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Issue

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October 25, 2017
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Greater love for tourism start-ups

Booking.com's success with Booster has birthed a new mentoring and funding programme for start-ups at seed level

By Raini Hamdi

Booking.com is turning its attention to mentoring start-ups at that are at seed level with Booster Lab, an offshoot from its Booster programme launched in June which saw three Asian start-ups, Authenticook, LocalAlike and Backstreet Academy as among finalists receiving no-strings-attached grants from Booking.com to scale up their businesses.

Booster Lab not only focuses on start-ups that bring local and/or marginalised communities into tourism, but makes a deliberate attempt to support those that have the potential to alleviate overcrowding, an issue that

has created resentment and anti-tourism in some destinations.

Fittingly, the first Booster Lab will be held in Barcelona, Spain this December, covering start-ups in Europe, and is slated to run globally, including in Asia-Pacific, throughout 2018. It features a regionally-focused weekend programme of workshops, mentoring plus a chance to pitch for growth-hacking grants of up to 25,000 euros (US\$29,396).

In an interview with *TTG Show Daily*, Marianne Gybels, manager Booking Cares who

leads the development of Booster, said one of the major learnings from Booster was that many of the 700 applicants were "great start-ups with amazing ideas but are still at seed level – no staff, do not make revenue – and so didn't fit our Booster which are for start-ups that are ready to scale".

"We want to push them forward," she said.

When asked what sort of solutions Booking.com was looking for in alleviating overtourism, Gybels said: "We have a team called Destinations Unlock to look at these start-

ups. For example, there are many beautiful destinations in the world, yet we tend to concentrate on the same areas. A new destination can be a city within a city. For example, in Amsterdam city, there are so many beautiful surroundings that are waiting to be unlocked. Showing different sides to a destination (can) help spread tourism to more areas."

Booster Lab has 265 applications from Europe and will be selecting 15 start-ups soon.

The grants of up to 25,000 euros each are much smaller than Booster grants. Singapore's Backstreet Academy, for instance, received this year's top

Booster grant of 400,000 euros that it asked for, while Thailand's LocalAlike got 300,000 euros.

One reason is, as Booster Lab-start-ups are at seed level and have not made any business investment, the risk of them just walking away after receiving a grant is real.

Gybels said the grants "truly have no strings attached" and are meant to ease the "struggle these start-ups go through".

"We want to show our commitment to them and are happy to share our knowledge and expertise in helping them scale."

Find out how Asian start-ups are using the grants in tomorrow's issue



Gybels: focus on overcrowding

New WTTC study emphasises tourism's role

By S Puvaneswary

WTTC has produced its first study that looks at the economic and employment impact of travel and tourism on cities.

The research looks at 65 global cities, chosen for being tops for arrivals and visitor spend, of which 21 cities are in Asia-Pacific.

The report indicated that rising prosperity across the region is fuelling increased travel demand, and investment in transport and hotel infrastructure. As well, government policies that facilitate the ease of borders crossings have helped to boost travel

and tourism connectivity across the region.

It is also noted that the world's top 10 fastest growing cities are in Asia, and that Asian cities will be at the forefront of tourism growth over the next decade. Six Chinese cities are on the list, with Chongqing in pole position with a 14 per cent growth per year.

In general, Asia-Pacific records almost six per cent of annual growth – 50 per cent more than the world average of four per cent.

Gloria Guevara, president & CEO, WTTC, said: "The power

of Asian cities when it comes to driving the travel and tourism sector is clear to see in this new data.

"With this level of forecast growth, the importance of investment in long-term planning, infrastructure and sustainable public policies cannot be underestimated. It is vital that city authorities understand the economic impact of travel and tourism, GDP and employment contribution, and not just visitor arrivals, as they seek to develop new products and opportunities to increase traveller spend and sustainable growth."



RIGHT THERE AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD Photo by Eugene Tang

The Messe Berlin team, led by senior vice president, travel & logistics Martin Buck (fourth from right) and ITB Asia executive director Katrina Leung (fourth from left), is looking mighty ecstatic, because it is kicking off a milestone edition of ITB Asia this week. Check out *TTG Show Daily's* ITB Asia 10th Anniversary Special from pages 22-25.



Pan Pacific Melbourne offers a rejuvenating escape along the city's South Wharf, with panoramic views of the Yarra River, Port Phillip Bay and the city. Experience the best of Melbourne within and around the hotel with diverse culinary offerings, revitalising facilities and a collection of versatile meeting space, and Flinders Lane and the Arts Centre just a stone's throw away.

For more information, visit us at ITB Asia at **booth Q25**.

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News

Agents warm up to LCCs

Singapore-based travel consultants are adapting to the more cost-conscious market segments by including low-cost carrier options in their packages

By Pamela Chow

With an increasing number of low-cost carriers (LCC) jetting to longhaul destinations, travel agents in Singapore are now open to working with these budget flight options.

In June this year, Scoot launched direct flights to Athens. The airline will also be introducing seasonal direct flights to Sapporo in November, and a service to Honolulu via Osaka in December. Meanwhile, Norwegian Air recently began plying between Singapore and London on what is currently the world's longest low-cost flight.

As a result, travel agents in Singapore have started working on longhaul packages with LCC options in mind, and *TTG Show Daily* understands that Scoot is currently in talks with a number of travel agents.

Trevor Spinks, Scoot's head of sales and distribution, revealed that his team is working with travel agents that are offering leisure and tour packages to Australia, China, Greece and North Asia, as well as labour agents and pilgrimage agents.



Wong: adapting to the LCC crowd

He explained: "We work with key agents and consortium partners on short- and long-term sales initiatives, including offering private fares for packages, joint promotions and incentives to include Scoot prominently in their advertising."

One of these agents is Chan Brothers Travel, which recently started including LCC flights in packages for destinations where there are such options.

For other destinations, the agency offers land-only packages – comprising airport transfers, hotel and attraction passes. Meanwhile, EU Holidays recognises the

significance of providing LCC options for the "young traveller and FIT" markets.

To cater to the LCC-loving crowd, EU Holidays has been rolling out FIT packages, as well as land-only versions of their regular packages for budget-conscious travellers, said its director, Wong Yew Hoong.

However, Wong noted that his customers still prefer full-cost carriers for longer flights.

He shared: "When it comes to long-haul trips to Europe and US – our speciality – customers always prefer travelling on a full-service airline as it is all-rounded in terms of providing comfort, meals, and luggage allowance."

To increase collaboration with the trade, Scoot has been engaging new agents, actively collaborating with existing partners, improving ease of partnership, as well as raising awareness among agents on Scoot's offerings, said Spinks.

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Redmond Sia, Goh Meng Yong Creative Designers
Lina Tan Editorial Assistant

CONTRIBUTORS

Prudence Lui, Julian Ryall, Marissa Carruthers, Rosa Ocampo

SALES & MARKETING

Michael Chow Group Publisher
Pierre Quek Publisher, Online Section
Shirley Tan Senior Business Manager
Ingrid Chung Business Manager
Cheryl Lim Advertisement Administration Manager
Cheryl Tan Corporate Marketing Manager
Kwek Wan Ling Marketing Executive

PUBLISHING SERVICES

Tony Yeo Division Manager
Kun Swee Qi Publishing Services Executive
Lynn Lim Web Executive
Katherine Leong Circulation Executive

TTG ASIA MEDIA

Darren Ng Managing Director
Raini Hamdi Senior Editor

Expedia enters MICE market with online booking portal

By Raini Hamdi

Expedia has rolled out its white-label business events technology in Asia with Thailand's Minor Hotels Group as the first customer. But it remains to be seen if RFPs will be a thing of the past, as Expedia thinks they will be, with its business events online booking engine.

Meeting Market by Expedia automates the booking process for meeting organisers and hotels in real time. In the case of Anantara and Oaks hotels, planners visiting the two Minor brands' websites when they go live with Expedia's booking engine this week can instantly check availability, pricing, configure their meeting room, group lodging, F&B, equipment, and book directly.

The hotels, on the other hand, can yield prices for meetings and groups, filling a gap in events space revenue management

which still is a new discipline in the sector.

The automated process, as opposed to the current manual, and time-consuming back-and-forth between the planner and the hotel's business events sales manager, will free up time for the sales team to focus on the acquisition and personal care of their customers, Expedia said.

According to Tariq Janmohamed, Expedia's senior director – new businesses, the average response time for quotes has been reduced from five hours to 14 minutes, going by the experience of Best Western Central, the first global chain to launch last year in Germany with more than 300 hotels.

"The current process is manual, inefficient with static prices, no revenue management for meeting rooms, and no

adjustments for seasonality. Throw in changing customer expectations – their digital impatience – and our research shows there's a problem with the current process and just how big this industry is," he said, in a press briefing in Singapore on Monday.

Expedia is lusting after the prospect of 60 million events per annum globally worth US\$400 billion.

"The majority of meetings are small, i.e. less than 25 people, typically taking place in hotels. There has to be a better way to organise this," he added.

However, Tariq could not elaborate on other results achieved at Best Western Central, such as percentage increase in sales, whether bookers are end-users or consumers, or feedback on areas to be

improved, saying these details were being compiled.

Questions remain whether business event RFPs can really be automated, with hotel chains boasting they have dedicated sales persons to look after each enquiry, and to service the client from when they make an RFP to the end of, or even long after, the event.

Business event bookings, unlike rooms, are not commoditised and Tariq also had no answer to what happens when there are special requests, only saying that Expedia will keep enhancing the technology based on feedback from clients.

As well, Meeting Market by Expedia currently is unable to search by destination. Therefore, planners must know a specific hotel group, and its various brands and properties in its portfolio, in order to go to its website and make a booking.



Tariq: better way to organise event RFPs

Meet the early arrivals at ITB Asia 2017

Photos by Eugene Tang



Smartcom (Hong Kong)'s Ken Leung



Siam@Siam Design Hotel Pattaya's Dmitry Chernyshev



Century Travel Centre Brunei's Foo CP



Vivid Travel World India's Prashant Patel



The Gala Hotels Group Indonesia's Dian Ayu Angraini and Tinoek Oentari

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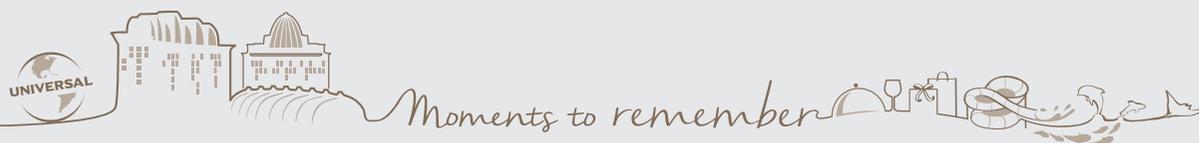


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In the spotlight

South Korea's show of force

Korea Tourism Organization (Singapore)'s director, Yoon Seung Hwan, tells [Karen Yue](#) that his organisation is coming into ITB Asia this year in a big way to win over leisure and MICE buyers from across the Asia region



Attractions in Busan and Jeju, among other South Korean destinations, will be showcased at ITB Asia 2017; Busan Tower and Jeju Stone Park pictured

The Singapore offices of Korea Tourism Organization and Messe Berlin signed a memorandum of cooperation at ITB Asia. Why this decision?

Looking at global business trends and the growth in corporate travel and business events, it is clear that Asia will be the most strategic market for us in the next decade. Our partnership with ITB Asia will expand our presence and strengthen our proposition to the Asian markets.

With ITB Asia in Singapore, a hub for the region, we have a great platform to reach a large number of participants who clearly recognise the benefits of attending.

It will be our seventh show with ITB Asia, and we've witness the transformation and improvement of the show; the scale has expanded, the number and quality of attendees have increased.

We are excited about the potential opportunities that ITB Asia can open up for us.

What special programmes is Korean Tourism Organisation (Singapore) bringing to ITB Asia delegates?

Together with Seoul Tourism Organization and Jeju Convention & Visitors Bureau, we are bringing in more sellers to ITB Asia this year.

Out of 29 co-exhibitors, more than 80 per cent will make their debut at the tradeshow.

As the most experienced exhibitor at ITB Asia, Korean Tourism Organisation (Singapore) is assisting many new co-exhibitors with their queries about the show.

We will be sharing information on South Korea's latest business events facilities, latest trends and recommendations for team activities, and cultural experiences that may enlighten delegates at the Destination Showcase segment on October 25.

What are the most fascinating developments in South Korea that would excite visitors in 2018 and beyond?

Be it for leisure, business or the combination bleisure, travellers are looking for authentic activities and sustainable experiences.

There are many marketable experiential programmes in South Korea now.

For example, travellers can visit one of the sustainable villages in South Korea, interact with the villagers, enjoy simple and hearty meals prepared on the farm, learn to cook a local dish, or craft an item using recycled materials.

They can also visit one of the many weekend night markets at designated spots in the country and do what the locals do – grab a quick bite from some of the interestingly decorated food trucks and picnic under the stars.

Not many travellers have

been to Korean traditional markets, which are great for meeting the locals, eating with the locals and shopping with the locals.

Also, what are the most interesting developments in South Korea that would attract more business events?

One worth watching is the Magok District, the latest large-scale area to have been developed in Seoul. It offers great accessibility to Incheon International Airport (35 minutes by subway) and Gimpo International Airport (five minutes by subway), making it a gateway city to North-east Asia.

Magok Industrial Complex will be established as an industrial ecosystem consisting of diverse national and international enterprises, research institutes, universities and international organisations which are developing an R&D cluster for cutting-edge convergence technologies in information technology, global green technology, bio-technology, and nano technology.

A large central park will be built as an environmental friendly masterpiece where eco-friendly housing and an ecological wetland will be crafted.

Residing major companies are LG, Kolon Industries, The E.Land Group, Lotte, Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering Co, S-oil Corporate and Nexen Tire. Courtyard by Marriott Seoul Botanic Park will be opening its doors in 2018.

Next to watch is the International Exchange Complex in Seoul's Jamsil Sports Complex area. The Seoul Metropolitan Government has announced a master plan. The area will be transformed into a hub of international business exchange, (complete with) venues for exhibitions, conventions, performances and entertainment. The existing sports facilities will be rearranged and rebuilt.

In all, the International Exchange Complex will boast more than 100,000m² of land for business event facilities and a 1,500-room luxury hotel. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2025.

Are there improvements to access too?

Incheon International Airport's new terminal building is scheduled for completion by the end of September 2017. After a twelve-week trial period, the new terminal will be open to the public from January 2018, just in time for the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, which kicks off the following month.

The new terminal, which has five stories above ground and two underground, will be equipped with 22 state-of-the-art full-body scanners and various duty-free shops in the new terminal. It will be connected to the subway line and have its own bus stops.

The new terminal can handle some 72 million passengers a year, up from the current 54 million.

Four airlines – Korean Air, Delta Air Lines, Air France and KLM Royal Dutch Airlines – will move into the new terminal.

Overland, the new Korean Train Express (KTX) line from the airport to Pyeongchang is scheduled to open this December. The high-speed rail will take one hour and 38 minutes from Incheon International Airport to Pyeongchang, and one hour and 52 minutes from Incheon International Airport to Gangneung. From Cheongnyangni in Seoul to Pyeongchang, the journey will take 58 minutes. The trains will stop at Pyeongchang Station, Jinbu Station, and Gangneung Station near the host city.

How are the leisure travel and business events divisions under Korea Tourism Organization working together to ensure overall tourism objectives are met?

We have seen strong interest from corporate meetings to South Korea in recent years, and this helps to boost the percentage of bleisure travellers for the country.

Instead of focusing on the hardware South Korea offers for business events, we are now weaving more software such as experiential programmes, unique dining experiences and tourist-friendly festivals and events, into our marketing materials. This helps to promote South Korea as an ideal destination for both leisure and business.

For example, leisure travellers can visit one of the many traditional markets in South Korea. In the same place, corporate groups can conduct teambuilding activities.

Another good example is the Korea Folk Village in Yongin, Gyeonggi province. While it was promoted as a leisure attraction years ago, today we market it as a great post-event tour site with hands-on activities. Adventurous event organisers could dress their delegates in traditional *hanbok* and take them on a walking tour of the village, where they could later partake in a group dinner at the Market Bazaar – a replicate of a busy marketplace during the Joseon Dynasty.

Simple yet hearty Korean dishes, such as *jeon* (pancake) and *guksu* (noodles), are served along with *makgeolli* and *soju* (both local rice wines). The organisers could wrap up the night with a *salmunori*, Korean farmer dance.



Yoon Seung Hwan
Director, Korea Tourism Organization (Singapore)

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Photo: Elina Sirparanta



[VisitFinland.com](https://www.visitfinland.com)

[#SummerFinland](https://www.instagram.com/summerfinland)

Marketplace

Hullett House transports 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 ten 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 for 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 of between 18 and 45 delegates.

Contact: <http://harbour-plaza.com/>



Bintan Lagoon Resort dishes out new corporate package



MICE delegates can now feast on the new Corporate Rojak package at Bintan Lagoon Resort, which is a 75-minute ferry ride from Singapore. Named after the South-east Asian salad, the new package allows delegates to augment its basic ingredients such as ferry tickets, deluxe accommodation, use of meeting room, lunch and even a stretching session during coffee break, with top-ups such as teambuilding, dinner, unlimited golf, express immigration and weekend extension.

Rates start at S\$205 (US\$150) nett/person for single occupancy and S\$155 nett/person for twin/triple share occupancy. The package is available till December 15, 2017.

Contact: reservations@bintanlagoon.com

Furama Hotels International commits to green initiatives

Recognising the importance of the environment, Furama Hotels International (FHI), ensures its properties are well supported by eco-friendly and sustainable practices where guests can relax and indulge in.

FHI provides over 60 award-winning accommodation choices across the vibrant Asia-Pacific region, namely in Australia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand, with an increasing inventory as the company continues to expand. The three brands under FHI include Furama – four-star business hotels; FuramaXclusive – luxurious boutique hotels, villas and resorts; and FX Hotels – essential service boutique hotels.

The hotel group is committed to pampering leisure and business travellers while providing them a well-appointed backdrop to indulge in restful play and invigorating work.

Contact: <http://furama.com>



FuramaXclusive Villas & Spa Ubud Bali

Sentosa offers perfect all-in-one destination for MICE

With world-class meeting spaces, award-winning resort accommodations, attractions that deliver unparalleled fun along with renowned golf courses, Sentosa offers a truly unforgettable event experience. Whether you are hosting a large-scale event space, casual teambuilding retreats, day and night activities, Sentosa has both luxurious MICE facilities and unique venues to help you bring your event to life, while providing guests an unforgettable experience. This island retreat is also home to 17 hotels, over 210 iconic restaurants and must-visit attractions, including South-east Asia's first and only Universal Studios Singapore theme park, the world's largest oceanarium and the Resorts World Sentosa integrated resort.

Website: <http://sentosa.com.sg>

Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts crosses 100th hotel milestone

Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts has crossed the 100th property milestone and now manages 105 hotels with five brands in 38 strategic business locations and exotic resorts throughout Indonesia. Santika has a stable of various brands – The Royal Collection, Anvaya (five-star), Santika Premiere Hotel (four-star), Santika Hotel (three-star) and Amaris Hotel (smart hotel). Every property provides the same high quality of standard of service paired with excellent facilities and a relaxing environment

Established since 1981, Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts is a well-known local hospitality company under Kompas Gramedia Group. The brand made its debut with Hotel Santika Bandung in West Java and has since been opening hotels across Indonesia. It has been carving its distinctive image and pioneering its way as a preferred brand, particularly among the business and leisure travellers of middle and upper segments.

Website: <http://santika.com>

Japan inspires content for corporate incentives

The Japan National Tourism Organization has newly launched the Japan Incentives website – a portal showcasing incentives inspiration for event planners. The website gathers model courses, unique venues, exclusive experiences, and gastronomic delights all in one place, showcasing Japan's exciting ideas for corporate incentives.

In addition to common itineraries to Tokyo and Kyoto, the new website also highlights ideas for lesser known incentive destinations that will pique the interest of even the most travel-savvy delegate.

Japan's unique geography, high-speed rail network and extensive flight connections allow event planners to choose from a diverse portfolio of cities. The new website simplifies the selection process by gathering all the information incentive programmes in one place, and includes information on the various support and subsidy programmes provided by the individual cities and relevant contact details.

Website: <http://japanmeetings.org/incentives>

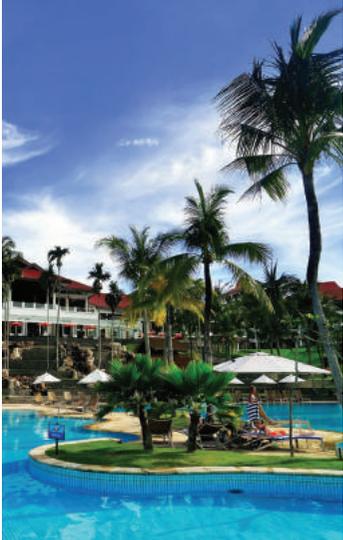


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Marketplace



Carlton City Hotel Singapore successfully goes green

With its collaborative push with guests to reduce the ecological footprint and embrace environmental-friendly practices, Carlton City Hotel Singapore has decreased its annual water consumption by 30 per cent from 2014 to 2016. Energy consumption was reduced by 5.42 per cent over the span of three years. Green practices include reusing linens and towels, maintaining a recommended room temperature and minimising waste. As a testament to the property's push for green practices, the hotel received its second consecutive Singapore Green Hotel Award in August 2017.

The 386-room hotel, located along the fringes of Chinatown, Raffles Place and within the Central Business District, offers guests an upscale and stylish experience, resonating well with international business and leisure travellers.

Website: <http://carltoncity.sg>



Presenting nature's beauty at The Lokha Ubud Resort

Located in the traditional Balinese village of Keliki, and a 15-minute drive from central Ubud, the Lokha Ubud is a charming hotel designed to celebrate local artistry and to embrace the natural beauty of the surrounding environment.

The Lokha Ubud anticipates the needs of seasoned travellers with a collection of 16 luxury villas, 52 rooms and lifestyle facilities in a relaxed resort setting. The property is encompassed within a parcel of tropical landscape that descends down to the banks of the Wos River, and overlooks a scenic ridge. A complimentary shuttle service runs at scheduled intervals throughout the day to and from Ubud to allow guests to experience the various attractions of this artistically charged town.

Website: <http://thelokhaubud.com>

Multi-park destination in Sunway Theme Parks

Sunway Theme Parks is home to two award-winning theme park attractions in Malaysia. First of which is the internationally acclaimed Sunway Lagoon which spans some 88 acres and currently boasts more than 90 attractions spread across six uniquely designed parks, featuring Asia's 1st Nickelodeon-themed attraction.

The other park – Sunway Lost World of Tambun – is located in the historic town of Ipoh, Perak, and is landscaped with lush tropical flora and fauna, majestic limestone hills of 400 million years of age and complemented by seven amazing parks including Malaysia's best Night Park.

Website: <http://sunwaylostworldoftambun.com>; <http://sunwaylagoon.com>



An unforgettable experience awaits at Resorts World Sentosa

Crowned as Asia's ultimate leisure and MICE destination, Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) Singapore presents a unique blend of premier meeting and entertainment facilities, offering delegates an unforgettable experience.

Extraordinary venues provide unforgettable settings for talk-of-the-town events. Transport delegates back in time in the 1950's New York Street at Universal Studios Singapore with event spaces that can stretch the entire park, or immerse guests in a stunning panorama of marine life at S.E.A. Aquarium.

Delegates can also opt for a great escape into a tropical paradise in Adventure Cove Waterpark, which is available for corporate bookings after dark. Intimate gatherings can even be hosted at any of the Michelin-starred restaurants, where stellar experiences are paired with outstanding service.

Contact: mice@rwsentosa.com

Protecting the Orang Utans in Sarawak

Located about 20km from the centre of Kuching, the Semenggoh Wildlife Centre is an Orang Utan rehabilitation centre where orphaned or rescued Orang Utans learn how to survive in the wild. With the efforts of the wildlife centre and other conservation projects throughout Sarawak, the Orang Utan population in the state is standing at 2,500 and continues to climb every year.

The centre encourages the public to get involved with the conservation efforts through the Heart2Heart programme, as they learn about the challenges of Orang Utan rehabilitation and related work at the centres. They can also participate in the Orang Utan Adoption Program, where they can adopt an Orang Utan for 10 years and fund their rehabilitation.

Website: <http://sarawaktourism.com>



THE LOKHA UBUD
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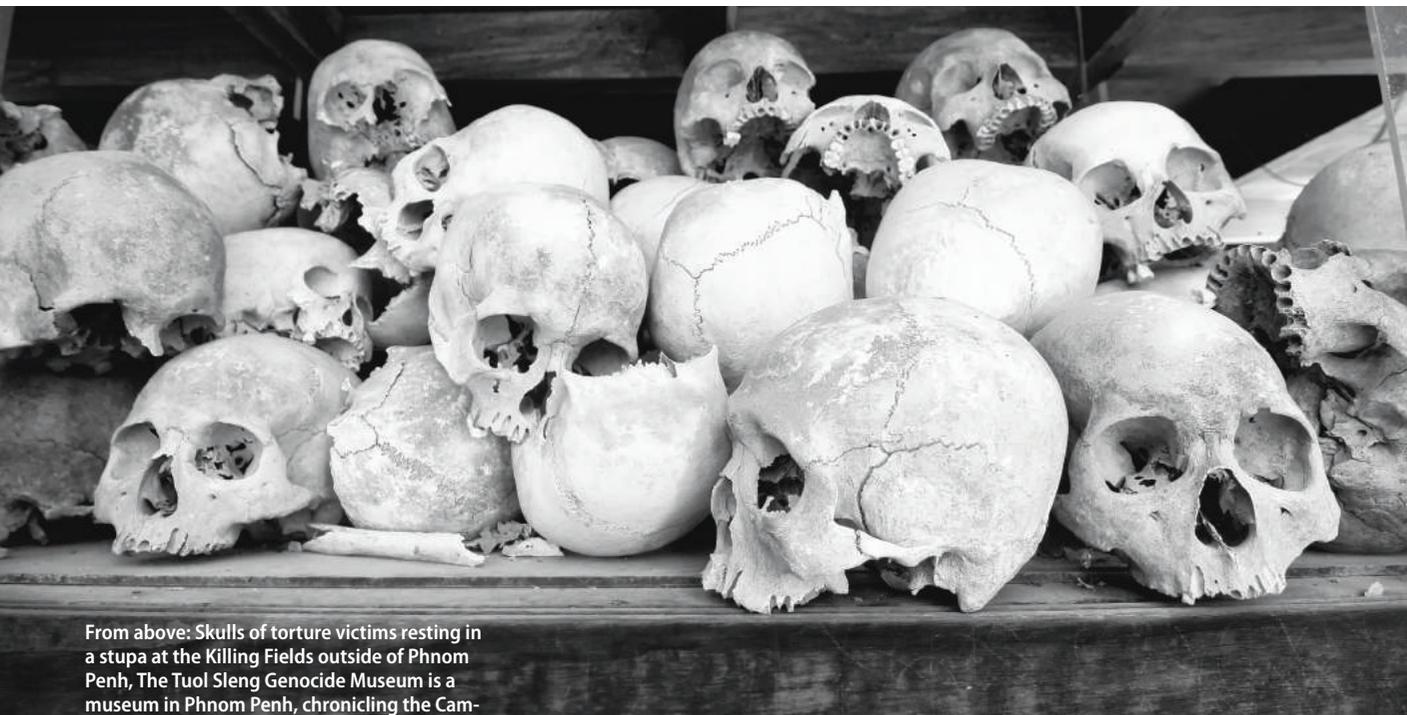
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Analysis

The dark side of dark tourism

Slaughter sites and killing fields are a major money-maker in Cambodia, but is this right? **Marissa Carruthers** reports the dark side to them as the kingdom moves on from the horrors of the Khmer Rouge regime



From above: Skulls of torture victims resting in a stupa at the Killing Fields outside of Phnom Penh, The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum is a museum in Phnom Penh, chronicling the Cambodian genocide.

As a country ravaged by decades of war, Cambodia is littered with former slaughter sites, killing fields and bitter memories for those who survived. While Angkor Wat remains the main tourist draw, the capital's barbaric S-21 prison and nearby Choeung Ek – one of the largest killing fields – also top the list of attractions.

S-21 or Tuol Sleng – the political prison where an estimated 17,000 Cambodians were tortured to death or sent to be slaughtered at Choeung Ek between 1975 and 1979 – receives 500 visitors daily, with more than 800 a day venturing to the Killing Fields during high season.

And while most international tour operators omit it from their itineraries, many tourists seize the opportunity to include the shooting range in the popular Choeung Ek-S-21 trip. Here, large sums of money are paid to fire AK47s, rocket launchers and other ageing weapons.

Pierre-Andre Romano, general manager of EXO Cambodia, said: "This is definitely not tourism. It's voyeurism. You can go and learn about the Khmer Rouge, then pretend to be one? That isn't right."

According to Elizabeth Becker, a war correspondent who covered Cambodia throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Cambodia's genocide tourist attractions should not exist. In her book, *Overbooked: The Exploding Business of Travel and Tourism* (2013), she accuses the country's dark tourism industry of being exploitative and disrespectful to those who died, and those who survived.

It's 'education'

However, Kimhean Pich, CEO of Discover the Mekong, disagrees. He said these du-



For local people, these are places to learn about our bitter history and to make sure we avoid repeating (the same) mistake in the future

Kimhean Pich
CEO, Discover the Mekong

bious attractions not only drive tourism but provide a way to educate the world, and Cambodians.

He said: "For local people, these are places to learn about our bitter history and to make sure we avoid repeating (the

same) mistake in the future. For tourism, it is a unique product and attracts many visitors. Other countries can create similar events, temples and infrastructure, but they can't make up a history like ours."

But Romano argues it is time for Cambodia to "turn the page" and start promoting the country's other unique products, such as the wealth of community projects, rare wildlife and rural living. He added Exo Travel includes the Killing Fields and S-21 on tours due to high demand.

He said: "Of course, these sites are necessary for the education of Cambodians and to help the country understand and move forward. But for tourism, no."

As visitor numbers to genocide-related sites increase, reports of vandalism and disrespectful behaviour are on the rise. At Choeung Ek, visitors have been found collecting bones. Inappropriate selfies are often snapped in front of the blood-splattered torture tools at S-21 and graffiti

sprawled across images of Pol Pot.

Last year, outrage erupted when Pokemon Go players stormed S-21 to capture characters. It resulted in the game being banned.

This is an issue Pich said needs to be tackled, with tour guides and agents having a role to play.

He said: "Before they visit the site, visitors need to be clearly informed about their behaviour. It is difficult for tourists to truly understand what our dark history means to us. Even some Cambodians have difficulty understanding, unless their family, relatives or they themselves experienced the regime. Guides and tour leaders must translate those memories to be understood well by tourists and ask for their respect."

One organisation that is using tourism as a tool to educate and help the country heal is the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam). It has spent the last few years working in the remote area of Anlong Veng, the final Khmer Rouge stronghold. Home to 14 landmarks, including Pol Pot's cremation site and home of infamous commander Ta Mok, the area is predominantly inhabited by former Khmer Rouge cadres, who are exiled from society.

Two years ago, DC-Cam opened Anlong Veng Peace Center, and has developed many of the sites, adding information for visitors. In July, it will start training local tour guides, and has encouraged former Khmer Rouge soldiers to share their experiences with visitors, many of whom are currently Cambodian students.

"Our main objective is to promote memory, justice and reconciliation," said centre director Ly Sok-Kheang. "We believe this can be done through dialogue and education. If a visitor really wants to learn about the Khmer Rouge, Anlong Veng is the best place to start and it can be developed into an important historical and educational tourist site."

Sinan Thourn, chairman of PATA Cambodia Chapter, agrees that dark tourism has a role to play in preserving the turbulent past. But it needs to evolve and the focus shift away from the macabre, such as the skulls and bones of Choeung Ek or the harrowing cells of S-21.

He said: "Why can't we add cultural elements? Villages next to Choeung Ek can open (their homes to) homestays, or show what happens to Cambodian people when they die and put on Buddhist funeral ceremonies for visitors. We can't forget Cambodia's history but we can't just keep bringing people to these settings."

"Often when foreigners think of Cambodia, they think of landmines, genocide and Pol Pot. There is much more than that and there needs to be more promotion of the alternatives to get rid of this bad image."

This article was first published in *TTG Asia* July 2017.

It was awarded Feature of the Year – Bronze by the Media Publishers Association of Singapore in its 11th MPAS Awards on September 27.





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Analysis

The value of MICE

It is extremely difficult to put a monetary value to how much a country's business events industry contributes to its GDP, say industry leaders. **Caroline Boey** and **Karen Yue** take a look at what can be done



“To truly understand the impact of the (events) sector, we need to understand the legacies that were left behind, such as knowledge dispersal, community initiatives, research opportunities and business development.”

Karen Bolinger
CEO, Melbourne Convention Bureau



Seven years ago in 2010 was the last time an official dollar figure on the contribution of the events industry was published.

The WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) reported it was worth more than US\$650 billion out of the total tourism industry contribution of US\$5.7 trillion, which accounts for more than nine per cent of global GDP. Is it an accurate figure and what is the dollar figure today?

“Nobody knows,” Oscar Cerezales, chief operating officer, MCI Group replied. “There are reports and stats but the direct value is difficult to measure and the indirect is almost impossible. That said, if you need a number, US\$650 billion is ‘accurate.’”

Cerezales supported his estimate based on a recent PricewaterhouseCoopers study, which put travel and tourism at US\$865 billion in the US, with US\$280 billion accounting for meetings direct spend. With world meetings contributing three to four times more, he put the events ballpark figure at around US\$700 billion.

Primarily, Cerezales said, it is because there is no global agreement in method-

ologies like ISO, and calculations in most countries are based on tourism KPIs.

Figures aside, Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC)’s executive director, Rod Cameron, pointed out that it was only in the last few years that there has been a growing appreciation of the value events create in terms of knowledge transfer, innovation, and business stimulation.

But these values, he noted, are difficult to measure with any precision, and methodologies are just being developed. However, the meetings industry is fragmented, has limited collective resources and progress has been slow.

Earlier this year in January, JMIC launched The Iceberg, not only as a vehicle for industry advocacy, but also specifically to showcase the content of its Case Study Program.

Cameron said JMIC, in collaboration with an international academic panel coordinated by the University of Technology Sydney, is publishing academically rigorous studies of the outcomes and legacies of business and professional events.

The aim is to convince the government, and individuals involved in a destination’s

economic development, of the sector’s true value, and to identify the range of output values from particular events to serve as examples of the broader benefits generated by the meetings industry as a whole.

Cameron continued: “In most parts of the world the meetings industry is heavily reliant on government support and investment. Major event facilities like convention centres, for example, are almost always supported by public investment and government policies – such as taxation, immigration and access – can have huge implications for industry success.

“In order to see the real return on that investment, governments and communities must go beyond the spending-based value measurement and recognise the much broader role they play in advancing a wide range of policy priorities and community aspirations.

“We need to make the arguments and back them up with solid data – so this is why broader value measurement needs to be a top priority for the meetings industry today.”

Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya, the

The problem for us is that many people still see business events and tourism as one and the same. I’ve been trying to explain the difference to both the government and the private sector. Even the UNWTO defines business events as a component of tourism, which (deepens) the misunderstanding.

Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya
President, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau



new president of the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, is a strong believer of the extended benefits of business events.

He shared that over the last decade, Thailand has made approximately 150 billion baht (US\$4.5 billion) in revenue from the business events industry. The business events industry created 164,000 jobs and brought the government around 10.5 billion baht in taxes.

But the real impact of business events runs far deeper than the numbers can reveal. He said: “Tourism and business events grow at a different pace. Business events growth follows the country’s investments and trade. It boosts tourism performance, but the two are not the same.

“The problem for us is that many people still see business events and tourism as one and the same. I’ve been trying to explain the difference to both the government and the private sector. Even the UNWTO defines business events as a component of tourism, which (deepens) the misunderstanding.

“Top-level people in the government needs to understand the definition of business events in order to give it the right attention and support for development.”

Karen Bolinger, CEO, Melbourne Convention Bureau, opined “we are not good at promoting ourselves”.

“Business events are a crucial part of the visitor economy, and the value of the sector extends beyond tourism expenditure. Conferences provide opportunities to build international networks, open trade and investment opportunities, profile a region’s sectors of strength, and bring focus to a government’s areas of policy leadership.”

Bolinger added: “To truly understand the impact of the sector, we need to understand the legacies that were left behind, such as knowledge dispersal, community initiatives, research opportunities and business development.

“However, there are real challenges in sourcing this data. There are also challenges around collecting the right data that will educate government, stakeholders and partners on the value of the business events industry.”

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Intelligence

Travellers more open to non-hotel stays in home continent: Agoda

Travellers are more likely to opt for homestays when travelling close to home, reveals the *Agoda Travel & Tech Study*, which surveyed over 16,000 respondents aged 18-64 across 15 countries to uncover their travel motivations and booking behaviour in the age of technological innovation.

The report revealed that travellers from Indonesia (79 per cent), Singapore (71 per cent), the Philippines (82 per cent) and Thailand (80 per cent) will most likely consider booking homestays when travelling within Asia.

Similarly, travellers from the UK (88 per cent), the US (84 per cent) and Australia (75 per cent) are most likely to book a privately-owned home within their home continent.

Reasons for opting for on non-hotel accommodations (NHAs) vary across countries, Agoda further pointed out.

Indonesians (55 per cent), Malaysians (54 per cent) and Filipinos (53 per cent) tend to book NHAs to accommodate families and large groups; while Singaporeans (57 per cent), Thais (54 per cent) and Australians (46 per cent) view NHAs as a less expensive option to a hotel room.

Chinese travellers, on the other hand, mostly look to NHAs for a more local travel experience (55 per cent).

Among non-hotel bookers, there is a clear trend in the most popular type of NHAs booked per market. B&Bs rank first for Filipino travellers, with 53 per cent of those surveyed having booked one in the past year.

Private homes are among the favourites for travellers from Singapore (44 per cent), Malaysia (40 per cent) and Australia (38 per cent).

And among Indonesian (37 per cent, 36 per cent) and Thai (31 per cent, 32 per cent) travellers, Agoda observed a preference for villas and guesthouses.

Highlights

- B&Bs rank first for Filipino travellers, with 53% of those surveyed having booked one in the past year
- Private homes are among the favorites for travellers from Singapore (44%), Malaysia (40%) and Australia (38%)
- Villas and guesthouses are well liked by Indonesian (37%, 36%) and Thai (31%, 32%) travellers



Child-free travel most preferred but least realised in Asia

Despite being most likely to admit that they don't enjoy travelling with children in tow, Asian parents are also the least willing to leave their children behind when they go on holidays, according to a recent study conducted by Expedia and research firm Northstar.

Almost all surveyed go on vacation at least once a year with their family, while non-parents tend to only go once a year. Regional differences are striking, the research shows, with those in Asia and southern Europe and Mexico, the most

likely to prioritise getting away with family as often as they can.

South Korean travellers led the charts in terms of commitment to family holidays, with 74 per cent of teens vacationing with family more than twice a year, along with 68 per cent of parents and 57 per cent of non-parents. On the other end is Hong Kong, with just 29 per cent of teens, 25 per cent of parents, and 21 per cent of non-parents taking a family vacation more than once a year.

Notably, the report revealed that Hong Kong (47 per cent) and Taiwan

(40 per cent) have the highest proportion of parents who indicated they do not enjoy holidays when travelling with their children. Comparing between regions, the sentiment is strongest in Asia, with an average of 27 per cent per nation agreeing, compared to 17 per cent in Europe.

The markets least likely to choose their children as their favourite travel companions are also in Asia – Malaysia (32 per cent), Taiwan (32 per cent) and Hong Kong (33 per cent).

Yet, parents from these countries are

relatively less willing to travel without their children. Only 19 per cent, 23 per cent and 27 per cent from Malaysia, Taiwan and Hong Kong respectively are willing to leave their children behind on their travels.

The markets most reluctant to travel kid-free are Thailand (six per cent) and South Korea (eight per cent), while those most willing are Finland (82 per cent), Mexico (64 per cent) and Spain (56 per cent).

Reconnecting with a partner is the main reason to leave the children behind in Malaysia (67 per cent), Canada (65 per cent), Singapore (61 per cent), Denmark (61 per cent) and the US (61 per cent).

Meanwhile, few parents show interest in traveling with their own parents, although some interest does show up in Asia, led by Thailand (24 per cent), Malaysia (16 per cent) and South Korea (15 per cent).

Still, family travel continues to play a key role especially for Asian travellers. Parents in Asia were much more likely to agree that most of their favourite memories occurred on family vacations, led by parents in Thailand (82 per cent), Malaysia (81 per cent), South Korea (74 per cent) and Taiwan (69 per cent).

Most teens in nearly all countries say that a majority of their favorite memories occurred on family vacations, with the exception of Hong Kong (48 per cent) and Japan (44 per cent).

The study surveyed 17,079 respondents across 28 countries – including 5,570 teens (aged 13-17), 8,486 parents (aged 18+) and 3,023 non-parents (aged 18+).



Asian parents are also the least willing to leave their children behind when they go on holidays

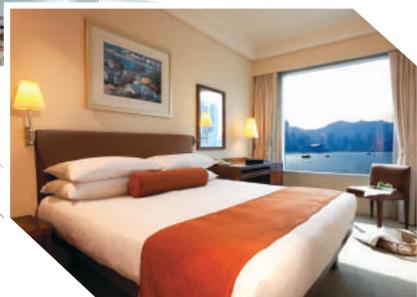
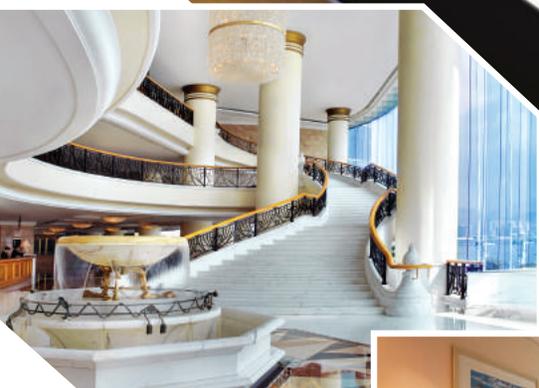
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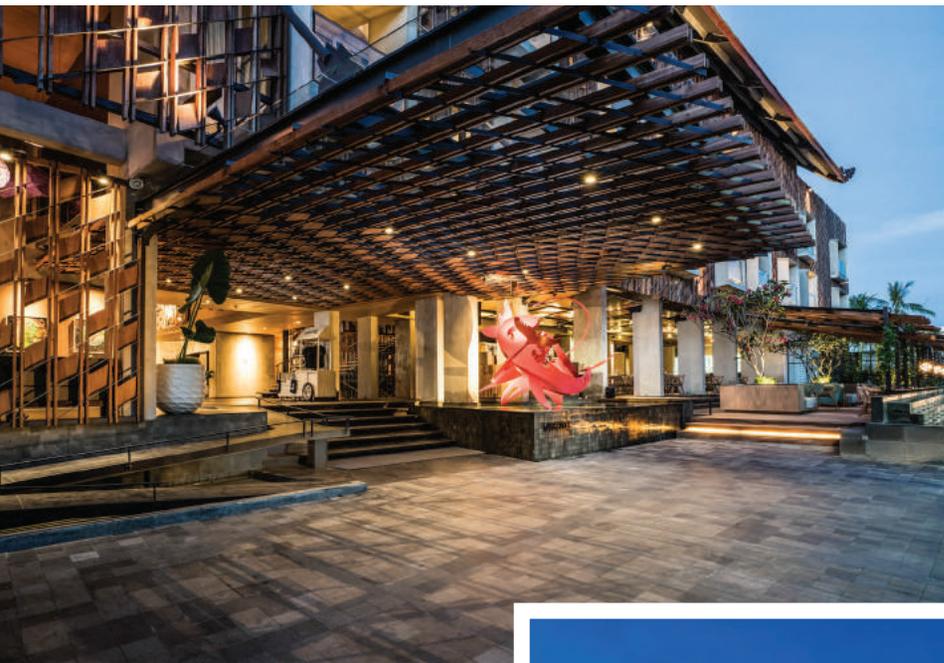
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Feature Design hotels

Beauties on the block

Beauties with character? Oh yes, they exist. TTG Show Daily profiles some of the loveliest design hotels in Asia-Pacific that work well for business events



ARTOTEL Sanur-Bali, Indonesia

Event venues One meeting room for up to 80 pax, plus ROCA Sanur restaurant and Bar at ARTOTEL which are open to private events

Design story The boutique hotel's architecture pays tribute to Sanur, a seaside town well known for its annual kite festival. Rhombus shapes and inspired designs are found in the tiles, balcony partitions and roof of its restaurant.

But more than its quirky architecture, the hotel's bigger design story lies in its role as a supporter of artworks by some of Indonesia's leading contemporary artists. Consistent to the brand's artistic commitment, ARTOTEL Sanur-Bali has the ART-SPACE, an ARTOTEL signature gallery, where artworks are displayed. The hotel also provides a painting course for groups.

The design of MEETSPACE, the hotel's meeting room, is however more subdued, with white walls and wood paneled floors and ceiling. – **Mimi Hudoyo**

Alila Fort Bishangarh, Rajasthan, India

Event venues Various indoor and outdoor venues

Design story Once a warrior fort and now a luxurious resort under a brand known for its breathtaking properties, the Alila Fort Bishangarh perches atop a granite hill with its conserved 2m-thick walls and battlement turrets and arches looking very much like a natural extension of the surrounding terrain.

The heritage resort is said to be a unique example of Jaipur Gharana architecture, influenced by both the Mughals and the British, and much of that has been carefully restored.

The resort boasts 59 stately suites, each individually created to capture the stunning views of the surroundings.

The regal atmosphere is carried through the hotel's suites, four specialty theme restaurants – particularly Amarsar all-day dining restaurant which features restored Rajasthani thikri work and hand-painted wall art, and The Nazaara terrace lounge with its elegant Indian arches, and Spa Alila.



From above: ARTOTEL Sanur-Bali, Indonesia; Macalister Mansion, Penang, Malaysia

For private events, the resort has plenty to offer too, including a royal banquet hall, a banquet dining room, conference and meeting rooms, an open-air terrace and large banquet lawns. – **Karen Yue**

Hôtel Vagabond, Singapore

Event venues One, for up to 350 guests

Design story The luxury boutique hotel lives, breathes and plays art. Housed in a 1950s Art Deco building and designed by renowned French designer Jacques Garcia, Hôtel Vagabond embodies his design philosophy of "all things in excess" from the bronze rhinoceros that doubles as a reception desk to the life-sized golden elephants that 'hold up' the elevator.

Come evening, the Vagabond Salon, which comes with a touch of Parisian glamour, takes centre stage, providing guests with a space to experience art through interaction with the artist-in-residence. The 400m² venue encompasses a bar and a restaurant kitchen, and can adapt to different event requirements. Its floor-to-ceiling velvet curtains are sound-proof, allowing the space to cater to intimate soirees or be opened up, catering up to 100 pax seated or 350 standing. – **Barathi Narayan**

Hoshino Resort Risonare Yatsugatake, Yamanashi, Japan

Event venues Two convention rooms, four boardrooms and a ballroom

Design story A winner of a dozen international architecture and design awards, Hoshino Resort Risonare Yatsugatake appears as a contemporary complex of various facilities set high in the spectacular mountains of Yatsugatake.

The complex – which incorporates striking design concepts by a number of prominent architects – also has a 300-seat auditorium, reception venues and restaurants, including the newly created YYgrill. Other facilities include a cafe with a wide selection of books, a spa with top-of-the-range therapies, an indoor pool and the Yatsugatake Winehouse.

There are a number of meeting facili-

ties, including venues that permit work to continue on a shady deck with mountains forming the backdrop. Meeting rooms can accommodate 12 to 120 people.

Hotel Mecure Danang French Village Bana, Vietnam

Event venues A grand ballroom and six meeting rooms

Design story With Danang becoming an attractive destination for business events, AccorHotels pledged to offer something slightly different when it opened Mercure Bana Hills French Village in April 2016. Sitting at 1,480m above sea level in an area that was once popular with French colonialists seeking respite from the heat, it is only accessible via a 5,800m long cable car. Boasting unparalleled views of the surrounding mountainous region of central Vietnam, the village is modelled on 19th Century France and is home to 494 European-style rooms, seven F&B outlets, a fitness centre, spa, indoor pool, golf centre, shopping area and attraction park.

The village is also home to a range of

Macalister Mansion, Penang, Malaysia

Event venues Two private rooms within The Dining Room, one for up to 10 people boardroom-style, the other for up to 20; The Lawn accommodating up to 200 people

Design story Located along the historic Macalister Road, the eight-room Macalister Mansion is a restored colonial mansion built in the early 1900s and named in honour of Penang's British governor Norman Macalister who ruled from 1808 to 1810. Numerous references to the historic figure are captured in the host of specially commissioned installation art pieces displayed throughout the premises.

Guests can expect a dramatic sense of arrival through the generous ground fronting the historic mansion. When viewed along the main road, the Macalister Mansion logo floats above the green hedge and original wrought iron gate, with the elegant mansion in the distance. Entering the hedge-lined driveway, guests are welcomed by an oversized 2.5m high fractal bust of Norman Macalister. Arrival at the reception area is under a turquoise scalloped canopy and through a pair of restored ornate wooden double-leaf doorway.

The reception is central to the rest of the Macalister Mansion experience and is linked to three F&B outlets and to the eight rooms above.

The Living Room has its own distinct entry on the southwest side of the building with a pathway connecting it to The Lawn's pool and pool bar.

At the pool, a white cannon and series of cannonballs on display are a tongue-in-cheek reference to a legend surrounding Norman Macalister's days of governing – apparently he incentivised local islanders to aid in the clearing of a piece of forested coastal land by shooting gold coins into the forest.

The entire mansion can be booked for RM80,000 (US\$18,161) nett per day. – **S Puvaneswary**

Jaya House Riverpark, Siem Reap, Cambodia

Event venues Adaptable space

Design story Since opening on the outskirts of Siem Reap in October, Jaya House Riverpark has been creating a name for itself. The stunning resort takes in 36 rooms, two swimming pools, a spa and restaurant dotted among tropical gardens and lush trees. Chic modernity dominates, with clean contemporary décor elegantly balanced against Angkorian-influenced carvings, with the hotel's design based on Kos Ke Temple.

For private events, the resort can be transformed into a unique venue, from the majestically lit, landscaped gardens to the spacious restaurant, reception area and silver-tiled pool area.

The brainchild of Christian De Boer, former general manager of the nearby exclusive Shinta Mani hotel, and Kan Rinna, former Shinta Mani F&B manager, service at Jaya House Riverpark is one of the finest to be found in Cambodia's Temple Town, with dedicated teams on hand to help look after every detail, including organising tailor-made group excursions to the surrounding area. – **Marissa Carruthers**



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Feature Beach destinations

Discover Asia's secret sands

With their laid-back vibe, tropical charm and lesser crowds, these are the rising beach stars of tomorrow. Here are TTG Show Daily's picks of the region's best under-the-radar spots



Phu Quoc, Vietnam

Desaru Coast, Malaysia

At this classic Malaysian beach town in south-eastern Johor, Themed Attractions Resorts & Hotels' (TAR&H) plan to transform 1,580ha of the land into a premium integrated destination resort, is expected to widen its appeal beyond the domestic and Singaporean markets.

Phase 1 has seen the opening of The Els Club Desaru Coast – comprising the Ocean Course (opened September 2016) and Valley Course (opened May 2017) – plus waterfront F&B and entertainment outlets, and a conference centre.

In addition, the Els Club Desaru Coast comprises two championship golf courses with 45 holes in total. The 27-hole Ocean Course was designed by four-time major champion Ernie Els, while the 18-hole Valley Course was co-designed by Vijay Singh and Ernie Els.

Raaj Navaratnaa, general manager of Johor-based New Asia Holiday Tours & Travel, said: "Currently, Desaru Coast attracts Indian and Asian FITs who are keen on soft adventure and nature activities. Its close proximity to Singapore is another attraction as tourists can combine a beach stay in Desaru with a day trip, or overnight, in Singapore."

Watch out for Launching by end-2017 is the 365-room Hard Rock Hotel Desaru Coast, located adjacent to Desaru Coast Adventure Water Park (currently under construction). Also coming up are the Anantara Desaru Coast Resorts & Villas, Aman Resorts & Villas and The Westin Desaru Coast Resort. – S Puvaneswary

Phu Quoc, Vietnam

While resorts are quickly rising on the 20km stretch of Long Beach and the west side of Phu Quoc, simple island life can still be found on its east coast, with

its reefs perfect for diving, calm bays for kayaking, and quaint fishing villages and beach shacks serving up fresh seafood.

There, Star Beach, known locally as Bai Sao, is the island's prized beach, said Shane Ngu, general manager of Vietnam Designer Tours.

"Phu Quoc is fast becoming developed, which can put some people off. But it still has a lot of charm and you can find seclusion and tropical beaches, which make it the perfect getaway," he added.

Watch out for The debut of the JW Marriott Phu Quoc Emerald Bay Resort & Spa in March 2017 has significantly raised the destination's luxury credentials. Designed by renowned architect Bill Bensley, it has 244 guestrooms, five F&B outlets, a gym, spa and 1,100m² of meeting space. – Marissa Carruthers

Mergui Archipelago, Myanmar

Lying off Myanmar's southern coast is the Mergui (or Myeik) Archipelago, comprising more than 800 pristine islands that have remained untouched until recently despite its proximity to the Thai border.

Boasting white beaches, vibrant marine life and home to the Moken people – or sea gypsies – the archipelago is touted as South-east Asia's best kept secret.

Janis Vougioukas, general manager of Burma Boating, said: "The Mergui Archipelago is just opening up to tourism and people come to explore remote islands."

The archipelago is now flagging up on visitors' radars, with a string of sailing trips touring the islands, as well as more land accommodation springing up, such as on Nyaung Oo Phee Island.

Watch out for Burma Boating, which has

been operating in the area since the late 1990s, recently added four yachts, including the luxurious new flagship *Clan VI* to their fleet. The company also added a seven-day itinerary that takes in more of the archipelago's islands. – Marissa Carruthers

Koh Chang, Thailand

Mu Koh Chang National Park, located in eastern Thailand near the Cambodian borders, comprises 52 islands including Koh Chang – the second-largest island in the country after Phuket.

Panika Kongprasert, owner and sales manager of Changtour explains that Koh Chang is fast gaining popularity among Thai and foreign tourists alike as it is just 300km from Bangkok, and cheaper than the many famous beaches and islands in the country's south.

"Koh Chang is so attractive because there is a wide range of activities available, such as elephant riding, snorkelling and firefly watching," Panika said.

Watch out for The new ferry service connecting Sattahip and Koh Chang was recently launched in May, providing an alternative means for tourists staying in Pattaya or those landing in U-tapao Airport to get to the island. – Siriarpa Kamjan

Belitung, Indonesia

An island on the east coast of Sumatra, Belitung has caught travellers' attention since *Laskar Pelangi* – a film based on a book of the same title – was shown in 2008.

Known for its unique granite rock formations scattered on land and in the sea, Belitung's most popular destination is Tanjung Kelayang, a 4km-long stretch of white-sand beach in the north. The southern part is home to mangrove forests, while the small islands south of Belitung offer shipwrecks for divers to explore.

In addition, Belitung is part of the tourism ministry's 10 "New Bali" destinations, with a Special Economic Zone set up to include the development of a 90-room hotel and 30 villas, set to open in 2018. As well, an 18-hole golf course broke ground in September 2016 and is expected to

open this year.

Bambang Sugiono, director of Gajah Bali Tour, said: "Belitung has the potential as it has beautiful beaches, and Chinese travellers like water sports and activities."

Watch out for H.A.S. Hanandjoeddin International Airport, 40km from Tanjung Kelayang, extending its runway from 2,200 to 2,500m as it gears up to receive international flights in the near future. – Mimi Hudoyo

Port Dickson, Malaysia

Already popular among locals due to its proximity to Kuala Lumpur, a new crop of mid to upscale hotels targeted at the international market is now raising Port Dickson's profile among a wider clientele.

New hotels include Avillion Port Dickson, featuring 258 rooms, chalets and villas; Avillion Admiral Cove, a waterfront 316-room hotel with meeting facilities and a marina; the 200-key Corus Paradise Resort Port Dickson; Lexis Hibiscus Port Dickson, offering 639 rooms and overwater villas; and the 317-villa Grand Lexis Port Dickson.

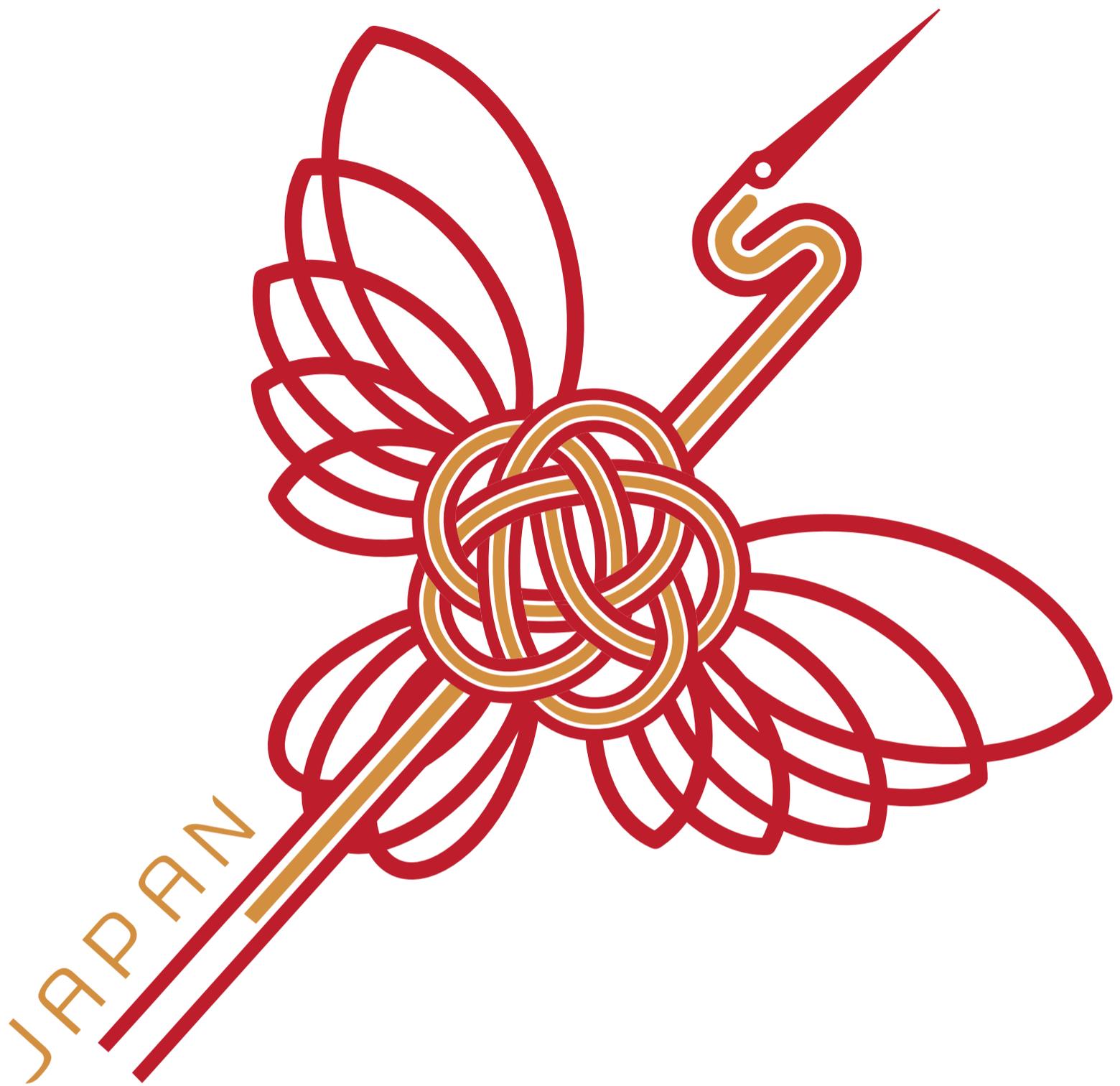
"The quality of these hotels has made it possible to sell the destination to foreign markets. In the past it was mainly budget and three-star properties catering mainly to locals," said Arokia Das, senior manager, Luxury Tours Malaysia.

Said Steve Woon, senior vice president – sales marketing of Lexis Hotel Group: "We are seeing a lot of honeymoon couples, meetings and incentive groups, and upmarket leisure tourists mainly from China, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Middle East and Indonesia."

Watch out for Malaysian prime minister Najib Abdul Razak announced in May the creation of Malaysia Vision Valley (MVV) – a world-class metropolis in the Negeri Sembilan State (which includes Port Dickson). MVV is expected to attract more than RM290 billion (US\$67 billion) in investments, and will be developed over 153,000ha and in phases until 2045. – S Puvaneswary



Belitung, Indonesia



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Feature Beach destinations

Con Dao, Vietnam

The southern archipelago of Con Dao comprises 16 islands, the largest of which is Con Son.

Despite its stunning natural beauty, it holds a dark history as this was where political prisoners were sent during the French rule. Today, former prison buildings have been turned into a museum and are open to the public.

While the island remains off-the-beaten path, its remote vibe and untouched paradise offerings make it attractive to both developers and tourists.

Florencia Allo Moreno, general manager of Khiri Travel Vietnam, said Con Dao has become a top beach destination with her clientele since it was introduced to itineraries.

She added: "The island is quite small with few accommodation choices, but this is changing as demand is increasing."

Watch out for Dream Hotel Group is venturing into Vietnam, with its first property slated to open in Ba Ria province's Long Hai in the next few months, followed by four more upmarket properties over the next two years, including one in Con Dao. – **Marissa Carruthers**

Wakatobi, Indonesia

Located in south-east Sulawesi, Wakatobi is part of the Coral Triangle – a triangular area of tropical marine waters between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines – and has been listed as a tentative World Heritage Site since 2005.

With its rich underwater biodiversity that spans 750 species of coral reefs, it is also one of the 10 new destinations the Indonesian government is focused on developing.

"The destination is promising. However, there is a need for international-standard and more affordable accommodation," Vivi Herlambang, director – sales marketing and business development at Sahid International Hotel, which took over the management of the midscale Wakatobi Patuno Resort in September 2016.

Accessibility to the island is improving,

with Wings Air launching a daily service between Makassar and Wakatobi since October 2016.

Watch out for The government is expanding Matahora Airport's runway on Wangi-Wangi Island, from 2,000m to 2,500m in length. As well, Garuda Indonesia plans to fly between Denpasar and Wakatobi this year. – **Mimi Hudoyo**

Koh Lipe, Thailand

As one of the biggest islands in Tarutao National Marine Park in southern Thailand, Koh Lipe in Satun province has been steadily rising on the international tourist radar.

Last year, 1.2 million tourists visited the island, up from 800,000 in 2005.

Sumet Marnhet, secretary of the Satun Provincial Administrative Organization, attributes Koh Lipe's growing popularity to the island's clear waters and powdery sand, which made it attractive for snorkelling.

Furthermore, Koh Lipe is located near other tranquil islands such as Koh Hin Ngam, well-known for its rock beach.

Watch out for The ambassador of China to Thailand in March visited Koh Lipe with Chinese tour operators to strengthen trade cooperation on Koh Lipe and in Satun province. It is expected that China will soon be a source market of Koh Lipe in the near future. – **Siriarpa Kamjan**

Koh Rong Samloem, Cambodia

As Cambodia's largest and most developed island Koh Rong continues to grow, more visitors are seeking solace in neighbouring islands like Koh Rong Samloem.

Measuring nine kilometres long and five kilometres at its widest point, Koh Rong Samloem remains relatively undeveloped, with a smattering of guest-houses lining its white sandy shores, rare wildlife, and crystal waters perfect for snorkelling.

Kimhean Pich, CEO and founder

of Discover the Mekong, said: "Koh Rong Samloem is close to the mainland coastal town of Sihanoukville, which has easy land and air access. It is also a relatively new destination and there are fewer people, which makes it appealing to some."

With speedboats now transporting visitors from Sihanoukville to Koh Rong Samloem and more upmarket boutique accommodation being introduced, the Cambodian trade is keeping a watch on the island.

Watch out for Earlier this year, Buva Sea Cambodia launched new fast boats connecting Sihanoukville and Koh Rong Samloem. The thrice-daily boats now take about 30 minutes, and increased competition has also driven down the cost of one-way tickets to about US\$6. – **Marissa Carruthers**

Caramoan, Philippines

With its powdery white sand and limestone caves, Caramoan, in the Bicol Region, is often compared to Boracay and Palawan.

Vilma De Claro Mendoza, president of Mart Evers Travel and Tours, said that Caramoan is ideal for travellers seeking peace and unspoiled nature. Travellers can also take in the culture, cuisine, and heritage of the Bicol Region.

The resort destination can be reached from Manila via an hour-long domestic flight to Camarines Sur, followed by a three-hour overland drive.

Watch out for More Bicol Region tour operators, as well as the Philippine Tour Operators Association (Philtota), have added Caramoan to their tour packages, creating stronger marketing mileage for the destination. – **Rosa Ocampo**

Siquijor, Philippines

Located in the Central Visayas, Siquijor is a laid-back island characterised by pristine white sand and great snorkelling opportunities.

Its tranquility and lack of tourist

crowds are what make it unique, according to Renalie Locsin, Annset Holidays' account manager for Europe. Visitors can ride a motorbike from one end of the island to the other, dip in the multi-tiered Cambugahay Falls and mix with the friendly locals.

Siquijor has no airport, so access is via ferry rides of about two hours from Cebu to Dumaguete, then another hour to the island.

Watch out for The 30-room, three-star Casa Coco Hotel will be built in San Juan, Siquijor, to augment the current accommodation shortage. – **Rosa Ocampo**

Visakhapatnam, India

Also known as Vizag, this beach destination in the state of Andhra Pradesh has been growing in popularity in the domestic market.

It has the potential to become an international resort destination like Goa, as charter tourists from Russia are starting to visit the destination this year.

"In recent months, efforts have been directed towards international markets, with the state representing actively in ITB Berlin and Arabian Travel Market. Even local trade bodies like Confederation of Indian Industry have actively engaged with tourism stakeholders, and organised a meeting with top DMCs from New Delhi and Mumbai to showcase the destination," said Aditya Shamsheer Malla, general manager, Four Points by Sheraton, Visakhapatnam.

"Essential attractions in Vizag already exist but the capacity utilisation is grossly low," said Col Minhas, general manager, Baypark – a Pema Wellness Resort.

Watch out for The Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA) recently organised its annual meeting in Vizag, providing an opportunity for member MICE operators to know the destination.

"NIMA is now planning to organise a B2B table session for some 200 travel agents and hoteliers in Vizag," said Gajesh Girdhar, national coordinator, NIMA. – **Rohit Kaul**



From left; Burma Boating organises sailing holidays in Myanmar's Mergui Archipelago; Cambugahay Falls at Siquijor, Philippines

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A milestone to celebrate

A decade seems a short time but in the competitive and congested arena of travel trade shows, 10 years of growth is a big deal. ITB Asia's chief, Katrina Leung tells **Karen Yue** what the event has done right

ITB Asia reaches its 10th edition this year. Consider the increasingly stiff competition trade shows face, why do you think ITB Asia has managed to not only survive but also thrive?

Every year we set ourselves the goal of meeting and exceeding the needs of our customers. Year after year, this is the DNA we live by at ITB Asia.

Our team constantly works hard to ensure that business is being done on the show floor through our customised business matching. We also ensure that the quality of buyers is very high. This is achieved through strategic partnerships with our Buyers Program Partners. We have recommended buyers from 120 intermediaries and balance this by maintaining a 1:1 ratio between buyers and exhibitors.

Finally, for our conference segment, we

focus on curating interesting topics and securing industry leaders to share their insights on the latest trends that are the most relevant and useful to our attendees.

What are some of the more significant changes in the way ITB Asia shows were conducted over the past decade?

ITB Asia has certainly grown and changed significantly over the past decade. In terms of the way in which the shows are now conducted, we have increased our focus on providing a seamless customer experience not only during the show but also pre-show and post show.

In regards to the aesthetics of the entire showcase and experience, we have really invested in the look and feel to showcase the strength of our brand.

Furthermore, business matching is a key priority for our customers, so we are

looking at going more digital. We are pursuing this by pushing business at the show to be done digitally, for example; scheduling appointments, securing meetings and tracking data.

What impact do you think ITB Asia shows have had on Singapore as both a leisure and business events destination?

As Asia's leading travel trade show, we attract over 10,000 attendees every year. This year, we expect almost a thousand exhibitors to attend, and have confirmed almost another thousand buyers from the MICE, corporate and leisure sector.

This puts Singapore at the centre of all this exciting activity and affirms the city as a hub for leisure and business events.

Indeed, ITB Asia is recognised internationally with exhibitors and buyers attending yearly from around the world. We bring together leading buyers and exhibitors at ITB Asia annually. Our global partners include the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), Society Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) and United Networks of International Corporate Event Organisers (UNICEO) which have chapters across the world.

In 2016, business events such as ITB Asia saw a 28 per cent year-on-year growth by generating over S\$611 million (US\$449.6 million) in tourism receipts for Singapore.

And how have the shows helped with Asia-Pacific destinations?

ITB Asia acts as a platform to connect key Asia-Pacific destinations. We've seen our international attendees meet our exhibitors and learn more about each other's destinations – this is how many collaborations have sparked off.

The value of the show for these destinations is demonstrated by the ROI as well as the overwhelming support we have received from leading Asian destinations including Indonesia, (South) Korea, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines and more.

Due to the positive response received at our show, exhibitors such as Japan and (South) Korea have increased their investment in ITB Asia and expanded their presence and booths.

In fact, we just announced a major partnership with the Korea Tourism Organization which looks to boost (South) Korea's appeal as a key destination in South-east

Asia. Just last year, we also inked a milestone partnership with the Japan National Tourism Organisation of Singapore which looks to propel Japan up the international business and events destination chart.

Can ITB Asia 2017 delegates expect special programmes as a result of your 10th anniversary?

We are looking towards the Future of Travel, and our opening keynote on October 25 will feature industry thought leaders from IBM Asia Pacific and Google discussing the potential and opportunities in Artificial Intelligence for the travel and tourism industry.

To reflect the strong support by our corporate participants at ITB Asia, we will also launch our inaugural Corporate Day which focuses on the corporate sector. Our corporate partners include GBTA, Egencia, Corporate Travel Management, UOB Travel and Airbnb.

We will also host a Cruise panel featuring global cruise operators who will discuss the rise of cruise in Asia-Pacific and the growing market and opportunities.

We have also redefined our business matching system to allow attendees to set more business appointments at ITB Asia 2017. Attendees can leverage on this to maximise and enhance their experience at the show.

Looking forward into the next decade, what challenges and opportunities are present for ITB Asia, both its show and its team? And how will you be tackling the challenges and leveraging the opportunities?

Our team is constantly challenged as we have grown and continue to grow ITB Asia. We continue to focus on improving the show for our attendees as this is at the heart of our business objectives and brand value.

By implementing new measures and constantly reviewing how we can improve the customer experience, we adopt the latest in MICE trends and make the processes seamless and efficient for our attendees.

Of course, the industry is ever changing and the exhibition business continues to grow and develop from strength to strength. We believe we are presented with a fantastic opportunity to grow ITB Asia as we look ahead to the next decade!



ITB Asia is recognised internationally with exhibitors and buyers attending yearly from around the world.

Katrina Leung
Executive director,
Messe Berlin (Singapore) and ITB Asia

ITB ASIA'S EVOLUTION

1 ITB Asia has been held in Singapore for the past ten years with consistent support from the Singapore Tourism Board and Singapore Exhibition Convention Bureau

2 ITB Asia's conference duration has grown from 3,000+ minutes in 2013 to 6,000+ minutes in 2017

3 ITB Asia moved to Marina Bay Sands in 2014 to accommodate greater demand for exhibition space

4 ITB Asia has experienced 1:1 ratio for exhibitors and buyers since 2014, with 15,000 pre-scheduled appointments made prior to the show

5 ITB Asia transformed its keynote structure in 2014 by featuring C-level representatives. Always held on the second day of the show, the keynote sessions consistently focus on industry leaders in the online travel space

6 ITB Asia visitor numbers have boomed to more than 10,000 across the years

7 ITB Asia's exhibitor numbers have grown tremendously to almost 1,000

8 ITB Asia's buyer numbers currently stand at almost 1,000

9 90% of ITB Asia buyers are recommended buyers

10 ITB Asia's corporate, MICE and leisure buyer mix is 25%, 35% and 40% respectively

11 ITB Asia has experienced significant growth in its travel and technology exhibitors, with a 100% increase in 2016

12 In 2016, ITB Asia announced its inaugural MICE Day, with the second edition taking place this year

13 In 2017, ITB Asia launched its first Corporate Day on October 26



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ITB Asia 10th Anniversary Special



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ITB
Asia

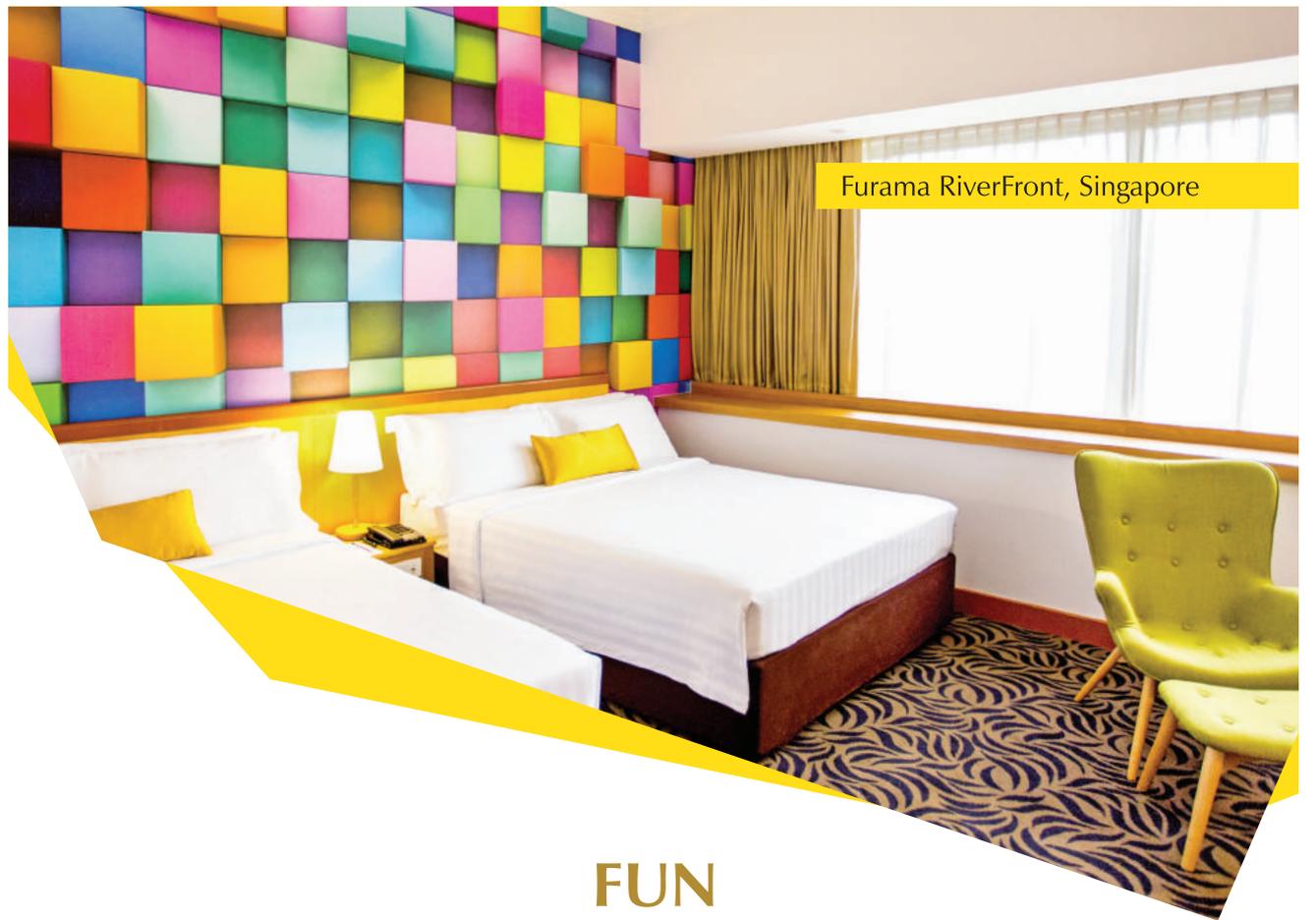
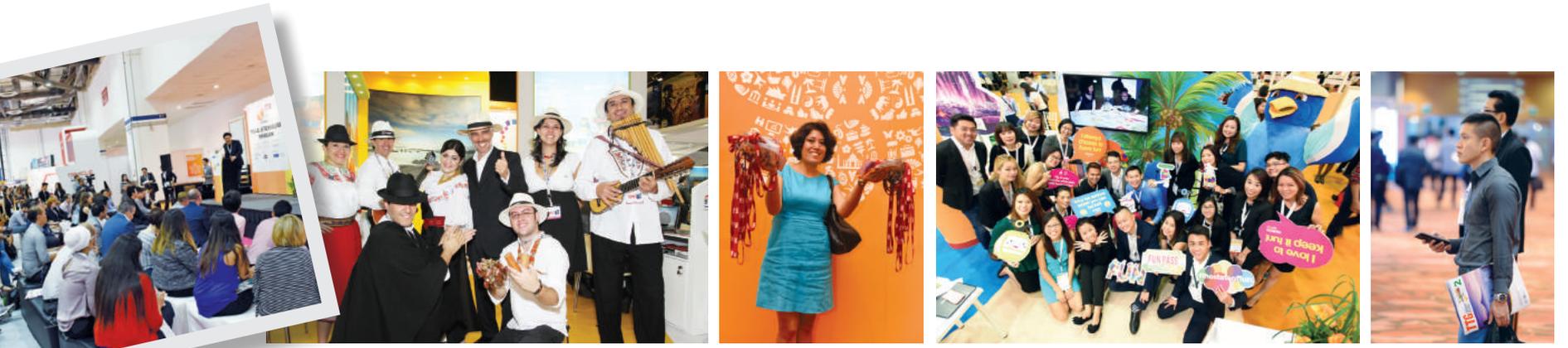
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Destination Finland



Summertime in Finland promises unusual experiences too, thanks to cool temperatures and endless bright days in the south; go camping in Nuuksio National Park (above)

Summer lovin' in Finland

Visit Finland hopes to lure Asian travellers with its lesser-known summertime attractions, and intends to eventually chase after special interest groups such as sports, education and business events. [S Puvaneswary](#) reports

Finland for summer? Why not, says Visit Finland, which is bent on raising awareness of the destination's summertime appeal at ITB Asia this year.

Heli Mende, head of global sales promotion, Finpro Visit Finland, told *TTG Show Daily*: "There is growing awareness around winter attractions in Finland. Winter in Lapland, in particular, sells very well. However, not enough is known about our summer attractions and activities that Asian tourists will enjoy, such as cycling, hiking, canoeing, fishing and horse-riding."

In addition, Visit Finland is determined to woo more Asian travellers over.

To this end, the NTO has brought a record delegation of 43 travel service providers to ITB Asia 2017.

"All our four main regions – Greater Helsinki, Archipelago, Lakeland and Lapland – are well represented (at ITB Asia) which shows that Finnish travel companies are keen on tapping the Asian markets," said Mende.

It comes as no surprise that Greater China is Finland's biggest Asian arrivals

Destination in numbers

3.4 nights

The average length of stay by Japanese visitors to Finland in 2016, compared with 5.2 nights among the Chinese and 4.4 nights among the Indians

2.5 billion euros

The total spend of overseas tourists in Finland in 2016 – equivalent to US\$2.9 billion – of which China and Japan contributed slightly more than 20 per cent of total tourist spend

source market. Chinese overnights accounted for 34 per cent of all Asian overnights in Finland, with the ultimate total overnights standing at 160,000

Finland's second largest Asian market is Japan with 102,000 overnights, followed by India with 39,000 overnights. South Korea and Singapore complete the top five Asian inbound markets to Finland.

Mende said: "Nearly all Asian markets registered increased overnights in Finland in the first half of 2017. We attribute the

growth to good air access, in addition to the general trend of growing interest in Northern Europe."

She added: "Based on our statistics, our *StopOver Finland* programme launched at ITB Asia last year has been well received. The number of stopover travellers from Asia en route to Europe is growing according to our expectations."

Finland is also keen to do more in India and the UAE.

She said: "We have not had any pro-

motional activities in India in the last few years, but that is about to change. Next year, we plan to initiate B2B activities with the travel trade in India.

"We also view the UAE as a market with potential and intend to increase our presence there in the near future."

Mende revealed that in general, Visit Finland's focus are on Asian millennials and families – segments that are interested in the Nordic way of living and nature experiences.

She shared: "In the coming years, we will pay special attention to developing sports tourism and education tourism in Finland. We will also intensify our efforts to promote business events in Finland to Asians.

"With good connectivity and direct flights from many destinations in Asia, we think that Finland makes an ideal incentive and convention destination. At the same time, we need to keep in mind that there is a large segment of high-end travellers for whom we have a lot to offer in Finland. Our strategy is to work with tour operators and online travel agents to increase awareness of the destination."

Hot stuff

Iittala & Arabia Design Centre

It is here where you can take a deep dive into two of Finland's best-known design and lifestyle brands, Iittala and Arabia. More than a window into the history, present and future of these legendary brands, the centre invites guests to interact with working artists and explore their own creativity through exhibitions, workshops, guided tours, design talks and events.

Lake Spa at Hotel & Spa Resort Järvisydän

The Lake Spa at Hotel & Spa Resort Järvisydän

will give visitors a new kind of Finnish lake wellness experience. The spa is surrounded by natural rocks and boasts large windows that overlook Lake Saimaa. In the middle of the spa sits a natural pond in the shape of a heart.

Arctic TreeHouse Hotel

Arctic TreeHouse Hotel, located at Rovaniemi Arctic Circle, offers guests an opportunity to experience the Arctic Circle and the beauty of the Northern Lights. With spectacular views over the treetops, the suites offer an exclusive combination of lo-

cal tradition, Lappish heritage and modern Scandinavian design. Accommodation comprises 32 Arctic TreeHouse suites and five Arctic Glass Houses.

Seaside Glass Villas Kemi

Kemi Tourism's new Glass Villas offer a warm, cosy and unique accommodation that comes with incredible views of the Bay of Bothnia. It is located in the beautiful and quiet SnowCastle area, just a few minutes from the Kemi city centre. Experience the sea, snow and ice, and access the frozen sea were various winter activities with a

special twist are available. Be brave and go for ice driving, for instance! In summer, the villas are a great place to catch the Midnight Sun.

Moomin Museum

The world's only Moomin Museum houses a unique exhibition of more than 2,000 original Moomin illustrations and paintings by Tove Jansson, all presented in a modern, experiential and multisensory way. Visitors can explore the Moomin Museum's own library as well as buy wonderful souvenirs from the revamped gift shop.



From left: Iittala & Arabia Design Centre; Arctic TreeHouse Hotel

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Japan's grand plans

A slew of destination promotion campaigns for global markets and special interest promotions are waiting in the wings, ready to help Japan achieve its 40 million arrival target by 2020, discovers [Julian Ryall](#)



Glittering Osaka continues to draw visitors, but the Japan National Tourism Organization is bent on pushing travel footfalls deeper into the country

Japan may be on course for its best ever inbound tourism numbers in 2017, but the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) and the industry are refusing to rest on their laurels. While the target of 20 million annual arrivals has already been achieved, they accept that more work remains to be done if the altogether more ambitious goal of 40 million foreign visitors is to be achieved in 2020.

“Our attractiveness as a destination has not changed, but our success in attracting inbound tourists has changed greatly in the last couple of years,” said Mamoru Kobori, executive vice president of the JNTO.

The upturn in Japan's tourism fortunes can be traced back to the launch of the Visit Japan campaign in 2003, with the sector benefiting from a number of developments, including the advent of low-cost carriers across Asia, easier visa regulations and the growth of an affluent middle-class in the region.

The challenge now, Kobori said, is build on the existing momentum.

JNTO is upgrading its marketing efforts through the use of big data and analysis, while in 2016 it opened six new overseas offices, in Moscow, Hanoi, Kuala Lumpur, Delhi, Rome and Madrid. A seventh new office is due to open in Manila in the coming months.

Key aims for JNTO in the coming months will be to continue to encourage visitors to go beyond the Golden Route cities of Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka and to explore lesser-known destinations. A campaign is being drawn up to promote

Destination in numbers

24.7 billion yen

The fiscal 2018 budget – equivalent to US\$229 million – that has been requested for the Japan Tourism Agency, up 17 per cent on this year's budget allocation

1,000 yen

The sum that is being considered for an exit tax – light-heartedly named the sayonara tax – to be paid by foreign tourists to Japan. While regarded a controversial move among industry players, the tax will nevertheless raise an estimated 40 billion yen that will be invested in tourism promotion efforts

78.9%

The occupancy rate of leading Tokyo hotels in June, down 1.9 per cent as budget-conscious travellers increasingly opt for cheaper hotels or home-sharing services

the Tohoku region, for example, while the organisation also wants to reduce the seasonal gap in tourist arrivals.

As well, JNTO intends to increase the range of destinations that are available for educational trips and will partner cruise lines and airlines in destination promotions, Kobori said.

In tandem with those campaigns, there will be a new drive to increase arrivals from long-haul source markets as well as a targeted campaign for the luxury segment.

In the immediate future, however, a great deal of effort is going to be spent on promoting mega sporting events in Japan.

“In the next few years, Japanese cities will host the Rugby World Cup, the Tokyo Olympic Games, the Paralympics and the World Masters Games,” he told *TTG Show Daily*. “We launched our promotions for the Rugby World Cup in London last year, along with a broader branding campaign throughout Europe, and expanded our online media centre, which has a free database of more than 10,000 photos and videos.”

The tourism board will kick off its new long-haul marketing campaign in early 2018, using data gathered this year to specifically target travellers from the US, Canada, France, the UK, Germany and

Australia. The campaign will include videos that focus on unique activities, such as diving, trekking and sake brewery tours, along with temples, shrines and the better-known attractions of Japan.

Noriko Kono, sales manager, Keio Plaza Hotel Tokyo, is looking forward to the crowds that will inevitably come to Japan for the major sporting events of the next few years, although the campaign to encourage people to get out of the big cities has impacted the company's operations.

“This year has been worse than 2016 because the number of our Asian guests has decreased quite significantly,” Kono revealed. “As much as 80 per cent of our guests are from overseas and half of those come from Asia, so that is an important part of our business.”

Hotels have been affected by tourists – particularly repeat visitors – that have decided to skip the big cities and also to turn to cheaper accommodation options, including private lodgings, known as *min-paku*.

For travel agencies, meanwhile, the bigger concern is the growing competition for inbound tourists.

Ayako Adachi, owner of Tokyo-based Japan Oriental Tours, said: “We started five years ago, and at that time there were not so many small agencies and business was good. Now we have to work much harder to identify what people want and what they are interested in seeing.

“It is clear that many visitors now have already been to Japan once or twice, so they are looking for something new and different, so that is what we have to deliver.”

Hot stuff

Tohoku Hot Spring Snow Tour

The latest addition to the off-the-beaten-path trips pioneered by Walk Japan is its guided, nine-day Tohoku Hot Spring Snow Tour. Participants will need snowshoes for part of the hike through the rugged mountains of northern Japan, taking in remote valleys, vast forests and rugged coastlines. Accommodation is in traditional inns, most of which have invigorating *onsen* thermal hot spring baths.

Bebot

Japan's Times Mobility Network has become the first car rental service in the world to introduce Bebot, an artificial intelligence chatbot that can recommend local restaurants, attractions and accommodation as well as travel routes, to its vehicles used by visitors arriving at Tokyo's Narita International Airport. Bebot operates in English and Chinese and learns a user's preferences from the conversation.

The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto

The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto, has introduced three new cultural experiences for guests. They include learning to play the *koto*, a 13-stringed harp, attending morning chanting with the monks of Myokaku-ji Temple and then tucking into breakfast with the monks, and taking a tandem bike to some of the ancient capital's most famous sites.

The hotel is known to offer memorable local experiences, and options already available include performing a traditional Japanese sword dance and creating a miniature zen garden.

Muji hotel

Local budget interior goods retailer Muji is moving into the hotel sector, with its first property located within the 10-storey Marronnier Gate Ginza complex. The hotel is scheduled to open in early 2019, just in time for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. The hotel will occupy the top five floors of the building, which will

also have retail outlets and restaurants. The hotel's furnishings and amenities will all be Muji-brand products.

Mangekyo

Japanese drum and dance ensemble Drum Tao, JTB Communication Design and Shinagawa Prince Hotel, Tokyo have joined hands to produce a new non-verbal performance.

Titled *Mangekyo*, which translates to kaleidoscope, the show uses a circular stage to represent the eye-piece of a kaleidoscope, as well as unique lighting and passionate

drum beats to convey ever-changing visions and emotions.

Its debut run ends October 29 this year, but will return from May to June, and September to November next year.

Mangekyo's compact two-floor theatre in Shinagawa Prince Hotel makes it suitable for corporate and VIP groups. Planners can choose to book their VIP guests in the box seats on the second floor terrace or buy out the venue. The venue size also allows the audience to enjoy the performance up close, with those seated in the front rows on the first floor merely a metre from the energetic performers.



From left: The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto; Mangekyo



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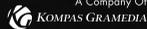
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Destination Hong Kong

Luxury ripples in the harbour

Hong Kong's hospitality scene is welcoming a new wave of luxury properties in the coming years, but the more crowded marketplace will also bring a mixed bag of benefits to the trade, discovers [Prudence Lui](#)

Land-scarce Hong Kong will embrace a new wave of luxury five-star hotels starting later this year when The Murray, Hong Kong, a Niccolo Hotel opens later this year with 336 rooms, followed by the 398-room

Rosewood Hong Kong and the 129-room St Regis Hong Kong next year, and the 460-room Fullerton Hong Kong Hotel Ocean Park in 2020.

The industry is watching the new properties with much excitement, as the last

time Hong Kong welcomed a new luxury hotel was in 2011, when the Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong was launched.

Without any new supply until the launch of Kerry Hotel, Hong Kong in April this year, the city now has 27 luxury hotels as of June 2017, up from 26 in 2014 and 19 in 2007, according to STR.

Four Seasons Hotel's general manager and regional vice president, Christoph Schmidinger, told *TTG Show Daily*: "After two years of stagnant growth, business from China is rebounding. The supply of luxury hotels will grow significantly in the months to come and we expect the demand to be buoyed by continued strong demand from business travel and increased travel from emerging markets and China."

While there isn't any threat of over-supply, Schmidinger believes occupancy growth in Hong Kong will be moderate until all new supply is absorbed. In the short term, he expects the city's rates might be affected but will return to current levels soon thereafter.

With the boom in new luxury hotels across Asia, Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees' general manager Christina Cheng thinks that the luxury hotel sector will come under pressure in terms of service and pricing strategy.

She said: "In Hong Kong, five-star guestrooms share 27 per cent of hotel supply YTD 2017 with average occupancy around 84 per cent, reflecting sufficient supply in the market. This new wave creates price competition that will spread from (within) same class hotels to lower ranking hotels, affecting the average rate over the whole industry."

She added: "Luxury hotels are recording lower average rate compared to the same period last year for the first five months, which explained why upscale hotels have been reducing their prices for optimum yield to maximise the market share... mid-range hotels are still benefiting from tourists with less spending power looking for affordable lodging."

With rates coming under pressure from the increase in luxury room supply, Swire Travel, managing director, Gloria Sle-

thaug, has already observed a 5.4 per cent drop in average room rate for Jan-May 2017 – welcome news as the competitive rates help travel agents to roll out more attractive offers for Hong Kong.

"(Greater competition) should drive luxury hotels to differentiate products and services and create additional value for customers e.g. some hotels have short three-hour itineraries for hotel guests seeking leisure. In addition, agents can also use this opportunity to develop leisure programmes.

"Like Bangkok and Singapore in the region, an ample number of luxury hotels will help to drive the meetings and incentives sector and make Hong Kong more competitive as a MICE destinations," she elaborated.

However, W Travel Services' managing director Wing Wong does not think the new luxury hotels will benefit leisure agents much.

He explained: "It's typical for VIP or high-end guests to book direct (with the hotel) rather than via agents. Unless I am a corporate travel agent, I don't think our service is needed."

Destination in numbers

77,555

The number of hotel rooms in Hong Kong as of May 2017, which is expected to reach 85,000 in 2019

27.8 million

The number of visitor arrivals Hong Kong received between 1H2017, a slight 2.4 per cent increase from 2016

20%

The percentage decline in total arrivals from India in 1H2017 to 207,133, due to the implementation of the online pre-arrival registration for Indian nationals early this year



Kerry Hotel was a long-awaited new luxury hotel addition to Hong Kong

Hot stuff

Penta Hotel Hong Kong opens

Opened in July, the 298-room Penta Hotel Hong Kong is converted from an industrial high-rise building that now sports a contemporary rustic decor fused with local cultural references. It is located just a three-minute walk from the Tuen Mun MTR - West Rail Terminal Station.

Direct HK-Melbourne links

Virgin Australia has inaugurated five-times weekly Hong Kong-Melbourne services from July 5, 2017, marking the airline's expansion into Greater China. The service is operated using an Airbus A330-200 aircraft, offering business class as well as 255 economy seats in a 2-4-2 configuration.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan Airlines also launched five-times weekly flights between Hong Kong and Colombo from July 15.

French fine dining with a view

Perched on the 101st floor in the International Commerce Centre, Le 39V by chef Frédéric Vardon opened in June to present neo-classical French cuisine against a backdrop of the Victoria Harbour. It is the first Asian outpost of Paris' Le 39V, which was awarded its first Michelin star in 2012.

Makeover for airport lounge

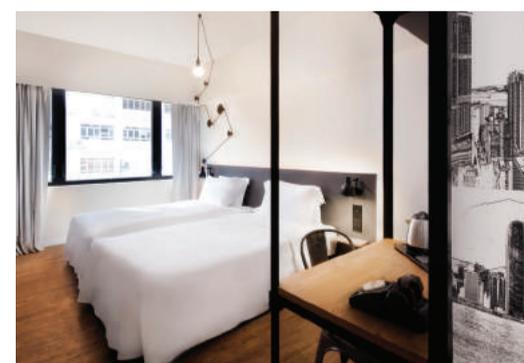
The Plaza Premium Lounge (East Hall) at Hong Kong International Airport will be upgraded and expanded into a 16,000m² area that can accommodate a total of

410 guests. It will emerge as a Plaza Premium Lounge (PPL) with 202 seats and Plaza Premium First (PPF) Lounge with 208 seats, designed with different entrances.

HK icon to undergo revamp

The InterContinental Hong Kong is scheduled to close in 1Q2019 for an extensive renovation lasting 12-16 months. The transformation will span all rooms and suites, public areas, restaurants and event venues, and include a redesign of the building façade.

The hotel's restaurants and event venues are expected to reopen in the evenings from late summer 2019, after approximately six months of renovation.



Penta Hotel Hong Kong

Yan Toh Heen, InterContinental Hong Kong's two-Michelin-star Cantonese restaurant, will remain open for dinner throughout the renovation.



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Dress Code: **Smart Casual**

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Transport will be provided from Marina Bay Sands at 8.45pm and 9pm. Pick-up location: Sands Expo Level 1 Driveway in front of Halls A/B/C. Visit TTG booth E63 for details.

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Destination Singapore

A brand new story

Travellers these days prefer experiences over attractions, which is why Singapore has launched a new campaign that targets different markets. [Pamela Chow](#) reports

Destination in numbers

85.6%

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

4.3 million

The total international arrivals to Singapore in 1Q2017, a four per cent increase from 2016

\$S\$6.4 billion

The total tourism receipts for 1Q2017, equivalent to US\$4.7 billion, a 15 per cent year-on-year increase



Prasit Boonphan/Shutterstock

A significant global tourism trend is the demand for a travel experience that is immersive, local, and authentic; Singapore's business district pictured

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and the Economic Development Board launched in August a unified destination marketing brand that aims to promote Singapore through its local stories and experiences.

Named *Passion Made Possible*, the brand aims to tell “a fuller Singapore story beyond just tourism... about the destination and its people”, said STB chief executive Lionel Yeo.

STB has identified 15 international target markets for this brand, including key Asian markets such as China, India and Indonesia; as well as longhaul markets such as Australia, UK and US. It is launch-

ing the campaign on staggered dates until November 2017.

The brand's campaigns are tailored to each target market, and features both Singaporean personalities and influential public figures from each of the other countries. These include Singaporean and Japanese contemporary creative talents at showcase Singapore: Inside Out Tokyo, as well as a collaboration between Singapore's tourism ambassador for Greater China, Stephanie Sun, and singer Nathan Hartono for promotions in China.

In light of this, STB has projected “a year-on-year growth of one to four per cent in tourism receipts, and one to two per cent in international visitor arrivals

for 2017,” said its director, strategy planning & incentive policy, Rachel Loh.

On the ground, *Passion Made Possible* will see operators roll out new tours highlighting heritage businesses and unique finds in Singapore. Examples include a food trail by Wok 'n' Stroll featuring new-generation hawkers, Ruby Dot Trails' family businesses of Kampong Glam and Tribe's past-to-present industry tour.

Such unique products focusing on localised experiences hit the right note for tourists, said industry players.

Linda Low, CMP strategic partnership & product marketing manager of Destination Services, observed: “There has been a strong demand for private tours, flexible

arrangements, and truly local encounters that call for interaction with the locals and off-the-beaten-track experiences.”

Meanwhile, Garth Simmons, COO AccorHotels for Malaysia, Singapore & Indonesia, remarked that more innovative tourism products are essential to enhance Singapore's standing as a destination.

He elaborated: “The industry and government must work closely together and coordinate their efforts in (developing) new products and visitor experiences that are unique and differentiated, (and) to enhance our industry competitiveness by investing in our people and embracing innovation.”

The renewal of the Singapore Grand Prix night race to 2021 is another added boost for the city state.

Simmons added: “The year-long calendar of international events and festivals such as the Singapore Grand Prix and Singapore International Festival of Arts will continue to attract tourists.”

However, he remains cautious about regional developments that could affect tourism to Singapore.

“Looking ahead, we face a more volatile global environment and growing regional competition,” said Simmons. “Political, economic and social developments across the world can also affect our tourism sector. Continued success is not a given.”

Hot stuff

Changi Airport Terminal 4

Changi Airport has completed works on its latest terminal, where passengers have the option of self-service during check-in, bag drop, immigration and boarding using fast and seamless travel (FAST) technology.

The terminal also presents themed experiential zones – including the Heritage Zone with Peranakan shophouse facades and dining – immersive LED displays, and more than 80 retail and F&B outlets. The terminal will open on October 31.

Trishaw Uncle

Traditional rickshaw service company Trishaw Uncle has refreshed its service to provide trishaw tours through various heritage districts such as Little India, Kampong Glam, Chinatown and the Civic District.

On these journeys, visitors will also get to step into the humble homes of Chinatown's early residents, peek into the living cubicle of a trishaw rider and hear authentic personal stories. This new range of trishaw experiences will be available for walk-in customers at Albert Mall Trishaw Park.

National Museum of Singapore

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.

Science Centre Singapore

The Science Centre Singapore has added two new permanent exhibitions.

Opened in June, the centre's new mirror maze – the largest one 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.

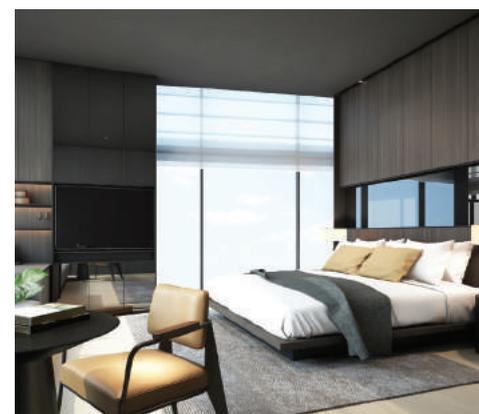
The second addition is The Mind's Eye, an optical illusion exhibition.

Park Hotel Farrer Park

Opened in May, this 20-storey hotel comprises 300 guestrooms and duplex lofts, and is adjacent to an integrated medical facility that houses the Farrer Park Hospital. The



Changi Airport



From left: Changi Airport Terminal 4; InterContinental Singapore Robertson Quay

property is also directly connected to the Farrer Park MRT station. Guests can make use of the outdoor swimming pool and 24-hour gymnasium, or tuck into a meal at either of its two restaurants.

InterContinental Singapore Robertson Quay

The second InterContinental-branded property in Singapore will be opening this month.

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 such as a Nespresso coffee machine and personal cocktail kit, and complimentary Wi-Fi.

In addition to four dining options, other facilities include five meeting spaces, a swimming pool, and a 24-hour fitness studio.



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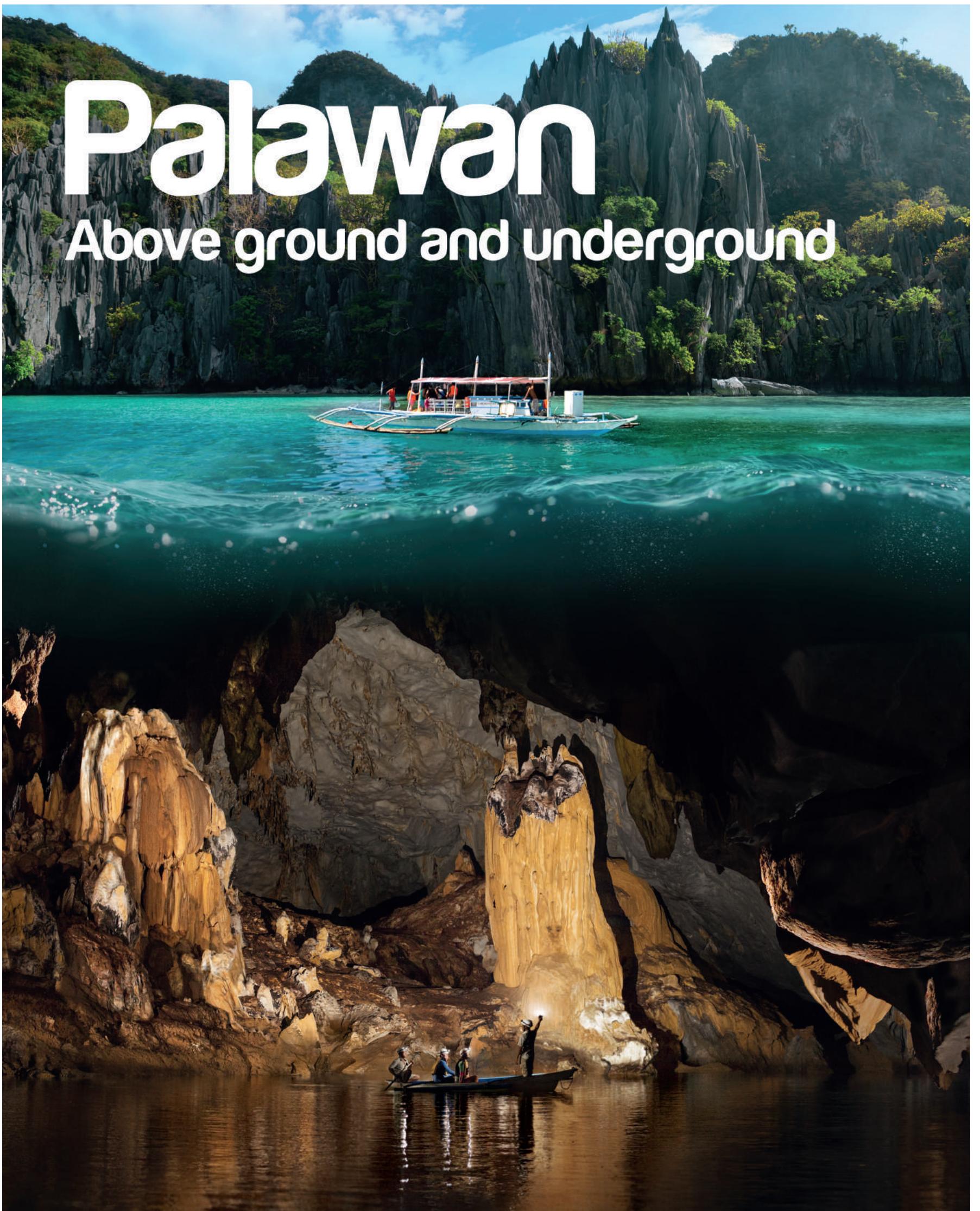


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