



ATF 2020
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Bandar Seri
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ATRA wants ASEAN NTOs to prioritise locals' wellbeing

CBT projects must benefit communities; locals to be relieved of overtourism ills

By S Puvaneswary

In ASEAN Tourism Research Association's (ATRA) meeting with regional NTOs on Monday, recommendations have been made to prioritise the wellbeing of local communities in tourism policies impacting community-based tourism (CBT) and to diversify tourism across more destinations to resolve the scourge of overtourism.

ATRA's honorary treasurer, Puvaneswaran Kunasekaran, told *TTG Show Daily* that recommendations relating to CBT included capacity training for local communities so they become self-reliant, and creation of niche segments such as gastronomy tours that are initiated by the communities themselves.

Citing examples of successful CBT projects in the region, Puvaneswaran said that some of the aboriginal Mah Meri women on Carey Island in Selangor, Malaysia have formed a collective known as Tompoq Tompoh, and have been selling their handcrafted items online and at the Mah Meri Cultural Village.

He said: "They are the most successful aboriginal group practicing community-based tourism in Peninsular Malaysia."

Another example exists in eastern Sabah where an eco-tourism cooperative of the Batu Puteh community in Lower Kinabatangan River was able to reduce the poverty rate of the locals, enhance local community participation and protect the natural environment.

On the flip side, Puvaneswaran, who is also a senior lecturer at the School of Hospitality, Tourism & Events at Taylor's University Malaysia, warned that poorly managed CBT projects can limit benefits to the very communities they are meant to support.

Illustrating his point, he referenced Mabul Island in Sabah, Malaysia which is a popular dive destination. While local travel suppliers are thriving, the local population remains poor.

Overtourism is the other matter that

Puvaneswaran: no more inconveniences for locals



warranted immediate attention, he noted, pointing to Bali, Bangkok, Phuket and Langkawi as destinations suffering the affliction.

Puvaneswaran said authorities must promote other destinations so as to disperse tourists to other parts of the country, a move that would also spread commercial benefits to more locals.

He said overtourism in a destination must first be declared by the local authorities before action can be taken.

"But there are (congested) places that are undeclared, such as Cameron Highlands in Malaysia during the school holidays.

It takes about two hours to travel a distance of 6km from Brinchang to Blue Valley due to traffic jams caused by the many small shops selling souvenirs, flowers and vegetables along the road. The local population that are not involved in the businesses are inconvenienced as a result," he said.



TTG's lensmen are on the prowl for great photos. See this photo and more at our online gallery by scanning the code above.

Promoting ASEAN, pushing sustainability

Malaysia has pledged its commitment towards promoting ASEAN as a competitive tourism destination, while balancing its development with sustainability and inclusive development, during the 51st ASEAN Tourism Organisation (NTOs) Meeting in Brunei this week.

As country coordinator, Malaysia will



Zari: enhance ASEAN cooperation

be collaborating with the ASEAN-China Centre to organise the ASEAN-China Tourism Investment Seminar in Shanghai, China, in November 2020.

Malaysia will also be leading the initiative to promote South-east Asia as a single destination by updating the ASEAN Tourism Packages 2019-2020 that can be used by the NTOs and private sectors to attract more tourists, especially from the medium- and longhaul markets.

Furthermore, as the incoming chair of the ASEAN Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Development Committee (ASITDC) for 2020-2021, Malaysia will be working closely with the other ASEAN members to initiate and implement more meaningful activities for the new ASITDC Work Plan 2020-2021. In relation to this, Malaysia will be leading the mid-term review of the Plan.

Malaysia's delegation at the 51st ASEAN NTOs Meeting is led by Noor Zari bin Hamat, secretary general, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Malaysia.

ASEANTA makes move on TRAVEX management

By S Puvaneswary

ASEAN Tourism Association (ASEANTA) has presented its proposal to ASEAN NTOs to offer its support in organising TRAVEX from 2022 onwards on the grounds of combating current weaknesses in the system and improving the quality of the B2B component in the coming years.

ASEANTA president, Mingkwan Metmowlee, told *TTG Show Daily* that the proposal has been accepted in principle by the NTOs.

Another presentation will be made to ASEAN tourism ministers on Wednesday to get their approval, before a legal framework between ASEANTA and ASEAN NTOs can be drawn up in 1H2020. With these completed, ASEANTA will then be able to start preparing for TRAVEX 2022 in Indonesia.

Mingkwan sees this move as a natural progression for ASEANTA, as the organisation "has grown to become a tourism association of influence within the South-east Asian tourism land-



scape, playing an integral role in shaping tourism development growth and policies in the region".

She remarked: "We are experts in the business (of travel and tourism)."

She added: "In the current set-up, where the host and organising committee changes with each ATF event, there is no central registry data of ATF buyers and sellers. As a result, there is no continuity in identifying good buyers and sellers.

"At times, we get bad buyers who do not perform and as a result, the quality of TRAVEX goes down. Also, some TRAVEX shows are more successful than others, due to the unequal level of development of tourism in ASEAN member countries."



In the current set-up, where the host and organising committee changes with each ATF event, there is no central registry data of ATF buyers and sellers.

Mingkwan Metmowlee
ASEANTA president

Vietnamese's new darling

By Mimi Hudoyo

Indonesian tour operators are upbeat about the growth of arrivals from Vietnam on the back of improved access from Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.

Bali, in particular, has seen healthy growth in traffic from Vietnam, particularly since Vietjet started a five-times-weekly service from Ho Chi Minh City last May, after which Vietnam Airlines started to fly the same route in October.

As well, Jakarta enjoys direct connections with Ho Chi Minh City with the help of Vietnam Airlines.

Arrivals between January and November 2019 grew by 26 per cent over the same period in 2018, while arrivals into Bali was up 40 per cent, according to data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (MTCE).

Further growth is expected this year as Vietjet commences its daily service between Hanoi and Bali from January 26.

Irwan Raman, executive director of OneAsia Indonesia, said: "Through our representative in Vietnam, we already have 13 leisure and incentive groups to

Bali and two to Yogyakarta. We are optimistic that the market will continue to grow, thanks to the direct flights.

"I hope that the MTCE will strengthen its marketing activities here. In fact, they should start expanding their reach to the neighbouring cities."



Tran: Vietnamese take well to Indonesian destinations

Jonathan Tran, executive director of Ho Chi Minh City-based Lac Hong Voyages, said: "Vietnamese travellers like Bali, particularly for its culture, food and weather. Now, every week, we have groups going to Bali and we have started to see some groups going to Yogyakarta, too."

"Last year, we did a presentation to introduce Indonesia (to clients) in Hanoi, and the feedback was good."

Meanwhile, Adjie Wahjono, operations manager of Aneka Kartika Tours, sees the opportunity to maximise capacity by tapping the longhaul markets, especially with Vietnam Airlines, which also has flights to Europe.

He said: "Philippine Airlines' Manila-Bali route, for example, does not only carry Filipinos but also Chinese and Japa-

nese markets. So there is an opportunity for European tour operators to work with Vietnam Airlines to bring tourists to Indonesia through Ho Chi Minh City."

In fact, Tran said the DMC had been selling combined packages to leverage Vietnam Airlines' Paris, London and Frankfurt services to Ho Chi Minh City.

Conversely, Vietnam has yet to benefit significantly from the improved air connectivity with Indonesia.

Ha Van Siew, vice chairman of Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, explained: "(Most of) these flights are to Bali, while the (key outbound) market is Jakarta. What we need is a good link (with Jakarta)."

On this, Tran said: "We are waiting for Garuda to begin flights to Vietnam."

He added that Vietnam needs to compete with popular destinations like Thailand, Japan and South Korea, and to improve on its halal offerings in order to attract Indonesian travellers.

Irwan opined that Vietnamese airlines could still capture the Indonesian market by capitalising on the airlines' longhaul and regional network.

Numbers that matter

39 The number of ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) editions that has been held since its inauguration in Malaysia in 1981, making it the longest running annual leisure travel trade event in the region.

161 The number of buyers from 43 countries/territories attending TRAVEX 2020, the B2B exhibition component that sits alongside ATF, with Asia-Pacific (64%) leading in terms of regional representation, followed by Europe (29%), Americas (4%) and the Middle East (3%).

11 The percentage of total buyer population this year that comes from China, making it the largest buyer contingent from outside of Brunei Darussalam.

150 The number of exhibiting booths at TRAVEX 2020, supported by 263 exhibiting delegates. They range from airlines to auto rental, and inbound operators to attractions.

109 The number of media representatives covering ATF and TRAVEX 2020, hailing from 21 countries across the world.

FEATURE: VIEW FROM THE TOP

Building alliances for success

How are South-east Asian tourism authorities working with travel associations to maintain competitiveness and grow tourism? The chiefs of Singapore and the Philippines reveal their game plan to *TTG Show Daily*



KEITH TAN

Chief executive, Singapore Tourism Board

"Our tourism industry stakeholders are facing technological disruptions, fast-changing visitors' needs and high expectations. To help them stay ahead, STB is focused on building their capabilities to create best-in-the-world visitor experiences.

For instance, our industry partners will have access to the programmes and learning and developmental opportunities from STB's Tech College and Marketing College. These two virtual 'colleges' aim to strengthen the skills of our partners and to raise the quality of

their marketing, technology and data capabilities.

Together with the launch of the Singapore Tourism Accelerator, where promising technology start-ups are paired with industry partners to pilot new technologies, we hope to develop skills and innovative solutions that can help them address business needs in the industry.

STB also works very closely with the Singapore Hotel Association to ensure that Singapore's hotels remain competitive and productive by transforming their

work processes, redesigning jobs and enriching their guest offerings.

On the MICE front, we will continue working with private sector partners, industry associations and government agencies to attract and anchor industry-leading business events in Singapore. We see these events as strategic opportunities to strengthen Singapore's position as a global node for innovation, technology, and enterprise.

STB will also continue engaging our regional partners to open up new cruise destinations in South-east Asia."



BERNADETTE ROMULO-PUYAT

Philippine Tourism secretary

"As advocates of sustainable and responsible tourism and livable environment for tourist destinations, we have a programme called Transforming Communities Towards Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Tourism (TouRIST), in partnership with various government agencies, local government units (LGUs) and local stakeholders.

In El Nido and Coron in Palawan, for instance, the Asian Development Bank is helping to finance urban infrastructure and services, while assisting in building the capacity of local stakeholders

to protect and conserve the ocean and biodiversity.

Manila's ongoing urban regeneration under its mayor Francisco Domagoso is an example of the importance of including LGUs and local stakeholders. It is incredible what can be achieved when the national and local agencies work together under a common goal. We look forward to replicating this partnership with other LGUs in the country to boost tourism and preserve our heritage.

Also as part of our sustainable tourism advocacy is the support to local artisans,

protection of heirloom traditions, and preservation of our rich heritage for future generations, for which the participation of local stakeholders is vital."



8 Sublime Lake Toba Wonders to Feast Your Eyes On

wonderful indonesia 

Looking for the sublime? Make a journey to Lake Toba and enjoy a wealth of natural beauty. Take a flight from Medan, Jakarta & Kuala Lumpur, fly into Silangit International Airport, and take a ride to Lake Toba. With a myriad of attractions on offer, you'll never run out of trip ideas or things to do in Lake Toba, North Sumatra. Here are 8 top picks for you to add to your idyllic Lake Toba itinerary:



Pulisan Beach

The Pulisan Beach is yet another perfect spot to relax and unwind. Trek through the green savanna hills, explore the rock pools and caves, try snorkeling or take an invigorating swim in the crystal-clear water.



Tongging Village

Visit the Tongging Village to witness the most magical vistas of nature. Tucked away on a hill, this laidback village offers a beautiful setting to recharge you with the magnificent view of the picturesque hills reflecting in the lovely Lake Toba. Meet the friendly villagers working in the rice fields or fish farms and try the signature dish Arsik.



Pusuk Buhit

The unparalleled views from the summit of Pusuk Buhit are worth the long trek up to the top. Pusuk Buhit is a sacred hill for the Batak people who believe it to be the birthplace of the Batak King. Enjoy the solemn atmosphere as you go up the winding trails and capture some amazing photos of the mind-blowing scenery.



Menara Pandang Tele

Boasting mesmerizing views of the sunrise, the sunset, and the Lake Toba, the Menara Pandang Tele, the Tele Observation Tower, is a must-visit destination. The visibility level on each floor of this three-tiered tower is different which makes it a photography hotspot.



Huta Ginjang

Discover the charm of Lake Toba from another angle. Situated at an altitude of 1,555 meters above sea level, the Instagenic viewing post of Huta Ginjang offers scenic views of Lake Toba encompassed by pine-covered hills. Huta Ginjang is famous for paragliding as well.



Tomok Village

Stopover at the Tomok Village for a unique cultural experience. Located at the edge of the jetty to Parapat, this small village features beautiful Batak houses and many historical sites. The tomb of King Sidabutar, the stone statues, the Si Gale-Gale dance performance, and the nearby Batak Museum are some of the highlights. You will find plenty of stalls in the area selling typical Batak souvenirs.

Tarabunga Hill

Enjoy the cool atmosphere of Tarabunga Hill that's located just outside Balige. Providing romantic panoramic views of Lake Toba, this hill offers spectacular sunrise and sunset views and attracts lots of photographers.



Jangga Dolok Village

Home to the Batak tribe, the Jangga Dolok village is situated near an alluring hillside and lush rice fields. Admire the architecture of the traditional houses, watch the villagers weave beautiful Ulos, enjoy Batak cuisine, and explore the remnants and monuments of ancient Batak Kings.

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Flights suspended, businesses hit

Taal Volcano puts a damper on travel in and out of Manila and Clark; "hazardous eruption" imminent

By Rosa Ocampo

Following the spewing of toxic ashes during an eruption of the Taal Volcano in the Batangas province south of Manila since Sunday afternoon, all flights in the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) are put on hold temporarily, and work in government offices in metro Manila and nearby regions have been suspended.

Authorities have advised the private sector to suspend work for the safety of their employees.

Taal Volcano, the world's smallest active volcano, had blasted steam, ash and pebbles up to 10 to 15 km into the sky, according to media reports.

The volcano within a lake, which is a popular tourist spot for trekking and sightseeing for its picturesque view from upland Tagaytay a few hours from Manila, had its alert level raised to four out of five, signalling that a hazardous eruption is possible anytime.

A number of restaurants, malls and tourist attractions in Tagaytay are expected to stay closed as ashfall mixed with rain pours down, reaching areas including metro Manila and Calabarzon (Cav-

ite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) and northern Luzon.

In a press release, Philippine Department of Tourism secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said that while initial reports from the field indicated that there were no more tourists in the affected areas, "we continue to monitor the situation and are checking with hotels and other accommodation establishments in the area to ensure the safety of their guests".

Earthquakes have been reported in areas surrounding Taal Volcano island, where thousands of residents have been evacuated. There were also reports of power outage and poor visibility owing to the volcanic ash. Authorities have advised the public to stay indoors and to wear face masks when heading outdoors.

Clark International Airport, where some flights from NAIA were diverted to on Sunday, cancelled seven regional flights on Monday due to volcanic ash emissions.

Philippine Airlines and Cebu Pacific advised passengers to go to their websites and social media accounts for updates on their flight status.



Puyat: keeping a close eye on Taal

Hot leads



On the prowl for destinations

Ma Gay I Solidum, business development manager at Travelpeople (the Philippines), is looking for new

destinations and contracts to cater to the company's growing number of corporate groups from the pharmaceutical and insurance sector. Email her at solidum@travelpeople.com.ph.

New supplier contacts needed

After several years sitting out of ATF, Transinex's Eileen Tan is now back and in search of new hotel contacts and attraction programmes across Asia. Transinex organises tours from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia,

Cambodia and Vietnam for large incentive, education, government and special interest groups that require high capacity accommodation with good facilities. Contact her at eileen@transinex.com.sg.



Attractions on the shopping list

Telman Mammadov, CEO and founder at Go Travel (Azerbaijan), is seeking alternative

South-east Asian experiences away from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia and Vietnam to appeal to the growing appetite for new destinations among his clients, who have already explored much of the region. Contact him at info@gotravel.az.

Travel insurance purchase made easier

Global insurance company Chubb and Grab have made travel insurance purchase possible for Singapore-based customers on the Grab app, through the launch of Travel Cover.

The product, distributed by Grab-Insure Insurance Agency, allows users to save their travel profiles on the app, making future purchases easy and convenient. Additionally, users are rewarded with discounts for every repurchase.

Insurance premiums range from

S\$2.50 (US\$1.90) per day for travel to any destination globally.

"Our customer research shows that many individuals were uninsured when they travel, and we are uniquely placed to address this gap," remarked Tom Duncan, head of insurance at Grab.

Travel Cover will be rolled out to other Grab markets in South-east Asia in the coming months, with both companies looking at expanding the product offering and addressing differing consumer needs.

Brunei plays generous host

Photos by Yingyong Unanongrak



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 KOMPAS GRAMEDIA

It's bright out there

South-east Asian tourism players tell *TTG Show Daily* that things are looking mostly rosy for 2020

Nicholas Wade

General manager, Khiri Travel Vietnam

Vietnam's rise in popularity sees no stopping in 2020. That's a good thing but it brings certain issues into focus. Managing visitor numbers in key destinations is going to be critical, and finding new destinations to alleviate over-tourism in areas such as Hoi An and Ha Long Bay, is daunting for newer locations that are not as well equipped for large groups.



Leakhena Meas

Inbound manager,
CSL Travel and Tours, Cambodia

The islands and the beaches at Koh Rong and Koh Rong Samleom will hot up in 2020. They will help to attract more longhaul travellers who are our main market and whose numbers have been down this year. Sihanoukville will continue to attract more Chinese visitors as international hotels and other businesses open up.



Guy Allison

Director of procurement,
Tour East Holdings, Singapore

Sentosa is becoming quite a family destination. It's starting to attract people to stay in Singapore for not just one or two nights, but three or four – maybe even a week. With the new developments, it might even become a destination in itself.



Budianto Ardiansyah

Managing director,
Duta Leisure Indonesia

In 2019, it was widely discussed that the focus of the government in 2020-2024 will no longer be about the (number) of visitors but tourist quality instead. As such, I have positive hopes for 2020.



RoseMawaty Adil Embun

Senior manager,
Myne Travel, Malaysia

Arrivals to Malaysia is rising and I believe we will see a larger than normal increase on the back of the Visit Malaysia 2020 campaign. International promotions led by our government have helped us to stand out from other destinations as we promote our diverse cultures, heritage and eco-tourism products.



JP Cabalza

Inbound manager,
Corporate International Travel and Tours, Philippines

Inbound looks rosy and promising in 2020. We should be able to keep the growth momentum as the destination creates more awareness in existing and new source markets. The Philippines is improving her tourism infrastructure and new ones are forthcoming. There are more attractions and new destinations on offer.



Jojo Clemente

President, Rajah Tours,
Philippines

The Asian source market has slackened a little but interest remains. We have been seeing interest from Vietnamese and Myanmar travellers. It's a matter of getting them to eventually come over. I'm sure we will be able to make headway in tapping other markets that we haven't been into before, like Latin America. The Philippines is primarily a beach destination but playing up other attractions and a little bit of product differentiation will help.



Alexander Leven
General manager,
Asian Trails Vietnam

We will see a further shift towards price-conscious clients who go on the Internet to book services direct. The China-US conflict may potentially result in a global recession that makes clients cautious about their spend. Meanwhile, arrivals from China has driven business in recent years and some destinations are depending heavily on charters from there. We will also be monitoring the major investments being made on hotels here.



Aloysius Arlando
CEO, SingEx Holdings, Singapore

We believe that Singapore's outlook of business events in 2020 will remain positive and resilient against the wider landscape of economic concerns. With the deceleration of India's and China's economies, South-east Asia is increasingly becoming a destination for investment by corporates, and that bodes well for business events in Singapore. This is as organisers look to the country as an attractive business events destination with stable economic and geopolitical factors.

Hem Sophoan

Tour and sales manager, Paramount Angkor Travel and Tours, Cambodia

The US, Europe and Australian markets have been down this year so we've had to widen our focus and create itineraries for Asian markets, which should continue to grow in 2020. The main market focus is on China but they don't spend much money (here). The Western markets tend to spend more on local businesses and people.



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Experiences for the win

From local interactions to purpose-built communal spaces, travellers are increasingly seeking out authentic and culturally immersive experiences, and hotels are answering the call. By *TTG Show Daily* reporters



Fit for the wellness gods

Indonesia's Tauzia Hotels has been engaging the communities in accordance with the brand identity of each property. As healthy lifestyle is the brand identity of Harris Hotels, for instance, the brand's properties not only highlight healthy food in the restaurants, but also offers various wellness-related initiatives like the Fit and Fun Package, a special room promotion which includes a jump rope and stress ball to encourage stress relief and exercise. The hotel also works with Celebrity Fitness to organise health and wellness activities regularly.

Living the good lyf

The newly-opened, Instagrammable lyf Funan Singapore encourages bonding among guests with millennial-centric communal spaces. Guests can whip up homecooked meals, take culinary classes or chat with other travellers at the social kitchen. Interactive elements that inspire playtime include a giant ball pit, a social gymnasium with a human-sized hamster wheel, and a larger-than-life Connect Four set. Social programmes, such as TED talks, craft workshops and hackathons, are also held weekly.

Fish you were here

Four Seasons Resort Langkawi's Rumah Ikan Fish House offers guests the chance to get schooled on the traditional methods of catching seafood from the Andaman Sea, while helping to preserve Langkawi's fishing heritage. At the Fish House, situated at a secluded spot along the resort's mile-long coastline, guests can observe Pak Din, a local fisherman, hard at work, or try their hand at fishing the old-fashioned way. Year-round, the hotel also runs excursions led by an in-house naturalist to Langkawi's Kilim Karst Geoforest Park, famed for its mangrove forests, diverse wildlife and ancient limestone formations.

Live in' La Vida Local

The Grand Copthorne Waterfront invites guests to Live Like a Local with



Clockwise from above: Four Seasons Resort Langkawi's Rumah Ikan Fish House; a visit to Cambodia's Banteay Chhmar Temple by helicopter is part of Shinta Mani Hotels' local offerings; communal spaces at lyf Funan Singapore bring guests together

its weekly experiential local tours and monthly workshops. The half-day heritage guided walking tour will let guests discover hidden gems at Singapore's oldest housing estate Tiong Bahru. The tour includes visits to blast-from-the-past wall murals painted by a local artist, the famous Tiong Bahru Market, and the Monkey God Temple. Specially curated in-house hotel activities, such as dumpling-making classes and family yoga sessions at the Promenade, are also held monthly.

Flex those green fingers

The Frangipani Langkawi Resort and Spa runs organic farming courses to equip its guests and the local community with green skills, such as composting, rain-water harvesting, and growing edible landscapes. The resort also holds daily eco-walks around the property to educate guests on the resort's green practices which they can adopt at home, such as air-conditioning water harvesting, build-

ing vertical gardens to grow vegetables, and making natural insect repellent by mixing citronella and lemongrass leaves with water.

Beyond Angkor Wat

All Shinta Mani Hotels put the spotlight on exclusive experiences that delve into the real Cambodia. Authentic offerings range from visiting the remote Banteay Chhmar Temple by helicopter, escorted by one of Cambodia's top archaeologists; to making local rice wine; and experiential dining at Villa Chandara nestled amid sprawling rice paddies. The year-old Shinta Mani Wild offers an array of adventures, from following rangers on jungle patrols and laying camera traps, to joining a chef to forage for fresh ingredients.

Culture vulture

Vietnam's The Anam beach resort is constantly refreshing its collection of curated experiences. It recently teamed up with boutique chocolate factory, Fifty Fresh

Farms, to offer a Chocolate Discovery cultural food tour that gives guests a delicious insight into Vietnam's chocolate industry. The resort also holds a weekly Artist in Residence Vietnamese Art and Street Food evening, where local artists set up their easels and practice their craft as guests feast on a variety of Vietnamese street food favourites.

The art of design

Indonesia's Artotel Group is evolving to offer a holistic experience to customers that goes beyond a hotel stay. Artotel Group's CEO Erastus Radjimin said that a hotel is not just providing guests with a place to sleep, but also to gather and chat, and function as a creative community centre. For instance, the Artotel Wahid Hasyim in Jakarta offers 122 rooms all decorated by five emerging local artists. The property is also home to Artspace, a gallery for the local artist community and which is also a mandatory fixture at Artotel properties.



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Onward to a busy new year

The government's new determination to grow Indonesia's tourism industry has inspired local stakeholders, who have responded enthusiastically with fresh ideas and proposals, writes **Mimi Hudoyo**



Indonesia's tourism stakeholders propose building more tourism villages to attract visitors; Pujon Kidul tourism village in Malang

A series of natural disasters that pummelled Indonesia in 2018 had forced the government to revise its international arrivals target in 2019 from 20 million to 18 million.

As the destination went on recovery mode, its people readied for the national and presidential election in April 2019. As with most elections, corporate activities slowed in the preceding months, as decision-makers waited to see how the next new government would impact their business plans.

The eventual elections presented Indonesian tourism with new hope. Acknowledging the growing significance of the creative economy in tourism, president Joko Widodo renamed the Ministry of Tourism to the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, and placed Wishnutama Kusubandio at its helm, replacing Arief Yahya.

Travel trade members welcomed the move and expressed renewed optimism that Indonesian tourism can be further developed and its quality improved.

Meanwhile, overall business confidence rebounded in the second half of 2019. Latest data from Statistics Indonesia showed that the number of international arrivals to Indonesia in the January-August 2019 period reached 10.9 million. Malaysia leads as the biggest contributor of tourist footfalls, with 2.1 million visitors (up 19.4 per cent).

China came in second with 1.4 million

(up 13.2 per cent), followed by Singapore with 11.2 million visits (up 11.5 per cent), and Australia with 876,800 visits (up eight per cent).

Although arrivals have increased, Indonesian tourism stakeholders say they need to work much harder to achieve their targets for the year.

Demonstrating their determination, industry players have rung up a number of proposals to take the country's tourism industry forward in 2020 and beyond.

In December 2019, Indonesian trade players sent a proposal to the government to establish a special visa regime to give preferential treatment to elderly travellers, in the hopes that such a move would provide the backbone for the development of retirement resorts within the country.

Industry leaders also called on the government to bank on tourism villages to support the development of the 10 New Balis in Indonesia. A proposed strategy to create 1,000 digital-based tourism villages across the archipelago annually has been submitted, with the beneficiaries being small- and medium enterprises that will be involved in the delivery of cultural experiences, ecotourism as well as agricultural, horticultural and aquatic products.

Along with Indonesia's successful bid for the FIFA U20 World Cup in 2021, the destination looks set for a fruitful year of tourism in 2020. – Additional reporting by Kurniawan Ulung

Inspiration: Local appeal

Join the locals and hop on Jakarta's new MRT, rapid transit system. First stop, Karinda Garden, which is near Lebak Bulus station. There, learn how locals turn waste into compost.

Next, head north towards Bundaran HI and get off at Fatmawati station for the Basoeki Abdullah Museum, where sculptures, masks, puppets, weapons and paintings are exhibited.

At Senayan station, stroll through Bung Karno City Forest or check out ongoing exhibitions at the Jakarta Convention Centre. Game for spicy Indonesian food? Make a beeline for Beautika.

End the day with some retail therapy. At Bundaran HI, there are upmarket shopping malls where many local and international branded labels are sold. Alun-Alun at Grand Indonesia Mall is a great place to snag some upmarket traditional cloths, such as batik and tenun (handwoven fabrics; pictured). For good bargains, try Thamrin City.

Bung Karno City Forest



Developments to watch



From left: A view of Yogyakarta International Airport which will be fully completed by mid-2020; Seger Beach in Mandalika, one of the five new priority destinations that will get tourism development support

More business events

For the next five years, the Indonesian government will be focusing on achieving revenue targets rather than visitor numbers. To achieve this, inbound business events will be at the core of Indonesia's tourism development plans. The development of business events will fall under the coordination of the Ministry of Tourism. As part of the strategy, the ministry will be working with associations to bid for events.

Yogyakarta gets a new airport

Yogyakarta International Airport, which has been partially opened since May 2019, is due for full completion in mid-2020. By then, it will accommodate 20 million passengers each year and be equipped with a 3,250m long by 45m wide runway capable of serving wide-bodied commercial aircraft. The new

facility is expected to solve Yogyakarta's accessibility issue.

The destination's current Adi Sutjipto International Airport has capacity for 1.8 million passengers a year but had to serve 8.8 million passengers in 2018.

A new capital

Indonesia's plan to move her capital city to East Kalimantan by 2024 is just the beginning of one of the most ambitious infrastructure ventures in the country's history. The new capital will be on a 180,000-hectare plot of land, and will drive urban development and improved access to seaports and airports.

The relocation is expected to cost a hefty 466 trillion rupiah (US\$33 billion), but the tourism industry is excited over the prospect of new star-rated hotels and meeting facilities emerging across East Kalimantan. They believe these facili-

ties will boost the destination's tourism standing.

Meanwhile, president Joko Widodo has reassured his people that Jakarta will remain the country's centre of business. Horwath HTL recently projected that based on the city's 2018 performance and the fact that government events are an important market for Jakarta hotels, the hotel industry in the current capital city faces a potential loss of 1.4 trillion rupiah (US\$100 million) annually.

New tourism destinations

The Indonesian government is accelerating the development of the tourism sector in five priority destinations – Mandalika, Labuan Bajo, Borobudur, Lake Toba and Likupang. These destinations, part of the 10 New Bali project, are expected to develop their infrastructure by 2020. The government has budgeted 9.4 trillion ru-

piah for them. Private sector projects are expected to start developing from next year.

Better crisis management

The Ministry of Tourism has designated three regions to pilot the Tourism Crisis Management (MKK) project. They are Riau Islands, which represents the western region; West Java for the central region; West Nusa Tenggara for the eastern region.

The MKK has four phases, namely the Preparedness and Mitigation Phase, the Emergency Response Phase, the Recovery Phase, and the Normalisation Phase. Its application aims to prevent and overcome the tourism crisis that could hurt the country's image as a tourism destination and lead to a fall in arrival numbers.

What's New

Café del Mar Bali

Ibiza's iconic lifestyle brand Café del Mar made its South-east Asia debut by opening its latest beach club in Canggu, Bali. This two-storey club by the beach features several bars, a 1,000m² infinity pool, private VIP cabanas, a premium restaurant and world-class staging for large, outdoor music events. Café del Mar Bali has also fused touches of Mediterranean architecture from the original Café del Mar in Ibiza with modern Balinese nuances.

Hakkasan Jakarta

Hakkasan Group, which runs several Michelin-starred restaurants, opened its first South-east Asia outlet in Jakarta's Sudirman Central Business District (SCBD). Located on the 25th and 26th floor of the Alila SCBD hotel, Hakkasan Jakarta offers a panoramic view of the city skyline. Serving signature Cantonese dishes, Hakkasan Jakarta is open for both lunch and dinner, with the bar opening at lunchtime and remain so till late. Menu highlights include black swan puff with musang king durian and steamed grouper with kaffir sambal sauce.

The Kayana Beach Lombok

A boutique villa under Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts' The Royal Collection category, The Kayana Beach Lombok opened its doors in August 2019. The property comprises 32 one-bedroom private villas. Guests can choose from four villa types – Deluxe, Duplex, Beach Front and Hillside, each with its own pool and

sundeck. Situated on the island's main tourist strip Jalan Senggigi, the all-villa resort boasts stunning views of the Lombok Strait, Mount Agung and the three Gilis. The resort is mere minutes away by boat from popular snorkelling spots.

The Apurva Kempinski Bali

The Apurva Kempinski Bali opened in Bali with 475 rooms. Set amid the cliffs and beaches of southern Bali, this five-star resort has six signature restaurants, a cigar and shisha Lounge, an ocean-facing spa and fitness centre, a 60-metre swimming pool, kids pool, and a family club. For business events and weddings, The Apurva Kempinski Bali offers a 1,076m² pillar-free and ocean-view grand ballroom, meeting rooms, The Apurva beachfront wedding chapels, and 2,200m² ocean-front lawn for exceptional outdoor gatherings and events.

InterContinental Jakarta

Pondok Indah

InterContinental Jakarta Pondok Indah opens with 311 guestrooms and suites. Nestled in the buzzing intersection of Pondok Indah, the property offers unrivalled amenities, including an all-day restaurant Sugar & Spice, swimming pool and kids playground area, fitness and movement Studio and the Aqua Lounge for those looking to indulge in cocktails by the pool. For special events and other functions, the hotel offers The Grand Ballroom – a venue that accommodates up to 3,500 people.



From above: Hakkasan Jakarta; The Apurva Kempinski Bali



A scenic landscape along the Song river in Vang Vieng

Developments to watch

Easier access overland

A new road between Nan in Thailand and the World Heritage town of Luang Prabang opened in June 2019. It reduces travel time from Hongsa district in northwest Laos to Luang Prabang from about nine hours to five.

Busier skies

It was a year of improved air connectivity for Laos, when Lao Airlines expanded its codeshare partnership

with Silk Air in July 2019. This covered the latter's service beyond Singapore, with plans to start weekly flights between Kumamoto, Japan and Vientiane/Luang Prabang. In October, daily flights between Vientiane and Phnom Penh, Cambodia were reinstated.

eVisa now available

In July 2019, an eVisa pilot scheme was launched in a bid to make travel to Laos more convenient. The single-entry eVisa is only available for travellers

entering the country through Vientiane's airport or the Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge checkpoint at the border with Thailand's Nong Khai province.

Focus on business events

The *MICE Guide to Lao* was launched at ITB Berlin in March 2019 to promote the destination's business travel potential. It features a comprehensive guide to business events opportunities, event venues and hotels that can cater to business travellers' needs. The

downloadable guide highlights the facilities of 16 hotels and resorts, as well as activities available.

Heritage power

Xieng Khouang authorities are giving The Plain of Jars, newly listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, an upgrade as it prepares for an influx of tourists. Improvements are being made to the area's roads and investment is being sought to develop more restaurants and hotels.



From left: Luang Prabang is now more accessible from Thailand; megalithic stone jars are an iconic sight at The Plain of Jars in Central Laos, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site

In the right direction

Laos' big bet on the Chinese inbound tourist market, with the *Visit Laos-China Year 2019*, has improved her tourism fortunes, writes **Marissa Carruthers**

The *Visit Laos-China Year 2019* campaign has helped stimulate growth in the inbound China market and lead to a pick up in overall arrivals.

More than 2.2 million people visited Laos in the first six months of 2019, according to the latest available figures from the Tourism Development Department, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism.

This represents a five per cent year-on-year increase, up from a challenging year when there were 2.1 million in 1H2018 and 4.1 million for the entire year. A series of

unfortunate incidents such as the Cham-pasak dam collapse and natural disasters in several localities held Laos back from achieving its five million arrival target in 2018.

In a reversal of fortunes, the *Visit Laos-China Year 2019* campaign resulted in a spike in Chinese arrivals, up 13 per cent. Vietnam also registered a healthy growth of 11 per cent in the period.

Thailand, which is Laos' traditional top source market, rose a mere one per cent.

In contrast, arrivals from South Korea

plunged by 20 per cent despite a 30-day visa-free privilege for South Koreans that came into effect on September 1, 2018.

Japanese arrivals were also down by 13 per cent.

In June 2019, Laos' Ministry of Foreign Affairs further eased access to the country with an e-visa service for all foreign visitors. The single-entry visa allows a maximum 30-day stay.

The move supports the government's plan to modernise and make public services more efficient.



Inspiration: Gourmet lures

Delve into the traditional tastes of Laos with a food tour in Vientiane. Sample snacks at a local market, drink local coffee and pastries, and watch rice noodles being crafted by hand. Stroll through Pakse's coffee plantations and pick coffee beans with farmers or take a farm tour in Luang Prabang and learn more about innovative organic growing techniques.

Alternatively, learn how to cook up a handful of local dishes at one of many cookery classes that operate in Luang Prabang and Vientiane and which include visits to local markets to buy fresh ingredients.



What's New

Buddhist Learning Centre

Amantaka in Luang Prabang has opened a Buddhist Learning Centre to educate visitors about the principals of Buddhism. Located in the resort's grounds at the foot of Mount Phousi, the Buddhist Learning Centre provides daily, 90-minute sessions led by the abbot. Senior monks also offer personalised tours of Wat Siphouthabath temple.

Jungle Kayaking

Green Discovery Laos has launched a full-day adventure tour that showcases Lao's natural beauty. It includes kayaking or rafting along Houay Bang Lieng River in Champassak, and incorporates easy to moderate rapids. Tours run from June to December and include a picnic lunch.

Le Thatluang D'oR

The 49-key Le Thatluang D'oR is a new luxurious boutique accommodation option in the capital. The restored 1928 French-colonial palatial building sits within walking distance of the city's national symbol, 16th century Pha That Luang, and boasts a fitness centre, swimming pool, spa and open-air Green Pepper restaurant.

Thailand and Laos Adventure

G Adventures, a small group adventure travel operator, has produced a 14-day programme that treks from Thailand to Laos. Described as a study in contrasts, travellers on this tour will get to visit the

old and the new across Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Chiang Khong in Thailand, before crossing the border into Laos.

From there, a traditional boat ride down the Mekong River will take participants to Luang Prabang to see the Pak Ou caves, Ethnology Museum, Ock Pop Tok Living Crafts Centre and Kuang Si waterfalls. There will be time to explore the bustling night markets as well as a local village for a feast of traditional Laotian food. The rest of the tour in Laos will be spent in Vang Vieng, where a homestay experience awaits, and Vientiane to see the capital city's best sights.

The programme concludes in Vietnam's Hanoi.

Red Rose Jazz Lounge

Luxury hotel La Seine has launched Vientiane's first jazz destination with the opening of Red Rose Jazz Lounge in August 2019. The sophisticated and intimate venue features musicians every Wednesday through Sunday from 19.00 to 22.00, and dishes up an innovative F&B menu that includes imported meats and cheeses from around the world as well as a well-rounded wine list curated by local renown wine merchant Baravin.

In the day, Red Rose presents a farm-to-table dining concept built upon the flavours of authentic Laotian food.



From top: Laos Pak Beng Mekong River Boat; Le Thatluang D'oR boutique hotel in Vientiane

Forging deeper trade ties

Photos by Yingyong Unanongrak



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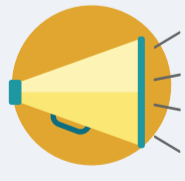
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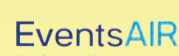
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