

From exclusive to inclusive

Traditional luxury markets are not weaning for the Maldives as the destination opens up to more visitor and accommodation segments

Selling a sea of opportunity

In a region where travellers are just discovering cruising, a sea of opportunity and attractive incentives await agents ready to sell sailing

Letting go to let it grow

Ceding a majority stake to Ascott is needed to scale up Tauzia Hotels, says founder Marc Steinmeyer



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Navigating Brexit **CHAOS**

The prolonged uncertainty over Brexit has agonised the travel sector and left business leaders in limbo. Bright spots are few, but the trade is hopeful that Asia, with its strong value proposition, could be a winner arising from Brexit's shambles. By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena and Yixin Ng



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Travelling with multi-gen tribes

Bring the kids – and grandparents



Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

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Multi-generational travel is a strong and fast-growing trend that shows no sign of abating. According to the 2019 Virtuoso Luxe Report on the global travel industry, multigenerational travel is this year's top vacation trend – among the top travel trends since 2011.

Key findings from Agoda Family Travel Trends 2018 also revealed that in Asia, travellers are more inclined to engage in multi-generational and extended family trips than their Western counterparts.

Multi-generational travel is clearly a hot trend in the Asian tourism sector. Among the key trends Steve Odell, Norwegian Cruise Lines' senior vice president and managing director of Asia-Pacific, has observed is the rise of multi-generational travel, and "a lot of times in Asia it's grandparents hosting the family" (see pages 10-12). Big extended family groups are coming out from most Asian markets, namely Singapore, the Philippines, Hong Kong and Thailand.

In the serviced residence sector, multi-generational travel is also singled out by Richard Tan, vice-president, serviced suites at Pan Pacific Hotels Group (see pages 14-17). "Millennials, who have become parents, are bringing their parents – active, healthy Baby Boomers – along on trips as the grandparents play a large part in (grand) parenting the children. This is true of the Chinese market, as outbound

family travel are often accompanied by grandparents," he noted.

Cruises, theme parks and beach resorts are natural choices for multi-generational travel, but with a new generation of travel-savvy parents, grandparents and kids who are no longer content to be visiting sites but collecting memories, a custom itinerary focussing on the desires of each family member may just be the ticket for travel advisors to showcase their planning expertise and increase sales.

While multi-generational travel has been on the rise for years, the family travel market continues to be dominated by picture-perfect images focussing on nuclear families. Savvy travel marketers should refine their marketing approaches to extended families.

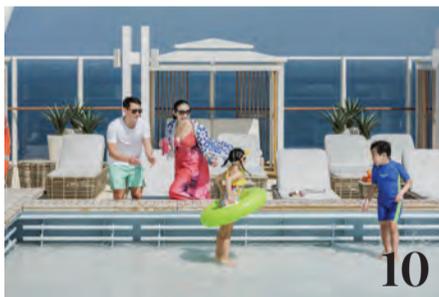
Who's the best person to target for multi-generational travel? The grandparents. In many cases, they are usually the decision-makers and instigators for a family vacation, having more time, money and motivation.

I can personally testify to this – my mother, now a grandmother of four, is often looking out for new travel destinations and opportunities for everyone to come together for an extended family vacation.

Meanwhile, an emerging subset within the multigen travel market is skip-gen travel, i.e. grandparents travelling with grandkids, leaving mom and dad behind. Now, I can't wait for my mother to suggest a grandtravel trip...



In many cases, the grandparents are usually the decision-maker and instigator for a family vacation, having more time, money and motivation.



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Coming Up

MAY 2019

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To celebrate TTG Asia Media's 45th birthday in 2019, we're publishing a special anniversary issue in May. Editorially, this will be a jam-packed issue, as we put together voices of 45 CEOs and industry heads on their views of the future, 45 ways that hotels and hospitality chains are making a difference, 45 innovative tourism products, 45 things you didn't know about cruising, and more. Don't miss it!



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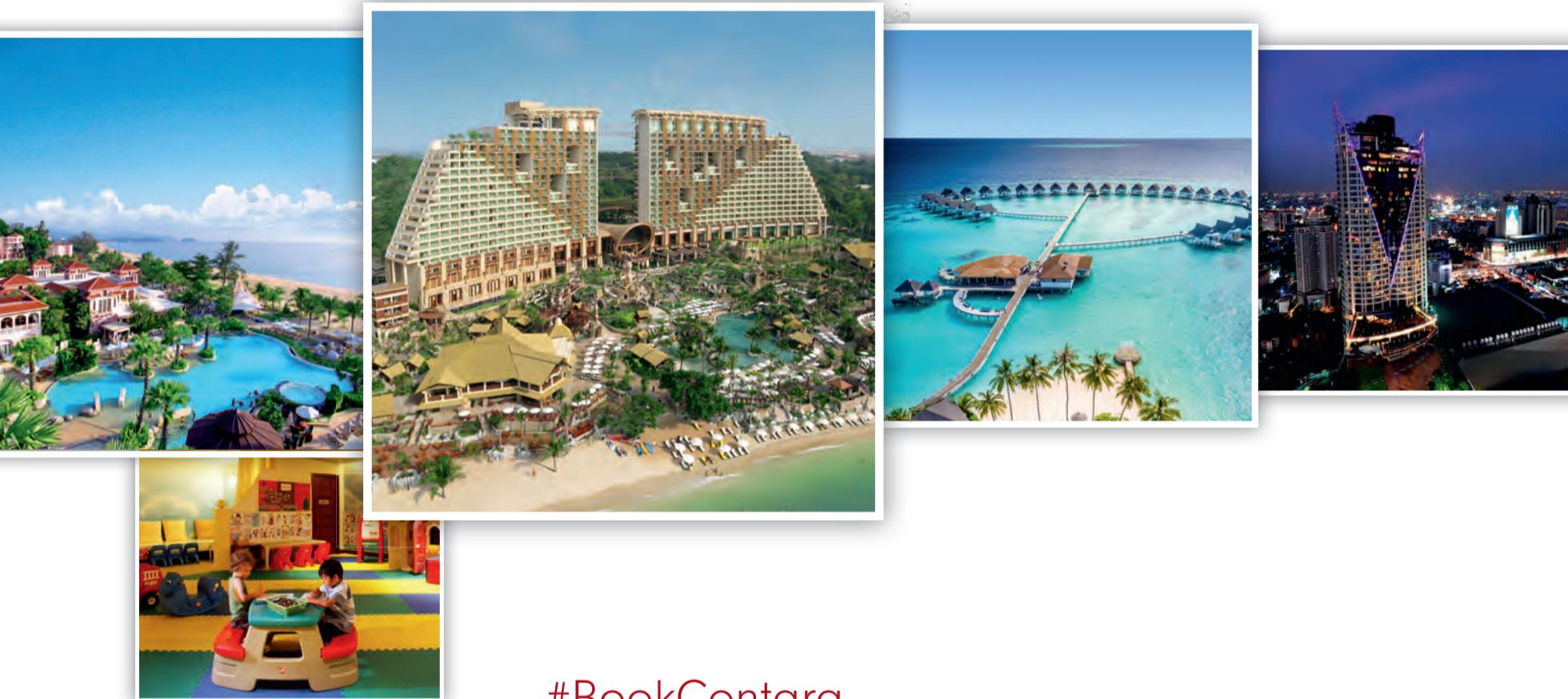
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TTG Asia Media is pleased to announce that it has set up a virtual TTG Travel Hall of Fame (www.ttgtravelfhof.com), which will enable us to showcase the accolades, artefacts and memorabilia of the region's most exceptional travel organisations in a far more effective way and to a global audience.



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Navigating Brexit

The prolonged uncertainty over Brexit has agonised the travel sector and left business leaders in limbo. Bright spots are few, but the trade is hopeful that Asia, with its strong value proposition, could be a winner arising from Brexit's shambles. By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena and Yixin Ng

The March 29 Brexit deadline came and went, but the UK – and everyone else – is none the wiser about what to expect in coming weeks and months as uncertainties continue to surround Britain's departure from the EU.

At press time, British lawmakers still failed to coalesce around a single proposal in indicative votes on the process of leaving the EU, with the UK now on course to leave the bloc on April 12 or May 22, depending on the agreement terms ratified.

What frustrates many in the travel and tourism business is the lack of a clear Brexit outcome – hard, soft, on hold or no deal – as the country continues to be paralysed by political division since the UK public voted to clear the EU in June 2016.

Travel industry members are cautious in speculating what this may mean for business coming into Asia, although the current uncertainty about Brexit and

weakening pound appear to make Brits think twice – and longer – about booking longhaul holidays.

“Brexit opens up two levels of uncertainties. On the consumer level, travellers are not sure what’s going on and how it would affect them personally; on the trade level there will be more uncertainty over currency issues, with the pound already hit really hard a bit ago, will there be even further impacts?” asked Willem Niemeijer, CEO & co-founder, Khiri Travel.

“The UK is our largest market at Exo Travel so we are watching the situation carefully,” said Hamish Keith, CEO of Exo Travel.

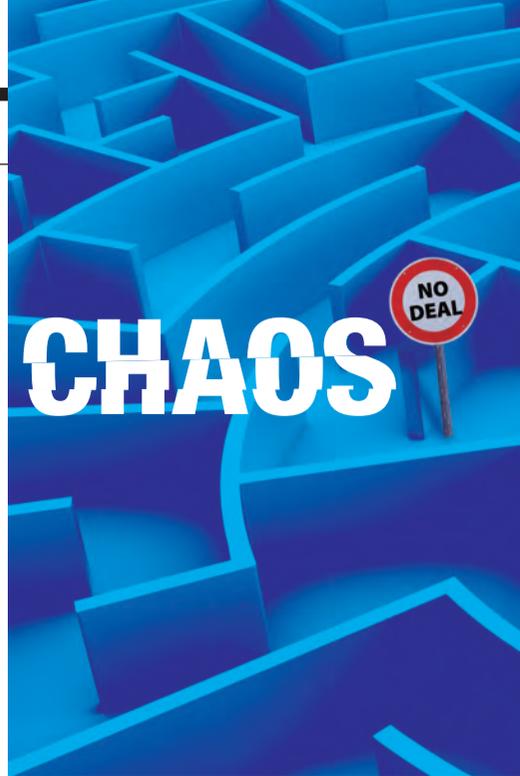
“Clarity is the key component for successful business planning and unfortunately nothing is clear at the moment so it is very difficult to know what will happen and of course how to plan effectively.”

Keith added: “In the meantime we are in constant communication with our key agents and working hard to assess poten-

tial direct and indirect impacts from all scenarios, particularly any possible changes in regulations and likely responses to those changes from customers, competitors and service providers. Like everyone else, we are waiting for a clear outcome so we can move on.”

Greg Young of Destination Asia’s international sales office, UK & Ireland, said: “The British are still spending and travelling, though it is more price-led than ever before. We are seeing bookings made in the same month as departure or now for 2020 and a much slower pace in the middle area. A decision made in regards to Brexit one way or the other would help.”

In January, IATA warned that up to five million flights would be at risk if the UK leaves the EU without a deal. A no-deal Brexit was feared to see airlines capping flights at 2018 level, although tickets for 2019 routes were already on sale. Late last month, the EU reportedly stated its intentions to lift this cap.



CHAOS

Research by Oxford Economics projected that a no-deal Brexit would cause a five per cent drop in UK outbound travel and tourism trips in 2020, as a result of the stifled economic backdrop and impact of a weaker pound. On the other hand, the weaker pound could mean that UK tourism inflows are four per cent higher in a no-deal scenario, provided there is no travel disruption.

Frank Wiegand, director of team sales Europe at Focus Asia, said: “There could be some legal problems for a short while, leading to certain Europe flights (operated by UK airlines) being unable to continue – but these will be solved.”

Paul Gorman, senior manager – owner engagement, of Luxury Escapes, which

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is plotting its move into the European outbound market, said: “Whether Brexit will have an impact depends on what the result is. At the same time, (a great deal of) airline capacity is coming out of Europe into Asia and vice versa. The barrier to getting to places now is so much less, you can fly between Singapore and Berlin (on an LCC, for example). Ultimately it’s about (the desire to travel). I don’t think Brexit will slow that down.”

For intra-Europe travel, he said: “Nobody knows how it’ll be in terms of operating licences. Guys who have UK or Irish operating licences like Ryanair and EasyJet may have to reapply for landing rights. I suspect that will be worked out before (the deal is final), (but it is still) a



“Like everyone else, we are waiting for a clear outcome so we can move on.”

– Hamish Keith, CEO, Exo Travel

big risk to a lot of companies.”

On whether these uncertainties could translate to speculative buying of Asian holidays in the short term, trade opinions are split.

Said Keith: “We believe some of the strong demand to Asia from the UK is driven by British travellers choosing not to go to Europe, so there is a silver lining

for Asian destinations there. In addition Asian destinations such as Thailand and Vietnam are well positioned as offering quality without being as expensive as other parts of the world so in times of economic uncertainty become the go-to destinations for British travellers.”

But a more doubtful Wiegand commented: “Asia is more expensive (than an European holiday). I don’t think a family in Birmingham originally intending to visit Spain will decide on Thailand instead. (Those choosing Asia and Europe holidays) are different markets.”

Particular segments of Brits may even choose to travel closer to home. Said David Kevan of Chic Locations in the UK: “I think the concern about being close to home is valid, particularly in the months immediately after Brexit. Our clients tend to be decision-makers within their business, and they want to feel they can react quickly to any crisis (as Brexit unfolds). They like the idea of a three, four hour flight rather than a 16-hour flight.”

Meanwhile, a potential slump in the UK economy and currency are larger concerns. “Nobody knows yet what the result of Brexit might be. Does it happen in March, June, or ever? Will they hold another referendum? The only risk I see is there might be less Brits travelling at all, whether to Europe or to Asia,” said Wiegand.

If or when the pound takes a hit, “travel everywhere will get more expensive”, Wiegand explained. “It happened in Russia years ago, and there could be a similar

crisis ahead of the UK.”

With travellers’ spending power affected, Kevan suggested that the UK’s travelling demography may shift towards those above 60. “Like with everything, a door closes and another opens. There will be problems and opportunities in equal measure.”

Kevan suggests that senior travellers are likely winners, as they are free from concerns of job security and dependents, and have a bigger travel window that is not tied to specific dates and can be enticed with longer stays with better value.

Losers, in his opinion, are likely to be those in the 25-55 age group, as they will be hit by job concerns and uncertainties, less disposable income, and any increase in bank interest rate.

But Keith is positive that the UK market will continue to do well in the longer term when a greater level of clarity is achieved.

“Holidays and travel are still a priority for the British and some recent surveys are indicating that longhaul travel are still experiencing strong growth driven by increased availability of cheaper longhaul flights and a desire to travel outside the Eurozone, particularly to Asian destinations where there is still good value to be found.

“The bottom line is that Brits will continue to travel no matter what happens with Brexit,” he surmised.

As the clock ticks down, the travel trade has one common desire: a clear Brexit outcome, come what may.



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Hard lessons from paradise

The six-month forced closure of Boracay was a clear lesson in sustainable tourism management for the Philippines. Now, six months since its reopening, Boracay's comeback also brings up pointed questions about what was done right and issues that remain unresolved, finds Rosa Ocampo

Boracay has reclaimed its pristine allure six months after it reopened to tourists, its cesspool tag a thing of the past as tourists rave over the island's clear waters and clean white beaches.

Even Simon Ang, managing director - operations of Celebrate TLC, who shunned Boracay for years as it became desecrated by mass tourism, began bringing in domestic tourists to the popular island.

"I will start sending my international clients once the rehabilitation is completed," Ang shared.

Road and sewerage construction are expected to complete in December. The first phase of the rehabilitation, which forced Boracay's half-year shutdown from April 26 to October 26 last year, focussed mainly on the clean-up of waters and beaches and enforcing strict compliance with the environmental and related regulations.

Now, six months since its reopening, Boracay boasts a cleaner beachfront and waters, while illegal establishments including West Cove Resort were demolished. Accommodations with 50 rooms or more are required to have their own sewerage treatment plants (STP), while those with 49 rooms and below can use a clustered STP or separate STP.

Setback regulations call for the implementation of establishments' 25m+5m easement from the shore and 6m easement from centre of the road.

On March 20, the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force reported that 326 hotels with combined 11,943 rooms have complied with rules and regulations, and are now able to accept bookings and reservations. They are part of the estimated 15,000 rooms in over 500 hotels and other accommodations.

With the carrying capacity for Boracay now set at 19,215 tourists at any time, it also brings to issue the implementation of the carrying capacity given the room oversupply on the island.

Was the rehabilitation a success?

Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) research fellow Mark Francis Quimba isn't sure if Boracay's closure is considered a success, as evaluation is difficult without a proper study or analysis launched.

In his presentation during Rajah Travel's Travel Talk forum last month, he said: "If you look at just pictures and anecdotal evidence, perhaps there are big improvements in how the beach looks now but we have to look deeper in terms of in-

come of those living in the area and the types of business (allowed)".

The costs of the six-month closure were enormous and the chain reaction long. PIDS reported that in closing Boracay, the economy lost up to 83.2 billion pesos (roughly US\$1.6 billion) in business revenue and 27.9 billion pesos (\$530 million) in compensation to displaced workers.

Narzalina Lim, founder of tourism and hospitality consultants Asia Pacific Projects, noted the "enormous social cost" of the shutdown, including "the displacement of many people who lost their jobs and livelihood and whose families were dislocated (children had to leave school, etc)".

Lim, the Philippines' tourism undersecretary for planning, policy and development for six years before becoming the tourism secretary, said she would have handled Boracay's rehabilitation differently.

"I would have held several town hall meetings to show the local government officials, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the private sector stakeholders what went wrong with the environment and presented a phased approach to rehabilitation," said Lim.

"A consensus should have been reached amongst all stakeholders on how the rehabilitation was going to be done and time given for people to prepare alternatives if their establishments were going to be affected by the rehabilitation", she pointed out.

And more could be done regarding waste disposal and street flood-

ing, Lim maintained, as the open dumpsite up the hill on the island's north is still operating and causes groundwater contamination when it rains, while garbage barged to the mainland sometimes falls into the sea.

"This is an unsustainable system," she remarked.

Most critically, the importance of educating the people was overlooked in the rehabilitation of Boracay, insisted Lim.

"You have to rehabilitate people's values, attitudes and outlook too to make any physical rehabilitation sustainable. As long as people are just strong-armed into following orders without understanding and appreciating why things have to be done a certain way, they will go back to their old ways," she remarked.

"An essential component to the rehabilitation should be an ongoing educational drive amongst school children, youth and adults on the importance of their natural resources and their role in preserving these resources," she emphasised.

What lies ahead

Boracay faces several challenges in the short run and long term. It did not lack redevelopment plans including three master plans by the Department of Tourism, although rules and regulations were either not implemented or followed by establishments, said industry watchers.

Apart from difficulties with enforcement, allegations of corruption have also been left unaddressed, with Lim claiming misdoings involving government officials and profiteering developers and investors.

Lim did not mince words: "I am disappointed that no official from the DENR has been jailed so far. They issued environmental compliance certificates and permits to build on wetlands and forest land. Cases should have been filed against them. Instead, they were just transferred to other posts. This is a case of selective justice which does not make the political will of this administration credible."

In spite of calls to limit the number of cruise ships that call on the island over concerns of low tourist expenditure and environmental impact, a 1,001-room mega hotel and construction of casinos were earlier approved for the island.

C9 Hotelworks managing director Bill Barnett noted: "It's hypocrisy to say no to cruising and yes to large casino-led developments on the island which will impact environment."

"Boracay remains a mixed message as the government has said they want a sustainable approach, yet they have approved mega hotel projects. There is no yin and yang, but an absolute disconnect," Barnett observed.

"As global population continues to grow, and now at seven billion, the reality is that Boracay like Bali, Phuket and other mainstream Asian resort destinations are feeling the impact of urbanisation and over-tourism."

Barnett said: "The Boracay of 2030 will be an urban resort and not an island getaway. How it plans for that future will be the basis of success."

“
You have to rehabilitate people's values, attitudes and outlook too to make any physical rehabilitation sustainable.
– Nazalina Lim, founder, Asia Pacific Projects

Letting go to let it grow

Rather than owning 100 per cent of his “beloved baby”, Marc Steinmeyer, CEO of The Green Oak Hotel Management, the holding company of Tauzia Hotels, tells Mimi Hudoyo why he’s willing to cede a 70 per cent stake to Ascott to achieve his vision of growing the business beyond Indonesia

Why do you want to expand beyond Indonesia when the country still offers so many opportunities?

One, because as Indonesians travel more outside of Indonesia and see a Harris, Yellow or Pop! hotel, I am sure they will take to these (home-grown) brands.

Two, the Harris Hotels brand is a success story in Indonesia. If I have Harris properties in Bangkok, Manila or elsewhere in the region, the brand will indirectly become more successful in Indonesia, as it will gain more credibility in the eyes of travellers. We will not be perceived as a local but an international brand.

You have been mulling to go regional for some time, so why is now the right time?

Actually, I have the vision to expand outside the country since 2012, but going out by myself as an operator will take a lot of time to build up relations in other countries. (When entering) a new destination, there is a risk of not getting the right partner and owner, and that may impact the brand. It can even kill a brand that I have been building for so many years.

These concerns had not stopped me from developing outside Indonesia but I needed a different strategy. I started to look for a strategic partner with three objectives: one, to complement (Tauzia Hotels); two, the company should have a strong base in Asia; and three, someone with a long-term vision.

How did it lead you to Ascott, and not some global hotel company with presence in Asia?

My objective is that the partner must complement us. What is the point of partnering another big world player? Cash wise, it may be good for me, but they will kill a brand that we have invested in over the years. My partners, hotel owners and employees believe in the brand. If I should merge with a partner who will dilute or rebrand with theirs, it will be a pity, so I need a partner who needs and believes in the future of (Tauzia’s) brands.

What do you mean by long-term vision?

Because in today’s financial market, private equity and banking (firms) have short-term interests. When they like it they buy it, raise the value and then quickly sell it. I don’t want that. It will be out of my control, and I want to remain in control of the company.

How do you eventually find Ascott as a partner?

I have got people knocking on my doors while I also knocked on others’ doors. Over the years, I found two

candidates that I had fallen in love with. One was not an Asian brand but they were based in Asia. All criteria were met, but the negotiation process was not easy and the deal fell through.

The other candidate is Ascott and it fits all three objectives I have been seeking. They are in the parahospitality business, in the residential market, their guests are long-stay and they have no F&B operations.

We, on the other hand, are in the hotel business, our guests are short-stay, we have F&B services, and our properties range from budget to luxury. Our square metres are smaller while their residential (units) are much bigger.

Both are hospitality companies with totally different markets. We have bigger F&B components because our hotels have meetings and conventions (services), which is something they don’t (offer). Their structure and management system is simpler, and their gross operating profit is different from us.

We share a similar vision in running a long-term business. This is not two companies merged into one; it is Ascott taking shares in Tauzia to grow the company.

You are passionate about your brands, but you also let Ascott hold two-third shares. Why?

My number one objective is development. They will bring me a network of developers, so that we can move fast.

Two, (Ascott has) financial credibility in the region which sometimes can offer a back-up. Three, the hospitality business

has changed a lot in the last 10 to 15 years, and we are depending more on technology. We require more means in term of technology to invest in mobile applications and access to many other tools. We need more technological muscle to follow the (changing market needs).

But aren’t you concerned that with a majority stake they will have a bigger say?

The idea of getting a partner is to make sure that Tauzia’s inventory grows in the next few years, and that growth will most probably be generated by their resources.

On the other hand, for the interest of the company’s growth and expansion, having a 30 per cent stake of a big plate for my family’s future is better than owning 100 per cent of a small plate. Some of the investment will be to grow the company.

On their side, they also do not want me to run away. My stake, though minor, is still 30 per cent, not 10 per cent or five per cent. It is fair.

Both sides have made this (partnership) a long-term decision. They agreed to a 70 per cent stake because they want to grow Tauzia beyond Indonesia.

I am committed to run the company in the next five years as CEO. Moreover, we have an executive committee (with representatives from both companies) to make decisions.

10 NEED TO KNOW’S ABOUT MARC STEINMEYER

■ **Who in your family?** Effectively married for nearly 40 years now, with twin girls and an elder boy

■ **What do you do for fun?** Trekking alone in the middle of nature; going back to the basics is the best way to recharge

■ **Your ideal vacation** I need three types of vacations: a family vacation in the southern France countryside, with my lovely wife enjoying nice charming hotels around the world, and for myself, alone in the middle of nature

■ **How do you book your own leisure trips?** Last minute, I ask my assistant to book a ticket

■ **What are you reading right now?** I have no time to read except for news on world business and politics.

■ **How do you stay healthy?** Limit the amount of food I eat, but once in a while I’ll go for a glass of a red wine – Bordeaux, Sancerre red or Madiran from south-western France.

■ **Favourite food?** I have a special fondness for Italian, Chinese, French, Mediterranean and Thai food

■ **A bad habit you cannot kick** I hate to have a habit but when I notice one, I will change it after a certain time. It’s always great to reinvent yourself all the time.

■ **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you** Someone who is disrespectful to others or look down on others, pretentious or shows a lack of humility especially if they are high ranking, or someone who loses self-control

■ **Most people don’t know that you....** I have a sky-diving license. I love to be in sky or on the top of a mountain, but I hate to be in the middle of the ocean.



Having a 30 per cent stake of a big plate for my family’s future is better than owning 100 per cent of a small plate.

Why did Tauzia set up a regional office in Singapore?

The Green Oak, the holding company of Tauzia Hotel Management, is based in Singapore. Communication wise, we call it Tauzia Singapore Regional Office.

You need to be in Indonesia to grab the Indonesian market. If I want to grab the worldwide market, I need to be based in Singapore as it is a financial hub in the region. As soon as you are present in Singapore, immediately your visibility is international, even if your property development is outside the country.

Having a regional office in Singapore will help me with marketing the (Tauzia) brands in the big countries like Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam. Once I get three or more hotels in Manila or Bangkok, for example, I will need to have an anchor in these countries and I will open Tauzia Thailand and Tauzia Philippines. Like Indonesia, Asians are very nationalistic. Once we have a number of our brands in a country, we need to become a domestic network in the destination.



From left: FlowRider and Skydiving simulator and family suite on the *Spectrum of the Seas*, the first of Royal Caribbean's Quantum Ultra Class cruise ship

Sea of opportunity in selling cruises

With cruise ships, itineraries and on-board experiences becoming more diverse than ever, cruise industry leaders say travel advisors in Asia can do more to tap the lucrative opportunities that a burgeoning cruise market brings, writes Yixin Ng

With cruise penetration in some fast-growing markets in South-east Asia as low as 0.02 per cent in recent times, education is an important next step for the region's travel agents to expand their revenue horizons.

Cruise passengers originating from Asia crossed the four million mark in 2017, up 20.6 per cent over 2016, and as of late last year was the world's fourth largest cruising region, said Jiali Wong, regional manager, Asia, Cruise Line International Association (CLIA) during a travel agent seminar held by the association during ITB Asia.

While China is the region's largest source market, Wong pointed out that "almost every market in Asia saw double-digit growth".

The statistics reflect healthy consumer interest in a region where travellers are starting to "recognise cruise holidays as a relaxing and value-for-money option". It also helps that cruise is "a natural fit" for families, a key travel segment in Asia, she pointed out.

Indeed, family travel presents a lucrative segment for cruises in Asia, according to Steve Odell, senior vice

president and managing director Asia Pacific, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings.

"One of the most important trends that we (are seeing) in Asia is multi-generational travel. A lot of times in Asia it's the grandparents hosting the family, and we have big extended family groups coming out from most markets, particularly Singapore, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Thailand," he commented.

Cruising a last bastion for agents

Said Wong: "Unlike a lot of travel segments, where consumers are starting to book direct, travel agents remain a key distribution channel for cruise lines.

"In fact, the majority of cruises have over 80 per cent of their products listed by travel agencies. This translates to potential for travel agents to tap into the cruising segment to increase sales," she added.

Cruise lines are also stressing the key role that agents play in the distribution and booking of cruises.

"The airline and the hotel business have educated travellers to book online but agents still play a major role in our booking process because a cruise is a more invested experience

(than a car ride or flight)," said Odell.

"Agents still have a fundamental role in the booking process because people have a lot of questions about cruises. We have online booking tools, and a growing number will book online, but these will be second- and third-time cruisers who are over the line of what they are buying," he continued.

For Genting Cruise Lines, OTAs are responsible for just 17 per cent of bookings in China, but this is already a good deal ahead of any other country in the world in terms of online distribution, according to Siv Forlie, senior vice president - revenue management. "All in all, 75-85 per cent of business comes from agencies, online and offline," she added.

Although Genting is "working very hard" to push online sales with e-commerce strategies and website revamps, she said the online format is often a "disaster for selling cruises" due to the amount of content that needs to be displayed for consumers to make a decision.

"When it comes to still being dependent on third parties, traditional partners are not moving as fast into the Internet age, although we tell them the Internet is here to stay."



... travel agents remain a key distribution channel for cruise lines. In fact, the majority of cruises have over 80 per cent of their products listed by travel agencies.

- Jiali Wong, regional manager, Asia, Cruise Line International Association

Asia cruise trends in 2018

38

Active cruise line brands in Asian waters

7,169

Scheduled port calls in Asian markets

288

Asian destinations

12.9

Potential passenger destination days (millions)

Source: CLIA



Costa Venezia is a cruise ship built for the Chinese market

& Asia managing director said.

The partnership with MCIA will provide CLIA with the opportunity to better equip members with better skills to promote and sell cruise holidays, while MCIA will leverage CLIA's expertise to educate their travel agent members and raise the profile of cruise tourism.

Cruise leaders can't stress enough the value that this sector brings for specialist advisors.

Seeing "huge opportunity" for agents, Odell said: "Agents in the region haven't been brave enough to say they are cruise specialists. Australia is quite a sophisticated cruise market with a lot of cruise specialists, and they are people who say they only sell cruises. But in Asia it's still a big issue – and a big opportunity," he remarked.

"Agents should also think what they can potentially earn from selling cruises. We are quite often an inclusive product where they are earning higher value commissions, (compared what they make from hotels and airfares). With cruising they are generally selling four to five days of travel – we pay very generous commissions."

Odell hence urges travel agents to "find the right partner, utilise the resources that partner can give you and become a specialist".

"It's about partnerships – agents can't do it on their own, and we can't do it on our own. There's a lot of money to be made (in cruising)," he stressed.

Indonesia: low penetration translates to growth opportunities

In Indonesia, the outbound cruise market was showing an alluring 40.2 per cent year-on-year growth, Wong shared last year. Yet, the most recently published figures from CLIA showed that one in 5,600 Indonesians were cruising, putting the penetration rate at only 0.017 per cent.

The knowledge gap and lack of cruises departing from the country's key outbound travel cities are major obstacles, according to some travel agents polled.

Selayar Kepulauan Lestari – which has been offering yacht and cruise itineraries out of Bali, servicing mainly European travellers – is now pivoting into Indonesia's outbound cruising market.

Company spokesperson Iwan Syahlani shared with TTG Asia plans to undergo the association's accreditation programme to steer his company into the cruising market.

He said: "(As the numbers show), there is a large potential market of Indonesians wanting to enjoy cruising around the world."



From left: Norwegian Joy offers bumper car rides; dining on board World Dream

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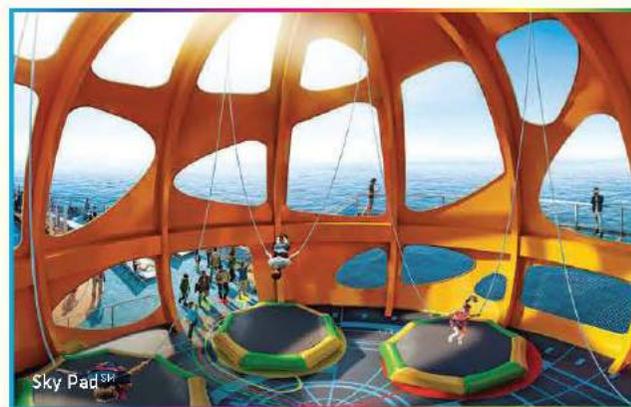
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“Unlike in Singapore, there is (little) happening in Indonesia to educate travel agents and help them better understand cruise tourism,” Iwan said, adding that he would like to learn more about cruise products before rolling out marketing campaigns in “big city markets” like Jakarta, Medan and Surabaya.”

Apart from CLIA’s training and accreditation, Iwan was also pursuing learning opportunities with a Jakarta-based consultant in cruise line marketing.

Further highlighting the importance of education for travel agent is the proliferation of cruise products in the region, not only in terms of capacity but also the types of offerings available.

“Ships are moving more and more to the east. This year we’ll see almost 38

cruise lines represented in Asia with more than 78 ships. There is also more variation in the types of cruise products,” CLIA’s Wong pointed out. For example, in addition to large ships, small luxury cruising is also catching on in Asia.

But for Katarina Indrawati, EMFA Tours & Travel in Indonesia, product knowledge and marketing alone are insufficient to help sell cruises to Indonesians.

Cruise sales are just beginning to come in at the agency, which offers Royal Caribbean and Genting cruises. In 2017, she said customers were seeking information on the products. By late 2018, they began making bookings.

“It took a long time to provide the information and (convert into sales),” she

said, explaining that the lack of cruise departures from Indonesia’s main outbound travel cities is a big obstacle, particularly as fly-cruise could still be relatively pricey for her clients at the moment.

“It’ll absolutely help if we have cruises departing from (primary outbound cities). I think there are little to none (other than from Bali) for now. Genting stops in Surabaya, but it is not the point of departure. Indonesian cruise-goers would have to buy tickets to Singapore and back, on top of the cruise product.”

“Air tickets can sometimes be priced quite high. Cruises set the schedule, so we have to buy the ticket accordingly and cannot rely on (seasonal) airfare discounts.” – **Additional reporting from Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**



It’s about partnerships – agents can’t do it on their own, and we can’t do it on our own. There’s a lot of money to be made (in selling cruises).

– Steve Odell, senior vice president and managing director Asia Pacific, Norwegian Cruise Line

Tried & Tested World Dream



Dream Cruises’ second ship, World Dream, made its debut a year ago and is now homeported in Hong Kong. Prudence Lui jumps at the chance to sail the high seas for a quick weekend getaway filled with plenty of wine-and-dine and gaming experiences

WHAT *World Dream* shares a similar configuration with its sister ship, *Genting Dream*. As I had previously sailed on *Genting Dream*, I felt a sense of familiarity while boarding *World Dream*, and had no trouble navigating the latter that is a 150,695-ton, 18-deck behemoth.

But there are several new features which stand *World Dream* apart from *Genting Dream*, including two exclusive shows, *Faith* and *Dulce Habana*; an exclusive

private dining room, Vintage Room; and a large indoor virtual reality game area called ESC Experience Lab.

My twin-bed room was situated on deck eight, where more than half of the floor space is devoted to restaurants and art gallery spaces. I like my spacious balcony, which was approximately half the size of the actual room. There are about 1,040 other similar balcony staterooms, and features and amenities were similar to its sister ship.

WHY In April 2018, Dream Cruises rolled out a new culinary concept, Taste the Dream – Wine and Dine at Sea, taking six Asia-based celebrity chefs to sea.

I attended a finale session that featured Martin Yan and Hilda Chan, where both culinary masters cooked up a storm with Dream Cruises chefs and impressed guests

with a limited-edition tasting menu.

Their four-hands menu, staged on the Saturday night I was on board, ended my journey on a high note. It took place in the Silk Road Restaurant, and there were 25 tables booked out.

It warmed my heart when chefs Yan and Chan greeted guests in person, moving from table to table to interact with guests. I also had my menu signed by Yan when he came to my table.

This gourmet dining experience was not just limited to dinner, as both chefs held a live cooking demonstration in the afternoon that was open to all guests on board.

Guests looking for more private arrangements can book the three-hour chef’s table at the Vintage Room.

When it comes to dining, guests are spoiled for choice with the *World Dream* offering 18 restaurants and bars. Palace Suite guests can also taste a specially created four-course set menu, which other guests can order for an extra HK\$512 (US\$66) per person (this does not include a 15 per cent service charge).

HOW I embarked on a two-night Weekend Getaway, boarding on a Friday night with disembarkation set at 08.30 on Sunday morning. This left me only Saturday to fully explore the ship. To make the most of time on board, I recommend that guests plan ahead by downloading the Dream Cruise app, which includes the daily schedule of activities.

I decided to experience the brand-new ESC Experience Lab. With a choice of ver-

satile games, I tried the Finger Coaster and created my own ride-of-a-lifetime roller-coaster, and sat back to experience the full motion with simulated sound and downhill wind effects. Though it was a short ride, it was great fun.

Other activities include a complimentary wine workshop, where Palace Suite guests get priority entry. This hour-long class was conducted in English with Mandarin translation, and during this time I learnt more about the Wynns Coonawarra Estate and created my own blend.

To ease the boarding experience, self check-in kiosks were introduced at the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal in 1Q2018. Guests only need to scan their travel document to identify themselves for check-in, and the kiosk would automatically print out the cabin card. No group check-ins via the kiosk were available at press time.

VERDICT Riding on the wave of success *Genting Dream* has generated, *World Dream* has elevated the entertainment and gourmet experiences onboard to the next level. It’s an ideal short escape for guests to appreciate premium quality and service, and will be especially fun for families.

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Making room for all

Serviced residences are no longer exclusively targeting the extended stay market, as the sector responds to shifts in market demand for shorter stays and smaller units. Xinyi Liang-Pholsena speaks to serviced residences chiefs to find more

Increasing business activities, an expanding middle class and a growing leisure market are some of the key factors driving demand for serviced apartments in Asia, spurring accommodation providers in the region to respond with robust pipelines and new brands.

The regional inventory of serviced apartments has exploded over the last four years. According to the *Global Serviced Apartments Industry Report 2018-2019*, there are 116,603 serviced apartment units across Asia today, an increase of 63 per cent from 2015.

The growth trajectory for business travel, especially in Asia-Pacific, will continue to drive demand for leisure across all regions worldwide, particularly for top destinations such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Shanghai, according to Richard Tan, vice-president, serviced suites, Pan Pacific Hotels Group (PPHG).

South-east Asia is projected to grow faster than elsewhere in the region, with demand primarily driven by Chinese travellers throughout the region, especially into Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, he added.

Shifting needs, blurring lines

While demand for serviced apartments continues to grow, international assignments are getting shorter as companies become more cost conscious.

Some of the cost-cutting measures include companies sending fewer married people with children overseas and offering international assignments of shorter duration, observed Onyx Hospitality Group's president & CEO Douglas Martell, resulting in reduced demand for serviced apartments with several rooms.

At the same time, the modern working world is increasingly characterised by short-term contracts, freelance and remote work, co-living and co-working concepts have risen in popularity. The Great Room, Just-co and WeWork are just some of the co-working brands that have popped up in Asia in recent years, and hotel operators like Ovolo have also jumped onto the bandwagon.

"The rising trend of co-living,

along with co-working, is here to stay," said Kevin Goh, CEO of Ascott.

Ascott has launched its co-living brand, lyf, to provide flexible communal spaces that facilitate collaboration, community building and social activities among guests. The first lyf property, lyf Funan Singapore, will open in 4Q2019.

The community spirit espoused in co-living is not a new concept though, said Arthur Kiong, CEO of Far East Hospitality (FEH). The company already segments its brands based on travellers' profiles, e.g. serviced residences under the Village brand provide options for guests to engage in local festivities throughout their business trip, he shared.

In particular, families have risen as a notable growth segment for all the serviced apartment operators that *TTG Asia* spoke with, especially as multigenerational vacations grow in popularity among Asians.

"Millennials, who have become parents, are bringing their parents – active, healthy Babyboomers – along on trips as the grandparents play a large part in (grand) parenting the children. This is true of the Chinese market, as outbound family travel is often accompanied by grandparents," observed PPHG's Tan.

The trend is a perfect fit with the "homely" serviced residence product, he stated, as each unit typically comes with one or two bedrooms which can fit the whole family, plus a common living area, kitchen and family-friendly amenities such as washer and dryer.

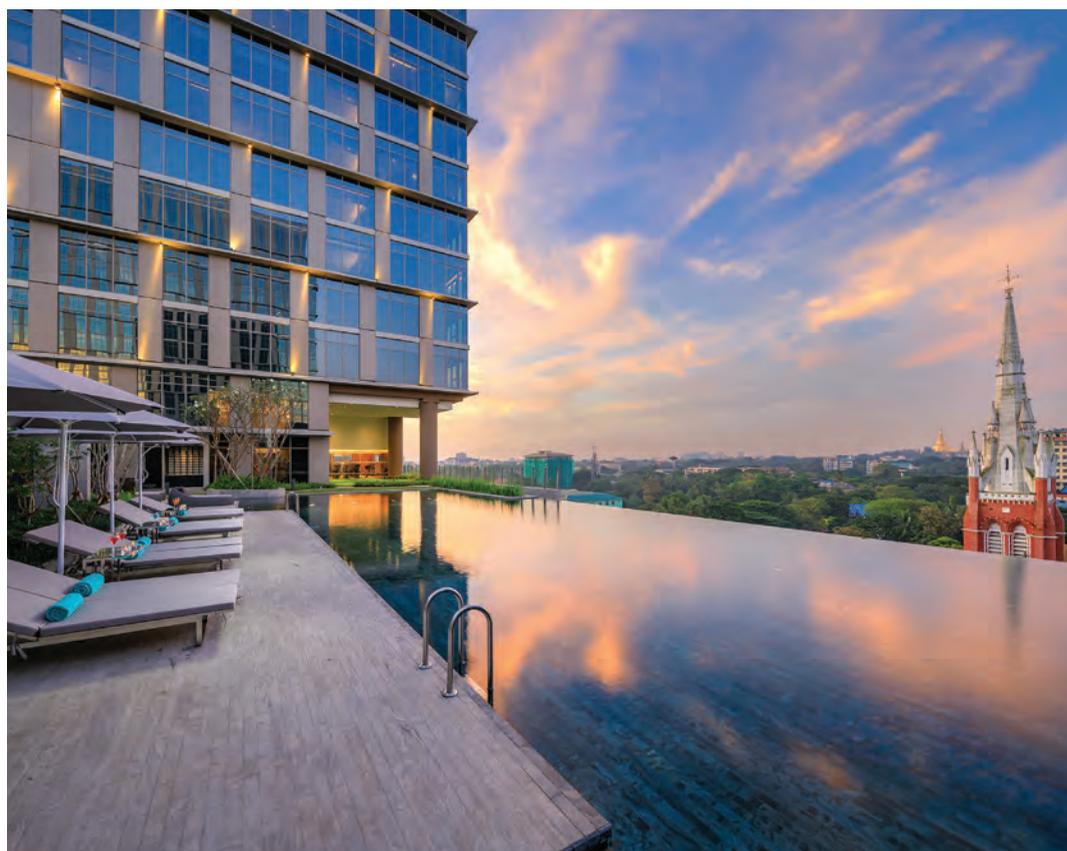
"We also see a growing trend of families choosing to stay in serviced residences instead of booking multiple hotel rooms," Tan added. "Compared to two connecting rooms or a suite in a hotel, a serviced apartment unit offers families or groups the convenience of space and facilities without a hefty price tag."

From above: Onyx Hospitality Group's Shama Hub room prototype, touting flexible spaces; lyf@SMU, Ascott's co-study, co-living and co-working space; and Pan Pacific Yangon



I've seen enormous change (in the sector) in the last five years; even the way we design serviced residences has changed dramatically.

– Douglas Martell, president & CEO, Onyx Hospitality Group



A new breed of serviced residences

As lengths of stays become shorter and more leisure segments show a demand for serviced residences, operators have responded by offering more hotel-like services, further blurring of lines between the traditional focus of hotels and serviced apartments.

The “stronger demand for studio apartments over three-bedroom apartments and much shorter stays” has led Onyx Hospitality Group to roll out the Shama Hub concept targeting travellers from the “informal generation”, Martell revealed.

Unveiling the concept in conjunction with the recent Serviced Apartment Summit Asia 2019 in Bangkok, Onyx launched its prototype Shama Hub Bangkok Pratunam studio apartment to offer a first-hand experience of how the flexible space can sleep up to four people, incorporating a king-sized bed complemented by a foldaway wall with two additional beds, a modular mini-kitchen, modular seating that can be rearranged, and separate shower and WC rooms with dedicated vanity space.

“We came up with the Shama Hub concept because we already see from our existing Shamas that the demand for three- and four-bedroom apartments is getting less but demand for studio apartments and shorter stays is really increasing,” Martell said.

“Shama Hub is designed to meet the needs for high demand of studio apartments and (families or groups of friends) wanting to share a room together while getting a proper sleeping area,” Martell elaborated. “It’s a really inventive way to maximise a small footprint.”

The desire “to widen our range of products and services to appeal to the fast-growing middle-class hotel segment of customers who demand shorter stays at a mid-tier price” also underscored Ascott’s recent investment in Tausia, a major hotel operator in Indonesia, according to Goh.

The Ascott has also launched Citadines Connect, a line of business hotels with selected services, in a bid to widen its short-stay offerings.

Hotels under this sub-brand will have tech-enabled features such as mobile keys, self check-in kiosks, smart washing machines or laundromats, content streaming-enabled TVs and Google cloud printers. Rooms within a Citadines Connect business hotel will mostly be studios ranging from 18m² to 21m².

As a predominantly corporate player, Oakwood now wants to tap growth in the leisure market where it sees rising demand, said Asia Pacific managing director Dean Schreiber.

“Our customers are demanding short stays, so we want to address our customers’ needs and develop prod-



Above: Village Residence Clarke Quay, Singapore



We shouldn’t be complacent with we do as an industry. The likes of Airbnb puts us on our toes a bit more to be open-minded and give what the guest wants, not what we want.

- Dean Schreiber, managing director, Asia Pacific, Oakwood

ucts suited for them,” he said.

As well, the longer stay nature of guests make serviced residences a desired partner for consumer brands, Schreiber told *TTG Asia*.

The Oakwood Showroom was launched in its Singapore corporate office earlier this January for property owners to view and purchase in-room amenities. The showroom is a mock-up of a suite featuring the latest gadgets, furnishings and other homewares from various product partners, such as Samsung, Bang & Olufsen and Serta.



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We also see a growing trend of families choosing to stay in serviced residences instead of booking multiple rooms.

- Richard Tan, vice-president, serviced suites, Pan Pacific Hotels Group

“A lot of partners we’re working with are all interested in this space because the customers engage with their brands a lot more in serviced apartments,” Schreiber shared.

“Our partners are very encouraged by the fact that they can put their brands in front of customers longer and the customers actually touch and use them, so we see an exciting opportunity. Our rooms are like showrooms for them.”

Airbnb opens up possibilities

As lines are blurred between serviced apartments and hotels, and the accommodation sector gets more crowded, what FEH’s Kiong finds a challenge is the “uneven playing field” that home-sharing platforms have brought in Singapore.

“Regulations here state that private residences can lease out their premises as long as guests stay for a minimum of three months. Yet, on home-sharing platforms, these lodgings can be booked for even a one-night stay. The intention and reality on the ground is very different,” he said.

“Serviced apartments on the other hand face a minimum six-night requirement, and are strictly regulated. The security and safety of the guests are also a high priority.”

Kiong added: “That brings us to the opportunity to reconsider the relevance of the service residence model with the six-night restriction; perhaps, doing away with or shortening the six-night requirement. This may be judiciously regulated to increase the room supply in Singapore, instead of allocating more land for hotel development where land is in short supply.

“With the deregulation of the serviced residences sector, we see the prospect of creating a new category of accommodation – aparthotels. This will target guests who would trade services for space. Those who do not need fancy services of a hotel, but need more space to have family with them or to cook in the apartment,” he elaborated.

But while Airbnb may have been perceived as a major disruptor in the hospitality sector, particularly persuading younger travellers to seek out alternatives to traditional hotel accommodation, the home-sharing trend has also shown that serviced apartments offer more freedom and space.

“Airbnb didn’t disrupt but made us rethink (our products). They are a solution, not a product,” Oakwood’s Schreiber stated.

“The likes of Airbnb puts us on our toes a bit more to be open-minded and give what the guest want, not what we want, e.g. getting rid of check-in and check-out times. We have to challenge ourselves a lot more.”

It’s an opinion endorsed too by PPHG’s Tan, who added that “the rise of the sharing economy has created unprecedented awareness in the accommodation space”.

“At the same time, lines between accommodation categories have definitely ‘blurred’, with home-sharing options, aparthotels and branded residences joining serviced apartments and hotels, not forgetting the proliferation of blended spaces, such as co-working spaces that double up as co-living spaces and vice versa.

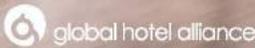
“To capture this group of travellers, serviced apartments will need to better segment their markets to drive revenue and profitability, and employ a different strategy given shorter stays and higher guest turnaround,” said Tan.




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Destination

Growing appreciation for nature

Juxtaposed against the steely skyscrapers of nearby Kuala Lumpur, Selangor state has emerged as an up-and-coming destination that can offer travellers what they crave for nowadays – a large dose of local culture coupled with unique rural experiences, discovers S Puvaneswary



Selangor's countryside charm is fast winning the favour of tourists, with growing demand for nature and local experiences stemming from the region and beyond.

Adam Kamal, general manager, Tour East Malaysia, said: "Asians and regional markets used to be attracted to big cities in Malaysia for its shopping, entertainment and cosmopolitan ambience. But these days, there is more demand for authentic local experiences, and these draws can be found outside of major cities.

"Repeat visitors especially wish to see new attractions other than Selangor's traditional draws such as Sunway Lagoon theme park and Batu Caves. They also want to enrich their holiday experience by meeting with locals," he added.

Manfred Kurz, managing director, Diethelm Travel Malaysia, agreed: "The attractiveness of Selangor countryside – be it Kuala Selangor, Sepang, Gombak, Sabak Bernam, Hulu Langat and Ulu Selangor – is its easy accessibility, a 1.5-hour drive from the nation's capital.

"Selangor is also rich in ecotourism, culture and historical places that make it ideal for day tours," he added.

One such tour that Diethelm runs

is a day trip to Bukit Melawati, a 300-year-old historic site filled with local lore. The visit is followed by a seafood dinner in a local restaurant, as well as a night boat ride to watch fireflies in Kampung Kuantan. The company also works closely with local communities and runs homestay programmes in Gombak and Sepang, as well as overnight cycling tours where guests get to stay in local properties.

"We find that even middle-aged Europeans are willing to spend a night or two at homestays, as they are keen to experience local living and participate in activities such as learning to cook local dishes or learning how to weave baskets and mats," Kurz elaborated.

Arokia Das, director of Luxury Tours Malaysia, agreed: "Visiting the Selangor countryside used to be sold as an optional add-on for tour packages (centred on) Kuala Lumpur. Thanks to increased demand for unique experiences, it is now part of packages (being sold to) Indians, Europeans and Filipinos."

For Arokia, his company works with local fishermen, farmers and plantations to create experiences for travellers such as collecting bamboo clams and cooking them the local

style, learning about the process of tapping rubber trees, or harvesting paddy fields.

Kamal attributed the growing interest in Selangor's countryside tours to "the efforts of Tourism Selangor, to promote new products and attractions such as Sky Mirror at Kuala Selangor Beach, and agrotourism in Sekinchan".

Rural tourism is indeed gaining popularity with Malaysia's traditional inbound markets such as China, Japan and regional countries, shared Tourism Selangor general manager, Noorul Ashikin Mohd Din.

"From this year onwards, we will also be promoting Selangor and rural tourism to emerging markets such as Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong and Europe through our marketing representatives," she said.

As part of its efforts to promote rural tourism, Tourism Selangor has trained local communities in Sabak Bernam and Kuala Selangor to be local guides in the areas they live. This

Sekinchan, with its lush green fields, has proven a hit as an agrotourism destination in Selangor

year, the training will continue in Ulu Langat, Gombak, Hulu Selangor and Kuala Langat. This Community Host Programme is endorsed by the Selangor State government. So far, 21 have already undergone training and are active guides.

Noorul said the pilot project was initiated to create community experts who are knowledgeable in their area's lore and history, culture, heritage and food, which they can share with tourists.

She added that this project will assist rural communities by allowing them to earn extra income through guiding, and the sales of local crafts.

As part of efforts to help market the services of community guides, Tourism Selangor has produced culture maps of Klang, Kuala Selangor and Sabak Bernam respectively which includes a list of places to eat, things to do, historical sites, as well as contact information for local guides and inbound agents.



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WHAT'S HOT

Tours & Activities

Multifaceted explorations

Meet with Orang Asli

This Diethelm Travel Malaysia tour offers visitors a glimpse into the lives of the local aboriginal people in Gombak, Selangor. Travellers will be able to try their hand at weaving bags and baskets with the local women, building a shelter in the jungle using leaves, starting a fire with wood and cooking a meal in a



traditional way, joining a blow-pipe competition, among other activities.

Paddle through a national park

Dev's Adventure Tours offers a kayaking adventure at Kilim Geoforest Park in Langkawi. A naturalist will lead the expedition through smaller river channels, with snack breaks in between and

Above: Kayaking in the Kilim Geoforest Park, Langkawi

a stop at Eagle Point to observe eagles in their natural habitat.

A jaunt by the countryside

This three-hour Selangor tour by Ping Anchorage takes visitors to the Royal Selangor Visitor Centre, where they can see craftsmen at work with pewter and try their hand at designing a pewter bowl. This is followed by a visit to a batik centre before proceeding to Batu Caves, where visitors have to climb 272 steps to reach a temple.

Sabah jungle expedition

Spotlighting Sabah's rich natural beauty, this 3D2N Sukau Wildlife Adventure by Big Blue Holidays includes a river cruise on the Kinabatangan River – which teems

with indigenous species such as the Proboscis monkey, Bornean orangutan and Borneo pygmy elephant – and a visit to the Gomantong Caves, renowned for its edible swiftlet nests.

A romance in the wilderness

Ecogreen Holidays offers a five-day ecotourism experience in Selaan-Linau, Ulu Baram, in northern Sarawak. Tour highlights include meeting with the Penan and the Kenyah ethnic groups, and trekking to the Sela'an Linau waterfall surrounded by dense dipterocarp forest. Guests depart for Ulu Baram area from Miri, the main gateway to Sarawak's northern region. This tour takes a maximum of eight in a group.

Hotels

Labour pains

Recruitment and employee retention are growing challenges for Kuala Lumpur's hospitality sector, especially as more hotels are added to the city. By S Puvaneswary

The expanding hotel supply in Kuala Lumpur is compounding the perennial shortage of a qualified workforce that the hotel sector is already grappling with.

Last year, five luxury brands – Banyan Tree, W and Alila, among them – started recruitment drives in 1Q2018 ahead of their openings in 2H2018, but the hiring exercises turned out to be a human resource challenge, TTTG Asia understands.

Industry leaders pointed out that local salaries are generally on the low side, which results in Malaysian hospitality professionals voting with their feet by seeking greener pastures overseas in such cities as Dubai, Macau, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Colin Rozario, director of human resources at Banyan Tree Kuala Lumpur and The Pavilion Kuala Lumpur Managed by Banyan Tree, shared: "Some (interviewees) told us they had applied to other hotels and were waiting for results; basically, they were 'shopping' around."

A far cry from "two decades ago", the current labour market is "generally an employees' market where there is little brand loyalty", Rozario contended.

Furthermore, with the prioritisation of work-life balance and empowerment of the millennial workforce, new-gen staff typically work for a property for two years or less before seeking higher salaries and

faster career advancement opportunities elsewhere, he added.

Christian Metzner, general manager, W Kuala Lumpur, commented: "Hiring rank and file staff for entry level positions is the hardest. Part of the reason is that many young people are not willing to put in the long hours required, and dealing with guests is not always easy."

To encourage more locals to work in hospitality, Kamal Munasinghe, general manager, Alila Bangsar Kuala Lumpur, suggested that the sector "should collectively come to an agreement for better compensation of operational staff".

Malaysian Association of Hotel Owners' executive director Shaharuddin Saaid also sees a need to tackle the paucity of "a ready pool of capable, local manpower" through the management of hotel supply.

"There must be a programme in place to address the supply issue, otherwise hotels will continue to pinch experienced staff by offering higher salaries and better benefits, but without corresponding increase in skillsets," he opined.

Kamal proposed: "A possible solution is to attract more international events to the city to help increase average occupancy rates, which in turn will help raise room rates."

"Once room rates increase, hotels will be able to deliver better services, as well as find the right balance between revenue versus overheads."



NEW HOTELS

The Datai Langkawi

After an extensive US\$60 million refurbishment, The Datai Langkawi has reopened with 121 rooms, suites and villas, all featuring views of the lush tropical rainforest and Andaman Sea. Other amenities include five F&B outlets and a new Nature Centre that allows guests to discover more about the surrounding environment.

Alila Bangsar

Occupying the 35th to 40th floors of The Establishment, a mixed-use development in Kuala Lumpur's Bangsar district, this urban retreat offers 143 rooms and suites across six categories. Aside from four meeting rooms, a pool on level 40 and a gym, F&B options include the pool bar, French semi fine-dining restaurant Entier on level 41, Pacific Standard cocktail lounge, rooftop bar Lido and all-day diner Botanica + Co.

Hard Rock Hotel Desaru Coast

The brand's second opening

in Johor features 365 rooms, all of which are music-inspired. Facilities on-site include four dining outlets, the Rock Spa, three meeting spaces and a kids' club. The hotel is part of the Desaru Coast integrated destination resort which boasts a waterpark, man-made beach, restaurants, shopping and golf courses.

Hyatt House Kuala Lumpur, Mont'Kiara

With 298 guestrooms and fully-equipped kitchens, this Hyatt House hotel features a restaurant, 300m² of meeting space, a 24-hour gym, game rooms, outdoor infinity pool and the Ten37 Skypool Bar. It stands near to the Malaysian International Trade and Exhibition Centre.

Hilton Garden Inn

The 255-key hotel features five meeting spaces, an F&B outlet, a 24-hour fitness centre and a 22m-long outdoor saltwater pool and heated outdoor jacuzzi. The hotel is a short walk to the Puchong Perdana RapidKL Light Rail Transit station, and it also offers free shuttle service.

Alila Bangsar's Studio room

Fresh Eyes

Curating traditions

As interest in local heritage experiences grows, so do opportunities for an activity booking platform, finds S Puvaneswary

A substantial funding injection from South Korea venture capital firm BonAngels will enable LokaLocal, a Malaysian travel technology start-up, to ramp up its product range and fuel its expansion goals.

The experienced-based travel platform currently lists more than 800 activities throughout the country, ranging from paddy harvesting and cooking classes to traditional lantern and shadow puppets making. Small tour operators can also list their day tours, or two- or three-day itineraries on LokaLocal.

With the funding boost, LokaLocal's founder Chin Yoon Khen hopes to grow the platform's stable of activities to 1,500 by the end of this year.

Part of the funding will also be

invested into a merchant solution to enable sellers to easily track their daily and monthly sales activities, as well as to provide quicker responses to enquiries and booking confirmations. The website will also be upgraded to provide faster loading times for users.

LokaLocal was established by Chin in April 2016, an idea born after the documentary photographer turned photographers of local artisans into a 500-page full-coloured book titled *Traditional Trades in Penang*.

Chin saw a growing demand from tourists seeking unique local experiences, leading to the launch of LokaLocal with a focus on matching traditional artisans as local guides for travellers. These cultural and heritage experiences are marketed creatively

on the website through professional photographs and videos.

Some of the artisans featured in his book project are also experts on LokaLocal, providing workshops such as joss stick making and hand-beading Peranakan shoes.

"More than 80 per cent of sales comes from the local expatriate community living and working in Malaysia, as well as tourists from the US, Australia and New Zealand," he shared.

"Most are between the ages of 25-34, and are looking for authentic local experiences and opportunities to make new friends."

And although the portal has received competition in Airbnb's Experiences, TakeMeTour and Withlocals, Chin believes that competition is

We believe we have an edge over the competition because we are homegrown, and who knows Malaysia better than a native?

Chin Yoon Khen

Founder,
Lokalocal



good for business.

"These giants have helped build the ecosystem faster, helped to educate suppliers on how to be good local experts, and how to market their business," said Chin.

"We believe we have an edge over the competition because we are homegrown, and who knows Malaysia better than a native?"

Tried & Tested Movenpick Hotel & Convention Centre KLIA

The newest landmark standing near Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and KLIA2 in Sepang, Malaysia sports a very distinctive architectural style. S Puvaneswary stays a night

LOCATION Movenpick Hotel & Convention Centre KLIA is located less than a 10-minute drive to both KLIA and KLIA2, which makes it a perfect hotel for those in transit and unexpected flight delays. For guests' convenience, the hotel provides a complimentary air-conditioned shuttle



service to and from the airport every two hours.

It is also about a five-minute drive to Mitsui Premium Outlet Park. The factory outlet also provides complimentary shuttle service every hour to and from the hotel, from 10.00 to 22.00 daily.

ROOMS There are 333 rooms in total. The Deluxe Room I stayed in was modern, with sensors that detect a guest's presence whenever the room door opens, automatically turning on the lights and air condition.

Each room has a smart TV, which in addition to its offering of 36 channels and five radio stations, also provides the latest flight information at both airports.

What I loved best about my room is its expansive size at 46m². It is outfitted with a king-sized bed, two lounge chairs, two work chairs, a small work table and a long coffee table, but still leaves plenty of walking space.

The bathroom is also impressively large, offering two sinks, a small round bathtub with shower facilities and a rainshower.

F&B Temasya, a swanky coffee house on the ground floor, stands out for its unique concept, with flat stones lining the clear glass flooring that leads to the outlet.

The spacious eatery features live cooking stations, serving a mixture of local and international food. I strongly recommend Malaysian favourites such as *satay* and *kuey teow*, and the chicken fajita sandwich. The food was remarkably delicious.

At 17.00 daily, the hotel holds its chocolate hour at Sira Lounge in the lobby. Guests are welcome to indulge in as much chocolates, biscuits, truffles and brownies as they can possibly devour. The desserts were made just right – without them being saccharine – which resulted in my overindulgence.

There are four other F&B outlets, ranging from fine-dining restaurant Bara, to Redup which specialises in light snacks.

FACILITIES There are separate recreational facilities – swimming pools, gyms and spas, etc – for men and women. There are also 12 spa pods and a kids' club.

SERVICE Excellent. I called for help way past midnight as I didn't know how to connect the TV to Netflix and someone came to assist right away. I also loved the hassle-free check-in service – I was handed my room key in less than five minutes.

VERDICT Fantastic hospitality. Staff were also attentive, friendly and made me feel right at home.

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Destination

From exclusivity to inclusivity

Traditional luxury markets are not waning for the Maldives as the destination opens up to more visitor and accommodation segments. By Feizal Samath

Germany remains a core market for the Maldives

Arrivals from Germany to the Maldives look set to keep its growth momentum, as the market's traditional preferences hold steady while more affordable accommodation options open the destination up to new segments.

Overall, the German-speaking markets of Germany, Austria and Switzerland have posted slow but positive growth to the Maldives every year. While its growth is modest relative to other source markets, Germany represents one of the most resilient feeders for the Maldives.

Germany is the Maldives' second largest source market after China. Arrivals from Germany grew by 3.5 per cent year-on-year to reach 106,660 in the January-November 2018 period.

It seems demand could be further stimulated as the Maldives welcomes more big hotel chains and mid-market options.

"This makes a holiday in the Maldives affordable, especially for young

couples, (but also for) friends or young families. The winners are the three- and four-star hotels, while five- and six-star ones are having a hard time," according to Stéphanie Appenzeller, senior sales manager, Europe at the The Small Maldives Island, which has two properties in the Maldives.

Even as more affordable options open up, some maintain that five-star accommodation remain popular among Germans.

Thomas Meier, senior vice president-operations Asia for Minor Hotels, said: "Our five hotels have each seen an increase in guests from these markets during 2018, especially Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villa with an increase of 22 per cent versus 2017, and Anantara Veli Maldives Resort of 55 per cent year-on-year."

While new resort categories are appealing to Germans, Andrew Ashmore, CCO at Coco Collection Hotels & Resorts/Sunland Hotels, said the German market remains "very

traditional, brochurised and seek the peaceful style".

At Coco's Maldives resorts, which range from affordable to five-star, German guests have been steadily coming in, and stay for 10 to 14 nights, the longest among its feeder markets, Ashmore told *TTG Asia*.

Tracy Neureuther, director, Mosaic Tourism Consulting, said: "For Coco Collection, which we represent, the German-speaking market remains a very strong feeder with all key tour operators (recording) increasing figures."

She added: "In general, positives speaking for the increase are airlift into the destination – with a good choice of direct connections from key cities, as well as the excellent coverage via Emirates."

Meanwhile, Minor's Meier pointed to an emerging preference for half-board accommodation among the German market.

"Luxury clients do not want full board or all-inclusive. Half board

ensures they retain the freedom to choose during their holiday (while still) helping with budget planning at the time of booking."

This contrasts with the observations of Howard Brohier, general manager of Diethelm Travel Maldives, who noted a growing popularity of resorts offering all-inclusive meal plans, complete with dine-around options and mini-bar inclusions.

Said Brohier: "In the past, all-inclusive meal packages lacked certain inclusions and were not offered by many five-star properties. However, as resorts add more value, we see the popularity of such resorts growing immensely."

Suresh Dissanayake, assistant vice president – sales & marketing, Heritage Aarah & Adaran Resorts, said: "(There is reason to be optimistic in 2019) with tourism bodies in the Maldives having planned a series of activities, starting with participation at ITB Berlin, to create more visibility in German-speaking markets."



(A growing mid-market room supply) makes a holiday in the Maldives affordable, especially for young couples, (but also for) friends or young families."

– Stéphanie Appenzeller, senior sales manager, Europe, The Small Maldives Island

NEW HOTELS

The Westin Maldives Miriandhoo Resort, Maldives

Westin's debut in the Maldives is a Baa Atoll island resort featuring 70 villas and suites. There are four F&B options on the island, alongside facilities like the Heavenly Spa by Westin, a two-level fitness studio, outdoor pool, and recreation ground with tennis, volleyball and basketball options. Rounding off the facilities are a PADI dive centre and a Westin Family Kids Club.

Mövenpick Resort Kuredhivaru Maldives

The resort opened on a private island in Noonu Atoll, marking the brand's debut in Maldives. It features 105 villas and suites comprising pool villas, beach pool suites and beach spa pool residences. Guests can choose from four dining

concepts: ONU Marché restaurant and bar; Mövenpick Coffee & Wine Lounge; pool-side Latitude 5.5; and overwater Bodumas Seafood Restaurant. Facilities include a kids' club, diving centre, tennis court, gym, watersports centre and spa.

SAii Lagoon Maldives

SAii Lagoon Maldives offers a private island experience with shopping, dining and entertainment spaces just across the footbridge at The Marina @ Crossroads.

Located on Emboodhoo Lagoon, 15 minutes by boat from Male's Velana International Airport, the resort offers 198 rooms and villas. Each room comes with ocean views, free Wi-Fi and furnished deck or balcony.

F&B options include Miss Olive Oyl, a poolside Mediterranean seafood grill and bar, Mr Tomyam for Thai fusion cuisine, bean/Co for fresh, premium coffee and



tea, and Café del Mar. Guests may also enjoy a ocean-view infinity pool and fitness centre.

Riu Maldives

Spanish hotel chain Riu Hotels & Resorts will soon enter the Maldives with two new properties opening on May 17. Located on two islets of the Dhaalu Atoll, both properties feature Riu's 24-hour all-inclusive service, and are connected by an overwater walkway.

From left: Mövenpick Resort Kuredhivaru Maldives' overwater pool villa; Riu Palace Maldives' overwater villa



The four-star Hotel Riu Atoll is located on the private island of Maafushi with 264 bedrooms, 36 of which are suites over the Indian Ocean.

Situated on the neighbouring Kethigandu Island, also private, is the Riu Palace Maldives. This five-star hotel features 176 rooms, 72 of which are overwater suites. It also offers premium branded drinks and has liquor dispenser available in room.

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Hotels

A renewed vigour

Millennials are good news for resorts trying to fill rooms, but they also book more last minute and stay for briefer periods, Feizal Samath writes

Millennials – often spur-of-the-moment travellers – are becoming a growing segment in the Maldives, allaying some worry over filling rooms in the destination's growing accommodation inventory.

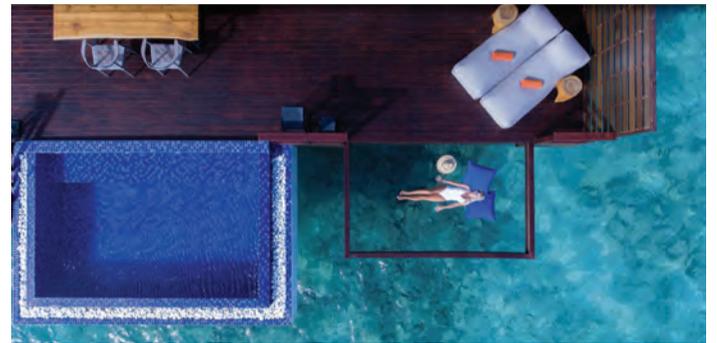
"Many millennials today are entering their peak earning years and gaining more affluence at unparalleled rates," observed Jan Tibaldi, general manager at One&Only Reethi Rah.

"This means brands looking to make a splash within the millennial audience need to stop thinking of this generation as college students only and instead recognise the significant spending power that this group wields, especially in the luxury travel industry," he added.

Deveeka Nijhawan, spokesperson of Anantara Resorts Maldives and Niyama Private Islands Maldives, told *TTG Asia*: "At Niyama we have seen a surge in stays from Asian and Middle Eastern millennials, who have increased levels of disposable and discretionary income and are willing to spend on quality five-star experiences."

She added: "Young and dynamic millennial travellers are disrupting the travel landscape. The preconceived notions of millennials being backpackers interested in exploring the world on a shoestring budget is no longer the reality."

While a majority of guests to Niyama Private Islands Maldives remain honeymooners and baby mooners, the resort is now



Millennials' growing affluence make them a prime target market for the Maldives; Grand Park Kodhipparu Maldives pictured

seeing a rise in adventure seekers, young families and solo travellers.

With the rise of millennial travellers to the Maldives, Nijhawan pointed out that resorts are now dealing with shorter lead times for bookings.

"Unlike the previous conventional traveller who plan trips months in advance, millennials book a trip at the spur of the moment, resulting in many last-minute bookings for the hotel."

"The main trigger for this is social media. Millennials see friends and influencers post pictures and videos of their holidays and get inspired to travel," she observed.

For Suresh Dissanayake, assistant vice president – sales & marketing, Heritance Aarah & Adaran Resorts, young travellers tend to spend fewer nights compared to the older generation, and prefer to combine their holiday with another destination.

Riu senior vice president sales & business development Asia,

Oliver Kluth, said the group's new resorts in the Maldives are looking to work with the Asian market, especially with millennials seeking a hassle-free vacation without hidden extras that its all-inclusive, "affordable luxury" resorts can provide.

Meanwhile, room count has steadily increased in the island paradise. Some 46 new resorts have opened since 2016, and another 20 with approximately 2,000 beds are due to open in 2019.

The destination is now seeing the entrance of Singapore's Park Hotel Group, Hard Rock International, Capella Hotel Group, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, Emaar Hospitality Group, Baglioni Hotels, Emerald Collection and Meliá Hotels International, among others.

More aggressive country promotion this year, and a planned three-fold increase in promotion budget to US\$6.7 million, is expected to boost arrivals in tandem with the growing room supply.

WHAT'S HOT

Tours & Activities

Fresh island experiences

Four Seasons Explorer's Manta Trust Expeditions

The *Four Seasons Explorer*, dubbed a luxurious "floating research lab", will set sail on two manta research expeditions this year: August 29 to September 5, and September 12 to 19.

Participants on the Manta Trust Expedition are encouraged to free-dive and snorkel with mantas alongside a team of marine biologists, recording environmental information, taking manta ID photos, and joining in the ID process – including naming any newly sighted mantas.

Niyama Maldives' year-long wellness programme

Since January, Niyama Private Islands Maldives' spa began hosting wellness experts as part of a year-long Masters of Wellness programme. The resort will bring back past guest experts Jade Wood and David Alessi, as well as several new specialists. For example, Rui Pedro Loureiro – specialising in traditional Chinese medicine – brought his acupuncture and contemporary diagnostic techniques to resort guests in January.

Soneva's new seaplane

Soneva Resorts' new Twin Ot-



Above: *Four Seasons Explorer*

ter seaplane will start flying guests beginning mid-December from Malé international airport to its two resorts in the Maldives – Soneva Fushi and Soneva Jani.

The DHC-6 Twin Otter has been completely overhauled, and now sports Soneva's purple branding colour. In addition, seats have been reduced from 19 to 10 (eight front-facing and two rear-facing) with two additional fold down seats plus two pilot seats. A return trip costs US\$1,100.

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- Best Travel Agency – Indonesia
- Best Travel Agency – Japan
- Best Travel Agency – Malaysia
- Best Travel Agency – Singapore
- Best Travel Agency – South Korea
- Best Travel Agency – Thailand
- Best Travel Agency – The Philippines
- Best Travel Agency – Vietnam
- Best Corporate Travel Agency
- Best Online Travel Agency

2. Travel Supplier Awards

Winners in this category are decided by votes from travel consultants and experts.

Airline Awards

- Best Full Service Carrier
- Best Airline - Business Class
- Best Inflight Service
- Best Boutique Airline
- Best Airline Connectivity
- Best Low-Cost Carrier

Hotels, Resorts and Serviced Residences Awards

HOTEL Chains

- Best Global Hotel Chain
- Best Regional Hotel Chain
- Best Local Hotel Chain
- Best Hotel Representation Company
- Best Luxury Hotel Brand
- Best Mid-range Hotel Brand
- Best Budget Hotel Brand

HOTELS – Individual Property

- Best Luxury Hotel
- Best Mid-range Hotel
- Best Budget Hotel
- Best Independent Hotel
- Best Boutique Hotel
- Best City Hotel – Bangkok
- Best City Hotel – Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City
- Best City Hotel – Hong Kong
- Best City Hotel – Jakarta
- Best City Hotel – Kuala Lumpur
- Best City Hotel – Macau
- Best City Hotel – Manila
- Best City Hotel – Seoul
- Best City Hotel – Singapore
- Best City Hotel – Taipei
- Best New City Hotel
- Best Airport Hotel

RESORTS – Individual Property & Serviced Residences

- Best Beach Resort
- Best Integrated Resort
- Best Serviced Residence Operator
- Best Serviced Residence (Property Level)

BT-MICE Awards

- Best Business Hotel
- Best Meetings & Conventions Hotel
- Best BT-MICE City
- Best Convention & Exhibition Centre
- Best Convention & Exhibition Bureau
- Best Events Technology Provider **NEW**

Travel Services Awards

- Best Airport Operator **NEW**
- Best Airport Lounge Operator
- Best NTO (National Tourism Organisation)
- Best Tour Operator
- Destination of the Year **NEW**
- Best Theme Attraction
- Best Cruise Line **NEW**
- Best Luxury Cruise Line **NEW**
- Best River Cruise Line **NEW**
- Best Car Rental Company
- Best Travel Technology Provider **NEW**
- Best Travel Insurance Company

3. Outstanding Achievement Awards

The winners in this category are decided by the TTG editorial team.

- Travel Personality of the Year
- Travel Entrepreneur of the Year
- Best Travel Marketing Effort
- Most Sustainable Travel Company

4. Travel Hall of Fame

Honoring organisations that have won at least 10 consecutive years at the awards.

These special award winners will be recognised at every TTG annual awards presentation ceremony. Votes for them will not be counted.

Inducted Travel Hall of Fame honorees are:

- Singapore Airlines Limited (2002)
- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Hertz Asia Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group - The State of Exclusivity & Fascination (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Sabre Asia Pacific (previously known as Abacus International) (2009)
- Silkair (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)
- Regal Airport Hotel (2015)
- Banyan Tree Spa (2015)
- Qatar Airways (2016)
- Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (2016)
- Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (2016)
- Royal Plaza on Scotts (2018)
- Royal Caribbean International (2018)
- Best Western International (2019)
- Travelport (2019)

VOTING INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES

For Travel Agency and Travel Supplier Awards

1. Please use the correct voting form.

Voting Form A: Travel Agency Awards

For voting by hoteliers, airline staff, car rental companies, cruise operators, national tourism organisations, GDS companies and all other travel professionals (except travel consultants, tour operators and destination management companies).

Voting Form B: Travel Supplier Awards

For voting by travel consultants, tour operators and destination management companies only.

Online Voting Forms

You can also opt to vote using our online form at awards.ttgasia.com

2. Voting Criteria

Please refer to the voting criteria for each category and title to ensure that all judging is done on an equal basis.

3. Voting Rules

- Only one voting entry per person is allowed – using the voting form or online voting.
- All votes are confidential.
- Voting forms are published in selected TTG Travel Trade Publishing print titles and issues and are also available online at awards.ttgasia.com

- No responsibility will be accepted by the organisers for voting forms lost, delayed or damaged in the post.
- There are no pre-nominated contenders for any voting awards.
- The results for TTG Travel Awards 2019 are final and no correspondence will be entertained.
- Voting forms will be tabulated and evaluated by an independent auditor in Singapore.
- Voting Closes 10 July 2019.

4. Voting Form Submission

Completed voting forms are to be returned to:

SINGAPORE

Delia Ng (TTG Travel Awards 2019)
TTG Asia Media
1 Science Park Road #04-07 The Capricorn
Singapore Science Park II
Singapore 117528
Tel: (65) 6395-7575 Fax: (65) 6536-0896

HONG KONG

Ms Carol Cheng (TTG Travel Awards 2019)
TTG Asia Media
8/F, E168, 166-168 Des Voeux Road Central,
Sheung Wan, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2237-7272 Fax: (852) 2237 7227

VOTING FORM A: TRAVEL AGENCY AWARDS

For voting by • Hoteliers • Airlines staff • Car rental companies • Cruise operators • National Tourism Organisations • GDS companies • All other travel professionals (except travel consultants, tour operators and destination management companies)

VOTE ONLINE AT
awards.ttgasia.com

Criteria

Best Travel Agency in its respective category in terms of:

- Professionalism and excellence in staff.
- Best value-added services to client.
- Best use of computer technology applications towards improving efficiency and effectiveness in services provided to client.

1. Best Travel Agency– **Chinese Taipei**

2. Best Travel Agency – **Hong Kong**

3. Best Travel Agency – **India**

4. Best Travel Agency– **Indonesia**

5. Best Travel Agency – **Japan**

6. Best Travel Agency – **Malaysia**

7. Best Travel Agency – **Singapore**

8. Best Travel Agency – **South Korea**

9. Best Travel Agency – **Thailand**

10. Best Travel Agency – **The Philippines**

11. Best Travel Agency – **Vietnam**

12. Best **Corporate** Travel Agency

13. Best **Online** Travel Agency

VOTER INFORMATION

Name:

Job title: Company:

Address:

Country:

Telephone no.: Fax no.:

Email: Signature:

Please refer to the next page for
VOTING FORM B:
TRAVEL SUPPLIER AWARDS

VOTING CLOSES
10 JULY 2019

VOTING FORM B: TRAVEL SUPPLIER AWARDS

For voting by • Travel Consultants • Tour Operators • Destination Management Companies

Airline Awards

Criteria

Best airline in its respective category in terms of:

- Best product, services and facilities.
- Most consistent and reliable network and schedules.
- Most agent-friendly in terms of reservations, commissions, incentives, ancillary opportunities and servicing.
- Best agency outreach programmes, including trade promotions and marketing, training and relationship-building.

14. Best Full Service Carrier

15. Best Airline - Business Class

16. Best Inflight Service

17. Best Boutique Airline

18. Best Airline Connectivity

19. Best Low Cost-Carrier

Hotels, Resorts and Serviced Residences Awards

Criteria

Best Hotel Chain in its respective category in terms of:

- Most consistent in products and services.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas, incentive programmes and servicing.

Best Hotel/Resort/Serviced Residence in its respective category in terms of:

- Best services and facilities.
- Best range of value-added benefits.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.

HOTEL CHAINS

20. Best Global Hotel Chain

21. Best Regional Hotel Chain

22. Best Local Hotel Chain

23. Best Hotel Representation Company

24. Best Luxury Hotel Brand

25. Best Mid-range Hotel Brand

26. Best Budget Hotel Brand

HOTELS – Individual Property

27. Best Luxury Hotel

28. Best Mid-range Hotel

29. Best Budget Hotel

30. Best Independent Hotel

31. Best Boutique Hotel

32. Best City Hotel – Bangkok

33. Best City Hotel – Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City

34. Best City Hotel – Hong Kong

35. Best City Hotel – Jakarta

36. Best City Hotel – Kuala Lumpur

37. Best City Hotel – Macao

38. Best City Hotel – Manila

39. Best City Hotel – Seoul

40. Best City Hotel – Singapore

41. Best City Hotel – Taipei

42. Best New City Hotel

43. Best Airport Hotel

RESORTS – Individual Property

44. Best Beach Resort

45. Best Integrated Resort

SERVICED RESIDENCES

46. Best Serviced Residence Operator

47. Best Serviced Residence (Property Level)

BT-MICE Awards

Criteria

- Best services and facilities catering specifically to the BT-MICE market.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing the BT-MICE market.
- Most desirable and attractive incentives and value added services to business travellers and MICE planners.

48. Best Business Hotel

49. Best Meetings & Conventions Hotel

50. Best BT-MICE City

51. Best Convention & Exhibition Centre

52. Best Convention & Exhibition Bureau

53. Best Events Technology Provider

Travel Services Awards

Criteria

- Best product, services and facilities.
- Most consistent and reliable in delivery.
- Most innovative offerings.
- Most agent-friendly in terms of ease of booking, commissions, incentives and servicing.
- Best agency outreach programmes, including trade promotions and marketing, training and relationship-building.

54. Best Airport Operator

55. Best Airport Lounge Operator

56. Best NTO (National Tourism Organisation)

57. Best Tour Operator

58. Destination of the Year

59. Best Theme Attraction

60. Best Cruise Line

61. Best Luxury Cruise Line

62. Best River Cruise Line

63. Best Car Rental Company

64. Best Travel Technology Provider

65. Best Travel Insurance Company

VOTER INFORMATION

Name:
Job title: Company:
Address:
Country:
Telephone no.: Fax no.:
Email: Signature:

VOTE ONLINE AT
awards.ttgasia.com

VOTING CLOSSES
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ATF TRAVEX email: atf@ttgasia.com



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IN MEMORIAM

‘A towering figure’: outpouring of tributes to Alwin Zecha’s passing

Trade members from across Asia paid homage to Alwin Zecha, who passed away from cardiac arrest last month in Bangkok after dedicating more than 50 years to the regional travel and tourism sector.

As the founder of the Pacific Leisure Group, established in 1961 in Hong Kong, Zecha together with Eckard Kremer together built up a network of offices across the globe and quickly gained a reputation as one of the leading DMCs worldwide.

Zecha had been instrumental to the development of the South-east Asian travel and tourism sector through his close involvement with PATA. He was named PATA Life Member in 1989 and was also recognised as a Friend of Thailand, among many other industry accolades achieved.

Here are some top tributes to the legendary doyen of Asian tourism:

Mario Hardy, CEO, PATA

“Alwin was a friend and a mentor to me in my journey with PATA. He was one of PATA’s most loyal members and dedicated a lifetime to the organisation.”

Wong Soon Hwa, chairman, PATA Singapore Chapter

“He was a small-sized man with huge stature and a distinctive voice of authority. He will be fondly remembered for speaking his mind, and always having the industry’s and PATA’s interests at heart.”

Narzalina Lim, former secretary, Department of Tourism Philippines

“Alwin was not a very tall man but he was a towering figure in the tourism industry. Through his leadership skills, charisma and the sheer force of his personality, he brought the attention of the world to tourism in Asia as early as the 1970s – and the world took notice.”

Wuryatuti Sunario, Indonesia Tourism Care member and former executive director of Indonesia Tourism Promotion Board

“Alwin cared a lot and helped the tourism industry in Indonesia. As a PATA leader, he always supported Indonesia’s bid to host PATA conferences. Alwin never ceased loving Indonesia; he was a great friend of all of us in the industry and government in Indonesia.”

Teresita Henderson, chairperson, Intas Destinations

I know Alwin from his Pacific Leisure days where I used to represent Pacific Leisure from the early ’70s to the ’80s. Those times were the glory days of Alwin, he was our super active hero; he had the good looks and the panache in setting up successful operations of Pacific Leisure in the ASEAN region. This was among one of the many accomplishments he had during his time.

Wiendu Nuryanti, director for the doctorate programme, Department of Architecture and Planning, Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta

“We have lost another giant statesman who always fought for the benefit of Asia, especially Indonesia. Dear Alwin is forever an inspiration for us, the tourism community in Indonesia. He was not only such a warm and open person, but also his endless dedication to better tourism for all is unquestionable.”

Tunku Iskandar Tunku Abdullah, group executive chairman, Melewar Group
 “Alwin has touched many people in the Asia-Pacific travel and tourism industry, including myself. He selflessly shared his experience and knowledge, and for me he was not only a business partner but also a mentor and a friend who led by example.”

Mary Wan Mering, director corporate services, Sarawak Tourism Board

“I was very lucky to have been a protégé under Alwin’s mentorship on tourism development at the University of Hawaii Manoa. I remember him as a practical tourism man with valuable knowledge.”



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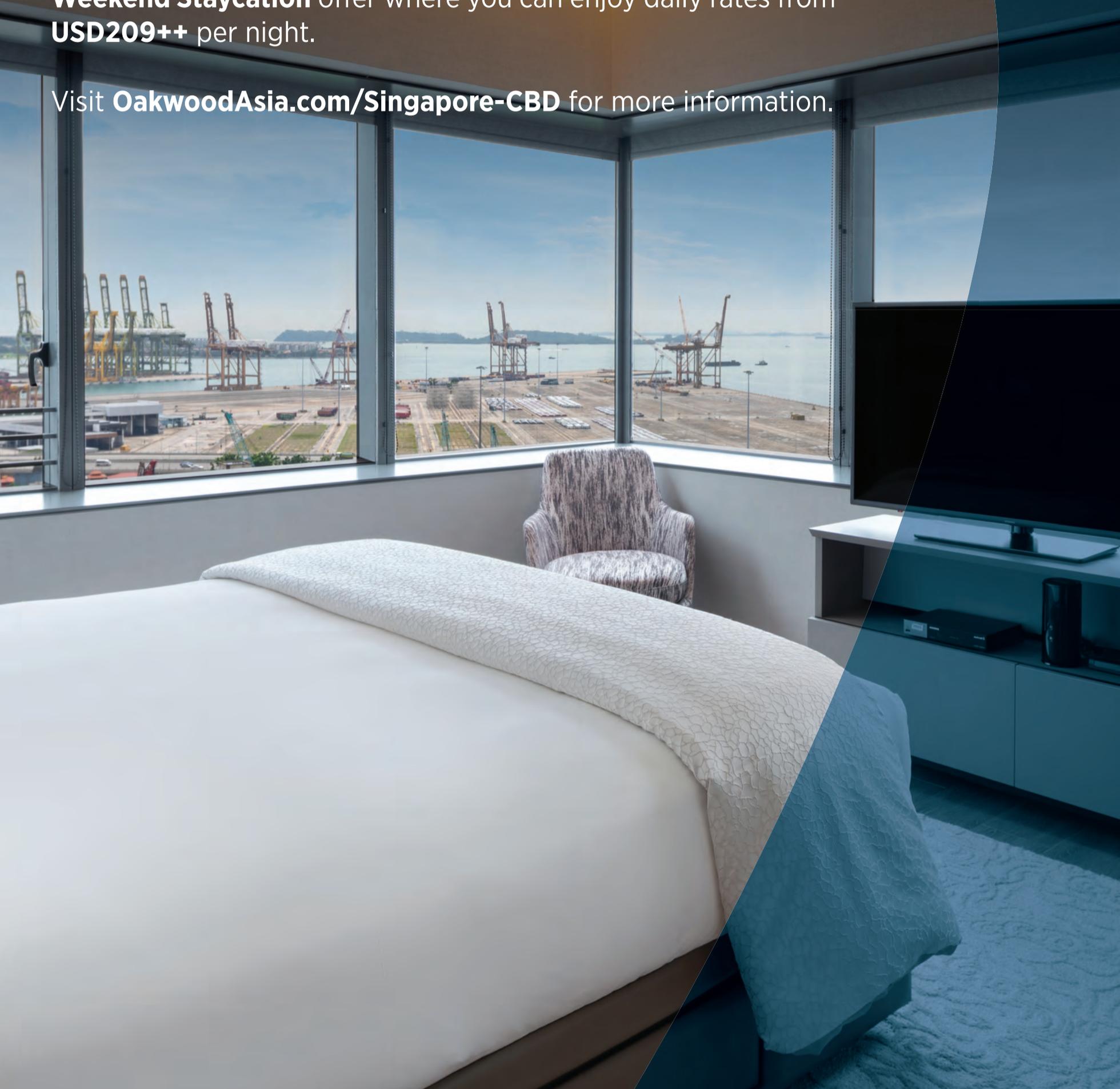
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