



Malaysia operators turn to China

Weakened arrivals from current core markets are forcing Malaysian inbound players to pin their hopes on China

By S Puvaneswary

Malaysian inbound operators are diversifying their source markets deeper into China, encouraged mainly by the government's easing of visa restrictions and a greatly improved air accessibility.

Malaysia Airlines launched nine new routes to China this year, covering Kuala Lumpur to Haikou, Nanjing, Fuzhou, Wuhan, Chengdu and Chongqing; Penang to Shenzhen and Shanghai; and Kota Kinabalu to Tianjin. AirAsia commenced its Langkawi-Shenzhen service in August. Earlier in March, AirAsia X launched daily flights between Kuala Lumpur and Wuhan.

With these additions, there are 470 direct flights weekly between China and Malaysia, which is the most number of flights between Malaysia and any other medium-haul destination.

Azizi Borhan, general manager of Safuan Travel & Holidays, who is among those casting a keen eye on China, told *TTG Show Daily* that the diversification must be made as its South-east Asian markets were not growing.

"China is a natural choice because it is a medium-haul destination with good air links, and China is among the main focus markets for Tourism Malaysia," Azizi said,

adding that his company will reach out only to the English speaking Muslim travellers from China.

Azizi said: "Muslim travel is our forte. There is also less competition for the Muslim Chinese market (among Malaysian) inbound operators. Our tour packages include halal meals in restaurants and visits to various mosques for prayers."



Bhoonee: investing in China

Ally Bhoonee, executive director, World Avenues, said his company has diversified into China with the intention of reducing its dependency on the seasonal Middle East market.

Bhoonee said: "Political tensions in the Gulf Cooperation Council and a weakened economy due to low oil prices are not in our favour. Malaysia has enjoyed a boom in arrivals since the 1990s, but the market has become saturated over the last five years. Malaysia is not as popular with the Middle East as it once was.

"On the other hand, China is a volume year-round market which enjoys good air access from both full service and low-cost carriers. The government, through the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and Tourism Malaysia, is also putting its resources into further developing this market, which augurs well for us."

To tackle China, World Avenues has

hired experienced staff and trained existing ones on the requirements of Chinese tourists. Sales calls to wholesalers in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou were also made this year.

"The Chinese market is still small as we are new in this market. However, we are willing to put in the effort and commitment to grow this market," said Ally.

Adam Kamal, CEO at Olympik Holidays, is also targeting the Chinese market to make up for the reduced longhaul business from Europe and the US, due partly to limited air access and the closure of Tourism Malaysia's offices early this year in New York, Milan and Sweden.

Europe and the US are seasonal markets and direct flights are limited to KLM's services from Amsterdam and Malaysia Airlines' flights to Heathrow.

But Kamal's foray is not without challenges. He said: "Group series face strong competition from Chinese OTAs, with the likes of Ctrip selling holiday packages at low rates. There is also competition from Malaysian inbound players who are dropping rates to secure volume business.

"To stand out, we offer niche packages to attract special interest groups. Our packages include diving, motor sports and

hiking."

In support of inbound operators' efforts, the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA) will collaborate with the Malaysia-China Chamber of Commerce to participate in the 2017 Guangdong 21st Century Maritime Silk Road International Expo, to be held in Dongguan, China from September 21 to 24. MATTA is providing free booths, accommodation and transportation at the expo for participating inbound members.

MATTA president, KL Tan, said: "The expo is another potential platform for our members to identify business opportunities and to increase arrivals from China."



Kamal: going for niche segments

MATTA is also planning a sales mission to Nanning, Guilin, Shenzhen and Guangzhou, tentatively scheduled for 1Q2018 or 2Q2018.

Tan shared: "It depends on the final confirmation from our China counterparts on the best time and venue to hold these events. These B2B sessions will be open to MATTA members as well as hoteliers and local attractions. The roadshows are a cost-effective platform for small and big players to join and build their contacts, expand market share and ultimately draw more arrivals into Malaysia."

Chinese wave sweeps in

By Caroline Boey

Thirty-seven Chinese buyers have registered for PATA Travel Mart 2017, making them the biggest contingent this year.

According to Puangthip Chotipantawanon, PATA's director of events, those who have registered are senior executives, with a quarter holding manager or director titles.

A pre-mart poll of registered buyers shows that direct flights, visa-free and/or ease of obtaining visa entry documents, favourable currency exchange and destinations not impacted by safety and security issues dominated outbound trends this year, with Asian destinations continuing to perform strongly.

China National Tourism Administration predicts outbound trips will increase four per cent this year to 127 million, citing convenient visa policies provided by some 65 destinations as the growth driver.

Sandy Ren, marketing direc-

tor, Guilin Tianyuan International Travel Service said Japan, with direct flights, and nearby Asian island resorts offering reasonably priced products are hot this year.

She added family trips to Europe and the US were popular this summer, while India, Egypt and Myanmar are up-and-coming.

William Lu, marketing director, Hola China (Shanghai) International Travel Service, noted a growing demand for tailor-made experiential trips to view the Northern Lights and Antarctic ocean adventures among Chinese sophisticates.

South America and the Balkan countries have been actively attending China tradeshows and Lu is keen to offer customised products to these destinations.

Jing Xia, director, CITS Head Office, said the favourable UK exchange rate was the impetus

for Chinese travellers earlier this year but demand dipped after the terror attacks. Xia expects Canada will gain favour in 2018 as it is the China-Canada Year of Tourism.



Lu: experiential trips are a hit

New flights coupled with Russia offering easier visa entry procedures and China's Belt and Road policy will bring awareness to Eastern Europe.

Shelley Jin, general manager, Customization Service Center of Shanghai Yangzi International Travel Service said Australia, New Zealand and Thailand did well in 1H2017 for travellers looking to enjoy the seasons.

"Canada, Czech Republic and Hungary, which offer natural scenery, easy access and are perceived to be safe, are up-and-coming. And among the more active NTOs this year were those from Texas, Argentina and Dubai."

Macau shows off tourism evolution at PTM 2017

PATA Travel Mart's (PTM) return to Macau after seven years will allow delegates to gain a live update on the destination's tourism development.

Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) director, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, said: "Macau last held PTM in 2010. Between then and now, Macau has seen numerous tourism complexes coming into operation, more heritage draws being revitalised for visitors, and new large-scale events being added to our annual calendar.

"These will make PTM 2017 a memorable event and contribute to destination promotion."

PTM 2017 also holds another special meaning for MGTO, as it is the event's 40th anniversary.

Besides being a platform to showcase Macau to travel and

tourism buyers from around the world, Fernandes said the Mart "offers a prime opportunity for Macau tourism stakeholders to connect with the world, and learn from the experts about the most effective marketing strategies".



Fernandes: trading knowledge

"The next generation of tourism professionals can also benefit from the PATA Youth Symposium," she said.

Bruno Simoes, executive director of small-WORLD Experience, a repeat exhibitor based in Macau, told *TTG Show Daily* that the mart "is a huge opportunity" for his destination and he hopes to connect with meeting and incentive agencies as well as conference organisers.

"This (business event) segment has huge potential growth in Macau," he explained. — **Pru-dence Lui**

View from the top

The 40-year-old tradeshow

Despite challenges, PATA Travel Mart (PTM) remains a solid event even after 40 years of existence. The success boils down to innovation, quality content and execution, says Mario Hardy, CEO of PATA, who shares the highlights of this year's edition and his vision for the show moving ahead with [Xinyi Liang-Pholsena](#)

What are the highlights for PTM 2017 as the show marks its 40th year?

The fact that PTM's still around after 40 years is exciting news for us. There are many tradeshows across the region and many companies have also started their own shows, but PTM has survived year to date and is doing pretty well.

It's not the largest show and we don't aim to be the largest; we're small and intimate, which makes it easier for people to network and do business together as opposed to running from one place to another. There's a need for both.

In our case, we have been roaming from one country to another over the years, so that is another benefit. We try to increase the networking opportunities too – it's still a work-in-progress and there's probably more that we can do in this area.

One of the things we have done over the past two years is to increase knowledge sharing at PTM. Past shows didn't have any seminars or workshops, with only the tradeshows followed by the board meeting. We still have the board meeting attached to PTM, but we also added the knowledge sharing forum.

We have the Travolution Forum (September 13) this year, focusing on technology and digital marketing topics, as well as the Bloggers Forum in the afternoon to offer different perspectives from the influencers and destinations. Delegates are coming a long distance to do business, so

they may have an extra day if they wish to meet the people in an informal way and pick up some knowledge about the region and trends.

How will PTM perform this year and how does it compare with past years?

We knew from the beginning that having the event in Macau will be really popular – people love going to Macau. Within days of announcing it we had people register-

ing for it, which never happened before, as they are usually late to respond. For the first few months of the announcement bookings came really fast, then at a good pace, slowed down for a period and then picked up in the last couple of weeks (as of July*) as the deadline was past.

Buyers registration is overwhelming and much more than we can actually take. The good thing about that is we (be more selective about qualifying) the buyers. Even though we have a great number of applications, far exceeding the past years, we've been very selective about who's coming. There's probably a few unhappy people who have not been selected but our host is looking for ROI and we want to make sure that buyers come with the intention of business. We also want to maintain the reputation of PATA (being an event with) quality buyers.

In my opinion, it also helped a little that we have increased the incentives for buyers. That has attracted more people.

On the seller side, interest picked up in the last couple of weeks. We have 80 per cent of the floor space taken up at the moment (early July*). The host is planning lots of interesting social activities and we have new sponsors this year such as Illy with us for the first time. We're looking for sponsorships and partners outside of travel trade.

What challenges are there in organising

PTM? How do you overcome them?

A lot depends on the host destination. Macau has been easy to work with as they're well organised and has an expertise in events that are much larger in scale than PTM. I think one of the greatest assets of PATA is our logistics team, which is phenomenal and they have been doing this for a long time.

The challenge is typically around the forum. For example, in creating interesting content that will attract people to join, but that is the same for any organisation or event planner. The other challenge is obviously to get exhibitors and sellers at our events.

How has PTM evolved over the years?

It's still transforming. There are ideas but we haven't finalised what PTM will be like in the future. We know it has to change and we have to make some significant changes to the format because there are too many similar shows already. We're not sure what it could and should look like moving forward but we know we need to be brave and take some risks to try new things we haven't tried before.

Can you give us an idea of what future PTMs will look like?

No, it's too early. We threw lots of crazy and fun ideas during a recent meeting, but we still need to refine these ideas and see if they are financially viable for the organisation.

It's not the largest show and we don't aim to be the largest; we're small and intimate, which makes it easier for people to network and do business together as opposed to running from one place to another.

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View from the top

Are tradeshows like PTM still viable?

PATA's income still relies very much on its events. One of our objectives is to move away from being too reliant on membership revenue to diversify our incomes to events, academy, training, research and other types of activities.

For the last two years, we have significantly increased our number of events – we now have eight official events a year but the reality is actually much more than that. We do several events in China, nearly one a month, and we have two events in the Pacific this year – PATA Global Insights in Auckland in September and PATA Pacific Tourism Insights Conference in Vanuatu in October.

Next year, we will start with the adventure mart in Al Ain – an oasis about an hour away from Abu Dhabi – our first event in the UAE. After the annual summit in South Korea's Gangneung, PTM will be in Langkawi, and the New Tourism Frontiers Forum – which this year will be in Palau in November.

We have nearly 15 events in a year, compared to previously two or three events in good years. We hope to continue to organise at least two events in the Pacific every year and we like to grow one additional event in Europe – the other being our advocacy dinner in London.

I don't think we can and should do more. We'd like to focus more on increasing attendance at other events moving forward and raising content quality.

You said earlier that there are too many similar tradeshows. How do you think PTM stands out from the rest?

One of the two unique selling points of PTM is that it rotates from one place to another. In the early days of PTM, it used to be in places like Singapore, Hong Kong and Beijing – the capital cities. In recent years, PTM is organised in secondary and tertiary cities. I know some people have criticised the destination choices, citing accessibility issues, but actually the secondary cities need PTM.

In the last three years we have been promoting the importance of showcasing the secondary cities. There are far too many tourists in capital cities and we need to push them into other destinations.

One way (to achieve that) is having a tradeshow to showcase to the tour agents and operators from overseas the opportunities in the secondary cities. Besides the

tradeshows, there are pre- and post-tours (for attendees to) experience (the destination) at the same time.

Secondly, we keep PTM relatively small for people to have more interaction. That's certainly what's unique for PATA and we want to retain that moving forward.

There are probably far too many tradeshows in the region but they are still well attended. All tradeshows I've been to have good attendance from all around the world, probably because tour agencies and operators are focusing on different niche markets and attend shows relevant to them.

Some overseas agents might not come to Macau because it's not an area of interest for their agency, but they could be happy attending Thailand Travel Mart Plus in Chiang Mai because that's what they're focusing on. Or they could be happy to visit the first Travel Trade Maldives because it's a market they are keen on.

There's probably room for more tradeshows in secondary cities. I find it funny that destinations have gone on to start their own tradeshows one or two years after a PATA event there (chuckles), but it goes to show that we are enabling people to create their own events and teaching them how to do it. There is no doubt that there will be more cities – in Chinese provinces, for example – starting their own events.

I think we're still far away from seeing an end or slowdown in tradeshows unless there is a crisis that stops people from travelling. Otherwise, business will continue to grow.

But with better technologies, do you think travel tradeshows will become obsolete in future?

Face to face will remain, more so in this region than other parts of the world. People like to travel somewhere else and experience a destination. Typically in our case, it's not just about trading or signing contracts; it's also about experiencing the destination because you will be the ones selling travel. So how you sell a place you have never been to? In the case of travel, experiencing the destination is still very important.

When people say virtual reality will transform travel, yes, it might transform the way people get inspiration to new places to discover but it won't replace travel. If you're wearing a headset and you're in

Macchu Pichu where you've never been, it gives you a pretty good perspective on what it would feel if you were there. Will it actually be a replacement of feeling the sun over your shoulder and the food, the smells, interacting with locals? Probably not.

Given your interest and background in technology, how are you leveraging the use of technology at PTM?

There's probably a lot that we can do to improve. We have a mobile app for several events since last year. This year we're trying something different and it will be ongoing after that.

As with most event organisers, we have been using one app per event – you download an app, you get the content, you network with people. After the fairs, we leave it open for a few weeks and then everything is gone – all your relationships, contacts and content are gone. That's unfortunate because there are a lot of good contacts made at the events and people want to stay in touch.

We were creating something different this year with a PATA branded app. You download the app only once, you keep the app and whenever we have a new event we will push the content to you. It doesn't erase what you have before but adds to it. The app is only a container and within the container there are lots of different events.

When you click on one of (the event programmes), you open it up and you get all the content plus contacts of people already there and you can start exchanging news and information with them. That's something we're in the process of implementing now for the rest of the events this year, and as we create programmes for next year they will be added to the app too.

How about PATA's other key advocacy areas like sustainability and youth engagement – are these reflected in PTM?

On sustainability, we are working very closely with The Venetian and Studio City to highlight some of their sustainable features. We know The Venetian has a good policy for sustainability so we will like to help to highlight some of that with them. We just started a conversation with Studio



I think we're still far away from seeing an end or slowdown in tradeshows unless there is a crisis that stops people from travelling. Otherwise, business will continue to grow.

City on what they do so we're certainly happy to work with them to make some improvements.

Also, we now use recyclable paper badges, which we will ask delegates to give them back for reutilisation at the end of the show. We can peel off the sticker and put on a new one, and they will still look very professional. And even if you do throw it away, it's recycled paper.

We are looking at using less paper whenever we can; the real challenge today is to convince our exhibitors not to bring paper brochures and find other ways to share information electronically or through thumbdrives. Some do but still a lot of people bring paper. To be honest, most people throw it away. In our social media and communication with sellers and exhibitors, we're trying to encourage them to find alternative ways to share their information.

We have stopped distributing board papers at our board meetings. We send the board members, including the council and committees, all information electronically.

And as for youth engagement, we have the Youth Symposium which will be held at the Institute for Tourism Studies (IFT) in Macau. We're working with Fanny Vong (president) from the institute and professor Chris Bottrill from Capilano University, who's also our vice chair this year, to organise the event. Several hundred students are expected to attend the forum, with about 10-20 per cent being international students. Tony Fernandes, CEO of AirAsia, will be a guest speaker at the symposium.

* **Editor's note:** This interview was conducted in July



Indonesia Ministry of Tourism's I Gde Pitana, PATA's Andrew Jones, Indonesia Ministry of Tourism's Arief Yahya and Mario Hardy wrote their congratulatory messages for PATA's 65th founding anniversary at PTM 2016 in Jakarta

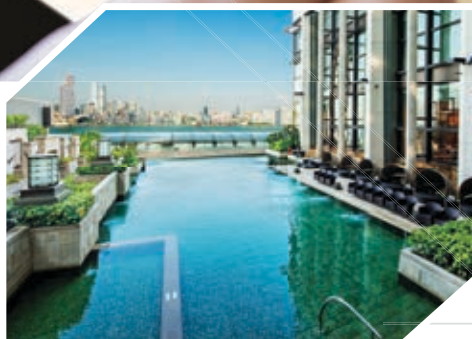
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Competing for fun

In Asia, the business of fun is a serious industry as attractions keep up the amusement war through constant reinvention. By **Pamela Chow**

Asia has been the hotbed of a theme park rush, with intellectual-property (IP) partnerships on the uptick as destinations the likes of Shanghai Disneyland, Legoland Japan and Malaysia's Movie Animation Park Studios seek out movie and cartoon producers to create new universes of amusement.

With fun being a serious business in Asia, water playgrounds have also been making a splash. From 2015-2016, visitor volume to water parks in the region climbed 5.4 per cent from 19.5 million to

20.9 million, reported the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) and AECOM.

To quench the region's thirst for watery fun, new operators are thronging the market – at least 15 water parks have opened in the last three years in Thailand alone, said Wuthichai Luangamornlert, managing director of Siam Park City, at the Asian Attractions Expo 2017 in Singapore in June.

"We're seeing a growth in private investment in this new emerging market as



Shanghai Disneyland



Legoland Discovery Center in Osaka

Getty Images/Stock

Vietnam has huge growth potential right now (in theme park development), and we also are seeing growth in Malaysia, South Korea and India.

Paul Noland
President and CEO,
International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions

tourism spreads from Pattaya, Bangkok and Chiang Mai to the second-tier cities," observed Wuthichai.

Meanwhile, service supplier WhiteWater Southeast Asia has signed to develop "world-class water parks" in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Bahrain, said CEO Chris Perry.

Yet, as the competition heats up, the market size is shrinking. In 2015-2016, overall visitor numbers in Asia-Pacific's top 20 amusement parks dipped 2.8 per cent from 130.9 million to 127.3 million, according to the 2016 TEA/AECOM Theme Index and Museum Index.

The decrease, as outlined in the report, is in part due to more parks opening in China, drawing droves of Chinese visitors to domestic attractions and away from those in neighbouring countries.

Confronted with sliding popularity and a tightening market share, incumbents around Asia are facing a mounting pressure to reinvent.

Fun for the whole family

The key, industry players believe, lies in multigenerational experiences. President and CEO of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), Paul Noland, observed: "We are seeing parks capitalise on the nostalgia

factor. Successive generations like to share experiences that they enjoyed growing up, so the trend is to create high-quality rides that all members of the family can enjoy."

Wuthichai agreed, adding that family rides generate the most visibility and discussion on social media for Siam Park City, Thailand's oldest water park.

"The trend is to become more family-oriented, so we've invested in rides that the whole family can go on," said Wuthichai. "We've had customers who haven't visited our park in five years come back."

Operators also reported that more developers are capitalising on this trend by transforming casino complexes into mixed-use, family-friendly destinations.

According to Ken Wheatley, director of entertainment technology supplier Christie, Macau led the pack in the development of mixed-use integrated resorts, which was soon replicated in the Philippines, South Korea and Singapore.

The latest talk of the town is Okada Manila, a 44ha integrated resort in the Entertainment City gaming strip. The US\$2.4 billion project boasts a casino, hotel, dining and shopping outlets, and conference spaces, in addition to a 1.2km-long multimedia show comprising choreographed water, light and music performances.

Such multimedia shows are also gain-

ing traction with operators across Asia, checking off boxes as a multigenerational, sustainable and cost-effective revenue driver, with Marina Bay Sands' Spectra light-and-water extravaganza by its promenade as a recent example.

"Multimedia presentations help us keep (attractions) current and relevant for the next generation, who come back to experience something old that's new again," said Paul Rivet, director of entertainment at Walt Disney Attractions Japan.

Often conducted in the evening, multimedia shows motivate visitors to stay longer at resorts or even overnight, and can drive on-site F&B spending to 15 per cent more, said Jean-Christophe Canizares, chairman and CEO of French multimedia provider ECA2, which developed the Wings of Time show in Sentosa.

They can also be "refreshed easily and changed seasonally", said Michael Reid, founder of IconPath Curated Experiences.

This is a big selling point – especially for regional parks with smaller budgets – as operators prioritise the "sustained repeatable value" of an attraction, explained Ron Merriman, managing director of MR ProFun China, the company that helmed Ferrari World Abu Dhabi.

While parkgoers may be eager to embrace multimedia extravaganzas, industry experts caution operators against leaning on trending technology as the focal point of the attraction.

"We have to recognise it's the story and experience that is important. The technology delivers it," said Darrell Metzger, former CEO of Ocean Park. "We have to be willing to abandon the technology and replace it with whatever it is that can tell your story."

The park battle wages on

As Asia continues to receive new openings and expansions, China is seeing multiple IP projects – including Zhuhai's Lionsgate Entertainment World and Universal Studios Beijing – in the development pipeline. TEA projects that by 2020, attendance at theme parks in China will surpass those in the US.

While numerous IP-driven developments are in the pipeline across Asia, countries outside of China may find greater favour in smaller or regional IP projects.

Malaysia and the Philippines were quick to hop on this trend, with the Genting Group's 20th Century Fox World open-

ing this year-end, and the launch of the DreamWorks-branded DreamPlay attraction in City of Dreams Manila.

Entertainment + Culture Advisors reported that other Asian markets, including Vietnam and South Korea, are in talks to develop integrated resorts with international IP.

Still, Indonesia currently lacks IP attractions, noted David Sutiono, director of Funworld Prima. He added that in order to boost international visitor volume, the country should promote its culture and islands, as it has potential for huge market growth in 10 years or more.

Wuthichai commented: "It can be difficult for major companies to come in because there is no major land mass like the US or China. In my opinion, smaller integrated resorts are the solution."

On the other hand, Wuthichai is optimistic of Thailand's theme park potential, as the country received 32.5 million visitors in 2016 and expects an upwards of 34 million this

year. The country's main concern lies in increasing repeat visitations, which will be tackled with continued government investment in man-made attractions over the next five years, he shared.

Elsewhere in Asia, previously untapped markets are emerging into the fore. Said IAAPA's Noland: "Vietnam has huge growth potential right now, and we also are seeing growth in Malaysia, South Korea and India."

Right: Siam Park City, Bangkok
Below: Water Show at Marina Bay Sands, Singapore



Upcoming attractions in Asia

Jeju Shinhwa World, South Korea

Opening in phases this year, the 250ha Jeju Shinhwa World will be Jeju's first integrated resort. It will encompass premium accommodation, a family theme park, water park, Jeju's largest retail and F&B complex, a YG

entertainment centre, MICE facilities and casinos. The 344-room Somerset Jeju Shinhwa World opened on April 25, while the 630-room Jeju Shinhwa World Marriott Resort & Spa will launch in two phases, starting with 486 rooms in late-2017.

Wet'n'Wild Haikou, China

Built on the Mission Hills Golf Resort Haikou on Hainan Island, Wet'n'Wild Haikou is one of Village Roadshow Theme Parks' (VRTP) first debuts in Asia, bringing China its first Wet'n'Wild-branded theme park.

The site is a cluster of hotels – including the recently opened Ritz-Carlton – and a retail, dining and entertainment precinct. VRTP is currently providing consultation for development and will operate the park following its opening, slated for later this year.

Lionsgate Entertainment World, China

Scheduled to open by the end of 2018 in Novotown on Hengqin Island in Zhuhai, the 2.2ha indoor park will be themed around Lionsgate's key franchises, including *The Hunger Games*, *The Twilight Saga*, *The Divergent Series* and *Now You See Me*. It is developed by Thinkwell Group with consultation by VRTP, which will manage its operations after the opening.

20th Century Fox World, Malaysia

Under the 10-year Genting Integrated Tourism Plan, Genting Group is developing its Outdoor Theme Park into the US\$300 million 20th Century Fox World. The 10ha park will feature six themed zones such as *Alien vs Predator*, *Ice Age* and *Planet of the Apes*. It is slated to open later this year.

Universal Studios Beijing, China

Universal Studios' latest foray is a 405ha destination resort in Tongzhou, Beijing, with a reported US\$3.3 billion initial capital investment.

A joint venture between Beijing Shouhuan Cultural Tourism Investment and Universal Parks & Resorts, the theme park will feature existing Universal Studio attractions as well as new attractions reflecting China's cultural heritage, alongside a retail, dining and entertainment district and themed hotels. It is scheduled to open in 2020 or later.



Preserving for posterity

Rachel AJ Lee rounds up the 37 sites in South-east Asia that sport the UNESCO World Heritage label

CAMBODIA

1. Angkor – Constructed by Khmer King Suryavarman II between 1113 and 1150, the long-standing symbol of Cambodia has more than 3,000 *apsaras* (celestial nymphs) carved into its stone walls.

2. Temple of Preah Vihear – Dating back to the 9th century, the Hindu temple – constructed along an 800m-long north-south axis – stands atop a 525m-high cliff in the Dangrek Mountains near the Thai-Cambodian border.

INDONESIA

3. Komodo National Park – Located in Nusa Tenggara, the park covers more than 1,800km² and comprises three major islands – Komodo, Rinca and Padar. It is the only place in the world where Komodo dragons are found.

4. Borobudur Temple Compounds – Built in the 8th and 9th centuries during the Syailendra Dynasty, the 29m-high step pyramid in Central Java has more than 500 Buddha statues perched all around.

5. Prambanan Temple Compounds – Dating back to the 10th century, this large Hindu complex features three temples decorated with reliefs illustrating the Ramayana epic, dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma, and three temples to the animals which serve them.

6. Ujung Kulon National Park – This park in Java's Banten Province is one of the natural world's best-known examples of recent island volcanism with its ongoing geological evolution since the 1883 Krakatau eruption. It is also home to the critically-endangered Javan rhinoceros.

7. Cultural Landscape of Bali Province: the Subak System as a Manifestation of the Tri Hita Karana Philosophy – This inscription comprises five rice terraces and their water temples that cover a total of 19,500ha. The temples are the focus of a cooperative water management system of canals and weirs, known as *subak*, which dates back to the 9th century.

8. Lorentz National Park – This 2.4 million-ha park stretches for over 150km from Irian Jaya's central cordillera mountains in the north to the Arafura Sea in the south, and contains a range of ecosystems from snow-capped mountain peaks to lowland wetlands.

9. Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra – Comprising Gunung Leuser National Park, Kerinci Seblat National Park and Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park, this 2.5 million-ha protected area is home to an estimated 10,000 plant species, 200 mammal species and 580 bird species.

10. Sangiran Early Man Site – Situated 15km north of Solo in Java, the site rose



to prominence thanks to the discovery of more than 100 *Homo erectus* remains and associated stone artefacts. These fossils show human evolution process during the Pleistocene period.

LAOS

11. Town of Luang Prabang – Built on a peninsula formed by the Mekong and the Nam Khan Rivers, the ancient capital boasts a fusion of traditional Lao architecture and colonial structures built by the Europeans in the 19th and 20th centuries.

12. Vat Phou and Associated Ancient Settlements within the Champasak Cultural Landscape – At the base of the Phou Kao mountain in southern Laos, the Vat Phou Temple complex is more than a millennia old with well-preserved ruins of temples, shrines and waterworks dating from the 5th to 15th centuries.

MALAYSIA

13. Gunung Mulu National Park – Occupying some 53,000ha, the park is located on the island of Borneo in Sarawak. It is dominated by Gunung Mulu, a 2,377m-high sandstone pinnacle, and has caves measuring at least 295km long.

14. Kinabalu Park – The centrepiece of this 754km² national park in Sabah is the 4,095m Mount Kinabalu. It is home to a wide range of habitats, and features more than 5,000 vascular plant species, 90 species of lowland mammals and 326 bird species.

15. Melaka and George Town, Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca – Asia and Europe have endowed Melaka with 15th-century Malay sultanate, Portuguese and Dutch influences, while George Town represents the British era from the end of the 18th century. These influences can be seen through the respective towns' government buildings, churches and squares.

16. Archaeological Heritage of the Lenggong Valley – Situated in the Lenggong Valley are four archaeological sites which span close to two million years. The sites suggest the presence of a fairly large, semi-sedentary population with cultural remains from the Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Metal ages.

MYANMAR

17. Pyu Ancient Cities – The site comprises the archaeological remains of palace citadels, burial grounds and Buddhist stupas belonging to the three city-states – Halin, Beikthano and Sri Ksetra – along the Irrawaddy River.

PHILIPPINES

18. Baroque Churches of the Philippines – These are four Roman Catholic churches built by the Spanish colonialists: Church of San Agustin in Manila; Church of La Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion in Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur; Church of San Agustin in Paoay, Ilocos Norte; and Church of Santo Tomas de Villanueva in Miag-ao.

19. Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park – The marine park in the centre of the Sulu Sea protects more than 130,000ha of three atolls and deep sea. The reef



ecosystem supports over 350 species of coral, 500 species of fish, and is a nesting site for birds and marine turtles.

20. Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras – The five clusters of rice fields on Luzon have followed the contours of the mountains for two millennia. They all belong to the Ifugao, a minority community that has occupied these mountains for just as long.

21. Historic Town of Vigan – Established in the 16th century, Vigan is the best-preserved example of a planned Spanish colonial town in Asia. Featuring 233 historic buildings along a grid of 25 streets, the 17.3ha site is located in the province of Ilocos Sur.

22. Puerto-Princesa Subterranean River National Park – The limestone karst site covers more than 22,200ha, and boasts an 8.2km-long underground river. The full mountain-to-sea ecosystem on south-western Palawan features intact-old growth forests and distinct wildlife.

23. Mount Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary – Straddling San Isidro Municipality, Governor Generoso Municipality and the City of Mati, all in the province of Davao Oriental, the 16,923ha sanctuary is home to 1,380 species including the critically-endangered Philippine eagle among the 341 endemic species.

SINGAPORE

24. Singapore Botanic Gardens – Established in 1859 by the Agri-Horticultural Society, this the first and only tropical botanic garden on the UNESCO list. The green site has 36,400 living plant accessions, 6,544 species and 44 heritage trees.

THAILAND

25. Historic City of Ayutthaya – Founded in 1350 by U Thong, Ayutthaya's first king, the 289ha city flourished for four centuries before it was attacked and destroyed by the Burmese army in 1767. Temples such as the Wat Phra Si Sanphet and Wat Phra Mahathat still remain.

26. Historic Town of Sukhothai and Associated Historic Towns – Situated in the northern region of present-day Thailand, this property comprises the three physically closely related ancient towns Sukhothai, Si Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet.



27. Thungyai-Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuaries – Encompassing 622,200ha in Uthai Thani, Tak and Kanchanaburi, the sanctuary comprises two river systems, the Upper Khwae Yai and Huai Khakhaeng. Species include 120 mammals, 400 birds, 96 reptiles, 43 amphibians and 113 freshwater fish.

28. Ban Chiang Archaeological Site – Dating from 1,495BC, the 67ha area in north-east Thailand contains early evidence of settled agrarian society in South-east Asia, along with evidence of wet rice agriculture and domesticated farm animals.

29. Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex – The 615,000ha site comprises five contiguous national parks of Khao Yai, Thap Lan, Pang Sida, Ta Phraya and the Dong Yai Wildlife Sanctuary. It contains more than 800 fauna species, 112 mammal species, 392 bird species, and 200 reptiles and amphibians.

VIETNAM

30. Complex of Huế Monuments – Established as the capital of unified Vietnam in 1802, Hue was the political, cultural and religious centre under the Nguyen dynasty until 1945, and is a remarkable example of late feudal urban planning in Asia.

31. Halong Bay – Covering an area of 43,400ha in the Gulf of Tonkin north-east of Vietnam, Halong Bay boasts more than 1,600 limestone islands and islets. Most of them are uninhabited and have towering limestone pillars, arches and caves.

32. Hoi An Ancient Town – The inscribed property in Quang Nam Province comprises a well-preserved complex of 1,107 timber frame buildings with brick or

wooden walls. The town reflects a fusion of cultures and is a good example of a small-scale trading port active from the 15th to 19th centuries.

33. My Son Sanctuary – Dating from the 4th to 13th centuries, the site was the religious and political capital of the Champa Kingdom. Located in the Duy Xuyen District, it is made up of numerous tower temples built for Hindu divinities Krishna, Vishnu and Shiva.

34. Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park – Located in the middle of the Annamite Mountain Range in Quang Binh Province, the 123,326ha national park features geological diversity as well as over 104km caves and underground rivers.

35. Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi – The Thang Long Imperial Citadel was built in the 11th century by the Ly Viet Dynasty and constructed on the remains of a Chinese fortress from the 7th century. It reflects a culture specific to the lower Red River Valley, at the crossroads of influences from China and the Champa Kingdom.

36. Citadel of the Ho Dynasty – Built in 1397, the site in Vinh Loc District comprises the Inner Citadel, La Thanh Outer Wall and Nam Giao Altar. It bears witness to the period in South-east Asian history when traditional kingship and Buddhist values were giving way to new trends in technology, commerce and centralised administration.

37. Trang An Landscape Complex – The property near Ninh Binh comprises limestone karst peaks permeated with valleys, paddy fields and small villages. Caves there have revealed archaeological traces of human activity over a continuous period of more than 30,000 years.

Host City

Uncover Macau's many gems

Macau is a destination for everyone, from gourmands and heritage hunters to shopaholics and little ones. By **Prudence Lui**



From above: SW Steakhouse at Wynn Palace Cotai, home-made durian ice cream from Mok Yei Kei, St Dominic's Church, one of the attractions on the Footprints of Painter George Smirnoff walking trail

Cheap chow

Lord Stow's Bakery

Opened on Coloane Island by Englishman Andrew Stow in 1989, this little bakery later became famous for one item – egg tart. It was recognised as the first specialist egg tart shop in Asia and its footprint today extends into Hong Kong, Japan and the Philippines. Although it has opened various branches in Macau, the original shop in Coloane still retains an old charm and traditional service.

Mok Yei Kei

Founded in 1954, Mok Yei Kei is a traditional dessert shop in the heart of Taipa Village – an old village area surrounding Rua da Cunha – which is home to a wide range of restaurants and eateries. The shop is well known for home-made durian ice cream, sawdust pudding and agar.

Koi Kei Bakery

From starting out in 1997 as a cart selling crunchy peanut and ginger candy, Koi Kei Bakery today produces over 300 varieties of baked treats like egg rolls and almond

cake. Visit the branch at Calçada Barra near A-Ma Temple if you'd like to also check out the Museum Of Souvenirs, a new attraction within the shop.

Heritage hunts

Taking a Walk through the Streets of Macao

Organised by the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM), this walk currently features 18 thematic routes through streets and alleys of old Macau. IACM offers guided walks on selected Saturdays or by appointment. One route is the two-hour Footprints of Poets of Modern Macao, which takes participants on streets once walked by Chinese and Western poets such as Portuguese literary figure Luis Vaz de Camoes.

Mandarin House

Built before 1869, the Mandarin House was once the home of Chinese literary figure Zheng Guanying. It consists of several courtyard houses, displaying a mix of Chinese and Western detailing, such as grey bricks against arched ornamentations and timber lattice windows against mother-of-pearl window panels of Indian origin. Entrance is free. Cantonese guided tours are available on scheduled days.

The Ruins of St Paul's

The Ruins of St Paul's is a symbolic altar to Macau. Its once housed the Church of Mater Dei built in 1602-1640, before being destroyed by fire in 1835. This attraction features the Museum of Sacred Art and Crypt.

Glam eats

SW Steakhouse

Located within Wynn Palace Cotai, SW Steakhouse reimagines the classic American steakhouse and features premium steak and seafood from the US, Australia and Japan. This fine-dining outlet pioneers a dinner show in theatrical animation with 3D mapping vignettes to delight the senses. The show comes on every 30 minutes.

8½ Otto e Mezzo Bombana

The restaurant in Galaxy Macao is run by renowned Italian chef Umberto Bombana, who holds three Michelin stars for the Hong Kong branch of the same name. He is committed to using only the most premium and fresh ingredients, striking the balance between tradition and innovation.

Robuchon au Dôme

Robuchon au Dôme, formerly known as Robuchon a Galera in Lisboa Hotel, has been relocated to the dome of Grand Lisboa Hotel. This fine-dining restaurant by Joël Robuchon has earned three Michelin stars. It is run by executive chef Julien Tongourian and his team, who ensure culinary artistry is met with the finest wines, service and an impressive décor.

Family fun

Giant Panda Pavilion

Since giant panda Kai Kai and Xin Xin gave birth to their twin cubs Jian Jian and Kang Kang in June 2016, visitors have been flocking to the Giant Panda Pavilion to say hello to the new additions to the family. Visit them in the Macao Giant Panda Pavilion on Sundays from 14.30 to 16.30.

Hac Sa beach area

Take a leisurely walk down the newly renovated promenade by Hac Sa beach, with nearby play areas for the little ones. The more adventurous may explore the Hác Sá Long Chao Kok Coastal Trail for views of the mountains and sea.

Kid zones

Kid zones in integrated resorts – namely the Cube (The Venetian, Sands Cotai Central and The Parisian), Kid's City (City of Dreams) and Planet J (Sands Cotai Central) – leave families spoiled for choice of indoor and outdoor activities.

Shopping treats

Creative shops

Not far from the Ruins of St Paul's is Macau's creative neighbourhood project by Number

81, launched in February 2015. The area features creative retail concepts like Pátio de Chón Sau, an arts department store, and Rua de Nossa Senhora do Amparo.

Village Mall

Located at Rua do Campo in the Broadway Centre Building, Village Mall houses close to 100 shops, mainly of culture and creative products. The top floor of this three-storey mall is dedicated to food and beverages.

St Lazarus Parish

The parish has developed into a district of cultural creative shops, including boutiques, cafes, souvenir shops and others.

Some of these shops offer products designed by local artists and designers.

Spectacular stays

The Parisian

The 3,000-room Parisian, which debuted in August 2016, is the last jigsaw piece that completes American developer Sheldon Adelson's grand dream for Macau. It is designed in contemporary French flair and comes with a half-scale Eiffel Tower in front of the hotel. Observation decks on the seventh and 37th floor grants visitors a

360-degree view of the Cotai Strip.

Wynn Palace Cotai

Wynn Palace on the Cotai Strip takes in 1,706 keys. It boasts a luxury of space, with suites averaging 85m² to 107m². Of the 12 dining outlets in the hotel, five are fine-dining concepts. A highlight is the SkyCab, cablecars that lift guests over the Performance Lake and into a garden where a member of the hotel's Reception team offers a warm welcome.

The Macau Roosevelt

The Old Hollywood-inspired, 368-room Macau Roosevelt introduces a new urban getaway retreat concept to Macau. Fa-

cilities include indoor and outdoor social spaces, a fitness centre and an open-air swimming pool overlooking the Macau Jockey Club. The hotel sits on Taipa Island, just 10 minutes from the Macau International Airport.

Legend Palace Hotel

The five-star Legend Palace Hotel rolled out its red carpet in February 2017. Straddling Macau Fisherman's Wharf and adjacent to the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal, the hotel houses 233 guestrooms, the Legend Palace Casino, retail shops, multipurpose rooms and six F&B outlets. Babysitting, butler and limousine services are offered.



From left: Legend Palace Hotel, Giant Panda Pavilion, Macau Roosevelt

*Experience Heritage,
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nepal 

Patan Durbar Square, A UNESCO World Heritage Site



Abu Dhabi to host PATA's inaugural event in United Arab Emirates

The PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart 2018 will take place in Al Ain, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) next February. This is the first PATA event to be held in the UAE and the only event to be staged in West Asia in the last 14 years.

This three-day niche event with both conference and travel mart components, will bring together public and private sector tourism professionals involved in adventure travel and responsible tourism.

Al Ain is one of the world's oldest permanently inhabited settlements and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visitors will get to enjoy the diversity of mountain, desert and oasis landscapes and exhilarating adventure attractions, all complemented by rich historical sites, a state-of-the-art conference centre and outstanding hotels of all categories.

This event is set to attract more than 200 delegates from over 25 countries, and delegates will be offered half-day pre or post touring options courtesy of the Abu Dhabi Convention Bureau to showcase the sights and attractions within the region.

According to Sultan Al Dhaheri, acting executive director tourism, Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority, Abu Dhabi has experienced "significant growth" in guest arrivals in recent years, especially from India and China.

He added: "Since we have joined PATA in March 2016, we have been working with PATA members to place greater emphasis on seeding growth in visitor arrivals from these priority source markets."

With three diverse destinations in just one emirate, Abu Dhabi is steeped in Arabian hospitality, authentic culture and heritage and is widely acclaimed as the ideal place for a desert hideaway.

Website: tcaabudhabi.ae



Hullett House brings guests back in time

Historic Hong Kong hotel Hullett House, located on Canton Road in the district of Tsim Sha Tsui, has joined Harbour Plaza Hotels and Resorts. The design-led hotel which originally opened in 1881, is housed within Hong Kong's former Marine Police Headquarters.

It has 10 individually-designed suites, adorned with high ceilings, wooden floors and balconies. Preserving its unique history, the building carries Victorian style colonial

architecture, with every inch and detail of the space a witness of history. Through unique and meticulous designs and furnishings, each suite of the heritage hotel recreates the unique history of Hong Kong, transporting travellers back in time to a tour of culture.

The heritage hotel presents unique meeting venues and facilities as well with four function rooms which offer a cosy seating capacity between 18 and 45 delegates.

Website: harbour-plaza.com/

Ezeego1.com strengthens presence across South-east Asia

Online travel marketplace Ezeego1.com, is growing its reach into the South-east Asia market to provide a customised portfolio of products according to the needs of each of the markets.

Neelu Singh, director and CEO of Ezeego1.com, said: "South-east Asia is a promising market for us and we believe it has immense potential that is scalable and we have a slew of products to cater to each of those markets. We aim to corner market share through an innovative product mix."

Since its establishment in 2010,

Ezeego1.com has evolved as a trusted online marketplace to garner the support of millions of customers and a strong network of partners in the trade, including agents, suppliers, tourism boards and other alliance networks.

Recognised for its robust technology and innovative distribution channels, the company offers travel providers a single window platform and real time interface to access millions of hotel rooms and airline ticketing across the globe, at one click.

Website: www.ezeego1.co.in

ezeego1.com
Global travel market place

The Wheel Travel

Established in 2010 in Yangon, Myanmar, The Wheel Travel specialises in unique Myanmar tour packages of excellent quality. Recognising that each traveller has different interests and travel styles, The Wheel Travel customises every tour to fit the client's profile, using its expert knowledge and creativity. Tours are led by multilingual guides who are trained to be more than 'guide books', to take guests off the tourist trail and to join in the local culture and life of Myanmar people.

Website: www.thewheeltravel.com



Marintur Indonesia

Marintur Indonesia is a DMC with its headquarters in Jakarta and a second office in Bali. Known for delivering quality and trustworthy service since its establishment in 1966, Marintur Indonesia offers the best tour experiences across Indonesia. It specialises in business events, leisure and special interest, and can tailor packages to suit client's needs.

Website: www.marintur.co.id



Exotic experiences await in Nepal

Take a tour into the capital city Kathmandu for a peek into the colourful Nepali life. Enjoy oriental stories that echo the past and engage with art and architecture which breathe history and culture. Relish unique ancient carnivals celebrating the joy-loving Nepali spirit, and taste authentic Nepali food prepared through recipes passed through generations.

Head out of the capital to relax in the quaint Pokhara city and replenish there. For a religious experience, discover peace in the holy city Lumbini, which is the birthplace of the Buddha. Seek delight in the company of nature and wildlife in Chitwan.

An unrivalled trekking experience awaits in Nepal, where travellers are able to discover the authentic beauty of nature amidst the wilderness as they walk through majestic mountains. Adventure lovers have a wide range of options to choose from rafting, paragliding, ultralight flying, sky diving, bungee jumping, canyoning, ziplining, cable car rides to hill-top getaways and mountain biking.

Nepal promises an unforgettable experience which will last for a lifetime.

Website: welcomenepal.com

DOC DMC Macau

Led by industry veteran Bruno Simões, DOC DMC Macau has established itself as a specialist in destination management services, meetings and event planning, congress organisation, and wine event management and publicity.

In Macau, the company is able to deliver

interesting themed events for corporates, such as a lively Brazil night or a wine casino-style cocktail party. It is also experienced in teambuilding programmes and has several engaging ideas up its sleeves.

Website: www.doc-dmc-macau.com

Langkawi crowned as next host venue for PATA Travel Mart 2018

Langkawi will be hosting the next PATA Travel Mart 2018 at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre (MIEC), the island's largest convention venue.

Langkawi, an archipelago of 99 islands, is famously known for its pristine beaches, secluded islands and nature sanctuaries of exotic wildlife and tropical plants. A magnet for international eco-tourism, Langkawi was designated a Global Geopark by UNESCO.

Aspiring to become the "Monaco of the East", Langkawi is home to a wide selection of stellar tourism products from its SkyCab, the steepest cable car ride

on earth; to Underwater World, Malaysia's largest aquarium; to mangrove tours at Kilim Karst Geoforest Park and cruises along Dayang Bunting Marble Geoforest Park.

Apart from being a perfect tourism getaway for family and honeymooners, the destination has been growing its reputation for MICE as well with numerous international events being hosted there.

During this signature event in September next year, more than 3,000 businesses, tourism organisations and authorities are expected to attend and will have the opportunity to visit the iconic attractions.

Website: naturallylangkawi.my



Grand Hyatt Macau

Sitting within the City of Dreams integrated resort, Grand Hyatt Macau is an ideal hotel for business and leisure. The 791 guestrooms and suites offer spectacular views over the Cotai or the west bank of Pearl River. All rooms boast an innovative design and are fitted with the latest business technology.

Beijing Kitchen and Mezza9 keep bellies happy with authentic northern Chinese dishes in the former and international favourites in the latter. For casual gatherings over desserts and light bites, head to the Lobby Lounge where a resident band plays in the evenings.

For relaxation, guests can retreat into Isala Spa, dip into a 40m heated outdoor lap pool, or luxuriate in steam rooms and whirlpools. Young families will appreciate the dedicated toddler pool and recreation area.

Grand Hyatt Macau charms event planners with almost 8,000m² of function space, comprising two pillarless ballrooms and eight meeting rooms on the same floor for convenient access.

Website: www.cityofdreamsmacau.com/en/hotels/detail/grand-hyatt



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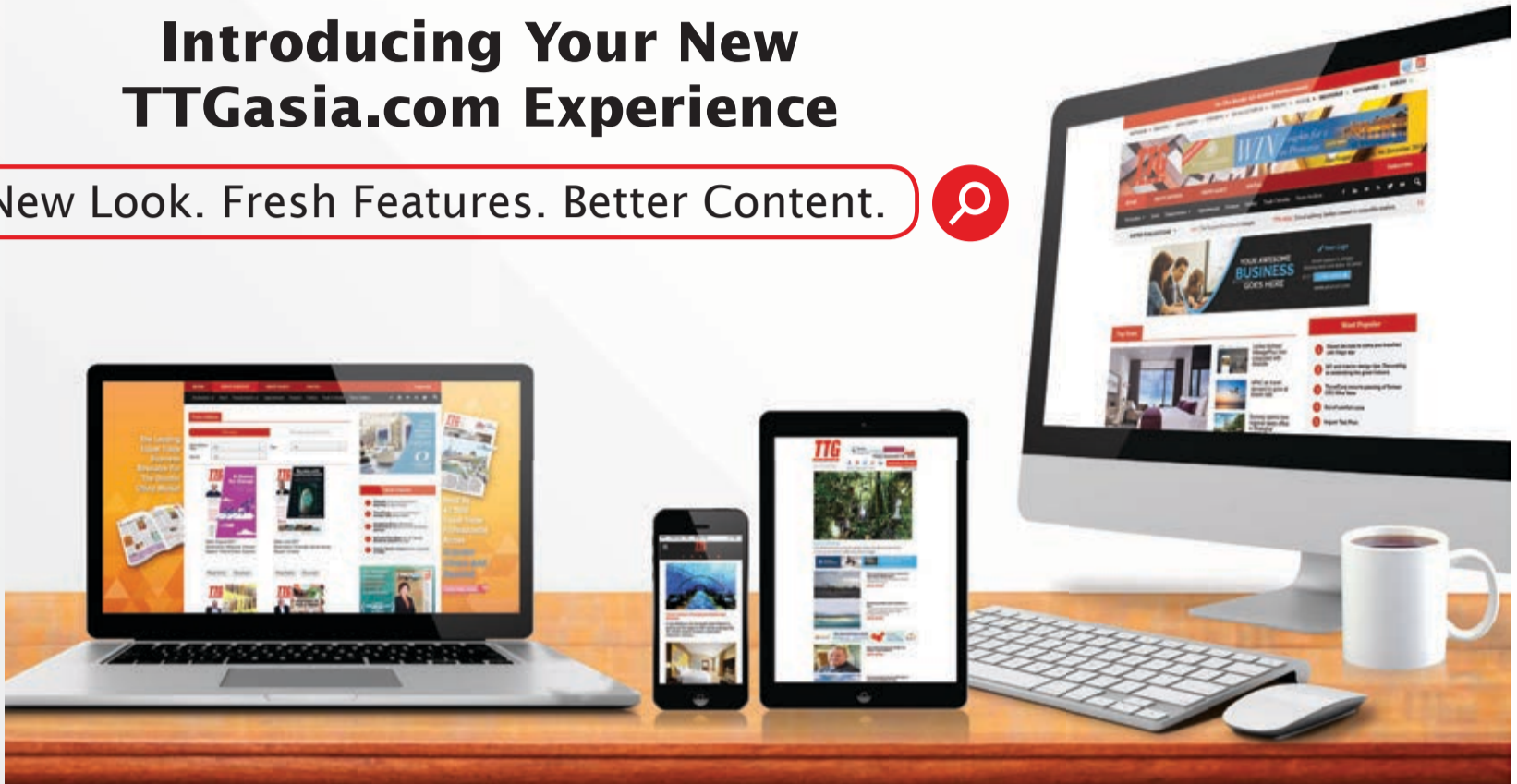
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There's more fun to discover

Travellers to benefit from LCC's expanding domestic network and a major campaign to market new locations. By **Rosa Ocampo**

This year is one of the most challenging in the annals of Philippine tourism as security concerns and conflict deter foreigners from visiting the country's top tourist draws.

Prospects for the rest of the year until the early part of 2018 are rendered uncertain by travel advisories from major and fast-growing source markets wary of terrorist threats, the battle in Marawi entering its third month (as of press time), and the extension of martial law throughout Mindanao until December.

Although terrorism has become a global concern, in the Philippines a lot depends on how the government is addressing the problem and how the Department of Tourism (DoT) in particular is marketing and promoting the destination.

Could it be that now is the time for the government to make it easier for foreigners to obtain a Philippine visa, a clarion call that it has been resisting for the longest time?

Rajah Tours president Jojo Clemente, thinks so. She said: "At the moment, there are several markets such as India and Sri Lanka where obtaining visas to visit the Philippines is difficult. We can easily add one to two million more arrivals per year if the process is simplified."

The current lull in tourism business could also signal the perfect time for the government to get busy with infrastructure improvement.

Mary Ann Ong, general manager, Luxus Travel and Tours, underscored the urgency for improved land transportation and airport facilities when she said that while China is committed to bringing in a million tourists into the country this year, the question is whether the current infrastructure can accommodate the surge.

As foreign arrivals are stymied, travel consultants are tapping domestic travellers by enticing them with new destina-



A major campaign is in the pipeline to highlight new and viable destinations, such as Batangas; colourful corals in Anilao, Batangas

tions and attractive packages. Estimated at 55 million, the domestic market is four times bigger than the international one. It is also growing as travel becomes part of the Filipino lifestyle.

It helps that budget carriers are opening new routes, including Cebu Pacific which has launched flights to Masbate and Romblon, both blessed with pristine beaches and bucolic scenery.

However, domestic tourist receipts are not as plump as income generated from foreign arrivals.

"We cannot really be domestic all the time. We have to go out (and get foreign visitors)," opined Fe Ablang-Yu, general manager, Arfel Travel and Tours.

Ablang-Yu stressed that the Philippines has what it takes to get a bigger slice of the international market: experiential jour-

neys, sustainable destinations, facilities that are par for the course but whose marketing and promotions can be improved.

Philippine Tour Operators Association (Philtota) president Cesar Cruz told *TTG Show Daily* that together with the (DoT) and its marketing arm, Tourism Promotions Board (TPB), the travel trade has lined up a major destination promotion centred on tour packages that are competitive in rates and quality.

Focused on new yet viable destinations, Cruz said the destinations chosen are safe and secure, accessible, with airport and other tourism infrastructure. These include the Ilocos Region up to the Cordillera and upland to Banaue and Sagada; the Bicol region; Batangas, Laguna and Quezon; among others in Luzon and destinations mainly in the central Visayas.

Destination in numbers

2.9 million

The number of foreign arrivals into the Philippines from January to May this year, up 14.4 per cent from a year ago, driven by the successful *It's More Fun in the Philippines* campaign

105

The expected number of port calls in the Philippines this year, up from 72 last year, as Star Cruises' *Superstar Virgo* makes Manila its home port and various international cruise lines add the country to their itineraries

35

The number of luxury hotels and resorts in planning, construction and pre-opening stages that will add at least 10,000 rooms to the Philippines over the next five years

Viewpoints

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

Frank Reichenbach
General manager,
Marco Polo Ortigas



Connecting destinations through better accessibility is important in enabling tourists get around different regions, in a faster and more efficient way. This gives utmost convenience to tourists who would like to explore the country, from capitals to the more exotic locations. These infrastructures are a long term investment that greatly affects the country positively.

Vilma De Claro Mendoza
President, Mart Evers
Travel and Tours



There are two urgent aspects. One, the transportation system which is in a dismal state, beginning with our gateways where our airports lack runways. Also, we need an efficient, inexpensive, safe and people-friendly way of transporting tourists (around). Two, our local governments and national agencies are notorious for overexploiting our natural attractions, such as the indiscriminately developed Puerto Galera and Boracay. The attractions' pristine beauty is killed by too many unnecessary structures built right where the best natural features are, effectively destroying the goose that lays the golden egg.

Hot and new

Marriott Manila Hotel

Marriott Manila Hotel has added 228 keys with the opening of its West Wing. With the smallest room at 48m², these newly minted rooms are bigger than the standard size of 36m² of the 570 rooms in the main hotel building.

Valero Grand Suites, Manila

Swiss-Belhotel International has returned to the Philippines with the launch of deluxe Valero Grand Suites in the financial and business hub of Makati. The property features 271 well-appointed rooms and suites, function rooms,

gym and spa, restaurants and coffee shops, rooftop swimming pool, and complimentary Wi-Fi.

Rizal Park Hotel, Manila

Rizal Park Hotel now stands in the restored 1898 colonial building that used to be the Manila Army and Navy Club, overlooking Manila Bay. The up-market boutique hotel has 76 keys, a sky bar and a coffee bar. Coming up in its phase two opening are an infinity pool and gym.

Crimson Resort & Spa Boracay

The 192-key Crimson Resort & Spa Boracay has

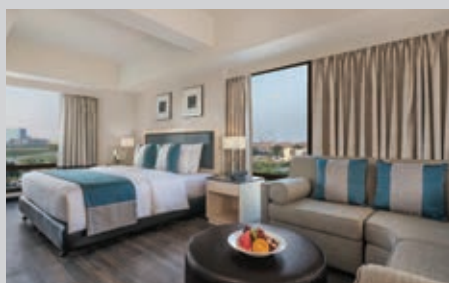
opened, offering 22 villas with private pools, one-bedroom suites and deluxe rooms as well as the brand's signature Azure Beach Club, Aum Spa, Crimzone Kids Entertainment, three swimming pools, a grand ballroom, events pavilion and meeting rooms.

Air Asia

Mindanao in southern Philippines has become more accessible with Air Asia expanding its services from Davao City to other domestic destinations including two daily flights to Cebu, daily flights to Boracay, three weekly flights to Palawan, and four weekly flights to Clark while maintaining its three daily flights to Manila.

Seda Atria Hotel, Iloilo City

The 150-key Seda Atria Hotel in Iloilo City boasts deluxe, premier and presidential accommodation. The modern lifestyle hotel is located near the airport, convention centre, Iloilo Business Park, shops and downtown area, making it ideal for both business and leisure travellers. Facilities include restaurants, e-lounge, gym and function rooms. Free Wi-Fi is offered.



From left: Rizal Park Hotel, Manila; Seda Atria Hotel, Iloilo City

14
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Destination China

Innovating the travel experience

China sees rising demand for experiential programmes and destinations away from the key tourism cities. By **Caroline Boey**

A poll of PATA China Chapter members who provide inbound leisure travel services show their businesses grew in 1H2017 by between three and 10 per cent compared to the same period last year.

The outlook for the rest of the year and into 2018 is hard to forecast, they say, but the sentiment is “optimistic” barring any major unforeseen environmental, economic and geopolitical hiccups.

Easy Tour China Travel, which caters to English-speaking markets, reported that its B2B business grew 10 per cent in 1H2017, but online bookings dropped 30 per cent. It counts the US and Australia as its biggest source markets.

Ricky Yang, general manager and co-owner, commented: “Total income and the number of clients for 1H2017 was similar to 2016. But some tourists have now returned to booking with their home-based agents who can offer good service and know what they want.”

Its B2B business is expected to increase for the rest of the year, but online will “drop drastically this year because competition is getting tougher and its website and strategies lag behind its rivals”.

To keep its offerings fresh, Easy Tour has successfully launched its Guilin Cycling Tours brand. Apart from showcasing China’s countryside on two wheels, cultural experiences have been designed for school groups from the US and travellers who want to visit non-touristy sites.

In the case of China Travel Service (CTS), its 1H2017 North America performance improved by between three and six per cent year-on-year.

Colleen Xu, assistant general manager,



Easy Tour China Travel launched Guilin Cycling Tours to showcase the countryside

Inbound, CTS Head Office, said there is room for North America to grow if environmental, political and economic conditions are favourable as China National Tourism Administration, provincial and local tourism bodies continue to promote China strongly.

“For the North American market, educational trips and homestays – which CTS pioneered in 2000 – have risen strongly since 2015 and we expect to see 10 per cent growth this year.

“We continue to see increasing demand for small special interest groups and multi-generation travel on less-packed itineraries, as well as for innovative experiences like repairing sections of the Great Wall or insights into the life of the emperor in the Forbidden City.”

Xu said Beijing, Shanghai and Xi’an are still popular destinations but increasingly, Guizhou, Shandong and Sichuan are

joining hands with airlines in destination marketing.

There has also been a resurgence of interest in Silk Road tours that take travellers along the ancient trading route from Beijing to the north-west to experience the sights and sounds of the vibrant Muslim Quarter in Xi’an, to a remote section of the Great Wall in the Gobi Desert and learning about local Uighur culture in Kashgar, according to Destination Asia (China) general manager Kaci McAllister.

As well, Huangshan is gaining popularity among nature lovers, hikers and photographers, while Xishuangbanna is seeing an emergence of new international hotel properties.

McAllister added: “While cruising on the Yangtze River remains a great way to see China’s heartland, Destination Asia is also developing a Yangtze River hike for those who want to see it on foot.”

Viewpoints

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

Chizi Igwe

Account manager-MICE,
Destination Asia (China)

China’s air quality has a major influence on a traveller’s decision to visit, so continued efforts to minimise air pollution will allow China to get closer to its full tourism potential. As well, China has to offer more economical domestic flights to make it more attractive as a multi-city destination and for infrastructure – this includes an increase in higher-level accommodation and a greater presence of English-speaking staff – to be in place in less travelled places such as in the west and south-west.

Colleen Xu

Assistant general
manager, Inbound, China
Travel Service Head Office



I would like to see China National Tourism Administration, its overseas offices and the local tourism authorities work on developing a long-term strategy to promote China and (enable) sustainable growth. Also, to have a higher level of professionalism in China’s travel industry and for suppliers to be innovative and attentive to details.

Hot and new

Palace Museum, Xiamen

Beijing’s Palace Museum opened a museum on Xiamen’s Gulangyu island in May, showcasing china, pottery, enamel vessels and decorative items from various countries. Gifted by foreign missions in the Ming and Qing dynasties, these antiques were once displayed in ancient Chinese palaces and are evidence of the rich cultural exchanges between China and other countries over the centuries.

Sea Life, Chongqing

In June, global entertainment company Merlin Entertainments opened Sea Life, Chongqing,

offering 18 exhibits and featuring more than 150 species of sea creatures. Lighting effects and creative displays offer entertaining and live interaction for visitors. The attraction’s Chongqing Ocean Exploration Center offers tour experiences where visitors can observe a wide variety of marine life at close range.

Arxan, Koktokay National Geoparks

Arxan National Geopark and Koktokay National Geopark, in Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang respectively, are now part of the UNESCO Global Geoparks. Arxan is characterised by its landscape of volcanoes, hot springs and lava formations, while Koktokay has a large

area of mining pits with deposits of over 80 kinds of minerals.

Hongshigou Ecological Leisure Farm, Hebei

Hongshigou Ecological Leisure Farm in Shahe, southern Hebei unveiled a maze formed with 7,000 trees on a 3,000m² site – twice the size of the famous Hampton Court Palace maze in London. The farm is accessible from Beijing via a five-hour train ride.

Hutong gardens, Beijing

A beautiful park with large waterways hidden deep inside a *hutong* in the Sanlihe area of Beijing’s Dongcheng district was opened in May. Crystal clear water flows through the picturesque park, which is dotted with ancient-style architecture.

Fangshan’s wine culture

In September 2016, Beijing’s Fangshan district launched tourism experiences built around local wine chateaux. Having attracted many winery investors like Chateau Changyu-AFIP and Chateau Bolongbao, Fangshan has today 22 chateaux and 13 are producing wine.

Destination in numbers

57

In billions of US dollars, China’s international visitor arrival revenue in 1H2016, a year-on-year increase of 5.3 per cent

67.87

In millions, the number of international visitor arrivals in China in 1H2016, a year-on-year increase of 3.8 per cent

11,037

The number of audited hotels in China’s provinces, which include 5,354 three-star hotels, 2,438 four-star hotels and 816 five-star hotels

RMB1,379.29

The 1Q2016 average room rate of five-star hotels in Sanya (US\$203), compared to RMB936.12 in Shanghai, RMB851.45 in Beijing and RMB724.81 in Guangzhou



From left: New maze attraction at Hongshigou Ecological Leisure Farm; Hutong gardens, Beijing

Destination Sri Lanka

Colombo readies for youthful makeover

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau has big plans to project Colombo as a fun and happening destination, writes **Feizal Samath**



Seema Malaka buddhist temple in Colombo glows at sunset

As tourism infrastructure continues to blossom across Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan Tourism Promotion Bureau is now getting to work to sharpen the image of Colombo capital city and to position it as a fun and buzzing place to be.

“We want to make Colombo a happening city with plenty of restaurants including fine-dining ones, and high-class apartments,” said Udaya Nanayakkara, chairman of the Sri Lankan Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB).

Sri Lanka is already seeing the arrival of many international dining and shopping brands, from Taco Bell to GAP.

As the first step towards this future vision of Sri Lanka, a proposal has been

sent to the government to relax the opening hours of restaurants and pubs, and to allow liquor to be served until 02.00. Currently, restaurants and pubs shut by 23.00 in this predominantly Buddhist country.

“Colombo is like a ghost town after 21.00. We want to change this,” he said.

Colombo’s repositioning is part of a wider destination marketing campaign that will start in December, initially through a US\$1.3 million digital media blitz in three traditional markets – the UK, Germany and France. Efforts will expand by May 2018 to all source markets, funded by a US\$6 million budget.

Part of the campaign is to entice travellers from regional markets to visit the capital city for three- to four-day breaks.

Destination in numbers

14

The number of Indian cities that SriLankan Airlines will fly to from August 2017, making it the international airline with the most service points in India

53

The barely noticeable difference in arrivals from India, Sri Lanka’s largest source market, in 1H2017 (172,894) and 1H2016 (172,841)

Tourism players are eager for the campaign to finally take off, after years of stalling. However, some doubt the campaign will bring much success.

A hotelier who spoke to *TTG Show Daily* on condition of anonymity, said: “With no new product development – for instance night entertainment – the campaign won’t succeed.”

He added that the destination’s room oversupply is stunting hotel performance. The problem will be exacerbated when some 4,000 new rooms come online over the next three years, most of which bearing global brand names like Shangri-La, Sheraton and Grand Hyatt. Hilton International alone intends to open six more properties under the Hilton and Double Tree brands.

Meanwhile arrivals have been flat over the past few months, owing to the three-month-long partial closure of Bandaranaike International Airport for urgent repairs and heavy floods in May.

Arrivals are expected to rebound and see 10 to 15 per cent growth this year, opined Krishan Balendra, executive director of John Keells Holdings, Sri Lanka’s largest hotel chain.

Viewpoints

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

Nalin Jayasundera
Managing director,
Aitken Spence Travels



To make Colombo a buzzing (destination, we could) develop the city’s showpiece Beira Lake (by giving it) boat rides, establish an underground train service and build theme parks with Disney-type features. We also need a dedicated cruise terminal (to cater to the) many passenger liners that are calling (at Colombo).

Devindre Senaratne
President,
Sri Lanka Association of
Inbound Tour Operators



We need to position Sri Lanka (correctly). For example, according to recent research 48 per cent of arrivals use informal accommodation which is two to three-star properties while we seem to be encouraging more five-star hotels to come in. A needs assessment of room requirements based on arrival (data and) trends is needed before encouraging more hotel (development).

On the business events front, Prema Cooray, chairman of the state-run Sri Lankan Convention Bureau, revealed that progress was being made, with two of India’s biggest travel associations – the Indian Association of Tour Operators and the Travel Agents Federation of India – planning to take their annual meetings to Colombo in October/November 2017. Further details are not available at press time, as negotiations are underway.

Hot and new

Jie Jie Beach by Jetwing

The 180-keys Jie Jie Beach by Jetwing in Panadura on the southern outskirts of Colombo welcomes Chinese tourists with a variety of dining facilities which will make them feel at home. Distinct South-east Asian flavours can be found in the restaurants, while a Chinese chef helms Golden Silk Chinese restaurant. Rooms and suites come with balconies and terraces that overlook either the Indian Ocean or the city.

Masiumpathy

Maniumpathy is a boutique hotel that was once a colonial home with over a century of memories. Following extensive renovations, this bungalow in a fashionable, tree-lined avenue in Colombo now takes in eight double rooms, each furnished with antique furniture and fittings. Facilities include a pool surrounded by lush green foliage, gardens, and a dining area where Jaffna cuisine is served.

Graze Kitchen

New to Hilton Colombo is Graze Kitchen, an all-day dining destination that showcases Sri Lankan, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Mediterranean and Thai specialties through live stations and an a la carte menu. It can seat 240 diners and comes with two private dining areas and a deck by a pond.

Weligama Bay Marriott Resort & Spa

The beachfront Weligama Bay Marriott Resort & Spa offers 198 rooms and suites looking out to the sea and Weligama fishing village. The hotel’s location close to Galle Fort and Blue Whale watching spots makes it a convenient base for tourists to explore the area. Within the hotel, guests can enjoy wellness treatments at Quan Spa, feast at various restaurants, laze by the swimming pools or work up a sweat at the gym.

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