing seat capacity to Asia, competitive airfares, the opening up of relatively new destinations in Asia, and the perception of Asia being a safe region have all contributed to the growth.

Cathay Pacific is adding flights to Brussels, Copenhagen and Dublin in 2018, while Garuda Indonesia will fly direct from Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport to London's Heathrow from October 31 and through the winter season. The latter will cut out a stopover in Singapore, and the new schedule means flights now operate on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Eric Chan, senior sales officer, Garuda, Hong Kong told *TTG Show Daily* that the new Jakarta-London direct service will shave four hours off the usual flight time.

Air Canada inaugurated a daily Montreal-Shanghai flight last February.

Qatar Airways, which links the Western markets with Doha, added a third daily flight between Doha and Bali earlier this year. Qatar Airways also boasts several connections between the Middle East and Phuket and Chiangmai.

Justa Calderon, product manager Asia of Traveltino Spain, said: "We have many possibilities for our Italian, Portuguese

and German clients to fly from Europe to Asia on the Middle Eastern airlines."

Calderon said Thailand and Vietnam are in demand.



Cadamuro: opportunities

"The safety of Asian countries, and their value-for-money appeal have fed the growing demand," she added.

Philippe Roussel, tour operator at Asie Voyages France, said he has seen a 10 to 15 per cent growth in traffic from France to South-east Asia compared to last year, and is expecting similar

growth next year.

Growing awareness of more Asian options among Canadians is the reason for Blacation to see stronger demand for this region. Mark Stiles, president and CEO of the agency, said: "In the past we know of Macau, Bangkok and Hong Kong, but not places like Danang in Vietnam, or Lombok next to Bali, like we do today."

He added that easy access from Canada to Asia through Hong Kong, Singapore and Bangkok, and onwards deeper into Asia, has enticed more Canadian travellers to come this far.

Also crediting improved airlift for Asia's renewed tourism fortunes from the longhaul markets is Umberto Cadamuro, COO inbound of Pacto, Indonesia.

"Any additional access is an opportunity for a destination," he remarked, adding that the Indonesian government's destination branding efforts are met with support from airlines that mount additional

capacity.

He commented that additional flights from the Middle East put approximately 600 seats per day to Indonesia. This allows wholesalers to better gain longhaul traffic.

Pacto's Italian market this year grew nearly 200 per cent compared to 2016, and the Spanish market rose 40 per cent.

"These two markets are last-minute travellers, which means they had to compete for air seats with the advanced bookers of Central Europe. With more air capacity coming online, Italians and Spanish can now have a chance to fly."

European travellers are not just eyeing Asia for holidays, but also for corporate incentives.

Milan-based Tripware, managing director, Daniela Linda Mengoni, who specialises in small-sized, high-end incentive programmes, said her clients are urging her to suggest Asian destination options, thus resulting in her attendance at PATA Travel Mart 2017.

"Asia is new to me, so I am here at the mart to learn more about the Philippines and Indonesia in particular," she said.

While Mengoni welcomes the additional flight options between Europe and Asia, she said airfares must first be competitive for travellers to bite.

Belle Planète France's director general, Dorin Severin, agrees, saying: "Although Cathay Pacific has many connections (to Europe), I find its airfare more expensive than other carriers like Air France and Qatar (to get to) Hong Kong and China."

M'sia's special deal for Asians

As hotels and tour operators in Malaysia rack up higher tourist receipts thanks to the competitive ringgit, they are rolling out upscale offerings targeted at Asian visitors.

Industry players note that Asian visitors are more willing to splurge.

For example, Sand & Sandals Resort & Spa, located on Desaru Beach, has seen an uptick in guests choosing larger and more plush room categories, according to its director of sales, Owen Tan.

"Our guests are also spending more in restaurants and on spa treatments," noted Tan. "We are now offering spa and water-sports packages to attract more visitors."

The resort's key markets are in Asia, including Singapore, China and Hong Kong.

Also identifying this trend, inbound tour operator Synergy Tours – which previously specialised in the European market – has developed packages specifically for Asian travellers that include shopping stops and upscale hotels.

"Asians prefer the city life and are more willing to spend on shopping, such as buying products unique to the destination," said Kan Pooi Yew, business development manager of Synergy Tours.

"Shopping is in high demand for this market."

She added: "We're not offering budget tours for the Asian market since everyone else is doing the same."

Instead, it is targeting Chinese business travellers with packages that include value-adds like transportation, guided tours and translation. – **Pamela Chow**



JOSTLING FOR A SHOT OF A MEMORABLE MORNING

PATA Travel Mart 2017 opened yesterday morning in Macau. This year's mart holds special meaning, as it is the 40th edition and the second time in under a decade that it has returned to the city of entertainment. Perhaps that's why delegates were eager to grab a shot of the momentous ceremony.

Abu Dhabi's red carpet for the Chinese

Anticipating a surge in tourism from China, Abu Dhabi is rolling out new attractions and Chinese-friendly facilities.

China posted a year-on-year growth of 55 per cent in year-to-date arrivals, to a total of 185,541 visitors.

The spike was largely sparked by Abu Dhabi's recent visa-on-arrival scheme for China passport holders, said Mubarak Rashed Al Nuaimi, director of promotion & overseas offices, Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA).

He added that PATA is a key channel that helps to "push tourism to Abu Dhabi", and that TCA is also conducting roadshows in China to promote the destination.

"Our Chinese roadshows provide information on Abu Dhabi's visa-on-arrival scheme and use of the Union Pay system – both of which are major incentives for Chinese travellers," said Mubarak.

Popular attractions for the Chinese include museums, cultural activities such as camel races, as well as family activities

on Yas Island, where the Formula 1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix is held.

The emirate will launch Louvre Abu Dhabi museum on November 11, and two more theme parks on Yas Island – Warner Brothers Abu Dhabi and Sea World.

To prepare for the Chinese influx, TCA is encouraging more local tourism players to secure the Welcome Chinese Certification (WCC), which recognises providers that can cater well to Chinese travellers.

"Many hotels and attractions in Abu Dhabi have secured WCC," said Mubarak. "This means they have Chinese speakers (on their staff), Chinese stations on their in-house TV (and) Chinese dishes on menus and buffets."

The emirate is the first destination in the Middle East and North Africa region to hold a WCC, with 22 hotels, two attractions and a luxury shopping mall having been accredited. – **Pamela Chow**



Mubarak: get accredited

News / Snapshots

More than just mountains

Destination marketing efforts to play up various appeals of Nepal

By S Puvaneswary

With Nepal already well established as a destination for trekking and mountaineering expeditions, the NTO is now moving on to promote the destination for culture, soft adventures and corporate incentives to widen its market and achieve more year-round footfalls.

Nepal Tourism Board's CEO, Deepak Raj Joshi, said: "Our aim is to promote Nepal as a very high value, unique experiential destination. We also want to grow tourist arrivals in line with the new National Tourism Strategy 2016–2025 which targets 2.52 million tourists annually by 2025."

This year, Deepak expects Nepal to breach its one-million arrival mark for the first time in the country's history.

From January to June 2017, arrivals rose by 41.5 per cent to 460,237 tourists.

Deepak said: "Tourism in Nepal has completely recovered from the earthquake of 2015. Part of the reason for the strong

growth is that tourists who had held back their holiday plans to Nepal after the earthquake were finally back this year."

In line with its new vision, Nepal Tourism Board is conducting more promotions towards niche interest groups such as bird watchers, photographers and pious Buddhists.

Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, is also attracting Buddhists from around the world who begin their religious circuit from Nepal to India.

Marketing efforts will also play up Nepal's culture, its national parks and local cuisine.

Sanjay Mathema, president at Travel World Experiences, a DMC, believes that Nepal Tourism Board is on the right track.

He said: "Nepal has always been associated with mountaineering because of Mt Everest. It is the right move to change the perception of people and to

make known other products that the destination can offer."

Travel World Experiences has seen growing interest from the silver-hair markets of Japan, the US, the UK and France. These travellers are interested in soft adventure and unique, luxurious experiences in Nepal.

Nanda Kumar, managing director, Hidden Asia Travel & Tours based in Kuala Lumpur, is also seeing keener interest in Nepal among his Malaysian corporate clients.

Kumar said: "We see clients increasingly asking for exotic destinations to incentivise their top achievers, and Nepal falls into this category. A popular activity is a helicopter tour to see Mt Everest up close and the surrounding mountains. This is symbolic, as the client's top achievers have been to the tallest mountain in the world. The sky is the limit for their future achievements."



Deepak: lofty goals

Gangwon wants more South-east Asian travellers

South Korea's Gangwon province is leveraging its host status for the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang County to sing about its winter draws at PATA Travel Mart 2018.

Kim Min Ju, assistant manager with Korea Tourism Organization's (KTO) International Tourism Cooperation Team, said Gangwon has been a popular domestic tourist destination, especially during winter when sports enthusiasts flock over.

Kim said KTO is especially keen to convey Pyeongchang County's snowy appeal to South-east Asian travellers.

"We have the great ski resorts that would interest travellers from South-east Asia. They do not need to travel to (longhaul) destinations just to enjoy winter sports," she remarked.

Gangwon is also ideal for vacations in spring and autumn, opined Kim, pointing to cherry blossoms and the changing colours of the autumn landscape as

examples.

The province also has long stretches of beaches to enjoy.

Kim said not much more tourism infrastructure was needed to be developed for it to cater as well to the international market since the province is an established leisure destination.

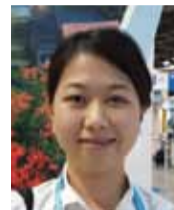
But she admitted that access was tricky.

"One of the challenges of promoting the destination is the lack of direct international flights to Pyeongchang. Travellers have to travel four hours by bus from Incheon International

Airport.

To remedy this issue, a new speed rail service operated by Korail is being built to link Incheon with Gangwon. Once operational, the speed rail service will halve overland travel duration.

"If demand for this rail service remains strong after the 2018 Winter Olympics, Korail will continue the service," she said. – Mimi Hudoyo



Kim: good for all seasons

IN BRIEF

New ships in Mekong

Mekong Kingdoms is launching a fleet of five cruise ships, including the flagship 13-suite *Bohème*, sailing between Luang Prabang and Chiang Khong/Chiang Rai.

Gypsy is a two-cabin cruiser, which takes up to four pax on

customisable journeys from Luang Prabang, while the 40m-long *Monsoon* shuttle visits temples and the Pak Ou Caves.

Play is a 42m-long "waterlino" for charter; while the last member of the fleet, *Nomad*, offers sunset cruises for two.

Pan Pac heads to Yangon

Myanmar will get its first Pan Pacific hotel when Pan Pacific Yangon opens within the Junction City integrated development on Shwedagon Pagoda Road come November.

The hotel will feature 336

rooms and suites, a ballroom and several meeting rooms, a swimming pool, spa and fitness centre, as well as F&B outlets including an all-day dining and a Cantonese restaurant. On the sixth floor is a sky lobby that looks out to the Shwedagon Pagoda.

Snowshoe tour in Tohoku

Walk Japan has unveiled the Tohoku Hot Spring Snow Tour. Tracing the footsteps of the famed poet Matsuo Basho, participants will visit a hot spring and a cliff-top temple. The first tour will run from 24 February.

Profitable connections

By Caleb Richard Lai



Orient Odyssey US's Thomas Cheng



Logitel Incentives France's Sarah-Anne Szwarcberg and Trans India Holidays India's Amit Arora



Pacto Bali's Umberto Cadamuro, TravPax Solutions Thailand's Dror Maytal and Badriya Wilaiwan, and Global Travel Trade China's Jack Chen



Spring Tour Hong Kong's Serena Zhang and Cai Wei, and Forte Hotel Group Taiwan's Benjamin Liao



Orientours Co US's Joebert Opulencia, Blackibex Mongolia's Oyunbaatar and Mongolian Tourism Association's Barsbold Baatarsuren



U Say Systems Thailand's Leny Vergara

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Abu Dhabi 

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News / Snapshots

Tourasia in driver seat at Diethelm

Swiss Asian tour operator buys into Bangkok-based Diethelm, stressing that size matters in the DMC business

By Raini Hamdi

Swiss tour operator Tourasia has emerged as a substantial shareholder of Diethelm Travel Group (DTG) with its founder/managing director (MD) Stephan Roemer taking the driver's seat at DTG as its CEO based in Bangkok, effective next week.

Lisa Fitzell, group MD of DTG, is on a garden leave till January and is no longer with the company.

The acquisition involves DTG buying into Tourasia's Blue Horizons Travel & Tours Philippines and its DMC network All Asia Exclusive (AAE), and Tourasia acquiring shares in DTG. Details of the shareholding will not be revealed; however, *TTG Show Daily* understands Tourasia has substantial equity to put it in the driver's seat of DTG.

Blue Horizons and AAE, which has offices in Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar, will

be merged into DTG, with only Blue Horizons retaining its name. DTG operates in Sri Lanka/the Maldives, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Malaysia and Singapore.

In a phone interview, Roemer said: "We believe in the DMC business. We believe that if a DMC can provide quality and added value, there's a good chance it can be successful. Our own AAE and Blue Horizons make it their priority to deliver consistent quality, and are all profitable; we hope to have similar results at Diethelm, otherwise why would we buy?"

"Another aspect is the market development over the last two to three years. Today, it's difficult if you're a small or medium-sized DMC – unless you are really niche. We believe this

move makes absolute sense as it positions us now as a strong player with more than 500 staff in 13 countries and a combined turnover of US\$90 million."

Roemer added: "Tourasia and our subsidiaries in Germany and Poland bring substantial business to Asia. The move enables us to bring our business into the vertical chain."

Asked who will take charge of Tourasia, which bills itself Switzerland's largest tour operator specialising in travel to Asia, Roemer said: "Tourasia is perfectly organised with my MDs in Germany and Poland. I will stay on as MD of Switzerland, although I have a long-serving team who have been with me for more than 10 years, some 20 years, and are highly experienced. Tourasia has a lean structure,

no big hierarchies."

Tourasia did look at many companies, he said, when asked about speculation in the industry that DTG had been struggling for a while now. "We looked into many companies but didn't find any that complemented us the way Diethelm does. We've also been dealing with DTG and are familiar with them... Not only does Diethelm have a storied name (founded in 1957), its portfolio is interesting and does not overlap with ours," said Roemer.

Roemer stressed that his first priority is not cost-cutting but to introduce his concept of quality. "It will be introduced quickly. There are already workshops within a week's time."

Roemer has nearly four decades of experience with Asia. A few industry members *TTG Show Daily* spoke to believed he's good news for Diethelm.

Said a competitor: "For

Diethelm Travel, this is good since it will have an experienced tourism professional who knows Asia inside-out as their CEO... and who should be able to get the company back on track."

Former DTG CEO, John Watson, said: "I think this move is a clever one and I am pleased to see it happen. I had the most wonderful time of my career working for Diethelm Travel and the Keller family, and feel sure that the synergies between DTG and Tourasia will pay dividends. Stephan Roemer understands the Asia tourism market very well from every angle and overall this is a smart move on both sides."

"Hopefully, the Diethelm ship will now sail out of the doldrums and make landfall in a more profitable place. The brand is still the strongest in its field and they are well placed to take advantage of the opportunities out there."



Roemer: believer in DMC business

Mild itinerary jitters ahead of King's cremation

The cremation ceremony for the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, taking place in Bangkok from October 25 to 29, is expected to see business closures and traffic disruption in central Bangkok.

DMC Destination Asia Thailand, for example, has notified partners that it will not operate its Royal Palace and City and Temple tours over the period.

Bob Daniel, manager – product development, individual and group tours at the New South Wales-based Guidepost, said: "We are wary of October

26, as we expect many businesses in Bangkok especially to be closed. We will (try to) avoid Bangkok on this day."

The agency will be relying on partners in Bangkok to advise on any disruption that may warrant itinerary adjustments, Daniel said.

However, other buyers interviewed at PATA Travel Mart 2017 were doubtful that travellers will be deterred from visiting, while being mindful about conveying the solemnity of the occasion to clients.

Malinee Nitikaset Sunthorn, director, the Americas division, Tourism Authority of Thailand, stressed: "Thailand will be open to all tourists during the five day period. There is a misconception...that foreign tourists (have) to wear black during the period."

John Ching, COO of Singapore-based Albatross World, added that the ceremony may even bring tourists with special interests and Thai expatriates living in Singapore to Bangkok. – **S Puvaneswary**

■ HOT LEADS

Fresh adventure products wanted

Singapore-based Chan's World Holidays, retail travel department, is looking for new adventure products like safaris. Although 40 per cent of its business is focused on unusual tour ideas, its search is not limited to new destinations, as the company believes traditional ones like Hong Kong and Indonesia may also have fresh products to offer.

Email: betty_moh@chanbrothers.com.sg

NSW agent seeks tour operators in exotic locales

Bob Daniel, manager, product development for individual & group tours of New South Wales-based Guidepost, is seeking local tour operators in off-the-beaten-track destinations such as Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Tibet, Myanmar and the Mekong Region.

Email: bob@guidepost-travel.com

PTM kicks off with a bang

By Caleb Richard Lai



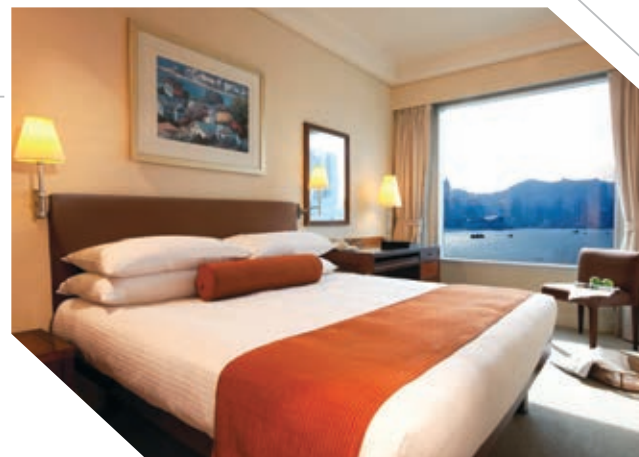
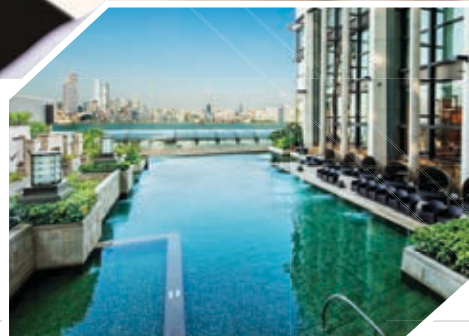
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Issues and Trends

Making the best of the local community

In this special report, PATA's Strategic Intelligence Centre discusses the importance of upholding community based tourism to benefit host countries and local communities

The essence of travel for many is to explore, enlighten and engage with other cultures and lifestyles from around the globe. Community based tourism (CBT) is an ideal way to share cultures in an authentic manner and bring an array of benefits to the host country and community. It helps differentiate a destination, retain and strengthen ethnic cultures, and disperse tourism economic development to regions that may not normally benefit from tourist activity.

A key differentiating characteristic of CBT is that the community is deeply involved in the development and delivery of the tourist experience. When CBT is conducted well, the result is enrichment for all.

What effective CBT can do

- Supports local economic development through diversification of employment
- Is financially viable
- Respects and encourages equitable participation of local community
- Is ecologically sustainable and minimizes impact upon the environment
- Conserves and promotes living cultural heritage and welfare
- Educates visitors about culture and nature
- Demonstrates good management practices
- Ensures a safe, quality experience for all

Authentic and unique experiences

CBT offers an opportunity for travellers to experience cultures in an authentic way. Visitors are provided a glimpse into the daily lives of the people in the community. In some cases the glimpse leads to deeper involvement – resulting in a true and genuine sharing of perspectives and practices between the host and the guest.

Communities often recognise the value of their culture to themselves, but not necessarily to others. There are practices and assets they value but these are, after all, just the way in which they conduct their daily lives. To begin sharing their culture, they need to evaluate it in terms of value to themselves and to others. Effectively, they must understand their cultural capital, the value of their cultural asset, and how they wish to share and/or commercialise it. The community must act as stewards and entrepreneurs of their culture and this takes special skills, procedures and guidance to achieve.

Asset mapping is one method that can help the community to recognise and mobilise existing assets. By doing this they can understand and document how their culture has changed over time, and form actions to strengthen it and/or help with interpretation of their culture to visitors. By carefully identifying all elements of the community experience, they can craft a vision for tourism development and understand the limits or thresholds of change that are acceptable. The outcome will be unique and sustainable tourist experiences.

Challenges to creating unique and authentic community based tourism experiences

- Understanding and researching what is genuine and true, and understanding limits of commercialisation to ensure authenticity is maintained
- Identifying the right tourism operators to work who that will respect and recognise the importance of community values and needs
- Recognising the asset value of culture and how to optimise economic benefits for the community
- Differentiating CBT products of one community from another by understanding what is unique, rare, and real

Approaches to creating unique and authentic community based tourism experiences:

- Taking time to develop CBT within the community so that culture and lifestyle is shared appropriately and consistent, quality experiences are achieved
- Helping communities to understand the tourist experience so that they know how to share and relate to tourists and their needs and wants
- Utilising asset mapping as a means to identify community character, differentiate CBT product, and determine what cultural and heritage assets the community wishes to share
- Establishing relationships with appropriate operators that understand the wants and values of the community
- Establishing understandings of cultural capital and cultural expression parameters for the community so that they feel positive about what they share and how they share their culture

A partnership based approach

The success of CBT hinges on effective partnerships and cooperation among all stakeholders. These include the community itself, tour operators (from outside the community), government agencies at local and national levels, and non-governmental organisations embracing key areas such as advocacy, education and aid. Prime issues of ownership, jurisdiction and control arise in the discussion of community based tourism as each stakeholder figures out what their responsibility and opportunities are as CBT unfolds.

For the community, their livelihoods and the things that they value are at stake. For tourism operators, there may be a unique business proposition and business partnerships need to be formed. For government, there may be a social and economic development and stewardship responsibility, and for NGO's there may be a specific environmental or cultural issue or a partnership possibility with mutual and wider benefits.

Stakeholders need to work together with respect and try to evaluate the interdependency that exists in their mutual objectives.

Requirements of a strong partnership:

- Making CBT truly integrative across all levels of government where support is required so that the support is delivered appropriately and consistently
- Educating locals and local government about CBT as they need to understand what it is and how to support it rather than just being directed to develop it from higher levels of government
- Sharing knowledge (such as customs and heritage) among partners at all levels, and ensuring knowledge is being received and treated with integrity and trust
- Taking time to build relationships among all stakeholders
- Open perspectives to the value that each participant brings to the process of CBT development, such as cultural or financial capital, technical or customary expertise, and other forms of knowledge and investment

Approaches to establish a strong partnership:

- Consultation based on respect to understand values which takes building capacity of locals and local government together so that an understanding of needs, values and objectives are achieved together
- Educating everyone within the community – children to elders - about tourism
- Establishing partnerships where training is integrated with business
- Potentially assisting/supporting development of regional tourism training centres to help develop capacity for many communities and where community members can learn from each other
- When possible, and when skills in communities have been generated, facilitating peer-to-peer community training
- Preparing and committing to an agreement to ensure that all stakeholders are on-side and working toward the same collective goals

Case in point: PATA Foundation

Since its inception in 1984, the PATA Foundation has been a champion of environmental and cultural heritage preservation as it relates to travel and tourism development.

It has supported over 132 community projects and donated US\$1.3 million to projects and scholarships in over 38 countries. These have included a wide array of topics such as wildlife and habitat protection, waste management artefact and culture site restoration, youth employment programmes, and assisting villages transition their economies to tourism.

Over the last five years, the PATA Foundation has been involved in a partnership based approach to assist community based tourism in the villages of Northern Vietnam. A key goal was to help communities in the Sapa region transition their economies to tourism as ever increasing numbers of visitors arrived in the region.

From initial positive results the Foundation committed to a long-term effort to help make this a shining example of sustainable tourism. It worked. Local villagers, local and regional government officials, local and national tourism operators, Vietnamese and Canadian educators and students, all pitched in with the financial support of an organisation representing thousands of industry members. The key to this was trust and commitment from all involved. The outcome was employment for women and families, many small business enterprises, and strong and positive working relationships among all stakeholders.

www.patafoundation.org



Support entrepreneurship and sustainability

Successful CBT development requires commitment, patience, and a careful balance on fiscal funding timelines. A end goal for organisations providing support to communities is for the community to become self-supporting and sustainable.

A key skill to develop in the community is the capacity to build effective and well operated businesses. This is important for many reasons. It generates knowledge and skills to adapt to changing economic conditions and changing market opportunities. It also builds independence for the community. Small business enterprise development skills need to be formed, whether for creating an artisan shop or building a homestay, hotel or resort. Social entrepreneurship knowledge and skills should also be generated to help utilise cultural capital and distribute benefits on various community enterprises such interpretative centres, community markets, or community events and festivals.

Communities will become sustainable only once they have developed quality business services and generated B2B partnerships with appropriate operators that share the same values and objectives as themselves.

It is important to recognise that community members may themselves have limited experience of what tourists want and how to work with operators that will bring visitors to their communities. This network can therefore be an important part of generating truly sustainable CBT, especially in remote areas. This may involve familiarisation trips and visits of the community themselves to the places where tourists originate from such as gateway cities or communities that are part of a broader CBT regional network.

Due to the wide array of stakeholders involved in CBT, it can be valuable to craft a general agreement among stakeholders that is not necessarily binding but at least sets out expectations and aims. A statement of intent can be a good way of doing this. It clarifies matters such as what will make tourism successful for the inbound operator and the community business owners, how benefits are going to be distributed, how communications are going to be managed, and how quality is going to be maintained. This can be an important ingredient of building trust and long-time positive relationships among all involved.

Capacity building for CBT success

It is essential to build skills and knowledge of local people when creating community based tourism. This can be immensely rewarding as the process of teaching builds a bond between the community and those delivering and supporting the training, including governments, NGOs, foundations and private citizens.

CBT training may need to start from very fundamental levels such as hygiene, food preparation and sleeping conditions before progressing towards more complex matters such as business development, environmental stewardship, community co-management and risk assessment.

Specific skills will need to be developed and an essential one is the ability to develop and manage productive and mutually beneficial B2B partnerships. This is often a final aspect of a training programme, but it is also a key point for independence and sustainability where the community can operate successfully without external assistance.

CBT training can include the following:

- Engaging locals in the design process of a cultural handicraft workshop and then having locals test and offer a workshop with volunteer participants
- Role-playing exercises within the community where locals act as tourists to understand the visitor experience
- Developing workbooks that make sense and are highly functional to locals. These may include simple illustrations that align with traditional knowledge and ways of knowing
- Practicing business pitches to prepare local small business owners to visit and pitch their products and business to potential partners in the city
- Having members of the local community travel to a nearby community or city already offering CBT experiences so that they may learn what it is like to be a tourist

Identifying communities suited for CBT

- ✓ Are the natural and cultural resources of the community distinctive or of notable quality?
- ✓ Are the people of the community interested in developing tourism and welcoming guests?
- ✓ Are all stakeholders willing to work constructively together and willing to commit time to the relationship that is necessary?
- ✓ Is the long-term vision for tourism in the country or region compatible with the unique characteristics and requirements of community based tourism?
- ✓ Are there resources to support the development of tourism in a sustainable way?
- ✓ Is the community accessible to markets that are interested in this type of tourist experience?
- ✓ Will the product be authentic?
- ✓ Can all parties act with integrity and build trust over the long term?
- ✓ Are there champions within the community to carry the momentum forward?
- ✓ Will the community have the ability to become independent with strong B2B relations within the tourism sector?

Case in point: Taphin village, Sapa, Lao Cai, Vietnam

Taphin village is a small village located approximately six miles from the town of Sapa, Lao Cai, Vietnam. The village is home to the Red Dao ethnic minority who has lived in the area for over 400 years.

When Capilano University and Hanoi Open University were first invited into Taphin in 2002, Sapa was emerging as a destination and few visitors were coming to the remote, ethnic minority villages. The initial challenge was to help locals understand what tourism was, what the perspectives of the visitors were, and to help build skills in a culture based solely on subsistence agriculture and minor trade. The only way to achieve this was through exceptionally high levels of consultation, community engagement and relationship building.

In the villages, the project's programmes began with community workshops to teach basic tourism skills and expand these to entrepreneurship and planning. These involved conversation, scenarios, role-playing and case studies. With the community, training partners and local tourism stakeholders worked to improve sanitation, create new community tourism products such as a temporary market, walking circuits and homestays, create business plans, enact community organisations and help to run community clean-up days. Formal workshops were facilitated to increase knowledge in planning, business development and to improve visitor experiences.

To build lasting, sustainable B2B relationships, the training partners facilitated familiarisation trips to the village with members of the Vietnam Responsible Tourism Association. They also arranged trips for local residents, many of whom had never left their villages, to Hanoi to present their CBT products and businesses to local and international private sector tourism companies.

These transformative experiences have led to enhanced understanding of product development, multiple partnership agreements, fair and equitable pricing, preservation of culture, and village improvement strategies. To date, over 500 people have been involved in the training.

Preservation of cultural heritage has been a critical focus of the project. First, local language has been integrated in the training modules. This has been particularly important in relation to interpretation and guiding, food, celebrations and entertainment such as singing and art. Taphin village continues to strive to create an authentic experience for visitors through the design of homestays, food services, indigenous health/wellness products such as herbal baths and hands-on handicraft activities. All visitors have left enlightened and enriched.

As a result of the project there are now new trekking routes offering a cultural overnight experience to Taphin village. Local guides have been trained and are gainfully employed by several local tour operators. Over 25 Taphin homestays owned and operated by local individuals are supplying accommodation and offering visitors a cultural experience. Individuals who have engaged in CBT activities have generated approximately four times their yearly income/revenues.

The Taphin community has since shared knowledge about CBT and tourism development with neighbouring communities and have become champions of positive change and sustainable community tourism.



The project received the PATA Grand Award for Education and Training (2014), Wild Asia Responsible Tourism Award for Most Inspiring Tourism Initiative (Finalist, 2015), UNEP and RPSC Tourism InSPIRE Award (Honourable Mention, 2015), and the SKAL International Sustainable Tourism Award (2016). www.cbtvietnam.com.

About the authors:

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He holds a PhD in tourism network and destination development and has taught in a wide array business, tourism, and adventure management fields in universities in Canada, New Zealand, the US and Austria. He has completed over 50 tourism projects around the globe with emphasis on product development, sustainability, and destination management, and he has presented on tourism related topics at conferences and forums in various countries worldwide.

Chris Carnovale

Chris Carnovale is an educator in Capilano University's Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Management Programs and teaches courses in sustainability, cross cultural communications, as well as cultural and heritage tourism planning. Most recently, he has managed the internationally recognised, PATA Foundation funded, Vietnam Tourism Training Project.

Issues and Trends

Big data with a personal touch



In the age of Internet of Things, is data the holy grail for travel companies to win the personalisation war? [Xinyi Liang-Pholsena](#) finds out where the industry stands in using data, its struggles and what the future might hold

With rapid advancement in digital and mobile technology, more travel companies are awakening to the massive potential of using data to unlock possibilities in providing seamless, personalised customer experience.

Those who are able to leverage millions of travel data points will possess a “huge competitive advantage”, Hotelbeds’ managing director Carlos Muñoz told *TTG Show Daily* in a one-on-one interview during its MarketHub Asia event in Bangkok in May. Having access to such information will allow companies to manipulate the “emotional” aspects of travellers by shaping their customer behaviour and maximising their spending potential, he noted.

Earlier at the WTTC Global Summit in Bangkok in April, AirAsia CEO Tony Fernandes also played up the importance of data in the travel and tourism sector.

“The data explosion will decrease cost and increase revenue, and gives fantastic opportunities for airlines. That excites me tremendously,” he enthused.

But for travel to be personalised down to the individual level, data insights have to go beyond their current use and adaptation.

Even for Hotelbeds, a global bedbank with more than 136,000 hotels worldwide, Muñoz still sees significant gaps in harnessing the sheer volume of data available.

“Our clients have given us huge amount of data,” he shared. “We are using only five per cent of this data so there is a lot of improvement.”

Albert Pozo, president, Amadeus Asia-Pacific, added: “Data on its own will mean very little. We’ll also need systems that are clever and agile enough to integrate them and make sense of them – turning them into immediate, actionable insights... I think we’re only at the early stages of what could be a fully interconnected industry.”

The ability of data to transform the travel industry cannot be understated, although Pozo stressed that “it is not data itself that is the holy grail – but the analytical capabilities and technology we layer on top of it, and how well it is integrated into business processes. The possibilities are endless”.

Swimming in a sea of data

Bangkok-based DMC Asian Trails has also caught up in the data riptide, having taken advantage of information on the behaviour of clients and consumers to form its marketing and business strategies.

E-commerce and marketing manager Niels Steeman told *TTG Show Daily*: “Asian Trails regularly uses analytic sources on our digital marketing channels, Google Analytics and other online applications to seek out trends and our success rate online. I believe that the availability of such data becomes an even more crucial part of the travel business.”

He added: “Looking back barely a decade ago when statistics were hardly available, we are now able to see the response of those showing interest in our products and how they read this. This mainly has been a positive feat with the shift from off

to online marketing channels and the ongoing development in the analytics part.”

The digital revolution, however, also brings with it an explosive surge in the variety and quantity of data available, so much so that Steeman dubbed data analysis “a time-consuming and a speciality field”.

He elaborated: “The amount of data available is simply overwhelming and one cannot go and invest into additional resources unless you have a clear image of what you’re after.”

Trying to make sense of data is hardly unique to Asian Trails; even large OTA players like Rakuten Travel, one of the biggest hotel reservation websites in Japan, also see hurdles in effective data utilisation.

Said Hirofumi Haraguchi, vice manager, business strategy group at the OTA’s international sales department: “Data is very important for Rakuten, as we have a huge e-commerce marketplace in Japan with over 80 businesses in our portfolio. However, customer demands are very diversified today so we need to use data better. We’re not maximising the use of data yet, and finding skilled personnel to manipulate data into meaningful insights is a challenge.”

Noel Swain, COO of Ezeego1, deemed

It is not data itself that is the holy grail – but the analytical capabilities and technology we layer on top of it, and how well it is integrated into business processes. The possibilities are endless.

Albert Pozo
President, Amadeus Asia-Pacific

data analytics a “learning process” for the India-based OTA, which has put in place associates across various departments instead of a specific team to build a more complete insights picture.

But “the overload of data is quite real” and the challenge lies in figuring which of the immense data Ezeego receives to use, added Swain, but he foresees the company will get better at parsing information into useful insights in future.

Some industry players also share that current data insights are better catered to the B2C travel market, as B2B players still grapple with gleaning meaning from the vast sea of information available.

For B2B OTA Aviation Services Mongolia, currently in the early stages of developing a data analytics strategy, the uphill task lies in getting information from its agents about their end-consumers, according to CEO Margad Byambajav.

If unstructured sources of customer data could be better leveraged for his portal, he foresees being able to help agents narrow down hotel choices in a destination to offer more targeted and personal-

ised recommendations for their clients.

It’s a similar story for Asian Trails, as Steeman sees data analytics “remaining very much focused on B2C/B2B2C channels than B2B channels”. Learning how to interpret available data and actively turn them into actionable insights and strategies may be the biggest challenges for DMCs, he opined.

Not big but smart data

No one will be able to capture and analyse data from the future, but predictive analytics – i.e. applying the right statistical models to gain insights and find patterns in a vast amount of data – is getting the attention of more big data specialists and travel businesses alike.

Hotelbeds’ sales director Sam Turner spotlighted the accelerating pace of change in the digital world today. “By 2020 the world will produce 40 zettabytes, up from 0.1 zettabytes in 2001, a 400 times difference. It’s not the size (of data) but what you do with it,” he said, adding that the effective data analytics can improve profitability for companies. “The analytics journey in the new world is going to be the prescriptive way, instead of descriptive.”

Echoing Turner’s view, Hotelbeds’ marketing & communications director Gareth Matthews added that predictive analytics has many potential applications in the travel industry, such as making airport delay predictions by combining weather, flight and traveller information.

But the current biggest hurdle to personalised service for companies lies in the lack of resources connecting different data sets, say, between a user’s frequent flyer programme and social media profile, pointed out Ming Foong, managing director Greater China & online business group, Asia-Pacific at Travelport.

Looking ahead, merging predictive analytics with artificial intelligence (AI) and matching learning capabilities appear to excite many trade players and industry watchers.

Amadeus’ Pozo elaborated: “Combined with AI, travel companies can use data analytics to create highly-tailored offers based on customers’ needs and preferences. Past behaviours can obviously feed AI computers to predict future purchase actions. But deep learning algorithms can help travel companies make the most out of their customer’s online activities... AI will also bring customised suggestions during the trip based on a traveller’s profile, location, time, and many other parameters and data that algorithms will process. This will take us into the future of ultra-personalisation.”

At the same time, Pozo insisted on maintaining a careful balance against rising privacy concerns in the pursuit of getting more information from travellers.

“Some boundaries must be maintained and at all times we must respect and protect personal data and the need for privacy. If we take this for granted we risk losing the trust of customers. And above and beyond adhering to legislation, travel players must also be able to articulate ‘what’s the value?’ for getting travellers to share their data,” he cautioned.

But Steve Saxon, partner, McKinsey & Company, reminded the industry not to lose sight of people – the critical factor that determines the success of data utilisation. “We need to think not just about data but how to embed data within the company culture,” he said.

“The power of the people is more important than the power of data,” Saxon concluded.

Destination Hong Kong

Varying expectations

The arrivals uptick in 1H2017 is not benefitting the trade equally, finds **Prudence Lui**



Visitor arrivals to Hong Kong are on the rebound in 1H2017

The year 2017 looks set to be a rosy one for Hong Kong, as arrivals so far this year have outperformed recent years.

In the first five months of 2017, both China and international markets posted a steady growth in visitor arrivals to Hong Kong. Total visitor arrivals from January to May increased 3.2 per cent to 23.6 million, while overnight visitor arrivals during the same period grew 5.7 per cent to 11 million.

Several shorthaul markets also recorded double-digit growth in visitor arrivals – the Philippines (16.8 per cent), Japan (16.7 per cent), Indonesia (10.8 per cent) and South Korea (10.7 per cent).

As well, the ongoing political conflict between China and South Korea, which saw many Chinese agents removing South Korea from their tour itineraries, might have indirectly benefited Hong Kong. In March, visitor arrivals from China to Korea plunged 40 per cent year-on-year while Hong Kong recorded a 25.1 per cent growth.

The uptick in visitor arrivals has Hong Kong's hospitality sector expectant of a good year in 2017.

Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees, general manager, Christina Cheng, said: "We expect positive growth, especially for the summer season and the last quarter of this year. HKTB's figures show good in-

Destination in numbers

22.8%

The percentage growth in overnight visitor arrivals between January and May 2017 from Japan, the highest among source markets, followed by Indonesia (+17.4 per cent) and the Philippines (+13.8 per cent)

23.6 million

The total visitor arrivals to Hong Kong from January to May in 2017, a 3.2 per cent increase from 2016

77,555

Hong Kong's hotel room supply as of May 2017, which is expected to grow to 85,000 in 2019

crement of arrivals from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China in 1H2017, and these are also our key markets."

The hotel's occupancy and average rates in 1H2017 rose by two per cent and 10 per cent respectively year-on-year, she revealed.

Likewise, Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong is seeing a strong 2017 so far, outpacing its 2016 performance, said general manager and regional vice president, Christoph Schmidinger.

"We anticipate 2H2017 to be strong. In addition to the positive booking pace, I have observed a general sentiment of optimism in the business community which should bode well for upcoming business travel... We are currently fine-tuning a proposal for an extensive renovation plan of the hotel to stay ahead of the competition," he added.

On the other hand, it's becoming an uphill battle for traditional agencies to compete with the growing sway of OTAs despite the arrivals rebound.

Viewpoints

What's needed for Hong Kong to reach its full tourism potential?

Christoph Schmidinger

General manager and regional vice president, Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong



From a leisure perspective, Hong Kong should diversify events and attractions to drive more consistent inbound traffic. Whether hosting major sporting events or enhancing the existing amusement parks, there are many opportunities to expand the year-round appeal of Hong Kong as a destination for culture and entertainment.

Michael Wu

Managing director, Gray Line Tours of Hong Kong



The government should have continuous promotion to remind people about Hong Kong. Instead of using a single attraction to draw crowds, this should include more diversified mega events like international marathons or e-sports festivals. The travel trade should also roll out versatile products like walking and hiking tours, other than the traditional island tours that many repeat visitors have experienced.

Gray Line Tours of Hong Kong, managing director, Michael Wu, said: "We have received fewer bookings as travel patterns have shifted to FITs in recent years. Though a three to five per cent increase in arrivals is projected for 2H2017, I expect a drop of two to three per cent in terms of income."

A Hong Kong Tourism Board spokesman said the NTO will continue to work closely with the travel trade to attract more overnight visitors and promote business growth by undertaking promotion initiatives locally and with its source markets. This is to maintain Hong Kong's long-term competitive edge and uphold its image as a preferred travel destination.

Hot and new

Tsukiji Yamataka Seafood Market

The 1,022m² market opened in November 2016 to boast fresh seafood and sashimi from the historical market in Tokyo and seasonal ingredients from around the world.

The venue comprises different dining experiences, including the standing sushi and seafood bar with the Victoria Harbour as backdrop as well as the Donburi (sashimi bowl rice) & Hamayaki (barbecue) areas.

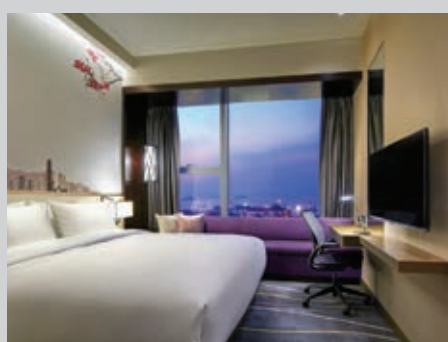


Tuna cutting show at Tsukiji Yamataka Seafood Market; Hilton Garden Inn Hong Kong

Patrons can also watch the fresh tuna cutting show at certain hours while savouring the fresh cuts.

Pentahotel Tuen Mun

Pentahotel Tuen Mun has opened its door in July, joining its sister pentahotel Kowloon. Converted from a former industrial high-rise building, the 298-room hotel now sports a contemporary rustic decor that blends with lo-



cal cultural references. The property is located a stone's throw from Tuen Mun MTR and West Rail Terminal Station.

Hilton Garden Inn Hong Kong

The 258-room Hilton Garden Inn Hong Kong Mongkok opened its doors in December 2016. Facilities include a rooftop swimming pool, 24-hour fitness centre, self-service laundry room, restaurant, bar, business centre and a 400m² ballroom.

Crystal Bus

Launched in March, the Crystal Bus pioneered the concept of serving Michelin-star culinary experience on wheels. The spacious upper deck can accommodate 28 pax while the lower VIP deck caters to a maximum of 10 guests.

In addition to two regular day-time departures, a new dinner tour and night drink tour was launched in August 2017. The 2.5-hour dinner tour departs at 19.00 to cover 26 spots



Crystal Bus

in Kowloon and Hong Kong Island whereas the night drink tour runs from 22.00 to 23.15 and travels along Nathan Road, Mongkok and Tsim Sha Tsui Waterfront Midway.

Aqua Luna II

The 80-seat *Aqua Luna II* is a Chinese junk boat launched in April, boasting blue-and-white Ming Dynasty dragon sails. It offers regular day cruises to Stanley on Hong Kong Island's south side every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday while the Lamma Day Tour runs every Wednesday.

Destination Indonesia

Big reasons to cheer

Viewpoints

Prized origin markets like China, Russia and India record double-digit growth, reports **Mimi Hudoyo**

Indonesia's tourism is on track to reach 15 million arrivals this year, after January-May numbers (the latest available at press time) grew 20 per cent year-on-year to hit 5.36 million, surpassing the tourism ministry's five-month target of 4.8 million.

Arief Yahya, Indonesia's tourism minister, said: "This is the second highest growth rate in ASEAN countries after Vietnam, which grew by 24 per cent."

He expected higher arrivals in June and July, both traditional peak seasons.

Moreover, following the aggressive *Wonderful Indonesia* campaign in the last couple of years, the Ministry of Tourism has put selling among its top priorities this year.

The government is leading greater participation at trade shows, sales missions and fairs overseas. Internally, it is pushing for more airline seat capacity growth.



Pura Besakih temple, Bali, Indonesia

Such efforts have reaped double-digit growth from target markets. Among the major markets, the biggest arrival growth in the first five months came from Russia (62 per cent) followed by China (45 per cent), Qatar (26 per cent) and India (21 per cent).

Look Asia Holidays Bali, a major player in the Russian market, has seen the market grow since mid-2016, a trend that has become more pronounced this year. Its managing director Tanto Ruwiyadi said: "The rouble has stabilised and people have started to travel again. Secondly, Turkey's coup d'etat attempt last year has seen travellers diverting their trips to other destinations, (including) Bali."

He said while travellers were looking for cheaper accommodation options in Bali last year, the market was back to picking upper-upscale properties such as The St Regis, The Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons brands this year. "They seem to be more confident in spending now."

The China market has been showing strong growth since Indonesia's aggressive in-market promotions and granting of visa-free facilities.

While Bali continues to be the primary destination for the Chinese, travellers

have been combining Bali with Manado since last year and have started eyeing Medan, Bintan and Belitung as well.

Meanwhile, seat capacity continues to increase between Indonesia and China to support growing demand. Garuda Indonesia launched four-weekly flights between Denpasar and Chengdu last May. Its LCC sister, Citilink, will fly 13 charter services from Chongqing and Kunming to Tanjung Pinang, the capital of Bintan, between July 22 and August 21.

Teddy Rezadiansyah, senior manager charter business and operations of Citilink said charter passengers are allowed to enter visa-free.

As for India, the market has been growing steadily in the last couple of years despite the lack of direct services. The Ministry of Tourism has been stepping up promotions in the country following a visa waiver for Indian passport holders, coupled with promotions by industry players such as PACTO, which brings hoteliers and attractions to table tops in a number of cities in India.

Indian arrivals are expected to continue growing with the launch of four-times-weekly AirAsia X services between Bali and Mumbai via Kuala Lumpur last May and the Batik Air daily service be-

What is needed for Indonesia to reach its full potential in tourism?

Umberto Cadamuro

COO Inbound,
PACTO



With arrivals now seeing a stable growth pattern, I would like to see marketing focus shift to origin countries with long average stay, so as to optimise the (strained) seat capacity. And by welcoming full service carriers such as Etihad Airways and Oman Air to Bali, we can attract higher spenders.

Koen Ruisch

Country manager
Indonesia,
Happy Trails Asia



We have seen steady growth in tourist numbers. Sumatra and Flores are especially gaining popularity in German and UK markets. The better flight connectivity to Bali, as well as the increased domestic services around the country have opened new possibilities.

I believe a lot is already being done. The ministry has a large focus on promoting Indonesia in collaboration with various stakeholders. This makes a successful formula which we are happy to be a part of.

Destination in numbers

7.2 million

The international passenger movement through Soukarno-Hatta International Airport in the first six months of the year, a 14.3 per cent year-on-year increase, according to Angkasa Pura II (AP II) data

14%

The percentage increase in international arrivals to Indonesia's 19 main gateways between January and May 2017, according to Ministry of Tourism data. The total number was 5.3 million, compared to 4.7 million in the same period last year

Hot and new

Four Seasons Resort Bali

Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay was re-launched last June, following a two-year renovation programme.

The 147 pool villas now feature new landscaping, interiors, furniture, electronics, thatched-roof and wooden flooring.

Deluxe and Premier guestrooms are 50 per cent bigger, with additional living space,

bigger plunge pools and in the Family Premier Villas, an extra children's bedroom. Imperial Villas also offer an ocean-edge venue for private celebrations for up to 80 pax.

Plataran Heritage Borobudur – Hotel & Convention Center

The 75-room property soft opened barely 3km from Borobudur Temple, featuring a restaurant serving Indonesia and international cuisine, a spa, The Heritage Convention Center with 500 seats plus several meeting rooms.

The hotel also offers activities such as horseback riding, yoga, cycling and village tour.

Spice by Chris Salans, Bali

The Chris Salans Group has opened its third Spice by Chris Salans in Seminyak, Bali.

With a dining concept revolving around sharing plates and drink pairings, the gastro-bar serves drinks and cuisine based on the

Indonesia's roots, herbs, and spices.

Celebrity chef Chris Salan's cuisine combine Indonesia flavours with French techniques made famous by his flagship Mozaic Restaurant Gastronomique in Ubud.

Signature dishes include crispy pork belly with turmeric and *dukkah*; *bangkuang* dumplings; tapioca root fries; and slipper lobster with curry-leaf butter and tempé.

The Jakarta Aquarium

The Taman Safari Group Indonesia opened the latest attraction in the city in the newest Agung Podomoro Land leisure district, Neo Soho in West Jakarta.

The aquarium showcases marine life and petit fauna such as the exotic leopard whip ray, giant pacific octopus, black-tip reef shark, and coconut crab.

Also featured are a penguin themed restaurant and an underwater performance inspired by Indonesian folklore directed by Peter Wilson.



Harris Convention Hall

Harris Convention Hall Summarecon Bekasi

Located in the New Modern City Summarecon Bekasi mixed-use development, the stand-alone hall in July opened minutes away from Summarecon Mall Bekasi and Harris Hotel & Convention Bekasi.

The venue can be booked for events for up to 1,500 pax.



Imperial Villa pool, Four Seasons Bali

Destination Myanmar

Good days just ahead

Aggressive marketing by Myanmar Tourism Federation along with numerous new tourism products being launched are expected to pay off in 2018, reports [Marissa Carruthers](#)



Traditional market leading to the eastern gate of Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon

International arrivals are climbing this year as Myanmar gears up for a bumper 2018. According to figures from Myanmar Tourism Federation, 1H2017 saw 562,821 international arrivals at Yangon airport – the main gateway to the country. This represents a 10 per cent increase on the previous year.

May Myat Mon Win, Myanmar Tourism Federation vice-chairwoman, expects this figure to continue to rise, noting a

“small growth” during the Green Season of May to September. In 2016, the country welcomed 2.9 million foreign arrivals, with 3.5 million predicted this year.

May said: “We expect a more exceptional growth in the upcoming high season – up 15 to 20 per cent compared to 2016 – as Myanmar Tourism Marketing continues (with its aggressive marketing campaigns).”

Efforts to attract more visitors include participation in travel shows, engagement with international media, and social media promotions.

For now, the industry is reporting mixed results for 1H2017. Asian Trails said business has remained unchanged from 2016, with top performing markets remaining Thailand, South Korea and China. Non-Asian markets are Germany, France, the UK and the US.

Khiri Travel Myanmar reported a 20 per cent increase. Edwin Briels, managing director, attributed this to pay-off from a range of products launched throughout 2015 and 2016, including kayaking in Kayin state and an overland adventure from Bagan to Mrauk U.

Greg Allan, Pan Pacific Hotels Group

vice president of operations (ASEAN), said despite a weak global economy and an increased supply in hotels and alternative accommodations adding pressure to an already competitive market in Yangon, Parkroyal Yangon has retained its market share. Similar performance has been recorded at Parkroyal Nay Pyi Taw.

With Myanmar Tourism Federation having stepped up its marketing game, the industry hopes the fruits of this labour will pay off, with expectations high for the remainder of 2017 and into 2018.

Thomas Carnevale, Asian Trails managing director, said: “We have seen a steady growth of enquiries from traditional markets such as western Europe, as well as from Asian markets such as India.”

He has also seen an increasing demand for business events, and expects this segment to start to thrive in 2018.

Added May: “We expect 2018 to be a breakthrough for tourism in Myanmar as the innovators, who started visiting Myanmar in 1996, and the early adapters, who came from 2012, make way for a bigger group of early majority. We expect people who never considered Myanmar as a tourist destination to start visiting.”

Hot and new

Junction City, Yangon

Located in the CBD, Junction City comprises Grade A offices, a state-of-the-art retail and entertainment centre with multiplex cinema, and multiple drinking and dining options. It is also home to the five-star, 348-room Pan Pacific Hotel, which is slated to open this month.

Emirates' Dubai-Yangon flight

Emirates has launched its Dubai-Yangon flight. From Asia, the route starts in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, flying to Yangon before landing in Dubai.

Lotte Hotels & Resorts Yangon

In September, South Korea's largest hotel chain Lotte hotels will open the doors to its first property in Myanmar, next to Inya Lake in Yangon. The hotel will have 343 rooms, 315 serviced apartments, dining options, a year-round outdoor pool with views of the lake, and a barbecue area.

Hidden Oases

Launched in May 2017, Khiri Travel Myanmar's Hidden Oases programme offers an alternative view of Myanmar to visitors. The unique route from Yangon to Bagan takes in rural towns, heritage sites and interactions with locals. Guests can discover off-the-beaten track experiences by train, boat, car and motorbike.

Experience Trekking,
Experience Nepal...

nepal

Trekking in Everest Region

Destination Singapore

Selling an inviting Singapore story

Experiential tours and unique events with a local flair are wooing tourists into Singapore, reports **Pamela Chow**



Colourful pre-war Peranakan terrace houses on Koon Seng Road in Singapore

Destination in numbers

\$S\$6.4 billion

Singapore's tourism receipts (US\$4.7 billion) for 1Q2017, a 15 per cent year-on-year increase

\$S\$1.06 billion

Total room revenue for January to April 2017, a two per cent year-on-year decrease from last year

9,918

The number of Singapore Airlines flights to Singapore in 1Q2017

85.6%

The average room occupancy rate for January to April 2017, up from 84.6 per cent in 2016

Singapore is ramping up its calendar of lifestyle events and tours that capitalise on the Singapore story, from home-grown dining festivals to a three-year collaboration between the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and The Walt Disney Company.

Rachel Loh, director of strategy planning and incentive policy at STB, said the board is working on "building an exciting calendar of authentic, differentiated events and experiences" to maintain the "healthy growth" momentum in tourism performance.

This includes STB and the Economic Development Board's new unified marketing brand, Passion Made Possible, which comprises tours and promotional visuals that communicate local experiences. The brand will launch worldwide between now and November.

So far in 2017, Singapore has presented a host of international and local branded events, such as the Star Wars Day: May the 4th Be With You Festival, Singapore Food Festival and Singapore Restaurant Week.

Linda Low, strategic partnership & product marketing manager of Destina-

tion Services, reported "strong demand" for "truly local encounters that call for interaction with the locals and off-the-beaten-track experiences".

The source of demand spans "from millennials to the silvers", she said. European travellers account for almost half of Destination Services' total visitor arrivals, with UK, Spain and Germany in the lead.

STB has also stepped up support for "immersive tours that enable visitors to gain a better appreciation or a different perspective of Singapore", said Loh. Examples include culinary tours where participants can learn to make local delicacies and precinct tours featuring live theatrical performances.

The board recently introduced the Marketing Innovation Programme, which allocated S\$1 million (US\$733,210) to supporting Singapore-based businesses with marketing campaign ideas that feature the Singapore story.

Leaning on its lively calendar, STB is "hopeful for a year-on-year growth of one to four per cent in tourism receipts and one to two per cent in international arrivals for 2017", said Loh.

As much as localised events are taking centre stage, international events remain a hit with visitors. Garth Simmons, COO, AccorHotels for Malaysia, Singapore & Indonesia, credited events such as the Singapore Grand Prix and Singapore International Festival of Arts for "providing opportunities for the hospitality industry". The hotel group saw a year-on-year surge of 17.2 per cent in visitors in 1H2017, with the largest increase coming from China (36 per cent). Indonesia and India saw six and eight per cent growth respectively.

Patrick Fiat, general manager and chief experience officer of Royal Plaza on Scotts, noted that international sports events such as the WTA Finals have also brought in crowds. He added: "With talks about non-renewal for Formula One, another option will be Formula E which is increasingly popular. Back-to-back in-

Viewpoints

What is needed for Singapore to reach its full potential in tourism?

Linda Low

Strategic partnership & product marketing manager, Destination Services



I would like to see a duplication of the Haji Lane concept in different parts of Singapore, with differentiated shopping and dining scenes in each area. Not only will this bring life into the heartlands, the expanded experience may help to extend travellers' length of stay.

Jaclyn Yeoh

Managing director, Siam Express



Singapore industry players should leverage on technology and mobile strategies to target specific customer segments. This includes using motivational videos, apps, virtual reality goggles and data analysis to effectively market tour programmes to targeted overseas buyers.

international Broadway shows or performances will also help Singapore boost tourism."

Moving forward, STB is expanding marketing efforts to tier-two cities in key source markets Indonesia, China and India. Loh said: "We will be rolling out campaigns for our new destination brand (which) encompasses a fuller and authentic Singapore story – one that goes beyond tourism and represents what Singapore and Singaporeans are to the world."

Hot and new

Oakwood Premier OUE Singapore

Oakwood Premier OUE Singapore, the second Oakwood-branded property in Singapore, has opened in the city-state's CBD. Its 268 residence units comprise studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments. Studios are fitted with a kitchenette and come with complimentary launderette access, while bedrooms are furnished with fully equipped kitchens and

a washer/dryer. Amenities include a fitness centre, outdoor infinity pool and Jacuzzi, lobby bar, executive club, lounge and the Se7enth restaurant.

National Museum of Singapore's Glass Rotunda

The Glass Rotunda at the National Museum of Singapore has undergone a rehaul and

now houses two new permanent art installations: An interactive digital installation, *Story of the Forest* by teamLab, and the *Singapore, Very Old Tree* exhibit by local photographer and artist, Robert Zhao.

Andaz Singapore

Situated at the crossroads of the Kampong Glam, Little India and Bras Basah Bugis cultural districts, Andaz Singapore is a 342-key hotel housed within the new DUO mixed-use space. It opens this month and boasts a direct underpass connection to Bugis MRT station. The hotel also houses a rooftop bar, Mr Stork, and Alley on 25, which has a unique 'street-dining-in-the-sky' concept.

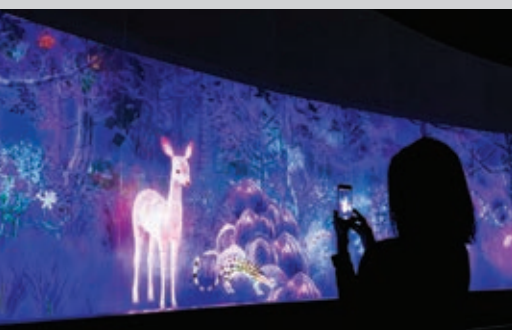
InterContinental Singapore Robertson Quay

Opened in September, InterContinental Singapore Robertson Quay is located in Singapore's emerging waterfront enclave.

Overlooking the Singapore River, the 225-room luxury hotel blends elements from the district's industrial past with sleek contemporary finishes. All rooms feature custom-made furnishings and amenities including a Nespresso coffee machine and personal cocktail kit, alongside wireless Internet connectivity. The property has four dining options including a 389-seat Italian restaurant & bar, Publico.

Science Centre Singapore

The Science Centre Singapore in the western part of the island has added two new permanent exhibitions. Opened in June, the centre's new mirror maze – the largest maze of its kind in Singapore – is a 270m² labyrinth created by Adrian Fisher Design. The maze features 105 mirror cells, more than 17 interactive exhibits and light experiments and holograms. The second addition is *The Mind's Eye*, an optical illusion exhibition.



From left: National Museum of Singapore's Glass Rotunda; InterContinental Singapore Robertson Quay

Destination India

Travel gets healing touch

Viewpoints

Look East Policy, recovery of key markets and medical tourism to drive growth. By **Rohit Kaul**

According to statistics from India's Ministry of Tourism, India recorded 4.8 million in the January-June 2017 period, up 17.2 per cent over the same period last year.

Karan Anand – head, relationships, Cox & Kings, said the US, UK, Malaysia, Australia and China have fared well this year.

Outlook for the near future appears positive as well. Anand said: "A positive growth in the inbound season beginning October is expected as the top source markets are coming out of recession thereby expanding the spending capacity of travellers there. Markets including Europe and US are doing well and giving India a chance to draw a growing share of their outbound."

The government's Look East Policy is also expected to help the country to draw Buddhist tourists to India, Anand said, while emerging markets such as in South America offer new areas of growth for the Indian inbound sector.

The growth of medical tourism in the country is now also contributing to the demand from international markets. The number of medical visas issued by India rose 45 per cent in 2016 over the previ-



Wooden statue of Lord Krishna

ous year, according to India's Ministry of Tourism.

The tourism ministry is showing interest in growing this segment, having recently revised guidelines for the promotion of wellness and medical services as a niche tourism product, said Ravi Gosain, managing director, Erco Travels. "We are focusing on European and North America markets for cosmetic surgeries and wellness treatments," he added.

Some tour operators, on the other hand, opined that the liquor ban an-

nounced earlier this year may dampen prospects. "(This) has sent a negative signal (to) international markets. F&B is an important part of a holiday so the news of liquor ban may not go down well among international tourists," said Ranjan Kumar Mishra, managing director, Eastern Voyage.

For the Ministry of Tourism, the launch of e-visa will be a boon. During January-June 2017, a total of 7.17 lakh tourist arrived in India on e-Tourist Visa, a growth of 52 per cent over the same period in 2016. "The government is providing e-visa with three sub-categories that include e-Tourist Visa, e-Business Visa and e-Medical Visa. The e-visa requirement have also been liberalised and simplified recently. Also, the window for application has been increased from 30 days to 120 days and the duration of stay increased from 30 days to 60 days," said Mahesh Sharma, India's tourism minister.

Some hoteliers also shared that the tourism ministry should promote destinations beyond the famed golden triangle and Kerala.

Deva added that social media marketing could be stepped up and train infrastructure improved.

What is needed for India to reach its full potential in tourism?



Subash Goyal
Chairman,
STIC Travel Group

I always say that India is the greatest show on planet Earth. We need to market India aggressively through the right channels like digital marketing. We now need to focus on cruise tourism in the country as we have a vast coastline, but lack of infrastructure is a major hurdle.

Pradipta Mohapatra
General manager (sales and marketing),
Mayfair Lagoon & Convention,
Bhubaneswar

Investing in infrastructure in (lesser-known) destinations. Although there are many beautiful sites in Odisha, (for example), facilities are lacking and many attractions remain inaccessible to tourists due to lack of connectivity.

Destination in numbers

91 million

The number of passengers that New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport is expected to handle by 2020

63.4%

The occupancy rate at branded Indian hotels, according to the 2016: *Hotels in India Trend & Opportunities* report by hospitality consultancy firm, HVS

Hot and new

Grand Mercure Vadodara Surya Palace, Gujarat

Gujarat has gotten its first Grand Mercure hotel with the rebranding of Surya Palace in Vadodara.

Located close to Vadodara's business district, Grand Mercure Vadodara Surya Palace features 146 guestrooms, including five suites, all-day dining restaurant Azure, a delicatessen, an outdoor pool and a fitness centre.

The hotel is a two-minute drive from the railway station and 10 minutes from the airport. Popular attractions like Sayaji Garden, Baroda Museum and Laxmi Vilas Palace are five minutes away while UNESCO World Heritage Site Champaner-Pavagarh is 50 minutes away.



Grand Mercure Vadodara Surya Palace

Ginger Hotel Gurugaon

A budget hotel catering to business and leisure guests, Ginger Hotel Gurugaon features 77 rooms offering complimentary WiFi, a 24/7 restaurant, fitness centre and meeting facilities. The hotel is located close to the Indira Gandhi International Airport, a domestic airport and a metro station offering connectivity to Delhi New Capital Region (NCR).

Thai AirAsia routes

Thai AirAsia commenced four times weekly Bangkok-Jaipur and Bangkok-Tiruchirappalli services in September 2017.

Madame Tussauds Delhi

Madame Tussauds will soon launch in Connaught Place in the heart of Delhi. It will showcase 50 wax figures from diverse leagues such as history, sport, music, film, and TV.

Radisson Noida

Covering 3,902m², Radisson Noida now features 88 rooms complete with LED TVs, loungers and new upholstery. Business Class, a new room category, has been introduced for corporate travellers who can enjoy complimentary drinks in the lounge among other benefits.

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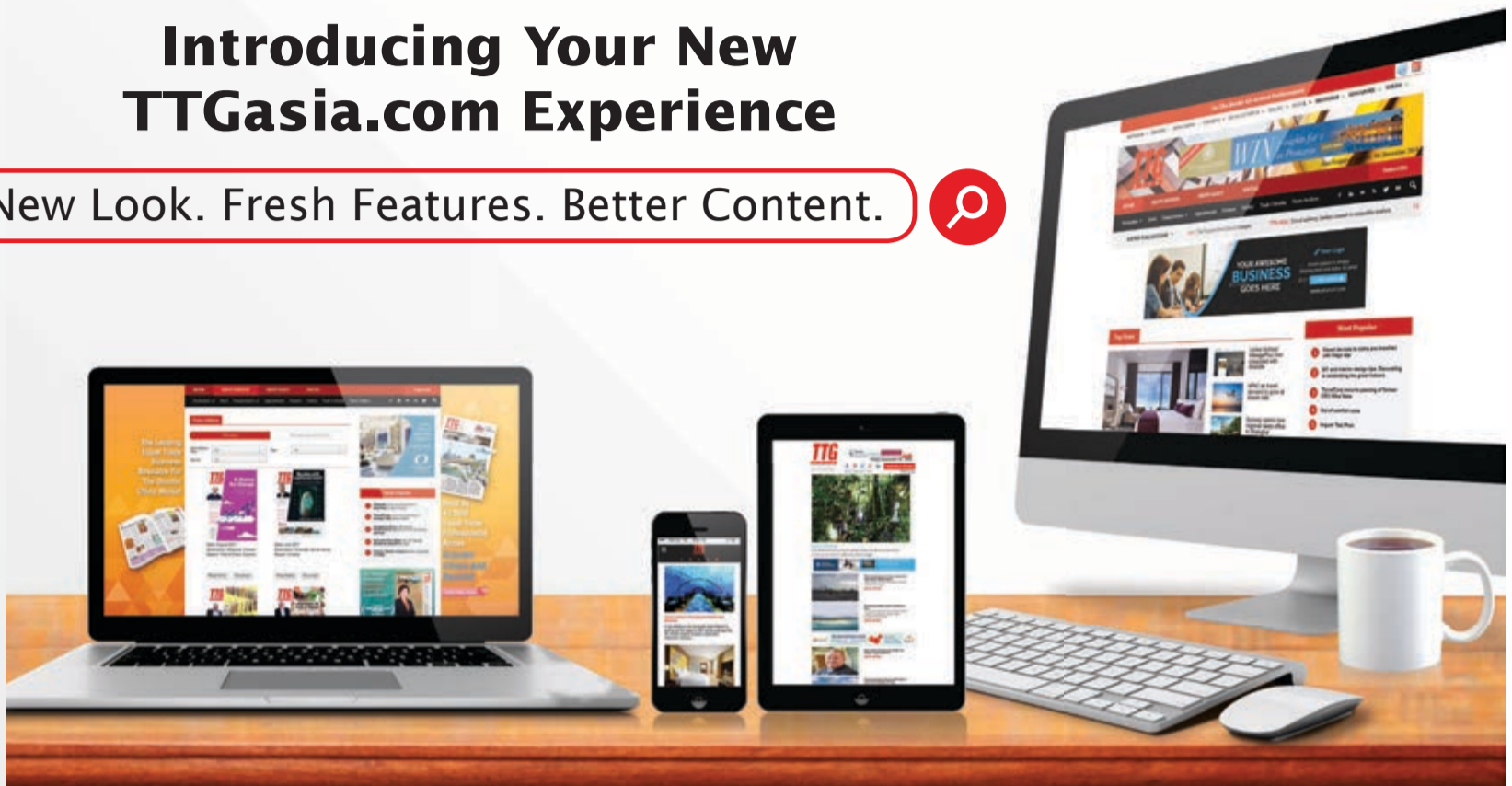
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Destination Thailand

Sunny days for Thai tourism

Improved air access and themed TAT campaigns are raising traveller interest and pulling in more footfalls. By **Siriarpa Kamjan**



Southern Thai beach destinations are welcoming more longhaul visitors thanks to better air access

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has kept itself busy this year with several destination promotion programmes such as Village to the World.

Village to the World invites companies to take part in volunteer activities that would generate at least a million baht in income for 10 selected Thai rural communities, while helping participants to satisfy their CSR desires.

While Yuthasak Supasorn, TAT governor recognised that 2017 is a challenging year, he noted that TAT's efforts have reaped good results, particularly in the increase in first-time visitors.

Arrivals in 1H2017 numbered 17 million and these visitors generated 876 billion baht (US\$26 billion) in tourism receipts. China takes the lead as Thailand's biggest tourism spenders, followed by Russia and Malaysia.

TAT maintains its target of 2.77 trillion baht in tourism revenue for 2017 and hopes to further raise Thailand's profile as a preferred tourist destination in 2018.

Business sentiments on the ground are positive too.

Christopher Stafford, COO of 137 Pillars Hotels & Resorts, told *TTG Show Daily* that his property in Chiang Mai is seeing growth. Room nights from the US and Canada rose 21 and 15 per cent respectively in 1H2017 over 1H2016. However, European and Asian markets registered only slight growth due to price sensitivity.

Business is far more varied at the group's 137 Pillars Suites Bangkok. Asian guests contributed to 65 per cent of total business, with the rest being Americans and Europeans.

Stafford remarked that business from China was promising for both properties,

due to its large volume and year-round travel habits.

"For the rest of the year and 1H2018, we are expecting to grow South Korea, Japan and the Middle East markets for 137 Pillars House Chiang Mai, and the US and Europe markets for 137 Pillars Suites Bangkok. We plan to target the luxury segment and work with luxury partners/buyers," Stafford concluded.

Thailand's beach destinations are also seeing stronger European arrivals as air connectivity improves. In 2016, UK arrivals into Phuket rose 20 per cent, making it one of Phuket's top five source markets.

With better direct connectivity into Phuket from longhaul markets, secondary beach destinations in southern Thailand are now being picked up as favoured holiday spots for European visitors.

Destinations like Krabi, Trang, Koh Lanta and Khao Lak no longer have to "suffer in Phuket's shadow", said Tobias Fischer, business development director at Go Vacation Thailand.

"We're seeing more roomnights booked by German-speaking markets in Khao Lak than Phuket," Fischer added.

The direct connectivity is also driving the surge of "twin-centre breaks" in southern Thailand, where Phuket is paired with Koh Yao Noi, Krabi with Koh Lanta, and Khao Lak with Khao Sok, said Philip Wigglesworth, Destination Asia's Thailand general manager.

For the year ahead, TAT will be more targeted in its destination promotions. A number of niche customer segments has been identified as key audience for the 2018 fiscal year. They range from first-timers and sports enthusiasts to senior citizens and female travellers.

TAT will also continue to position Thailand as a luxury travel destination.

Viewpoints

What is needed for Thailand to reach its full potential in tourism?

Vichit Prakobgosol

President,
Association of Thai
Travel Agents



Thailand needs stable politics, a society that is in order, new tourist attractions such as the Bangkok observation tower, improved transportation for tourists, and completion of the high-speed rail system.

Nigel Tovey

General Manager,
Ananda Hua Hin
Resort & Spa



I would like to see increased air lift from the higher yielding source markets, as well as the re-introduction of routes from other global source markets, such as the US and South Africa. Additionally, I would like to see a wider distribution of tourism spend beyond the Tier 1 destinations, with more support for Tier 2 locations such as Hua Hin, Chiang Mai and Khao Lak. From a local perspective in Hua Hin, we are hopeful that the airport will soon reopen for international flights with AirAsia leading the way, and that other carriers will follow. Finally, sustainability. With so many hotels slated to open over the next three years, we need to strike the right balance between the needs of tourists, investors and the environment.

Hot and new

Renaissance Pattaya Resort & Spa

Opened September 1, the 257-key Renaissance Pattaya Resort & Spa is located in a quieter side of the resort city and offers a mix of guestrooms including chic pool villas and spacious family suites. Recreational facilities include two outdoor swimming pools, a kids pool, a kids club and a luxury spa. The property is also built for business events, with venues clustered across two levels for privacy.

Novotel Phuket Phokeethra

The first international hotel brand in Phuket Old Town has opened with 180 rooms and suites. Hotel amenities include a spa, gym and indoor pool, as well as two lounges and an all-day dining restaurant. For events, the property has four meeting rooms and a Grand Ballroom that can accommodate up to 850 guests.

Park Hyatt Bangkok

The first Park Hyatt hotel in Thailand has opened in the capital, offering 222 guestrooms (including 32 suites). Amenities on-site comprise four F&B options, a 40m-long infinity saltwater pool, 24-hour fitness centre, spa with eight treatment rooms, and 12 event

spaces which include a pillarless ballroom. The property is also directly connected to the Central Embassy shopping mall and the Phloen Chit BTS skytrain station.

La Vela, Khao Lak

Launched officially last month, the stylish La Vela resort in Khao Lak comprises two distinct zones – oceanside and poolside – and features 181 guest rooms including Family rooms. A highlight here is the enormous free-form swimming pool that spans the length of the resort.

Travelodge Pattaya

Opened this July, Travelodge Pattaya in Central Pattaya offers 164 rooms, a rooftop bar, a

pool and a gym. Guests are eight minutes on foot from the beach and 15 minutes from Walking Street.

Asara Private Beach Resort, Koh Lipe

The four-star Asara Private Beach Resort sits on Koh Lipe's Sunset Beach. There are only 12 guestrooms, making the resort one for guests seeking privacy. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the property.

Zen Villa Khao Yai

The new Zen Villa Khao Yai is a Japanese-style resort with a beautiful garden. Room types range from superior to royal suite. Free Wi-Fi is available in all rooms.



Destination in numbers

1%

The percentage increase in average occupancy rate of luxury hotels in Bangkok, following the 2.75 per cent decline in 4Q2016

2,900 baht

Equivalent to US\$87, Thailand's RevPar for 1Q2017, up only 0.6 per cent YOY

2.4 million

The number of Chinese arrivals in 1Q2017

17 million

The number of international arrivals to Thailand between January and June 2017, up three per cent from 2016, an achievement attributed to a successful global campaign

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News

Hong Kong's new visa policy dents Indian arrivals

Leisure travellers are most affected while Macau – popularly twinned with Hong Kong – ends up as a casualty too

By Prudence Lui

Hong Kong's implementation of online pre-arrival registration (PAR) requirement for Indian nationals since January has triggered a 20 per cent drop in Indian inbound to 207, 133 in 1H2017.

And with Macau a popular component in Indian travellers' twin destination itinerary, the entertainment city has also seen fewer Indian footfalls – down 12.9 per cent to 91,090 in 1H2017.

Ronald Wu, director of sales and marketing at Hong Kong's Grayline Tours, suggested that the impact on Macau was lighter in comparison with Hong Kong because Indian nationals transiting at the Hong Kong International Airport and going directly onwards to Macau do not need PAR, as long as they show their Macau ferry tickets at the immigration counters.

For Chennai-based ttworld-tours.com's CEO, Tamilselvam T, trouble brought on by the new visa system was the high number of application rejections.

"(Tendency of rejection is higher for travellers) from North India. It's typical for clients who had paid for their tour only to have their PAR application re-

jected later. We agents have to refund their money, which means extra administration burden."

Travel Agents Association of Jharkhand, president Sanjiv Poddar, said: "One immediate impact I've observed is that Indian business event groups have chosen to skip Hong Kong (in order to avoid PAR application) and only hold their meetings in Macau."

Indian leisure groups, however, are skipping Hong Kong and Macau entirely and spending their vacation elsewhere in the region.

Poddar expects Indian traffic to fall by 20 per cent as a result of the new immigration policy.

"(The new procedure is) also giving additional work to our staff as they have to fill out online application forms for our clients," he lamented.

He hopes the Hong Kong government can relax the rules at least for family groups, such that a single approval is only needed rather than the existing requirement for individuals.

CITS (Macao), international department manager, Cooper Zhang, has also reported dismal Indian performance.

He told *TTG Show Daily*: "Leisure market is the worst hit. For the upcoming Devali Festival, bookings don't look promising and we are estimating a 30 to 40 per cent drop in business."

Oriental Travels India's director Mukesh Goel is, however, unaffected, saying that Macau's many new integrated resorts and their varied recreational attractions are strong enough magnets to keep Indian travellers coming despite the PAR requirement.

"What we are seeing though is clients cutting down time in Hong Kong to stay on longer in Macau," he remarked.



Tamilselvam: administrative burden

Indian business event groups have chosen to skip Hong Kong and only hold their meetings in Macau.

Sanjiv Poddar
President, Travel Agents Association of Jharkhand

IN THE HOT SEAT

Langkawi Development Authority CEO, Azizan Noordin, tells S Puvaneswary his destination is all ready for 2018's Mart

What legacy will PATA Travel Mart 2018 leave for Langkawi's tourism industry?

PATA Travel Mart 2018 will tremendously boost our tourism industry and cement Langkawi's position as a desirable destination on the world map. The event will also attract and increase the development of new hotels, tourism products and attractions, which will in turn lead to the creation of new jobs and business opportunities.

What exciting activities can delegates look forward to?

As the Jewel of Kedah, Langkawi welcomes delegates to experience a unique post-show tour of Royal Kedah and the Perlis state.

Langkawi is aiming for five million arrivals this year, and targets are bound to rise in the

coming years. What is done to ensure tourism goals are met sustainably?

The Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) introduced the Langkawi Tourism Blueprint in 2011, a strategic document that prepares Langkawi to become one of world's best island destinations. It draws inputs from academia and industry players from around the world, regarding Langkawi's tourism capacity, amenities and resources.

Now, LADA is preparing to roll out the Langkawi Tourism Blueprint 2.0, aimed at taking Langkawi beyond 2020 and shaping Langkawi into the 'Monaco of the East'.

As for our sustainability commitment, LADA works with other government agencies to realise the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Together with Langkawi Tourism Association, LADA has strategies and programmes to give locals access to work opportunities in the tourism sector. Youths and women also benefit from cooperation between LADA, Langkawi Tourism Academy and Langkawi Craft Complex in promoting local craftsmanship.

Langkawi aspires to pioneer the development of nautical tourism in a sustainable way.

Can PATA help Langkawi achieve its sustainable tourism goals, and how?

Yes. Being the foremost tourism authority in the world, PATA can further promote our strategic initiatives in fair employment and local craft support.

Can you give us a gist of Langkawi's tourism appeal?

Langkawi is a travel hub within Asia with 278 direct flights weekly from Singapore, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Johor Bahru and Kuching. Being just a short flight from the above markets, travellers will find Langkawi an exciting gateway, thanks to its duty free status

Caravans to carry tours and footfalls into Myanmar

To raise its own visitor numbers, Myanmar is working with operators and organisations in neighbouring countries on improving cross-border tourism in the region.

One of its efforts is the development of caravan tours that run from India via Myanmar and Thailand to Singapore, revealed Khin San Aye, executive committee member of the Union of Myanmar Travel Association.

The association hopes to promote through these tours "community-based tourism", or travel and overnight stays at local villages near major attractions such as Bagan and Mandalay,

said Khin.

The caravan tours will be organised by an Australian company based in India and developed with the Travel Agents Association of India. The parties are "still negotiating".



Khin San Aye: community benefit

The government is throwing strong support behind this initiative by improving access to villages, stepping up destination marketing, and increasing dialogue between inbound companies.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism has also been organising study trips to other countries such as Japan that are established in this area. – Pamela Chow

IN BRIEF

Mandarin Oriental grows in Beijing

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group will manage a luxury hotel project in the heart of Beijing. It is expected to open in 2018. Located in a traditional hutong quarter and close to Tiananmen Square, the hotel will provide guests with a rare opportunity to experience luxury living in authentic Beijing surroundings.

Second Four Points opens in Hefei

Four Points by Sheraton Hefei, Baohe has opened in the ancient Chinese city. It features 271 guestrooms and suites, three

stylish restaurants and bars, and More than 2,400m² of flexible, multi-functional meeting spaces. It is an hour's car ride from Hefei Xinqiao International Airport and 15 minutes from Hefei South Railway Station.

Disney characters get spooky in Hong Kong

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort is celebrating this Halloween with a special Disney Halloween Time 2017 programme from September 14 to October 31. Expect classic Disney stories retold with new twists and turns, new entertainment throughout the park, and a mystery dining experience.

as well as picturesque panorama.

Apart from luxury accommodation, Langkawi offers innovative and outstanding tourism products namely the Langkawi SkyCab which is the steepest cable car in the world and Umgawa Legendary Adventures, a world-class zipline eco-canopy tour inside the rainforest of the famous Machinchang Cambrian Geopark.

These are among the pull factors for foreign travellers, with particular appeal among segments like honeymooners, silver-hair and young executives.

All 99 islands of Langkawi are UNESCO recognised geoparks. How is LADA leveraging this?

The ability to balance a steady flow of tourists and preserve nature has made Langkawi one of the best island destinations in Asia, according to TripAdvisor.

The accreditation has also contributed to the stop of deforestation of mangrove areas in Langkawi.

With this status, Langkawi is now a geopark reference centre for South-east Asia.



Snapshots

Busy bees on the showfloor w



Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority's Mubarak Rashed Al Nuaimi (centre)



Harbour Plaza Hotels & Resorts China's Dennis Zhou and Harbour Plaza Hotels & Resorts Hong Kong's Claudia So



Ros Business Travel Russia's Artem Alekseev



Langkawi Development Authority's Haji Azizan Bin Noordin (seated, on the left) and team



Grand Hyatt Macau's Marylou Chan



Ezeego One Travel & Tours Singapore's Norman Chew, Ezeego One Travel & Tours India's Vikram Riar and Jayshree Naidu



Tourism Bureau Ministry of Transportation and Communications Taiwan's Eric Lin (on lounge) and PATA Taiwan's Stephen Chang (standing, on far right)



Finnair China's Robert Ohrnberg and Finnair Finland's Jonne Lehtioksa



Above: Lassen Tours US's Marc Lee, Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture China's Sophia Cao, Cathay Tours US's Virginia Chan, Chan's World Holidays Singapore's Betty Moh and Transocean Travel US's Christine Chau

Below: Nepal Tourism Board's Deepak Raj Joshi (centre)



Ministry of Tourism, Republic of Indonesia's Igde Pitana



With latest products By Caleb Richard Lai



Cox & Kings India's Priyanshu Priyadarshi and Aman Mahajan, TTG Asia Media's Michael Chow, Cox & Kings India's Sanjeet Joher, Y.S. Travel UK's Yusuf Seedat, TTG Asia Media's Pierre Quek and Cox & Kings India's Soundar Rajan



Islands Travel & Tours Philippines' Erlinda Tan Kwok and Chan's World Holidays Singapore's Betty Moh



American Connections Tours US' Sonia Florez and Far Corners The Netherlands' Joy Hingorani



The Face Suites Malaysia's Hanim Damanhuri and Sunny Tan



Tourism Promotions Board Philippines' Maricon Ebron



Plaza Premium Group Hong Kong's Natalie Ng, Linda Song and Janis Tse



Blaycation US's Mark Stiles, Blaycation Canada's Michele Gillis, Macao Government Tourism Office's Joao Novikoff Sales, Big Apple Corporation Japan's Yutaka Motomura, Bamba Experience US's Melanie Labedan, ETM Travel Services Hong Kong's Francis Tan and SporTourism21 Korea's JungSik Sim



MK Hotels & Resorts Malaysia's Khairul Azda Abu Bakar and Mohd Ariff Mokhtar



sav Hospitality Hong Kong's Marianna Tang and Stella Cheung



Sabah Tourism Board's Suzaini Datuk Sabdin Ghani and Josephine Chai



Berjaya Hotels & Resorts Malaysia's Jacqueline Li and George Wong



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