

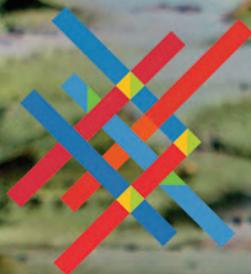


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ASEAN Smiles beams down on the region

A growing collection of tour packages will encourage travellers to holiday in South-east Asian destinations

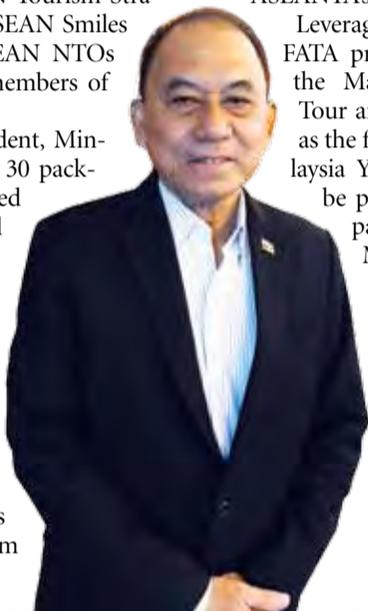
By S Puvaneswary

The Federation of ASEAN Travel Associations (FATA) has developed single- and multi-destination tour packages for South-east Asia which will be launched on February 1 under the banner ASEAN Smiles.

As part of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025, ASEAN Smiles has the support of ASEAN NTOs as well as component members of ASEANTA.

Outgoing FATA president, Mingkwan Metmowlee, said 30 packages have been finalised and more will be added in due course. They are themed by nature, culture and heritage, gastronomy, wellness and cruises, and are available in free-and-easy, half- and full-board arrangements.

Valid until December 31, 2020, these packages will target travellers from



medium-haul and longhaul markets, and who are keen on intra-regional programmes.

Mingkwan shared that ASEAN Smiles will be promoted on the ASEANTA website and at several travel tradeshow, such as ITB China and ITB India, through ASEANTA's participation.

Leveraging the newly elected FATA president who also heads the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents, as well as the fact that 2020 is Visit Malaysia Year, ASEAN Smiles will be presented at the Malaysia pavilion at ITB Berlin in March.

"Packages will be further promoted at FATA (Federation of ASEAN Travel Associations) Convention 2020, yet to be decided between Cambodia and Myanmar," she added.

FATA members are committed to promoting Visit ASEAN Year 2020 through the ASEAN Smiles packages.

Furthermore, ASEANTA will sign an MoU with Japan National Tourism Organization at the ASEANTA Board meeting in Sapporo this July, to get a mutual travel exchange going.

Ritchie B Tuano, president of Philippine Travel Agencies Association as well as secretary-general of FATA, described ASEAN Smiles as a "demonstration of the

strength and unity of ASEAN in promoting tourism to the world".

Sabli Arsad, president of the Association of Travel Agents Brunei, believes that ASEAN Smiles will help to bring attention to Brunei's tourism offerings and open new markets for the destination.

"We are a small country and tourism is still a new industry for us. We lack awareness in many countries. Some people don't know where Brunei is," Sabli remarked.

Eddy Krismeidi Soemawilaga, coordinator of ASEAN Airlines meeting at ATF 2020, expressed support. He told *TTG Show Daily*: "We support FATA's efforts and will come out with competitive airfares (to go with the packages)."



ASEAN Smiles will certainly create more awareness about Brunei's tourism offerings and we hope it will also open new markets for us...

Sabli Arsad

President, Association of Travel Agents Brunei



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

Hot leads

Hidden SE-Asian destinations wanted

After more than 50 years in the industry, Amsterdam-based agency Asfalea Travel is now searching for accessible and less touristy destinations and sights across South-east Asia. If you have something to offer, contact SH Oei at hong@asfalea.nl.

Hunting down Brunei gems

Indonesia-based EMFA Tours & Travel is in town to scour for old and new tour operator contacts, especially for Brunei's one-of-a-kind and undiscovered attractions, in order to better

sell the destination. Its outbound clients comprise small groups of up to 20 pax and family FITs. Reach out to director Katarina Indrawati at katarina.indrawati@yahoo.com.

Shopping for SE Asia operators

Gilbert Alvarez, president of Carpenter Travel in the Philippines, is sniffing out new operators across South-east Asia, especially in Penang, Malaysia, as his clients are hungry for foodie destinations that double up as shopping havens. Contact him at carpentertravelph@gmail.com.

ASEAN NTOs share wishlist for ATSP review

By Mimi Hudoyo

ASEAN NTOs have agreed to recommend a mid-term review of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2016-2025 to their tourism ministers during their meetings today and tomorrow.

Benito Bengzon, Jr, undersecretary, Philippines Department of Tourism, said the Philippines has offered to take the lead in organising what will be a combination of a retreat and planning session, planned for September this year, subject to ministerial approval.

Bengzon, Jr said the mid-term review is vital to evaluate the performance of ATSP and to determine the future course of action for the next five years.

He said: "(The review) will set the over-

all direction and vision for tourism in South-east Asia, and more specifically, it will identify what strategic concerns need to be looked into. Currently, the ATSP basically talks about two main strategic directions, which are increasing the competitiveness of the region as a collective destination, and ensuring sustainability and inclusivity for the stakeholders."

The review will also look at the existing committee and evaluate whether alterations are needed to achieve the goals.

Thong Rathanak, director general of Cambodia's Tourism Development and International Cooperation and vice chair of the ASEAN NTO Meeting at ATF 2020, noted that with changes in the general and tourism landscape taking place so rapidly,

NTO representatives were proposing a review every six months.

Thong remarked: "Changes may take place not even in months, but in days. For example, events happening in Australia and Iran may impact South-east Asia or our industry, so it will not be productive to conduct a review only once a year."

He emphasised that there is a need to determine what "needs to be changed, and what needs to be our top priority".

When asked what Philippine representatives would like to see happen through the review, Bengzon, Jr said member states needed "to rethink marketing and promo-

tion initiatives" to take into account the market shift towards digital platforms, and to pay greater attention to delivering authentic destination experiences.

Rizki Handayani, head of the delegation from the Indonesia Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, identified the trend of multi-generational travel as well as the development of marine and island products as focal points.

For Noor Zari bin Hammat, secretary general, Malaysia Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, an effective balance between competitiveness and sustainability should be achieved.



Thong: frequent reviews needed

Brunei's natural wonders beckons

By Marissa Carruthers

Brunei's offerings of nature and adventure are whetting the appetite of agents seeking new destinations for clients.

Heldur Allese, chairman of the board for Fiesta Reisd in Estonia, is looking for new spots in South-east Asia that will appeal to clients who have tired of Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

"Brunei is a good alternative. It is blessed with a lot of natural attractions like forests, and has nice beach areas," Allese said.

Dubbed the green jewel of Brunei, the Temburong district boasts pristine rainforest teeming with tropical flora and fauna, the protected Peradayan Forest Reserve, Ulu Temburong National Park and Sumbiling Eco Village.

Gay Solidum, business development manager at Travelpeople in the Philippines, said this natural beauty relatively untainted by tourism will appeal to clients. She plans to sell Brunei as a new destination to corporate groups seeking alternatives to traditional South-east Asian hotspots like Thailand.

Solidum said the country's bounty of nature and adventure offerings makes it ideal for the company's target market of incentive travellers aged between 25 and 30.

Likewise, Kyaw Pyay Oo, managing director of Asian Tour in Myanmar, said that his company will push Brunei to feed clients' demand for undiscovered gems, as the country's outbound market continues to grow exponentially.

"Brunei is a new destination for us. Here, they can see amazing greenery and explore natural rainforest," he said.

Also eyeing more outbound traffic to Brunei is Pattanee Sthitirata, managing director of Thailand-based Trail of Asia. She noted: "Brunei is interesting for specific groups. Apart from Muslim groups, it may appeal to groups looking for a nature-based trip."

Price hike woes

With early 2020 packages already sold, Bali agents say surprise new attraction tariffs will hurt bottom line

By Kurniawan Ulung

Travel players in Bali are crying foul over the regency government's surprise price hike on entrance fees for popular attractions, saying that they will have to bear the price difference for contracts inked before the change.

The new tariffs came into effect on January 1, 2020 in a bid by the regency government to boost tourism revenue. Attractions impacted by the price hikes include Mount Batur in Kintamani and Penglipuran village, which saw entrance fees raised from 30,000 rupiah (US\$2.20) to 50,000 rupiah. In Tabanan and Badung, entrance fees have risen by 25,000 rupiah.

Bambang Sugiono, director of marketing and overseas promotion of Bali-based RD Tours, said the government should have given the trade at least six months of notice so that changes could have been made to package prices.

Foreign clients who had committed to his tour packages last year would not accept the sudden price hike, as such, his company would have to shoulder the price difference.

Contracts with the old tariffs have been signed until June 2020, with at least 500 travellers each month, Bambang revealed.



Eddy: in a fix

For Eddy Sunyoto, owner of Terimakasih Indonesia Tours and Travel, contracts with the old rates were signed up till April this year.

He agreed that clients were unlikely to pay the difference. "How do we tell our foreign partners who have already printed their brochures?" asked Eddy.

To avoid a huge loss for his company, he will choose not to receive as many travellers from his foreign partners or to reduce the number of attractions featured in his itineraries. For contracts after April 2020, he intends to adjust package prices by upwards of eight to 10 per cent.

Eddy explained that while the price increment was a small amount, it would add up to a considerable sum since tourists could visit up to five attractions in a day on a tour.

Bali agents emphasised that they were not against the price hikes, as they understood the purpose of the move.

Bambang shared that his partners in China, India and Nepal were understanding too, but will only accept the elevated entrance fees in new contracts.

Expressing disappointment in the regency government's decision, Putu Winastra, secretary-general of Association of Indonesian Tours and Travel Agencies Bali chapter, said he intends to send a letter of protest to I Wayan Koster, governor of Bali. He hopes the new tariffs will be reviewed and postponed for Bangli and other regencies.

Umberto Cadamuro, COO inbound of Pacto, said the price hikes were minute in comparison to the amount of money European tourists fork out for an experience in Indonesia, and were unlikely to hurt inbound demand.

While travellers will not mind the higher entrance fees, they will be observing if the new tariffs will result in enhanced public facilities and services, such as cleaner toilets and improved parking lots, he opined.

FATA appoints KL Tan as new head



KL Tan (left) and Mingkwan Metmowlee

By S Puvaneswary

The Federation of ASEAN Travel Associations (FATA) has elected KL Tan as its new president for the next two years, taking over from Mingkwan Metmowlee who served from 2018-2020. The election of the new set of officers was done during FATA's annual general membership meeting on Tuesday.

Retaining their positions are Sivlin Chhay who is the deputy president and Ritchie Tuono who is the secretary-general. The treasurer has yet to be appointed.

New committee members are Sabli Arsad, Naung Naung Han and Wachira Wichaiwatana.

On his plans, Tan shared: "I hope to consolidate the efforts of travel agents in South-east Asia in promoting and strengthening (the region's) position as a competitive, fresh and exciting tourism destination. I am continuing the efforts of the previous president and her team which is marketing South-east Asia as a single destination."

Philippine DMCs lament limited cruise earnings

By Rosa Ocampo

The number of passengers and cruise ships that called at Philippine ports have plunged between January and September 2019 over the same period in 2018 – 83 ships with 90,571 pax made port calls in 2019, down from 143 ships with 149,272 pax.

Tourism undersecretary Benito Bengzon Jr blamed the poor performance on the lack of cruise facilities in the country and Boracay's six-month closure in 2018 plus the subsequent restrictions on ships docking at the island during high season to maintain the island's carrying capacity.

The news, however, was met by non-chalance among the country's DMCs – a response that highlights the limited business opportunities cruises bring to local tourism players. Philippine inbound travel specialists told *TTG Show Daily* that cruise tourism is considered low-yielding for their business.

Sid Santiago, Jeron Travel and Tours' senior travel coordinator, said ground

handlers generally do not earn much from cruise ships as they dock in the port for a day and require mainly buses, tour guides and restaurants for shore excursions.

DMCs in the Philippines, like his, typically focus on higher-yielding segments such as business events and corporate accounts, Santiago added.

A Philippine travel consultant who requested anonymity said that the inbound cruise business is "quite complicated" as bookings come mainly through the GSAs of the cruise lines, and for the burgeoning Chinese cruise market, groups prefer to engage a tour leader from China.

Lyn Karay, CTPH Travel outbound manager, whose business was unaffected by the dismal cruise tourism performance last year, explained that her company only does cruises when there are promotions from Star Cruises.

"They have other tourism offer-

ings (through parent company Genting Group) and cruising is just a small part of their business," said Karay.

According to Benjie Bernal, tour operations manager at Sharp Travel Services, the decline in cruise tourism numbers for the Philippines is not unexpected, as cruise itineraries are seasonal. However, their exit from a port has a big impact on overall passenger numbers because big ships handle a large volume of people each time.

For his part, Bengzon is optimistic that the numbers will increase.

"The fact that we're able to get *Superstar Virgo* to homeport with us is a major achievement as ordinarily the requirements are quite stringent," he remarked.

Bengzon said that while the strategy is to maintain an optimum mix of big and expedition ships, the tourism authority's ultimate task is to "work on homeport opportunities".

His team is also working on increasing cruise passengers' expenditures in Boracay, as a resolution for local travel trade's common gripe that cruises bring limited income with just a day's call while congesting the beaches.



Bengzon Jr: focus on premium segments

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10 Exotic Escapes for Tranquility in Labuan Bajo

wonderful indonesia 

As the gateway to the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Komodo National Park, the home of the famous Komodo Dragon, Labuan Bajo, the once small fishing site has flourished into a favorite holiday destination amongst locals and foreign tourists. These nine heavenly spots in Labuan Bajo could be your gateway to peace and serenity and an escape from the chaotic city life.



Seaesta Komodo

A mere five-minute walk from the main town of Labuan Bajo, Seaesta Komodo is a brand new boutique with the perfect ocean view overlooking the Flores Sea and the Komodo National Park. With a tagline that perfectly sums up what Seaesta Komodo has to offer: "Eat - Dive - Drink - Sleep". Equipped with indulging accommodations, international bar & restaurant as well as a lagoon-style pool all upon a large rooftop; unwind and enjoy carefree days away from the day-to-day robotic routine of modern life.



Mohini Resort

Breathtaking scenic beauty and landscapes are what awaits you at the Mohini Komodo Resort. Located in Waecici district, north of Labuan Bajo, around 15 minutes from the Komodo National Airport and the port to Komodo National Park. Experience the authentic Indonesian hospitality in this resort with nine villas, complete with a majestic pool, beautiful lush gardens and a restaurant serving both local and international cuisine.



Sudamala Resort

Around 10 kilometers north of Labuan Bajo, resides Sudamala Resort, in the small island of Seraya-Flores. This attractive tranquil sanctuary with white sandy beaches, crystal-clear waters and dynamic underwater life is perfect for your digital free escapade and getting in touch with nature's finest wonders. Sudamala Resort's exquisite beach bungalows with alang-alang thatched roofs offer understated luxury in the sublime setting of Little Seraya Island.



Ayana Komodo Resort

Residing on the strikingly gorgeous Waecicu Beach, Ayana Komodo Resort is the first and only 5-star resort in Labuan Bajo. The resort features 13 suites and 192 premium guest rooms. Each contemporary room features an unblemished ocean view alongside a pristine white sandy beach. Those who adore the blue ocean, might also embark on a cruise with the Ayana Lako di'a sailboat and visit the Komodo National Park's A list destination spots.



Le Pirate Island

Disconnect from the hustle and bustle of modern life at the blissful Le Pirate Island. Only one hour from the heart of Labuan Bajo, leave all the formalities of modern-day technologies, kick back relax and get in tune with nature and the carefree island life. At Le Pirate Island, experience life like an islander. Step out of the beach hut, dive into the translucent waters and enjoy the vibrant sea life, sleep under the stars, and breath in the peace and calmness of the natural surroundings. Ready to embark on your very own digital detox?



Le Pirate Boatel

Just 10 minutes from Labuan Bajo, discover a new concept of leisure at Le Pirate Boatel. This combo of hotels has a concept of boats with 10 waterfront cabins fitted with a private deck, hammock and swim ladder. The Boatel also features its own BBQ restaurant, bar, and a sun deck where you could enjoy some refreshing cocktails while savoring the charming view of Labuan Bajo's beach activities.



Dorme Tree

For backpackers visiting Labuan Bajo, Dorme Tree Hostel is a great alternative place to stay. The location is convenient as it is within walking distance from the airport, downtown and also the harbor. With a hip design, this place offers cozy dormitories and of course, free WIFI. Dorme Tree proves to be quite affordable and suitable for those who seek simplicity.



Plataran Komodo Resort

Another Wacicu Beach luxurious resort is the Plataran Komodo Resort. This true tropical haven is the perfect blend of luxurious comfort with a dominant touch of Javanese style interior design. Experience fine dining enriched with the natural beautiful ambiance of ocean waves and the island's serenity. Go on a water adventure to see the amazing marine life, or hop aboard one of the Plataran private cruises for some exciting island-hopping excursions with the view of Komodo National Park serving as the backdrop.



The Seraya Boutique Island Resort

Around 45 minutes north of the Labuan Bajo town, at Little Seraya Island (Pulau Seraya Kecil), resides The Seraya-Boutique Island Resort. Established in 2017, it offers a luxurious resort experience where you can enjoy peaceful island life and a digital free getaway. With the beauty of Komodo National Park as the backdrop, the resort is equipped with three types of spacious private bungalows: beachfront bungalows, canopy sea view bungalows, and hillside garden bungalows.



Selini On The Hill Villa

Around 1.8 kilometers from Labuan Bajo Port, located in West Manggarai District, you will find Selini on The Hill Villa. Overlooking the ocean from the hills, the wooden dominated furnished villas are well fitted for your "digital detox" vacation. Go island hopping at nearby islands and of course the most intriguing island of all in Flores, the Padar and Rinca Island, both home to the Komodo National Park.

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The quality approach

Indonesia is undergoing a facelift in its infrastructure as it eyes high-end travellers

By Mimi Hudoyo

Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (MoTCE) is focusing on attracting high-end travellers by targeting business events and special interest tourists such as sports tourism, ecotourism and cruise tourism. The government will also work to create and attract international quality events such as musical performances in the country.

Wishnutama Kusubandio, Indonesia's minister of tourism and creative economy and head of Tourism and Creative Economy Board, said: "Indonesia's tourism industry is undertaking a transformation from quantity to quality. We will no longer focus on the number of travellers but on the revenue generated by tourists."

Based on president Joko Widodo's

direction, each of the five super priority destinations – Lake Toba (North Sumatera), Labuan Bajo (East Nusa Tenggara), Borobudur (Central Java), Mandalika (Lombok) and Likupang (North Sulawesi) – are being developed to cater for different market segments, like super premium, premium, middle and budget.

"The president's direction for Labuan Bajo, for example, is to develop it into a super premium destination," Wishnutama said.

Apart from developing the infrastructure, the MoTCE will start promoting the super priority destinations creatively.

"I want the five destinations to have quality

events on an international scale, with (an element) of creativity that involves the local community, so as to uplift the image of the destinations and (boost) Indonesia's reputation," he said.

Now that the creative economy sector is part of his portfolio, both the tourism and creative sectors can support each others' growth, the minister said.

"The Ministry is developing the creative industries, (including the culture villages). We are also creating creative hubs at the five destinations to explore and develop each destination's creative and economic potential," he added.

Working with the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, the tourism authority will be establishing the creative hub in Pusat Waringin, Labuan Bajo, and East Nusa Tenggara, with more to follow in other destinations.

The government has targeted for arrivals to hit 17.3 million and revenue to reach US\$21 billion for 2020, and by 2024, 22.3 million arrivals, and revenue of US\$30 billion.



Indonesia's tourism industry is undertaking a transformation from quantity to quality. We will no longer focus on the number of travellers but on the revenue generated by tourists.

Wishnutama Kusubandio

Indonesia's minister of tourism and creative economy and head of Tourism and Creative Economy Board

Soundbite

"(Filipinos' penchant for travel is like) a raging river wherein if there's a deadend spout, it will always look for a hole to go somewhere."

– Ritchie Tuano, president, Philippine Travel Agencies Association, who is bullish about Philippine outbound travel business this year despite political tensions, natural disasters and other safety issues around the world

Off with the old, in with the new

Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore is bidding farewell to two of its attractions – Crane Dance and the Maritime Experiential Museum – on March 2 this year, which will make way for redevelopment of the waterfront promenade and the expansion of the S.E.A. Aquarium respectively.

As part of the destination's next-generation transformation, the waterfront promenade will become a complex with two destination hotels, dining and lifestyle experiences, and an iconic public attraction replacing the Crane Dance.

With the Maritime Experiential Museum vacated, the S.E.A. Aquarium will be expanded and rebranded as the Singapore Oceanarium. Highlights include specially-curated marine life and exhibits of prehistoric marine life and deep sea creatures.

Planning for the future

By Yingyong Unanongrak



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To market, to market

NTOs and tourism companies in South-east Asia prove that the region has no shortage of exciting leisure and MICE products and ideas

TOURISM PROMOTIONS BOARD PHILIPPINES

The coastal city of Davao in the Southern part of the Philippines won the bid to host MICE Conference in 2020, the country's largest gathering of MICE professionals and industry stakeholders.



Hosting the event is part of the City Government of Davao's efforts to position Davao City as a premier MICE destination in the Philippines and in Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area.

Reinforcing its MICE marketing slogan 'Let's Meet in Davao' launched in 2011, the Davao local government is working closely with the private sector to showcase the city as a diverse multicultural destination with world-class convention facilities, accommodations and exemplary auxiliary service.

With a diverse selection of attrac-

tions, Davao city is an ideal destination for incentive travel.

Business travellers can top off successful meetings by indulging in on-leisure trips near the city. They can enjoy the white sands, pristine waters and top class service just a boat ride away at the Pearl Farm in Samal Island for a quick escape.

Likewise, they can get a taste of the tropics and try the King and Queen of Fruits, the durian and mangosteen respectively, and marvel at the Philippines' National Bird, the silver-eyed Philippine Eagle. On the way home, they could end their trip on a sweet note by trying the award-winning Malagos Chocolate.

With all these wonderful attractions plus the combined efforts of the local government and the private sector, Davao is undoubtedly cementing itself as a MICE destination of choice in the Philippines.



INDONESIA TOURISM

Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism & Creative Economy – in line with the president's directive – will be focusing on quality tourism; tourism which contributes to both community welfare, as well as economic growth.

There will be a keen focus on the acceleration of development in the five Super Priority Destinations of Toba (North Sumatra), Borobudur (Central Java), Mandalika (West Nusa Tenggara), Labuan Bajo (East Nusa Tenggara), and Likupang (North Sulawesi). In addition, the government will also be developing other destinations with great potential for tourism and creative products.

MICE has also been placed at the forefront of Indonesia's tourism policy, as its Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Wishnutama Kusubandio has revived the directorate that manages the country's business events industry. To support the sector, 16 distributions of MICE destinations throughout the archipelago – ranging from Existing Destination (Big Scale); Potential Destination (Medium Scale); and Emerging Destination (Small Scale) – will be presented to MICE groups looking at the destination for events.

MICE tourism also means bringing world-class events to Indonesia; creating international tourism events in Indonesia; and supporting regional and special events in Indonesia to meet international standard with extraordinary appeal. Currently, there are 23 confirmed prestigious international MICE events that will be held in Indonesia.

For 2020, the ministry will also develop and curate a Wonderful Calendar of Event programme which contains of 100 Top Events from 34 provinces in Indonesia.

SANTIKA INDONESIA HOTELS & RESORTS

Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts is excited to introduce its brand new property, The Kayana Beach Lombok, which was launched on August 29, 2019.

Located on Jl. Raya Senggigi in North Lombok, The Kayana Beach Lombok offers 32 keys. The resort has the beautiful Senggigi Beach on its doorstep, and is surrounded by lush greenery with amazing views of the Lombok Strait; the first sight visitors that greets every visitor.

There are four villa types – Deluxe, Duplex, Beach Front and Hillside – each decorated with local artwork, as well as a private pool and sundeck, and round-the-

clock private butler service, all providing comfort and privacy for guests.

The Kayana Beach – Lombok also features The Blues restaurant, situated on a hill and commanding unbeatable views of the Lombok Strait, the three Gili islands, and magnificent Mount Agung in the distance. The Blues restaurant also has an outdoor but private deck that makes an ideal events venue. Saxum Spa, also situated on the hill next to The Blues, offers relaxation in pleasant surroundings.

Other facilities include a swimming pool, Kedi Car, outdoor pool bar, and a large public area.



SENTOSA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Sentosa Development Corporation (SDC) has unveiled exciting possibilities for Sentosa and Pulau Brani as part of a Master Plan to redevelop the two islands into a game-changing leisure and tourism destination, leveraging their unique island charm, geographical qualities, as well as proximity to the city.

Known as the Sentosa-Brani Master Plan, the comprehensive blueprint will be rolled out in phases over the next two to three decades. The redeveloped islands will feature five distinct zones – each delivering unique experiences, with the zones progressively taking on a more leisurely character as guests travel farther from the city into the islands: Vibrant Cluster, Island Heart, Waterfront, Ridge-line, and Beachfront.

The first milestone project, Sentosa Sensoryscape, is set to begin construction works in 4Q2019 and set to be completed by 2022. Located at the heart of Sentosa island, the 30,000m² Sentosa Sensoryscape, will link Resorts World Sentosa

in the north to Sentosa's beaches in the south through a multisensory experience, replacing the existing pedestrian thoroughfare.

Inspired by the island's lush tropical landscape, Sentosa Sensoryscape will feature a series of novel, picture-worthy vessel-like structures, measuring some 25 metres wide and 13 metres tall. Each of these will be framed by unique architectural features, and is set to pique and amplify one of the five senses through various elements such as polyphonic water features, mist, as well as fragrant flowers and plant species with unique scents.

The redeveloped precinct will incorporate Universal Design principles to ensure easy access for all guests, as well as feature break-out spaces and expanded vistas through new photo and look-out points.

While works are ongoing for Sentosa Sensoryscape, guests will be able to continue accessing and enjoying Sentosa's diverse array of leisure experiences such as its themed attractions and beaches.

JAYAKARTA HOTELS & RESORTS

The Jayakarta Lombok Beach Resort & Spa is one of the places to stay when in Senggigi, West Lombok, close by to tourist attractions.

Its charming location, located on the lip of Meninting Senggigi Beach, along Jl. Raya Senggigi Km 4, makes this four-star hotel a perfect hotel where you can explore the area from.

The property has 171 keys, and consists of a four-storey building that is home to 95 rooms, including 12 Junior Suites. The suites overlook the pool and boasts a sea view, private balcony, wooden floors, and a living room and kitchen.

On the other hand, another two-storey building has 76 rooms, as well as four Jayakarta Suites featuring private balconies and living rooms. All rooms come furnished with an IDD telephone, mini-bar, air conditioning, hairdryer, television remote control featuring cable TV.

Feel the warmth of the sun in the blue sky all day long, and in the afternoon, appreciate the exotic sunset while enjoying a cold drink at the beachside bar. The coolness and beauty of the park from tropical plants can also be felt in the hotel environment, thus making the atmosphere comfortable and pleasant.



MARKETPLACE

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buffet dinner, 20 per cent off F&B and recreation activities, 10 per cent off Kedaton Spa, and complimentary access to Silk Club starting from S\$290 (US\$214) nett per person.

The Get Energised Package includes two-way ferry tickets and land transfers with express immigration clearance, a teambuilding session for up to three hours, one buffet lunch, one coffee break, energy booster, and certificate of participation at S\$135 nett per person.

The Experiential Dining Package includes private experiential theme dining with venues of your choice, buffet dinner, a live culinary dining experience, live band performance and fireworks display starting from S\$75 per person.

Packages are available for bookings until March 31, 2020. Terms and conditions apply.



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Locals take the wheel

As Cambodia's tourism landscape matures, more locals are taking the lead and devising innovative tours to give visitors a true taste of the country and help them discover outlying areas, while driving social and economic change at the same time. By **Marissa Carruthers**



From left: Locally-led initiatives help to drive visitors to new destinations in Cambodia

Tourism is becoming a stronger force for change in Cambodia as locals take the front seat and devise innovative tours and activities showcasing a more authentic side to the country.

In recent years, more locals are taking the lead in Cambodia's growing crop of community-based tourism products, a contrast to barely less than a decade ago when the majority of such products were headed by foreigners and NGOs.

"In my experience, tourism is definitely being driven more locally," said Miles Gravett, Khiri Travel Cambodia general manager. He added that while NGOs and foreign organisations still play an instrumental role in helping initiatives with the initial set-up, many of the operations have today been handed over to locals. "This is great," remarked Gravett.

Chi Phat is a shining example of how community-based tourism is empowering local communities. Started in 2007 under the guidance of wildlife NGO Wildlife Alliance (WA), the aim of the community-based ecotourism project was to equip locals living in the remote village with an alternative form of income.

Nestled in the heart of the Koh Kong jungle, the area was notorious for illegal logging and poaching activities. WA set about training the village's hunters and loggers in tourism, helping them open

homestays, lead treks and hikes through the jungle, and roll out a series of activities that offer visitors an authentic glimpse into life in this remote part of the Cardamom Mountains.

The project is now entirely run by the community, comprising more than 40 homestays, plus trekking, cycling and kayaking adventures led by knowledgeable villagers. "This project has proven to be very beneficial to the community," said Chin Meankung, CEO of Cambodian Experiences. "It is a good example of tourism providing extra income and protecting the forests and wildlife from deteriorating."

Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT) is another pioneering locally-led initiative. The NGO was founded in 2001 as a voluntary university student initiative and has grown into a locally-driven organisation working with communities across the country's north-east to help eradicate poverty and protect the environment.

As part of its mission, it provides tourism and hospitality training for underprivileged youth living in Kratie and the surrounding areas and operates Cambodian Rural Discovery Tours (CRDTours), which are led by local guides and take visitors on a range of locally driven rural trips such as homestays in villages and Mekong islands and visits to family-run businesses and workshops.

The development of these community-based initiatives are also helping to drive visitors to new destinations away from the well-trodden tourist trail. For example, German NGO GIZ has helped communities across remote parts of Siem Reap to develop homestays and other tourist-related activities. It is also currently working with communities in Preah Vihear. After helping with the set-up, the organisation hands over operations to locals.

While agreeing that community-based tourism initiatives help to open up new destinations and encourage longer stays, Gravett remarked that most of such itineraries remain a hard sell for a majority of travellers, "who come to Siem Reap and stay in a five-star hotel for two to three nights and then leave".

"It's a constant fight trying to build new destinations," he added.

That is not deterring Liger Leadership Academy student Samnang Nuonsinoeun, who launched Journeys of Change with fellow students in September 2017. It currently offers bike trips around the outskirts of Phnom Penh, led by students, and is gearing up to launch a market tour and responsible shopping trip.

"Tourism has the potential to (drive) change," said the 17-year-old. "It's important that we have really good tours capturing (the essence of) Cambodia and its people. We are seeing more and more Cambodians lead this... they are the ones who live here and can show tourists the authentic (aspects of life); it makes tourists feel more connected and empowers communities."

Despite the community-driven tourism landscape gaining momentum in Cambodia, Gravett thinks a real challenge

for many locally-led initiatives is marketing. "That falls back on us as DMCs to be able to market these projects to foreign travel agencies and tour operators," he shared.

"The industry has to help a lot of these community-based tourism projects with marketing and driving business. It takes time to develop a new destination and that is what a lot of these projects are doing."

Coralie Romano, Diethelm Siem Reap branch manager, notes a rise in clients requesting community-based tourism activities.

"We have quite a few people who want to experience at least one night in a homestay and local activities," she said. "We are seeing more and more visitors wanting sustainable tourism experiences and to give back to communities when they visit."

Also helping drive the popularity of homestays are the availability of more comfortable options. While many homestays still remain basic – something Romano says can "surprise" guests – cleanliness and hygiene is on the rise. "The options are much better these days," she added.

Meankung feels that the new wave of responsible tourists that the community-driven sector tends to attract is also helping Cambodia clean up its reputation as a sex tourism destination. "(The image) is much more positive now," he stated. "It is still seen as a cheap destination, but that is also changing."

The merits of locally-led tourism product development extend beyond the industry. Gravett said: "Tourism can play a huge role in preserving cultural and natural heritage and developing communities in Cambodia."



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Get set for an optimistic run

With *Visit Malaysia 2020* campaign now on and concrete activities underway, local tourism trade players are confident that 2019's growth will continue into the New Year, writes **S Puvaneswary**



A view of Georgetown from Penang Hill

Malaysia's tourism performance in 2019 is an improvement over 2018. The destination recorded RM41.7 billion (US\$1 billion) in tourist receipts for 1H2019, a 6.8 per cent growth over the corresponding period in 2018.

The country also welcomed some 13.35 million international tourists from January to June this year, up 4.9 per cent over the first half of 2018. Shorthaul, medium-haul and longhaul markets all registered growth at 4.7 per cent, 7.2 per cent and 1.8 per cent respectively year-on-year.

On the business events front, destination promotion efforts have intensified to attract more Asian gatherings that are aligned with the strategic direction of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia.

To this end, the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) has targeted new incentive travel markets such as Vietnam, Taiwan and Indonesia, while retaining marketing commitments in traditional source markets of China, India and South Korea.

While the past year progressed mostly positively, the Malaysian tourism trade was put on edge when the government introduced an air departure tax on September 1. The tax ranges from RM8 to

RM150, with the amount varying according to the destination and flight class. Local players argued that the tax would affect the competitiveness of Malaysia.

A month later, the government moved to reduce passenger service charge for international flights from RM73 to RM50 at all airports in Malaysia, except the main air hub Kuala Lumpur International Airport. The move was said to help reduce the tax burden on travellers, according to transport minister Anthony Loke.

For now, the optimistic mood among Malaysia tourism trade players will continue into the New Year, fuelled by the country's *Visit Malaysia 2020* campaign. A host of initiatives and efforts to strengthen ties with China, leveraging the economic and cultural cooperation between both nations, has been announced.

Activities under the *Malaysia-China Culture and Tourism Year* campaign for 2020 kicked off at China International Travel Mart in Kunming last November, with Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) joining hands with local tour operators to promote unique experiences that offer deeper engagement for Chinese tourists.

The tourism authorities are also cultivating inbound traffic from Central

Inspiration: Adventure

Glamping – a form of luxury camping where guests enjoy direct access to the outdoors without compromising on comfort and convenience – has taken off in Malaysia.

Canopy Tribes in Nusajaya, Johor, charms glamping fans with cosy cotton bell tents that bring to mind images of Arabian Nights under moonlit skies.

Tiarasa Escapes Glamping Resorts (pictured) in Janda Baik, Pahang – where the rainforest is literally at one's doorstep – features 20 safari-style tented villas and treetop villas. Attached bathrooms, hot showers, deep-soaking bathtubs, air-conditioning and free Wi-Fi will keep modern travellers happy. It is also easily accessible, being just 30 minutes by car from Kuala Lumpur.

Up on Fraser's Hills in Selangor is The Sticks where *tendoks* – part tent, part traditional *pondok* – offer eco-chic accommodation to guests. The full-board rustic retreat offers



Tiarasa Escapes Glamping Resorts

accommodation for romance-seeking twosomes to happy families of seven. Lures include home-cooked meals under the stars, adventurous treks through the jungle or an old tin mine, botanical walks, relaxing dips in the river, and good old board games in the quiet of the *tendok*.

Asia. Kazakhstan was Malaysia's fastest-growing market in the region in 2018. Efforts include dangling cash incentives to attract more Central Asian airlines to

fly direct, as well as charter flights, to Malaysia, heightened in-market destination promotions, and potential collaborations with tour operators from Central Asia.

Developments to watch



From left: AirAsia is among the many airlines to benefit from JITDP; Malaysia tourism community at ITB Berlin 2019

Friendlier skies

To attract more airlines to fly to Malaysia, particularly from medium-haul and longhaul markets, and to encourage existing airlines to increase their frequency and routes to Malaysia, Tourism Malaysia and Malaysia Airports established a RM20 million (US\$4.9 million) fund in January 2019 for new and existing airlines to use for their marketing and promotions of Malaysia.

Known as Joint International Tourism Development Programme (JITDP), it is expected to continue into 2020. Airlines that have benefited from this programme include AirAsia, Malindo Air, Air Arabia, Air Busan, Condor Airlines, China Airlines and Royal Brunei Airlines.

European exposure

As the Official Country Partner of ITB Berlin 2019, Malaysia put on an energetic cultural performance to an audience of about 3,000 international trade visitors and media attending the event's official opening ceremony in March.

Becoming the Official Country Partner was part of Tourism Malaysia's efforts to rebuild promotions in Europe while generating further tourist interest from the region. Media exposure alone, as a result of interviews by international media at ITB Berlin, is expected to generate an investment return of RM175 million. In addition, Tourism Malaysia also received numerous partnership proposals from German, Austrian and Swiss industry partners, with an estimated total revenue of RM120 million to the country.

Improved Middle Eastern capacity

Air Arabia commenced daily direct flights between Sharjah and Kuala Lumpur from July 1 while Qatar Airways launched a new route to Langkawi via Penang from October 15. These services bring welcome relief to the local travel trade, as seat capacity is often stretched thin, especially during the super-peak Middle East summer season. Qatar Airways also increased its frequency from four to five times weekly to Penang and Langkawi on October 27, bringing even more tourists to the Peninsular's north.

Funding support

In July, Malaysia's Ministry of Finance dished out a RM5 million tourism fund for the private sector to use in their destination promotions aimed at the domestic

and international sectors. The fund is a matching grant, and seeks to enhance promotion and marketing efforts by the private sector. It is seen as a timely support, as the country gears up for *Visit Malaysia 2020*, which aims to attract 30 million tourist arrivals.

Expedia boost

In August, Tourism Malaysia and Expedia Group announced a major collaboration whereby both parties will work together on global campaigns in 2019 and 2020 to promote inbound travel to Malaysia from Australia, Japan and the US. These markets are the three biggest points of sales for Expedia Group while for Malaysia all three markets attracted long-staying and high-spending tourists.

What's New

The Grill

Le Petit Chef, the world's smallest chef at only 58mm tall, takes centre stage at The Grill at TREC Kuala Lumpur where he prepares a Tropical Colada with help from an active volcano and a tropical jungle. A product of advanced 3D projection mapping technology, Le Petit Chef promises a memorable dining experience. The Grill sits up to 60 diners, and is open daily from 17.00 to 02.00.

Monopoly Mansion by Sirocco

The 290-key Monopoly Mansion by Sirocco in Kuala Lumpur will soft open this December as the world's first Monopoly-themed hotel. Inspired by the popular board game by Hasbro Inc., the property will comprise 14 floors, each featuring traits of a particular country that Mr Monopoly, a fictional character from the game, has visited. Event planners rejoice, as the unique hotel will offer function rooms including a junior ballroom for up to 174 people in theatre seating and a grand ballroom for up to 322 people. There are three other meeting rooms to support breakout events.

Bukit Bintang walking tour

A tour of lively Bukit Bintang road in Kuala Lumpur is conducted every evening, during which a guide regals participants with tales of the city's history and heritage. Highlights include a bird's-eye view of the Kuala Lumpur skyline, optical illusions in a 'distorted room', and a special meal comprising local dishes and



From above: The Prestige Hotel Penang; IMAGINATRICKS

drinks. The guided walk starts at 16.00 from The Federal Hotel Kuala Lumpur and covers a distance of 2.5km.

Penampang Village Experience

Borneo Trails in Sabah offers a half-day cultural experience at the Penampang Village, hub of the Kadazandusun community in Sabah. Participants will visit the tamu, or local market, where they can purchase local food products and handicraft, as well as try local delicacies such as sago worms and rice wine. After a trip to the market with the help of a guide, participants will proceed to Madam Nurha-

nidah's Kitchen for a hands-on cooking class to create typical Borneo dishes such as hivana (pickled fish salad), lihing chicken (chicken with local rice wine), and rice cooked with yam and wrapped in a leaf. The Penampang Village Experience is good for 20 people each time.

The Prestige Hotel Penang

This Victorian-inspired hotel stands in Penang's UNESCO Heritage area, and is within walking distance to the Malaysian city's myriad cultural attractions and gourmet hotspots, making it an attractive location for bleisure travellers. It offers

162 guestrooms, an all-day dining outlet, a retail arcade, a gym, event spaces and a rooftop infinity pool.

IMAGINATRICKS

A new highlight at Resorts World Genting's Genting International Showroom, IMAGINATRICKS fuses acrobatics, dance and comedy into a loud and thrilling performance for all ages. Running from now until May 2020, the audience can expect an hour-long action-packed treat presented by a stellar cast of stuntmen, world champion ice skaters and talented dancers.



Asia casts positive reflection



Kyaiktiyo Pagoda and its iconic Golden Rock swells with eager pilgrims

Mauro Trevisan/istock

Myanmar's lagging tourism industry has Asian source markets to thank for, as regional arrivals swell on the back of new air connections, writes **Marissa Carruthers**

Just like its neighbours, Myanmar is enjoying swelling interest from Asian tourists, who are helping to fill the arrival gap left behind by weakening long-haul markets.

Latest figures from the destination's tourism authorities show that 841,579 international visitors arrived at Yangon International Airport in the first eight months of 2019, up 16 per cent year-on-year. Asian arrivals leapt 21 per cent year-on-year, with China leading the pack and recording an 81 per cent increase to 219,242.

Meanwhile, Western European arrivals slipped by two per cent in the same period. Italy and Spain were the only markets that recorded a pick up in arrivals, at 18 and 14 per cent respectively.

North American visitorship grew slightly, at just one per cent.

With China as the front runner in arrivals for Myanmar, industry players are hopeful that the market – particularly the swelling middle-class – will help steer Myanmar's lagging tourism industry to recovery. To further grow Chinese arrivals, industry leaders say there needs to be unique experiences that are also easily accessible.

Another source of hope lies the country's recent improvements in air accessibility. New flights launched in 2019 connect Myanmar with Hangzhou, Shanghai and Wuhan, with more services on the horizon. There are now 10 airlines flying between Myanmar and 15 different Chinese cities.

LCC IndiGo Airlines started daily direct flights from Kolkata to Yangon in October 2019, while Dubai-based flydubai launched daily services to Yangon, with an onward connection to Thailand's Krabi, in December.

Meanwhile, the government has helped to move tourism development along with improved visa programmes for international travellers.



Inspiration: Happy belly

As a melting pot of cultures and home to 135 ethnic tribes, Myanmar is a foodie's dream. Cuisines vary vastly throughout the country, with Yangon being the best place to sample the variety of dishes, from iconic breakfast meal *mohinga*, and *lahpet thoke* (tea leaf salad), to Burmese curry.

To eat like a local, 19th Street is awash with hawkers selling a range of tasty bites. Alternatively, food tours and cookery classes can introduce visitors to the country's diverse cuisine. Shan State is famed for its noodles and fish rice. Visitors to Inle Lake can sample the delights during a cookery class with Inle Heritage.

Developments to watch

Collaboration for strength

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Myanmar Tourism Marketing and American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) to start promoting tourism between the two countries. ASTA opened its Myanmar chapter in February 2019 with a view to work on a variety of projects in Myanmar and seek out opportunities to educate their travel advisors on an emerging destination. ASTA Myanmar chapter has almost 150 members, making it the association's largest international chapter.



From left: Mergui Archipelago gets more marketing attention; Shwezigon Pagoda, located in Nyaung-U, a town near Bagan



Bagan gets UNESCO listing

In July 2019, the ancient capital of Bagan was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site after years of bidding. Travel and tourism industry players believe this will help attract visitors wanting to catch a glimpse

of the temples, stupas, monasteries and pagodas that date back to between the 11th and 13th centuries.

Easy welcome

Myanmar has extended the visa-free concessions for nationals of Japan, Korea, Macau and Hong Kong for another year,

as well as the visa-on-arrival programme for Chinese and Indians. At the same time, nationals of Austria, Italy, Germany, Russia, Spain and Switzerland can now enjoy visa on arrival.

New discoveries

To showcase the country's diversity

beyond the classic tourist spots, the Myanmar Tourism Marketing kicked off its 9 *Enchanting Discoveries of Myanmar* campaign earlier in March 2019 to spotlight places such as Kyaing Tong, Loikaw, Mergui Archipelago and Hpa An. It remains to be seen how this effort has paid off.

What's New

Burma Boating

The company now operates monthly cruises around the Mergui Archipelago, combining yachting and scuba diving. From November to April, the *SY Dal-linghoo*, will cast off from the port of Kawthaung once a month and traverse the Mergui Archipelago on an eight-day, seven-night sailing trip which can accommodate up to eight qualified divers.

Centara KMA properties

Thai-based Centara Hotels & Resorts and Myanmar's KMA Hotels Group will jointly develop six hotels in Myanmar. Three of KMA's existing properties in Inle, Nay Pyi Taw and Taungoo will be refurbished, while three new ones will be developed in Bagan and Than Daung. First on the list to open is the 95-key Centara KMA Resort Inle Lake, which debuted at the end of 2019.

Khiri Luxury

Khiri Travel has unveiled a four-day walking and boating itinerary in the highlands of southern Shan State. Khiri links Pekon, Samkar and Inle lakes in one trip inspired by the 'chalet to chalet' trekking of Switzerland and New Zealand. Local boats link sections of hiking of 15km a day.

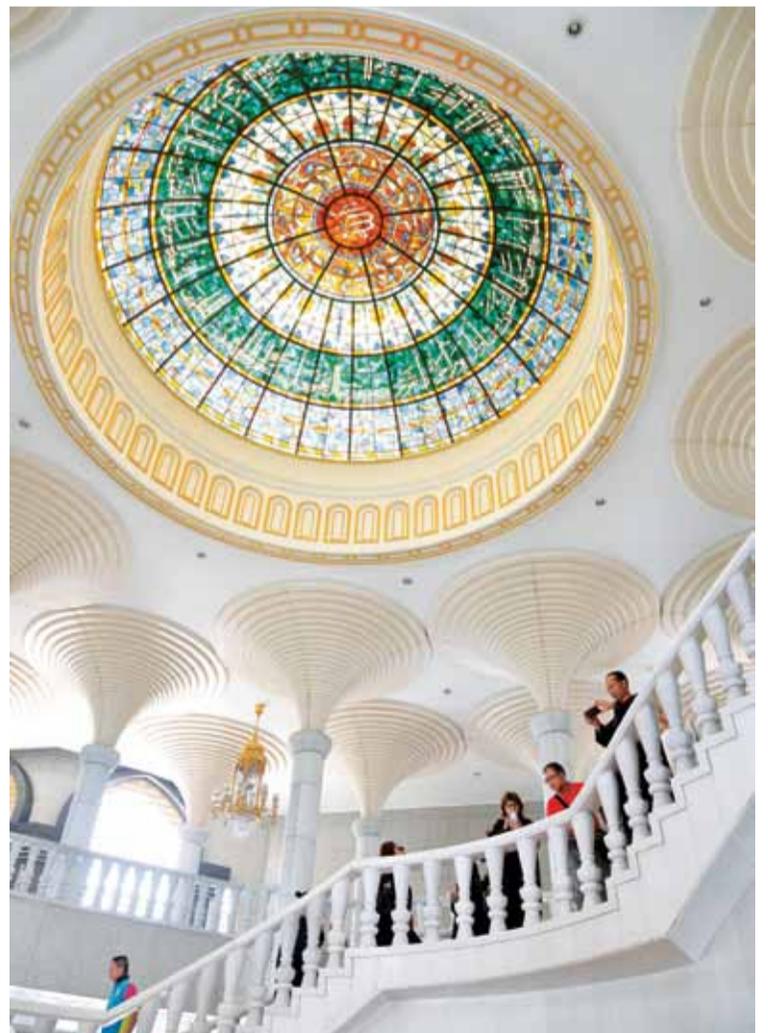


Clockwise from above: Khiri Travel takes visitors on a hike; a fisherman on Inle lake; Burma Boating offers cruise and dive programmes



Soaking up the sights

By Yingyong Unanongrak



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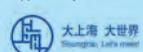
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