



ATF 2018
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Chiang Mai, Thailand



Longhaul demand firm

Traditional source markets remain strong, while new ones like Israel are emerging

By Marissa Carruthers and S Puvaneswary

Longhaul buyers at ATF 2018 and sellers specialising in farther source markets are reporting healthy demand for South-east Asia in the new year, driven by good airfares, improved economies and curiosity around perceived new destinations.

Destination Asia Thailand saw its biggest year-on-year growth from the honeymoon segment of Spain and Portugal, with most demand going into Thailand and Cambodia. Albert Sánchez Ramos, the company's account manager for Spanish and Latin Markets, added that interest is also up for Myanmar.

CEO and founder of US-based Blue World Holidays, David



Gerhauser: repeat travellers want new destinations

Capaldi, who recently started selling tours to South-east Asia, said the strong US dollar is perpetuating demand for the region. He observed that "multi-destination (programmes) are becoming more popular, such as Thailand and Cambodia".

According to Ben Gosman, president of FreeStyle Incentives, experienced Dutch travellers already familiar with Thailand, are looking for "new destinations" like Vietnam.

Feedback from sellers at the show has also revealed increasing bookings out of new and traditional longhaul markets.

Arjun P Shroff, managing director of Manila-based Shroff Travel, told *TTG Show Daily* that he saw double-digit year-on-year growth out of the US, the UK, Germany and France during the winter season, due to his company's promotional efforts. Top destination picks were Cebu, Boracay and Northern Palawan, while diving and other water-based activities remain hot favourites.

Shroff observed that longhaul travellers to this region are getting younger, and the millennial segment is growing.

On his radar now is Israel, a market he has started courting following his attend-

ance at the International Tourism Exhibition Tel Aviv. Earlier this month, Shroff Travel received a small group of 20 holidaymakers from Israel.

Peter Gerhauser, general manager, Pandanus Resort at Binh Thuan in South-east Vietnam, said the location of his resort, which is away from popular local destinations, is particularly appealing to repeat visitors. Despite raising its room rates by 10 per cent after major renovations last year, demand from key longhaul markets did not soften. Finland, France, Baltic, Russia and Poland saw double-digit year-on-year growth.

He attributed the rosy performance to supportive wholesalers and DMCs, good ratings on TripAdvisor and HolidayCheck, and attractive airfares from Middle Eastern carriers with a strong European network.

M Manimaran, senior director of sales & marketing at Saujana Hotels & Resorts in Malaysia, said the hotel's two 18-hole championship golf courses drew golfers from as far as Sweden and Norway during the winter season.

He said: "From a financial perspective, South-east Asia is better value for money than, say, Japan and South Korea."

APEC meetings lift Danang's appeal

Danang, Vietnam, is reaping the rewards of huge investment coming into the destination in the aftermath of the high-profile APEC meetings last November.

Nguyen Duc Quynh, deputy general director of Furama Resort, said the successful hosting of the APEC meetings has proved Danang is capable of "providing quality accommodation and venue facilities for international events".

He expects Danang's popularity to rise as more flights are introduced, and luxury hotels and resorts enter the market.

Tran Hoang Anh, managing director of Footsteps Indochina Travel, also predicts an influx in visitors this year, as hardware improvements made by the government for the APEC events gain the favour of international visitors.

In 2018, Da Nang International Airport will welcome a swathe of carriers, including Jeju Airlines, with flights from the Philippine's Manila and Thailand's Chiang Mai in February.

This year will also see Danang tourism offices open in China, South Korea, Japan and throughout South-east Asia. — Marissa Carruthers

Confidence in Bali increases; visitors trickle back

By Mimi Hudoyo

Bali hoteliers have seen a gradual restoration of confidence, with both leisure and business traveller numbers on the rise. This comes after the destination reported numerous trip cancellations following Mount Agung's eruption earlier in November, resulting in low occupancies in its typical peak months of November and December.

Anton Adijaya, director of Bali Rani, said: "Some hotels were forced to ask staff to take leave as occupancy was so low (November up to mid-December), but the situation started to improve during the Christmas and New Year period."

He shared that European buyers at ATF 2018 were expecting demand from their customers to pick up due to promotional fares offered by some airlines between January and June this year.

"We are looking at some form of promotion so that we can boost traffic," Anton said, and revealed bookings at Bali Rani were picking up from April onwards.

Peter Arya, director of Maya Resorts, shared: "Our European clientele knows

Bali well. They are aware that our hotels are far away from the (volcano)."

"Last year, we were doing very well with the (European) market, and this year we can at least reach the same level as we did last year."



Gufron: president's visit calms tourists

Similarly, Alpha Hotel Management (AHM) and Bali Villa Properties (BVP), which manage several hotels and villas in Bali have also seen the market bounce back.

Gufron, managing director of BVP, said: "Indonesian president Joko Widodo's visit to Bali (around Christmas 2017 when he called at several tourist attractions) has really boosted the confidence of the (inbound) markets."

"Some of our hotels are actually performing better this January compared to the last," added Wayan Supandi, managing director of AHM.

Meanwhile, The Westin Resort Nusa Dua, Bali and Bali International Convention Centre told *TTG Show Daily* that it has received some last minute business, allowing the resort to run at full

capacity through the end of January.

Saraswati Subadia, director of MICE sales, said: "There are fewer leads, but we have seen last minute bookings coming in. Earlier this month we received a group from an MLM company in China with 1,300 pax, booked with only two weeks' lead time."

"We are getting some domestic (corporate groups) and a small one from India taking 50 rooms next week."

Explaining the surprise surge in bookings, Saraswati said corporate groups have been "holding back" during the Mount Agung eruption, and are now "finally deciding to go ahead" with their events.

She, too, believes that the Indonesian president's visits has a part to play in the brisk return in traveller confidence, and added that IMF's and World Bank's move to confirmed their annual meeting in Bali further reassured event planners.

"They now see that the island is safe," she remarked.

At press time, Mount Agung volcano is calmer and the hazard zone has been reduced from 12 kilometres to just six kilometres.



Wayan: hotel performance better than expected



"I'm interested in meeting partners from all countries. My clients go for sightseeing, cultural, culinary and historic activities. Some play golf, scuba dive and bike too."

Beverly J Carlson
BJC Travel, bjctravl@gocsg.net



"I have honeymooners keen on Bali nowadays, and (holiday interest in) Vietnam. We've got customers wanting out-of-the-box experiences."

Lillian Miller
LTTravel Connection
lillian@lttravelconnection.com



"I'd like to meet with Thai hotels. I requested for (these) appointments but I didn't get matched with a lot of them!"

Dominik Schaufler
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News

Attention on secondary Thai provinces

Cost savings through a tax-back scheme as well as promotion of secondary destinations are part of Thailand's effort to drive tourist demand deeper into the country

By Marissa Carruthers

Thailand is hoping a tax deduction scheme will help drive tourism into 55 secondary provinces.

Tanes Petsuwan, Tourism Authority of Thailand's (TAT) deputy governor for marketing, said as part of the country's *Go Local* campaign, travellers to the 55 areas can claim back taxes paid on hotels and tours.

The tax-back scheme will first be offered to domestic travellers this year, with the programme extended to international visitors in 2019.

"We hope the tax deduction measures will help boost the economies of these provinces and create more (tourist) demand," said Tanes, adding that TAT's biggest challenge in promoting secondary provinces lies in "creating a flow of tourists from big cities to small cities".

However, some international buyers at ATF 2018 appeared less enthused about

the tax-back scheme, and told *TTG Show Daily* that the move would have little effect on their market.

David Capaldi, founder and CEO of US-based Blue World Journeys, explained: "For the US, I don't think this would encourage people to extend their stay (in Thailand) as they have a limited number of holidays."

Albert Sánchez Ramos, account manager Spanish & Latin Markets, Destination Asia Thailand, said the majority of his clients were first-timers to Thailand, and as such preferred "to do the typical itinerary and see Bangkok and Chiang Mai".

"I don't think this would affect our markets," Ramos remarked.

For Ben Gosman, managing director of FreeStyle Incentives based in the Netherlands, information on the secondary provinces must come first before he is able to

work the new destinations into existing itineraries.

"(Destination) knowledge comes before (traveller) incentives," he remarked.

TAT too sees the importance of raising awareness of the Kingdom's secondary provinces in order to achieve its new objective. Accordingly, it will reduce promotions of major and well-established destinations such as Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket and Pattaya this year, and shift its marketing efforts to lesser known ones.

Petsuwan said: "We hope this will encourage people to extend their trip. For example, people visiting Chiang Mai will go on to visit Lampang province."

Through this new direction, TAT hopes to increase visitor numbers in these areas to 10 million, and generate an annual tourism income of US\$3 million.

All new draws in Singapore

Singapore is rolling out a suite of events, attractions and updates for 2018 and beyond, to keep visitors coming.

Among the events are Design Orchard, a transformation of the Orchard Road shopping belt; the International Champions Cup held until 2021, and the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) partnership with Disney, which will see Marvel- and Disney/Pixar-themed activations running through 2018 and 2019 respectively.

"The Star Wars activations in 2017 saw many families and travellers come from around the region and beyond to take part in the festivities. We expect to see the same for the Marvel and Disney/Pixar franchises in the coming three years," said Oliver Chong, executive director, communications & marketing capability, marketing group, STB.

The country will also continue to host the Formula One Grand Prix, which Chong shared has so far attracted 450,000 international spectators that form 40 to 50 per cent of the race crowd.

To appeal to more Malaysian travellers – a market that ranks fourth in international arrivals for the city-state from January to October 2017 – STB will promote weekend getaways with a family focus.

STB will also reveal remaining programmes under its new Passion Made Possible brand, and these will target travellers keen on night life, arts and culture as well as sports and adventure. As well, the brand will launch in Germany and Australia in 1Q2018. – Pamela Chow



Chong: more for the family

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Ben Gosman

Managing director, FreeStyle Incentives



IN BRIEF

Asia DMC goes deeper into Europe

Asia DMC, a business event and luxury travel operator strong in Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, has expanded its reach into Europe through new sales representatives in Spain, France and the UK. As well, a sales office in Los Angeles was opened last year.

Pullman steps into Myanmar

On track to open next month is the 277-key Pullman Yangon Centrepoint. All rooms will have views of the city's colonial quarters. As well, Pullman Mandalay Mingalar is slated to open sometime this year, offering 358 room and suites.

Asia on Mövenpick's radar

Having made its debut in Chiang Mai last November, Mövenpick Hotel & Resorts is now gearing up to add 1,200 rooms across eight hotels in Asia this year. These include Hua Hin, Khao Yai and Kuala Lumpur in South-east Asia.

Wedding bells toll for Thailand

By Pamela Chow

Resorts and boutique hotels in Thailand are gaining popularity among wedding couples from longhaul markets.

Michelle Williamson, destination wedding specialist with US-based Destination Weddings, said: "There's a lot of interest building up for Thailand. Phuket is number one, and people also talk about Phi Phi Island. Most people still don't know about Krabi, but it's getting out there. There's a lot of culture and diversity with so much to do."

She observed that her wedding groups are expanding to include family and friends, often reaching 20 to 30 people.

"Americans...want a beach (venue) but they also want it to be private. We can (provide) that in smaller boutique hotels with intimate settings," she said.

Williamson explained that since it can

take almost 24 hours for Americans to fly to Thailand, her agency recommends stays of at least seven to ten days.

Local hotels are picking up on this trend as well, although demand is not limited to the US market.

Rayong Marriott Resort & Spa is seeing a pick-up in European wedding groups, of sizes between 10 and 30 guests, shared

its general manager Parichart Kotrajarus. She said this market fancies beachfront rooms, cocktail sessions on the beach and function rooms that can be transformed into a bar.

As Europeans begin to disperse to less-popular areas – such as Khao Lak – Novotel Phuket Vintage Park in Patong is court- ing "growing" markets such as Eastern European Lithuania and Estonia, as well as Morocco and Poland, said Sopa Sornin, its director of sales and marketing.



Williamson: in love with Phuket

Cambodia Travel Mart to return bigger, stronger

A good performance at the inaugural Cambodia Travel Mart (CTM), held in November last year, has given the organiser confidence of creating a bigger and better show this year.

"We were strongly supported by the Cambodian Ministry of Tourism and the private sector, including hoteliers... We're planning to increase (attendance) numbers to make CTM a national and international event brand," said Om Pharin, chairman of event organiser SlickBooth Holding.

This year, the event – to be held at the Diamond Island Convention & Exhibition Center in Phnom Penh – is aiming to expand to 250 booths and 6,000 total visitors, up from last year's 135 and 3,000 respectively.

Pharin aims to attract more international exhibitors than last year's 30, which included national tourism organisations around the region.

The goal is also to host 200 internation-



Pharin: growing in size, reputation

al buyers and 30 international media, compared to last year's 150 and 10 respectively.

Pharin added that CTM will not only spotlight Cambodia as a destination, but also its South-east Asian neighbours.

"CTM has become well-known locally. I'm sure we will become more popular in the region with strong support from the Ministry of Tourism," he remarked. – Pamela Chow

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News

Sabah joins the race for business events

New convention bureau reveals digital strategy

By S Puvaneswary

Sabah Convention Bureau is Malaysia's newest state convention bureau, set up this month and headed by industry veteran Gordon Yapp.

Sabah is now the third Malaysian state to boast its own convention bureau, after Sarawak and Penang. Sabah Convention Bureau reports to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment Sabah.

Yapp, who was previously the general manager of Sabah Tourism Board, spoke to *TTG Show Daily* on the sidelines of the inaugural ASEAN MICE Conference in Chiang Mai on Wednesday.

He explained that the bureau was formed by the state government to drive business events into the destination, in anticipation of the Sabah International Convention Centre which is scheduled

to open in early 2019.

The state's first convention centre, being developed by Yayasan Sabah Group, covers some 6.1 hectares and spans five levels with a total built-up area of 92,000m². It has the capacity to host up to 5,000 delegates.

Yapp said his to-do list includes building a strong team, gearing the bureau up for business lead acquisition, and developing marketing collaterals.

He added that destination promotion efforts will first be focused on digital marketing.

"We want to attract regional and Asian corporate incentives and association meetings of up to 3,000 delegates. The key sectors we wish to attract for meetings here in Sabah are related to biodiversity, marine life, education, medical, science and the arts (areas the state is strong in)," he shared.



Yapp: eye on incentives, association meetings

IN BRIEF

ASEAN investors needed

The formation of a working group has been proposed at the ASEAN NTO meeting on Tuesday to attract investments in tourism-related projects from Korean, Japanese and Chinese investors. At press time, this was subject to approval from the ministers of the 10 South-east Asian nations.

According to Rashidi Hasbullah, ASEAN Tourism Competitiveness Committee chair, there are also proposals to attract investors from the US, Europe, India and Russia at a later stage.

Sheraton Grand debuts in Danang

Sheraton Grand Danang Resort has opened on Non Nuoc in Danang City, injecting 130 keys into the Vietnamese destination.

Facilities include seven restaurants and bars, a conference centre housing 14 separate indoor function spaces, outdoor spaces for unique events, and a spa offering hydrotherapy and ancient Asian-inspired treatments.

Festival of Fun returns to Singapore

The annual Singapore Festival of Fun will be held from March 8-18 this year at Clarke Quay, featuring three main events: Magners International Comedy Festival, Nickelodeon Fiesta and Clarke Quay StreetFest. Some 12 comedians, seven street performers and various popular cartoon characters will provide entertainment for all ages.

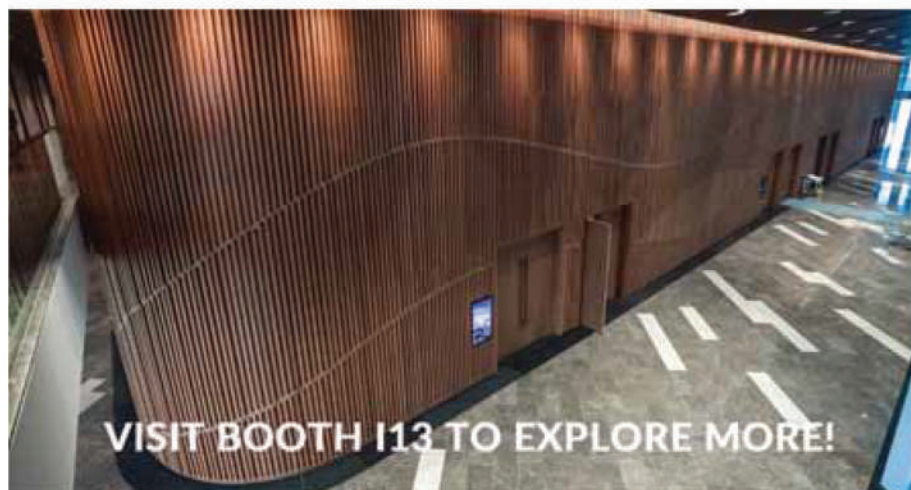
The festival is organised by Magic Rock and supported by Singapore Tourism Board's Leisure Events Fund.

Read and win Rugby 7s tickets

ATF delegates, here's your chance to win a pair of premium tickets to the HSBC Singapore Rugby 7s worth S\$440 (US\$333). Simply answer this question: *How many tournaments are played in the HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series?*

Pick up a contest form at TTG Booth No. 5, answer the above question, fill it up with your particulars, and hand it over to one of our friendly staff.

Need a hint? The answer is on page 2 of *TTG Show Daily's* Day 2 (January 24) issue.



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Features Airlines

Uplifting aviation developments

Last year Singapore welcomed more mid- and longhaul services, Thai aviation saw improvements in global air status, while Vietnam secured better Asian connections. *TTG Show Daily* reporters share these key updates



SINGAPORE

United Airlines, Los Angeles-Singapore

United Airlines added a second direct service between Singapore and the US, flying directly to and from Los Angeles in a bid to encourage greater travel – particularly among millennials – between the two countries.

Scot, Singapore-Osaka-Honolulu

Entering the Singapore-US air space is low-cost carrier Scot with its Singapore-Osaka-Honolulu service, flying four times weekly. Besides carving out a share in the budget-conscious FIT market, this route also increases the airline's Singapore-Osaka flight frequency from six times weekly to ten times weekly.

SilkAir, Singapore-Hiroshima

With its new Boeing 737 Max 8 aircraft, SilkAir launched direct flights between Singapore and Hiroshima, making it the only airline to fly this route and opening up a more affordable option for Japanese travellers to visit the Lion City.

Scot, Singapore-Harbin

Scot launched thrice-weekly Singapore-Harbin flights, served by Boeing 787 Dreamliners. Adding to its existing links to China, the service increases traffic between the two countries.

Singapore Airlines, Lufthansa

Singapore Airlines (SIA) and Lufthansa entered a revenue-sharing agreement on flights operated by SIA, Lufthansa and SWISS between Singapore and Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Munich and Zurich, with plans to re-introduce Lufthansa services between Singapore and Munich from

March. This opens up new and bigger opportunities for the city-state to attract more European travellers.



THAILAND

Jetstar Asia, Singapore-Hat Yai

Jetstar Asia began four-times-weekly services between Singapore and Hat Yai, making this the fourth Thai link for the airline. The route opens up an avenue for Hat Yai to attract both Singapore travellers and global travellers looking to explore the rest of South-east Asia through Singapore's gateway.

ICAO removes red flag on Thai aviation

In early October, ICAO lifted a safety red flag imposed on Thai carriers, to the relief of the country's aviation sector. Thailand's aviation had failed an ICAO audit in 2015, which identified 33 "significant safety concerns" that impacted the sector's safety credentials and introduced flying restrictions. Now free of the status, Thai carriers can add further international routes to countries such as China and South Korea.

Thai Airways, Bangkok-Vienna

On November 16, Thai Airways reinstated its Bangkok-Vienna service, which will help grow the European inbound market to Thailand. The service was suspended in 1993 due to poor loads. Utilising a Boeing 777-300ER aircraft with a capacity of 348 seats, the four-times-weekly route to the capital of Austria enables the airline to also serve passengers from neighbouring Eastern European countries such as Poland, Hungary and Croatia.

More Canada-Thailand flights

Canada's Ministry of Transport is mod-



ernising and expanding its air transport agreement with Thailand for the first time since 1989. On top of removing the limit on the number of Canadian and Thai airlines serving any city in both countries, the refreshed agreement will also allow each country 21 flights per week to the other, and afford fifth freedom rights on up to seven of the 21 flights. The widened pact also enhances existing codeshare rights, and modernises aviation safety and security articles as well as business provisions.

Qatar Airways, Chiang Mai and Pattaya

Qatar Airways launched flights between Doha and Chiang Mai on December 13, and will fly four-times-weekly between Doha and U Tapao-Rayong Pattaya International Airport on January 28. Both routes are expected to drive travel from longer haul markets such as Latin America to secondary Thai destinations.

The Chiang Mai flights would make it

much easier to promote Northern Thailand to travellers from Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires, where Qatar has direct, daily connections. Meanwhile, the launch of direct Doha-U Tapao-Rayong flights is expected to have an enormous impact on the region, especially the island of Koh Chang.

Thai AirAsia X, Bangkok-Osaka

Thai AirAsia X increased the flight frequency of its Bangkok (Don Mueang)-Osaka (Kansai) route to two flights per day from December 1, in time for the year-end travel season. This is a major opportunity for travellers on both ends, who now have the flexibility to fly either in the morning or evening.

VietJet, Chiang Mai and Phuket

Vietjet begun regular flights from Ho Chi Minh City to Thailand's Chiang Mai and Phuket on December 12 and December 15 respectively. Both routes are operated four times weekly, and is timed with the start of the high season, which is expected to carry an influx of Vietnamese tourists to Thailand.



VIETNAM

Vietjet, Ho Chi Minh City-Phnom Penh

In November, low-cost carrier Vietjet launched a direct flight between Phnom Penh, Cambodia and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. It aims to tap into the growing trade and travel demands between the two economic and financial hubs. It is the first low-cost carrier to serve this route, offering a cheaper alternative to travellers.

Cathay Dragon, Yangon-Hong Kong

Cathay Dragon increased capacity for its Hong Kong-Yangon service by an additional 60 per cent in October. It added four weekly flights to its daily connections in response to increasing demand and ease in accessing Myanmar for passengers connecting at Cathay Pacific's Hong Kong hub from European and American cities, including London, Paris, Madrid and San Francisco.



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Features Unique venues

Unique heritage venues

There are some venues that can't be replicated. Heritage sites are prime examples, with their unique history and timeless charm. By *TTG Show Daily* reporters



From left: Candi Prambanan Temple, Central Java, Indonesia; Capitol Theatre, Singapore

Indonesia

Candi Prambanan Temple, Central Java

What makes it special A ninth-century Hindu temple compound, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is the largest in Indonesia and one of the biggest in South-east Asia. The temple has been a major tourist attraction since the 1960s, not only for its majestic architecture but also the Ramayana Epic dance drama, performed during full moons at the open-air stage with the temple as its backdrop. The performance now takes place three times a week.

How to use it There are three open-air spaces on the temple grounds available for events like dinner parties for 300 to 1,000 people. On performance days, groups can start with cocktail or early dinner before moving to the amphitheatre for the dance drama, which runs from 19.30 till 21.30.

Website: www.borobudurpark.com
Email: Emilia@borobudurpark.co.id

Malaysia

Fort Cornwallis, Penang

What makes it special With a rich history spanning more than two centuries, the building was in the 18th century commissioned by Sir Captain Francis Light from the British East India Company to defend Penang from Kedah pirates and military forces. Today, Fort Cornwallis is the largest standing fort in Malaysia.

How to use it The site is great for heritage/colonial themed dinners and cocktail events. Located near the sea, Fort Cornwallis offers a beautiful event backdrop complete with gentle sea breeze. A short walk away, there is an outdoor stage, also available for booking. To leave a lasting impression on guests, organisers can also mount the company's name and logo on a boat. Fort Cornwallis can hold 139 tables in banquet seating.

Website: www.pceb.my
Email: info@pceb.my

Majestic Theatre, Penang

What makes it special Built in 1929 by philanthropist Khoo Sian Ewe, the Majestic Theatre was the first cinema in Penang to screen Chinese talkies, or motion pictures with synchronised sounds. As modern entertainment took over, the Majestic Theatre lost its shine and was abandoned in 1980 until Singapore-based Ministry of Design restored it and gave it a new lease on life as a multipurpose events space. The black-and-white exterior is conserved while the interior bears tribute to the building's cinematic heritage.

How to use it The Majestic Theatre is now a versatile space perfect for events such as meetings, seminars and networking parties. The main space on the ground floor has a stage area and can take 400 people in banquet or 600 people in theatre-style seminar. Upstairs, The Circle is ideal for pre-dinner cocktail events for 100 standing guests. The venue comes with a VIP box and holding room, a green room, a back-stage area, among other spaces.

Website: www.lokethykee.com
Email: tay@lokethykee.com

Singapore

Capitol Theatre

What makes it special This historic icon in North Bridge Road was first built as a theatre in the 1930s and reopened in 2015 as part of a major heritage redevelopment project. The theatre is now hailed for marrying luxury and old-world glamour, while also integrating state-of-the-art facilities.

How to use it The 900-seat theatre boasts an advanced rotational floor system for different configurations suitable for various event types. The foyer with its dome-shaped ceiling and sculptures of winged horses also provides a perfect space for pre-event cocktails. Spaces are equipped with modern lighting, staging and soundproofing systems.

Website: www.capitolsingapore.com
Email: enquiry@capitolsingapore.com

The Philippines

Fort San Pedro, Cebu City

What makes it special Work on the fort began in 1565 during the Spanish era to ward off Muslim invaders. The triangular structure is the oldest and smallest fort in the country and became part of American barracks during the American regime and a refuge for the Japanese during World War II.

How to use it With an inner courtyard, a colonnade and elevated walkways, the fort can accommodate up to 600 people for alfresco cocktails; concerts, dances and other entertainment; meetings and seminars; and dinner.

Website: cebu.gov.ph
Email: fortsanpedro_cebu@yahoo.com

Vietnam

Museum of Ho Chi Minh, Ho Chi Minh City

What makes it special Opened in 1885 as Gia Long Palace, this neoclassical structure has lived a potted life under several regimes. Today, it functions as a museum, displaying archaeological

artefacts, ceramics, and exhibits that explore the country's traditions and its fight for independence. It also has rooms available for private hire and functions.

How to use it Steeped in history, this fascinating two-tiered building holds more than a talking point or two. With its French neoclassical architecture harking back to a time when it housed the former French governor to the extensive underground network of concrete bunkers, where in 1963 president Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam and his brother hid before fleeing the palace, which was being stormed. It is home to a variety of meeting and function rooms that are available for private hire for small- to medium-sized events and meetings upon request.

Website: www.hcmc-museum.edu.vn
Email: baotangtphcm@gmail.com



Fort San Pedro, Cebu City, the Philippines

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Value Hotel Thomson



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Hotel Mi



Destination Singapore

More than just a sightseeing trip

Clockwise: An aerial view of Singapore's city skyline; the 101ha Gardens by the Bay; and chilli crab, one of the country's greatest culinary inventions



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

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

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

This includes STB and the Economic Development Board’s new unified marketing brand, *Passion Made Possible*, which comprises tours and promotional visuals that communicate local experiences. The brand was progressively launched over the last few months of 2017.

So far, Singapore has presented a host of international and local branded events,

such as the Star Wars Day: May the 4th Be With You Festival, Singapore Food Festival and Singapore Restaurant Week.

Linda Low, strategic partnership & product marketing manager of Destination Services, reported “strong demand” for “truly local encounters that call for interaction with the locals and off-the-beaten-track experiences”.

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

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

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

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

As much as localised events are taking centre stage, international events remain a hit with visitors.

Garth Simmons, AccorHotels’ chief operating officer, for Malaysia, Singapore & Indonesia, credited events such as the Singapore Grand Prix and Singapore International Festival of Arts for “providing opportunities for the hospitality industry”.

The hotel group saw a year-on-year surge of 17.2 per cent in visitors in 1H2017, with the largest increase coming

from China (36 per cent). Indonesia and India saw six and eight per cent growth respectively.

Patrick Fiat, general manager and chief experience officer of Royal Plaza on Scotts, noted that international sports events such as the WTA Finals have also brought in crowds.

He added: “With talks about non-renewal for Formula One, another option will be Formula E which is increasingly popular. Back-to-back international Broadway shows or performances will also help Singapore boost tourism.”

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

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Spend your day exploring the Wildlife Park and get close to exotic animals or give your lungs a workout at the Scream Park, with a unique immersive horror experience. Fans of adrenaline-pumping activities will love the Extreme Park with bungee jumping, catapult launching, and other outdoor sports while there's something for everyone at the Amusement Park featuring classic rides like gravity-defying pirate galleon and roller coaster.

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It's non-stop fun from morning to night at Sunway Lost World Of Tambun, the ultimate family getaway in Ipoh. Featuring the longest Adventure River in Malaysia to the thrilling Tiger Valley where you can see Siberian tigers run, jump and feed, it's a day of memorable sights and unforgettable experiences. Kids will love the Petting Zoo, where they can interact with a large variety of adorable animals in their natural habitats or gambol around the Amusement Park, full of kid-friendly attractions like the Adventure Express, a train ride through the wilderness and Lupe's Adventure, the first roller coaster in the state.

Once the sun sets, Sunway Lost World Of Tambun vibrates with a different sensation of fun. The biggest draw is the Hot Springs and Spa, where you can soak in 100% natural mineral hot springs sourced from deep caverns underground or pamper yourself at the Crystal Spa, featuring a menu of invigorating therapies. Or simply take in the carnival atmosphere with the Flaming Percussion, featuring fire eaters, jugglers and other photo-worthy performances. Take in the beauty of the enchanting Luminous Forest, a new and exciting attraction opening soon. So, book your holiday now to Sunway Lost World Of Tambun, always more than just a theme park.

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Destination Singapore

Viewpoints

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

Linda Low

Strategic partnership & product marketing manager, Destination Services



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

Jaclyn Yeoh

Managing director, Siam Express



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

Surprising theme



TreeTop Walk at MacRitchie Reservoir

Adventure in nature

Singapore is known as a garden city, but few know about the lush nature reserves that are located outside of the city centre. Visitors can go on a walk high above the canopy of MacRitchie Reservoir on the TreeTop Walk, or board a ferry to the Sister's Islands, where numerous species of hard corals, reef fish and sponges can be spotted during low tide.

Destination in numbers

8.5 million

The number of international arrivals from 1H2017, a four per cent increase from 2016

the largest increase across the period's top 10 spending markets and reaching S\$426 million (US\$315 million)

25

The year-on-year percentage increase in tourism receipts from Malaysia in 1H2017, marking

1.5 million

The number of Indonesian visitor arrivals in 1H2017, making it the second-largest source market for Singapore

Hot stuff

Changi Airport Terminal 4

Changi Airport opened its newest terminal on October 31, 2017, and passengers now 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.

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 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 has opened in the Robertson Quay district.

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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Destination Vietnam



The historic Peoples' Committee Building in Ho Chi Minh Square

Getting serious about events

Rapid economic developments across Vietnam is inspiring the destination to establish a business events hub status, writes **Marissa Carruthers**

Vietnam is chasing the cheese as it sets its sights on becoming South-east Asia's MICE hub.

Vu Nam, deputy director of Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT), said 2018 will bring with it a strong push as the organisation focuses on pushing business events.

He said: "MICE tourism (business events) is becoming more important for us and we really want to focus on that. We

will be working hard to promote Central Vietnam, such as Danang and Nha Trang, in this area because we want it to be the known as the MICE centre of Vietnam, and the region."

Jeff Redl, Diethelm Vietnam's director, said the last two years have brought with it a swathe of four- and five-star internationally-branded hotels that can cater to the business events market. And he expects more diversification of hotel management companies and brands in the market in 2018, which will further boost Vietnam's offerings in this sector.

He added: "Vietnam should not be seen as just a tourism destination as the country's rapid economic development, led by industrial manufacturing and production, has driven corporate demand in the market. Further, increased connectivity combined with new hotel product offerings has made the country ever more important as a MICE destination."

Nam predicted that Vietnam hosting APEC 2017 in Danang and Nha Trang has given the sector a major boost, and expects to see results in 2018.

In 2016, five-star InterContinental Nha Trang opened its doors, boasting the town's largest pillar-less ballroom and a separate check-in lounge for corporate groups – a segment it is targeting.

Tran Thuy Thanh Truc, the resort's marketing manager, said: "In line with market trends, InterContinental Nha Trang is focusing on luxury MICE and promoting Nha Trang as a truly unique destination in this segment. Nha Trang is Vietnam's most famous beach city and the

country's scuba diving centre. It is booming and is well positioned as Vietnam's luxury MICE destination."

The Visit Vietnam Year 2018 – Ha Ling, Quang Ninh is also expected to help with this aim, with the Northeastern province also hosting ASEAN Tourism Forum in 2019. Earlier this year, the 21,000m² Quang Ninh Exhibition of Planning and Expo Center opened in Ha Long City in preparation for the events.

Van Don airport in the province – which can cater to international flights – is scheduled to open in April, with construction of expressway sections that link Van Don district with Hanoi slated for completion by early 2018. This will cut the driving time from more than five hours to about two. A string of four- and five-star hotels, international golf courses and attractions, such as Ha Long Ocean Park and Ha Long Floral Park, have also been developed.

Redl said: "This national campaign, with upgraded infrastructure, diversified product lines, a concerted state and provincial publicity for the event is expected to lure more tourists to Vietnam."

Anthony Slewka, director of sales and marketing at Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi, said low costs in comparison to other South-east Asian destinations, such as Singapore and Malaysia, will continue to drive business events to the country. He notes a rise in demand for regional business events in Vietnam, which is overtaking the long-haul market.

"Vietnam is well positioned to embrace the MICE market," he added.



Street view with old houses in Hoi An ancient town, UNESCO world heritage. Hoi An is one of the most popular destinations in Vietnam

Destination Vietnam

Viewpoints

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

Jeff Redl
Managing director,
Diethelm Vietnam



We urgently need more international flights to major cities around the world. When compared to Thailand, Hong Kong and Singapore, Vietnam still does not have enough connections worldwide. All players should work hand in hand to promote the destination. For example, airlines, authorities, hotels and DMCs should come together to organise campaigns and fam trips.

Jose Gregorio Manzo
General manager,
Asian Trails



I would like to see a better respect for environment sustainability through the development of eco-sustainable products and responsible tours.

Surprising theme



Traditional local lanterns

Family fun

Dive head first into Vietnamese culture and learn how to make lanterns at a workshop in Hoi An, the town of lanterns. Learn about the history of the traditional lamps and work with experienced local craftsmen to create a great souvenir to take home.

Meanwhile, the more adventurous should head to the sand dunes near Mui Ne for some sand sledding. The rolling red dunes offer hours of family fun skirting down the hills. Arrive in the late afternoon to enjoy stunning sunsets from the site.

Destination in numbers

28.1

The year-on-year percentage increase in international arrivals for the first 10 months of 2017, representing more than 10.47 million tourists

3.2 million

The number of Chinese arrivals in the first 10 months of 2017, making it Vietnam's largest source market

31

The year-on-year percentage increase in arrivals by air in the first 10 months of 2017, representing 8.9 million foreign tourists

Hot stuff

L'Alyana Ninh Van Bay

Located on an island near Nha Trang is the L'Alyana Ninh Van Bay resort, a revival of the former An Lam Villas. The property offers 33 villas, all of which come with private plunge pools, private verandas and terraces. Facilities on-site include a spa, meeting room, restaurant, bar and an infinity pool.

Orchid Cruises

Offering a unique route through Halong Bay, the boarding point for Orchid Cruises is 1.5 hours from Hanoi rather than the usual four-

hour drive. The boat offers 18 cabins across four configurations. The itinerary takes in spots such as Bai Tu Long and Lan Ha Bay, which is less crowded than Halong and offers great kayaking opportunities, as well as a mountain home to endangered macaques.

Poulo Condor Boutique Resort and Spa, Con Son

Located on the island of Con Son, the largest and only inhabited of the Con Dao archipelago, Poulo Condor Boutique Resort and Spa boasts 16 suites and 20 villas. Amenities

include a 750m-long private beach, reading room, three F&B venues, an infinity pool, and a spa with four treatment rooms.

Helvetas Vietnam

Helvetas Vietnam and its in-country offshoot, CRED, are developing tour packages and activities in the northern provinces of Ha Giang and Cao Bang. Six ethnic minority villages have been trained to provide quality services to visitors as part of community-based tourism activities.



L'Alyana Ninh Van Bay



From left: Orchid Cruises; Poulo Condor Boutique Resort and Spa



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Destination Thailand



A scrumptious affair

Both the Tourism Authority of Thailand and travel trade are keen to take a bite of the country's vibrant gastronomy scene, a viable tourism niche that has found greater sizzle in more recent times, reports [Xinyi Liang-Pholsena](#)

For a country renowned for its fiery cuisine, making gastronomy tourism one of its key focus areas seems like a natural progression for the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), which has spearheaded several initiatives to beef up this niche sector.

Besides rolling out the *Amazing Thai Taste* campaign in 2016, TAT also appointed renowned American chef of Thai cuisine as its first Amazing Thailand Culinary Ambassador to assist the organisation in a variety of marketing and publicity initiatives, including taking a small group of influencers on an off-the-beaten-path culinary trip in Thailand to experience Thai cuisine first-hand.

Last year, even more food-led moves were placed onto TAT's marketing plate. Following months of speculation, TAT finally confirmed that it partnered with Michelin Travel Partner and published the Michelin Guide Bangkok in December

2017. Come May 2018, Thailand will also host the UNWTO Conference on Gastronomy Tourism in Bangkok.

TAT governor Yuthasak Supasorn told the *Daily* that the NTO has taken up the strategic approach of spicing up Thailand's tourism appeal by incorporating gastronomy tourism with agriculture – another bedrock economic sector for the country. "Since tourism and agriculture are critical components of our Thailand 4.0 national development policy over the next 20 years, linking tourism and agriculture makes perfect sense," he stated.

"One relatively new strategic direction is the forging of stronger links with the agriculture sector. Both are great job creators and income generators. It also gives us the chance to promote activities such as agrotourism where visitors can reconnect with nature, come into contact with local communities and contribute to the distribution of income nationwide."

The governor elaborated: "The TAT's food promotion story has not actually changed over the years. We are just telling the story more vigorously than we did in the past... In addition to Thai cuisine, the promotion of the country's dining scene has expanded to fusion and international flavours. We believe this will promote Thailand to be a truly world-class gastronomy destination."

Indeed, Bangkok's increasingly sophisticated dining scene – the Thai capital scored the most number of entries in Asia's 50 Best Restaurants awards in 2017 – is now becoming the icing on the cake for a destination famed for its street eats, tour operators noted.

"We make sure to inform our agents and clients about what's happening (in Bangkok) if we know that their visit coincides with, say, the World Gourmet Festival, and help them to secure bookings. With the launch of the Michelin Guide,

Destination in numbers

20.4 million

The number of visitors Thailand welcomed from January to July 2017, an increase of 4.5 per cent year-on-year

5.7 million

The total number of tourists from Russia and the UK that is expected in Thailand by the end of 2017

8.5%

The market share, of South-east Asian arrivals to Thailand, as of August 31, 2017, according to the Association of Thai Travel Agents

Bangkok and Thailand will surely get more interest from abroad for the accredited restaurants," said Kim Martin Rasmussen, Thailand product & contracting manager at Exo Travel.

The brewing interest in culinary travel worldwide, alongside a burgeoning number of local food tour companies, will also lend a hand in cultivating Thailand's push into gastronomy tourism, noted Si-



Clockwise from above: Train Night Market Ratchada; Wat Benchamabophit (The Marble Temple); the Damnoen Saduak Floating Market; Papaya salad, grilled chicken and *sai krok isan* (fermented sausage) are Thai dishes that hail from the north-eastern provinces of Thailand



Viewpoints

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

Vichit Prakobgosol
President,
Association of Thai
Travel Agents



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

Nigel Tovey
General manager,
Ananda Hua Hin
Resort & Spa



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

mon Philipp, founder and chief explorer of Expique.

“It is now an industry in itself and once people do a food tour in one country they may well do a food tour in another country. (This global trend) will continue to grow and create opportunities for us.”

The hunger for local experiences is also expected to grow in tandem with culinary travel, said Philipp. “Another trend is for experiences with locals, not licensed tour guides. Eating is something that people want to do with a local friend, something I foresee increasing. To some extent this will pose a challenge for licensed tour companies but also an opportunity (for them) to reinvent,” he commented.

Hot stuff

Wat Arun
One of Bangkok’s most prominent temples, Wat Arun – also known as Temple of Dawn – recently completed its extensive restoration that started over three years ago. The completion of renovations was commemorated in a 10-day long celebration from December 27, 2017 to January 5, 2018. The festivities included a tribute to King Taksin, who ordered the previously mentioned restoration of the temple during his reign, along with Thai dance performances and an exhibition on the temple’s history.

Thailand Creative & Design Center
Heralded as a great showcase of Thai innovation, the Thailand Creative & Design Center (TCDC) has moved from its previous location at Emporium to its current address at the 80-year-old Grand Postal Building on Charoenkrung Road. Spread across five floors and 9,000m², the new TCDC is home to a well-stocked design library, exhibition space, co-working space, rooftop garden, among others. Still can’t get enough of Thai art and design? Charoenkrung Road, Bangkok’s oldest road, is fast turning into a creative hub with recent cool bars and galleries like

Warehouse 30, Soy Sauce Factory and Speedy Grandma.

New-gen Thai cuisine
Armed with experience honed in world-class restaurants overseas and bellies full of passion, a new generation of young Thai chefs are making seismic changes to Bangkok’s dining scene with their culinary ventures. Earlier entrant Bo.Lan has already made its mark in the city, but now there’s Le Du, where Thitid Tassanakajohn focuses on French-influenced dishes made from seasonal Thai ingredients while Rangsima Bunyasaranand roars with her playful French-American interpretations of comfort food and drinks at Little Beast.

Supanniga Cruise
One of Bangkok’s hottest tables, Supanniga Eating Room, is now offering its delectable cuisine aboard its 40-seat dinner cruise along Chao Phraya River. The six-course programme will feature the restaurant’s popular dishes such as *moo cha muang* (stewed pork with local leaves) and *hor mok puu* (steamed crab curry paste in banana leaf), in addition to drinks and cocktails from Vesper’s bartender team plus Taittinger champagne. Shorter cocktail and evening champagne cruises are also available.



From top: Wat Arun; Thailand Creative & Design Center



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Gallery

Ready to rumble

Photos by Yingyong Unanongrak



Ministry of Tourism Indonesia's Dusep Mulya (fourth from left) and team



Bintan Lagoon Resort's Agnes Tan and Nah Li Ping



Como Metropolitan Bangkok's Gerhard Fink, Overseas Travel Agency Japan's Masao Konda and Como Metropolitan Bangkok's Orawan Chiraporn



Furama Resort Danang's Dinh Thi Phuong Hien, Ariyana Nha Trang's Bui Kieu My and L'alyana Ninh Van Bay's Le Pham Hoang Thu Dan



Secret Escapes Singapore's Aaron Little and The Old Phuket Karon Beach Resort's Ratphim Onkklang



Worldwide Hotels Singapore's Jason Peck (middle) and team



Le Menara Thailand's Anucha Soontornpak, Thailand Tours' Georg Schuster and Khaolak Laguna Resort Thailand's Napadol Phongthai



GCPH (Thailand)'s Tony Chisholm and Tankorn Somprasong, and Vision Travel Myanmar's Mya Kyaw Melvin



Riviera Tours and Travel India's Sunil Chawla, Travelosthan India's Ankit Agrawal, Sokha Siem Reap Resort's Hang Vannak, First Travel Cambodia's Tui Rutten and Intra Mekong's Sopheak Lem



The Regent Cha Am Beach Resort Thailand's Kanchicha Klaiakham, Sun Hotels Spain's Kevin Chumsaratoon and The Regent Cha Am Beach Resort Thailand's Benjaphon Angsaengtham



Traders Hotel Kuala Lumpur's Tammy Khoo, Tanjung Aru Resort & Spa Malaysia's Michele Ma, Shangri-La Hotel Chiang Mai's Wiyada Sornprapha and Shangri-La Hotel Kuala Lumpur's Cheah Keat Fui



Thailand Tourism's Nimitdee Sripong (second from right) and team

Gallery

Peak performance

Photos by Yingyong Unanongrak



Sunway Lagoon Malaysia's Garry Loke and Lost World of Tambun Malaysia's May Tan



Tourism Selangor's Noorul Ashikin Bt Mohd Din, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board's Razieha Razali and Tourism Selangor's Nazri Tashriq



Charming Cambodia Tours' Om Pharin



Penang State Minister for Tourism Development's Danny Law Heng Kiang (centre) and tourism partners



AccorHotels Thailand's Noppadon Jeanvaropas (centre) and team



Royal Brunei Airlines' Alirahim Haji Abdul Rani (third from right) and team



Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts' Yenny Susanty and Cita Dewantoro, Hotel Santika Jakarta's Guido Andriano, The Kayana Indonesia's Rosila Anton and The Samaya Seminyak Bali's Virgi



Tourism Promotions Board Philippines' Maricon Ebron (fourth from right) and team



HGH Travel Vietnam's Tran An Huy and Tapetevoador Portugal's Joao Tavares Goncalves



The Face Suites Malaysia's Hanim Damanhuri and Sunny Tan



Sol Beach House Phu Quoc's Bui Thi Bich Duyen, Melia Hotels & Resorts Thailand's Phatsalawadee Pimpila, Melia Yangon's Susie Moe Aung, Melia Hotels International Malaysia's Sharon Lee, Melia Kuala Lumpur's Manuel Quiros, Melia Purosani Indonesia's Jeronimo Molina



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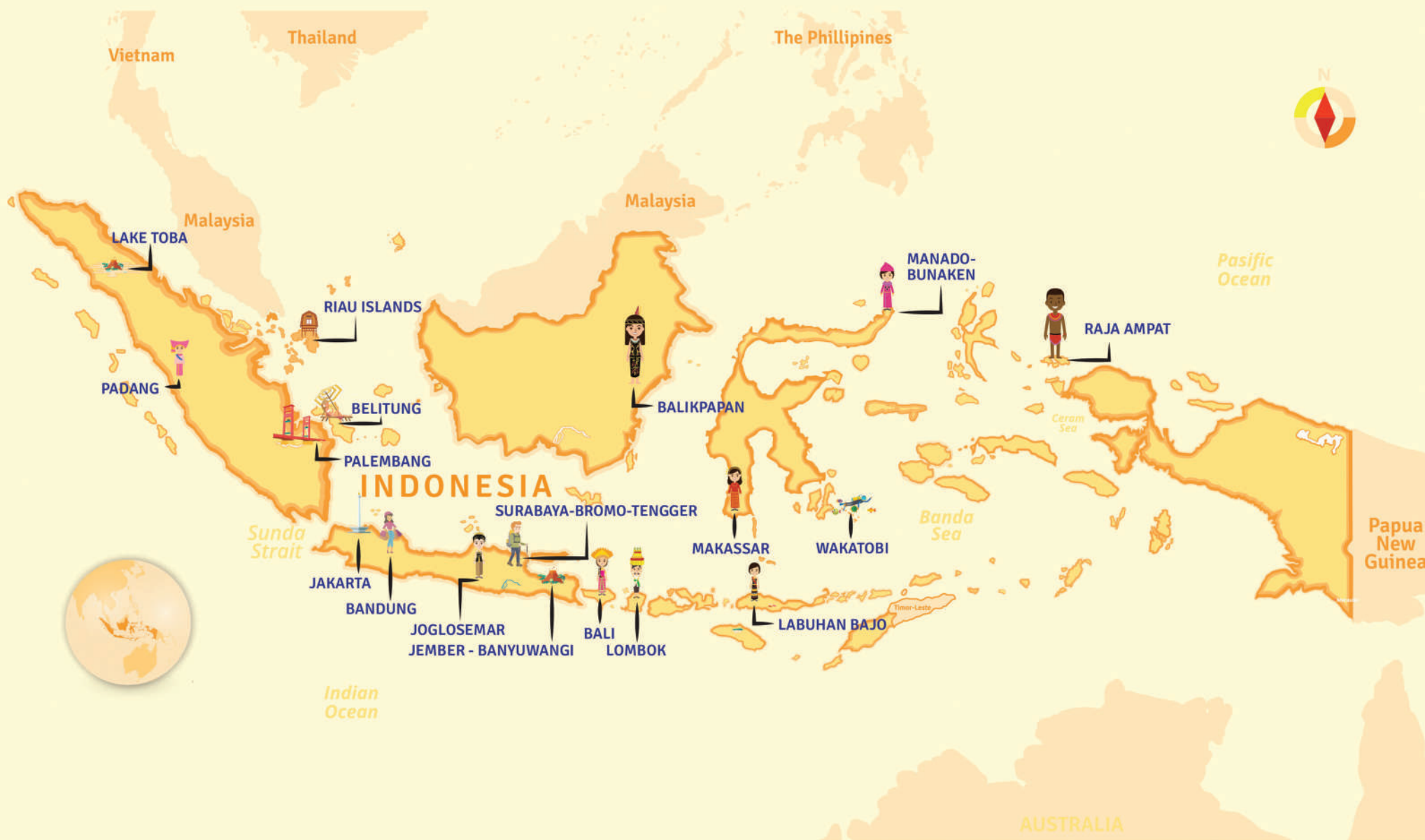
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