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No. 1773/January-February 2020



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iFly Singapore



AJ Hackett Sentosa



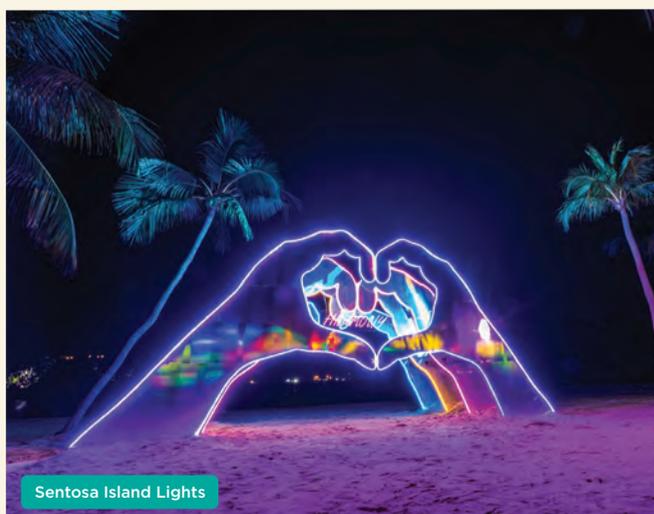
Sentosa 4D AdventureLand



KidZania Singapore



Madame Tussauds Singapore



Sentosa Island Lights



Sentosa Sandsation

Holidays with an eventful twist

Maximise the fun by planning holidays around Sentosa's slate of exciting annual events. It ranges from food festival by the beach Sentosa GrillFest (Jul 2020) to interactive art installations at Sentosa Island Lights (Nov-Dec 2020). If the littles ones are in tow, have a big day out at Sentosa Sandsation (Sep 2020), showcasing Disney-themed massive sand sculptures. For a higher dosage of cuteness, Sentosa FunFest (Mar 2020) featuring Sanrio characters will get them bouncing with glee on giant inflatables.

LIVING YOUR BEST ISLAND LIFE, COMES EASY



Rumours Beach Club

Here, your gastronomic adventures may take you to the beach, the marina or even up in the sky - one-of-a-kind experiences that will satiate more than your food cravings.

Dreamy beachside dining

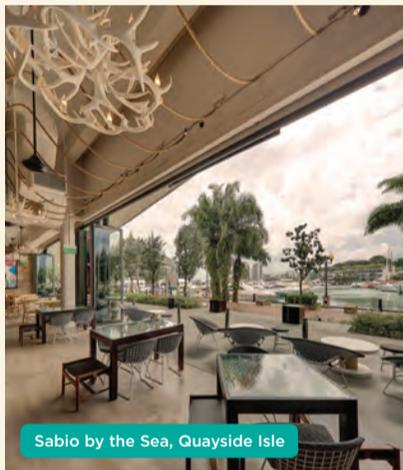
Kick back in a charming ambience at Siloso Beach's newest addition, **Rumours Beach Club**, where live music and great meat platters await. At **Ola Beach Club**, you'll pair Hawaiian-inspired bites with water sports like paddleboarding. You'll feel the same infectious energy at **Stacks at Siloso** - an all-new lifestyle enclave built on containers, offering hip F&B options boasting incredible sea views.

A taste of the marina

If you're hungry for waterfront views, the **Quayside Isle** will have you soaking up mesmerising views of the harbour from its luxurious stable of dining establishments. Kodak moments are aplenty when you set sail too, especially on board luxury tall ship, **The Royal Albatross**. Cruise past nearby islets and revel in the breathtaking sunsets and glittering skylines with a cocktail in hand.



Coastes



Sabio by the Sea, Quayside Isle



Ola Beach Club



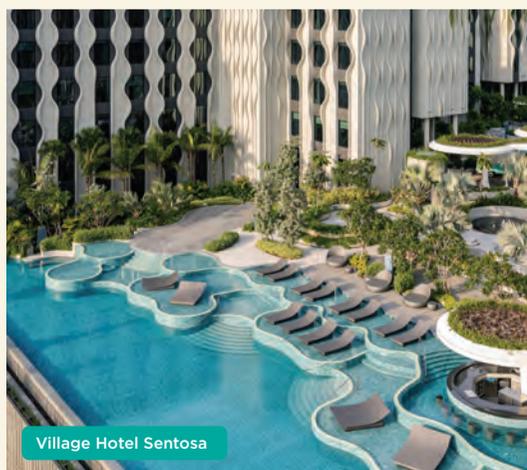
The Barracks Hotel Sentosa



W Singapore - Sentosa Cove



Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort & Spa



Village Hotel Sentosa

With over 17 hotels and 4000 rooms on Sentosa, you can find the perfect haven for any interest.

Rooms with the finer touches

Get whisked away by the old-world charm of **The Barracks Hotel**, Sentosa's newest establishment is a beautifully restored military outpost built in 1904. Look to **The Outpost Hotel** for an equally trendy space to unwind in, as its sleek well-appointed interiors are set to elevate your stay.

Exceptional family-friendly comforts

Take a break from the city life and seek refuge at **Village Hotel Sentosa**, a tropical resort that includes 4 unique themed pools that will be a hit with the kids. Inspire the whole family with unparalleled views of the South China Sea from your private balcony, when you stay at **Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort & Spa**.

Come escape to Sentosa, an idyllic getaway island filled with top attractions, award-winning accommodation, lush rainforests, white sandy beaches and more.

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Find room for discussion with a total venue space of 20,000sqm.



Spoil yourself with over 4,000 rooms in 17 hotels to choose from.



Cutting-edge facilities for crucial summits or casual get-togethers.

Work meets play on Sentosa, a tropical island just 15 minutes away from Singapore's city centre. Choose from a unique selection of world-class venues for corporate meetings or private parties, all equipped with state-of-the-art facilities. See your events come to life on our beautiful sun-kissed beaches, aboard a luxury tall ship or even amongst thousands of marine animals in an aquarium.

It's everything you'd expect from a business destination, plus the fun perks of a getaway island. To learn more, email us at mice@sentosa.com.sg or visit sentosa.com.sg

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SE Asia's most wanted

ASEAN NTOs and industry stakeholders pick which of the region's game-changing destinations should make it to our watchlist in 2020

The quality approach

Japan is leveraging the marketing wave arising from major sporting events to attract more longhaul, high-spending visitors into the country

Next big thing in travel

Blanca Menchaca, CEO and co-founder of BeMyGuest, believes the tours and activities sector is at a technological tipping point



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Tourism in 2020: what lies ahead?

In the current climate of global economic slowdown, geopolitical risks and trade tensions, what does the year ahead have in store? We ask travel industry chiefs for their take on how South-east Asia's tourism sector is shaping up in 2020





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Industry efforts to improve gender diversity and sustainable tourism

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In the current climate of global economic slowdown, geopolitical risks and trade tensions, what lies ahead on the tourism horizon? Industry chiefs predict how South-east Asia's tourism sector is shaping up in 2020

08 The next big thing in travel

Asia-Pacific's tours and activities space remains predominantly in the offline space, but Blanca Menchaca, CEO and co-founder of BeMyGuest, believes that the sector is now at a technological tipping point

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Hear from ASEAN NTOs and

industry stakeholders which of the region's game-changing destinations should make it to our watchlist for 2020

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Japan is leveraging the marketing wave of the recently concluded Rugby World Cup and the upcoming Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games to attract more longhaul visitors with higher spending. Inbound stakeholders share what their plans are

18 Combating Delhi's smog crisis

As hazardous levels of air pollution casts a pall over inbound tourism, Indian tour operators are finding ways to fight the confidence crisis in the face of falling arrivals and flight of tourists to other cities in the country



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WE LIKE

Pushing gender diversity in aviation

The IATA announced that 59 airlines have committed to the 25by2025 campaign which seeks to address gender balance in civil aviation.

Launched on September 26, 2019, the 25by2025 campaign sees participating airlines voluntarily committing to increase the number of women in senior positions (to be defined by member airlines) by either 25 per cent against currently reported metrics or to a minimum representation of 25 per cent by 2025; and to increase the number of women in under-represented jobs, such as pilots and operations, by either 25 per cent against currently reported metrics or to a minimum representation of 25 per cent by 2025.

Collectively, the 59 airlines that have committed to 25by2025 represent 30.2 per cent of passenger traffic, covering both traditional and LCCs. The initiative has garnered signatories across all continents, with Europe leading the pack (36), fol-

lowed by Asia-Pacific (10), the Americas (7), and Africa & Middle East (6).

"Our passengers come from all walks of life, represent different cultures and genders and yet, the industry itself does not represent the diverse world we live in today. We know this needs to change," said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's director general and CEO.

The next phase of the campaign will focus on collecting data on the key areas signatories have committed to: the number of women in senior positions (as defined by the airline); the number of women in underrepresented areas within the airline, such as pilots, maintenance and engineering; and the number of nominations and appointments to IATA governance groups. IATA is also measuring and reporting on the number of women in senior positions, and the number of women represented in industry meetings.

Air New Zealand trials edible cups

Air New Zealand has begun trialling edible coffee cups on select flights and its lounges in Auckland in a bid to reduce the amount of waste produced onboard its planes.

The airline currently serves more than eight million cups of coffee each year.

Air New Zealand's senior manager customer experience Niki Chave said that while the cups are compostable, the ultimate goal would be to remove them totally from landfills.

"We've been working in partnership with innovative New Zealand company twice to explore the future of edible coffee cups, which are vanilla-flavoured and leakproof. The cups have been a big hit with the customers who have used these and we've also been using the cups as dessert bowls," Chave said.

Coming Up

MARCH 2020 ISSUE

Wellness Amid a swelling global health-conscious trend, the hospitality industry is offering more than ever for wellness-focused guests

China Tour operators are seeing a spike in demand for self-drive and campervan travel among both domestic and foreign tourists in China

Singapore The islands of Sentosa and Pulau Brani are gearing up for a new wave of developments and attractions



Air New Zealand's edible coffee cups also double as dessert bowls

fee cups, which are vanilla-flavoured and leakproof. The cups have been a big hit with the customers who have used these and we've also been using the cups as dessert bowls," Chave said.

Twice's co-founder Jamie Cashmore said that the edible cups could play a big role in showing the world that new and innovative ways of packaging are achievable.

The twice edible cup trial follows Air New Zealand's recent switch to plant-based coffee cups onboard all aircraft and in lounges. The plant-based cups are made from paper and corn instead of plastic, which enables the cup to break down in a commercial composter.

Switching to plant-based coffee cups is expected to prevent around 15 million cups from going to landfill annually. The airline is also encouraging customers to bring their own reusable cups on board aircraft and into its lounges.

Chave said that Air New Zealand will continue to trial twice's edible coffee cups and work with the company and other partners to explore scaling options that could make it a viable long-term product for the airline.



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Travel Hall of Fame

Since 2002, TTG Asia Media has honoured luminaries that have won the prestigious TTG Travel Award for at least 10 consecutive times for the same award title in the Travel Hall of Fame.

- At present, these exceptional organisations and their years of induction are:
- Singapore Airlines Limited (2002)
- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Hertz Asia Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group - The State of Exclusivity & Fascination (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Sabre Asia Pacific Pte Ltd (2009)
- SilkAir (Singapore) Private Limited (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)
- Regal Airport Hotel (2015)
- Banyan Tree Spa (2015)
- Qatar Airways (2016)
- Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (2016)
- Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (2016)
- Royal Plaza on Scotts (2018)
- Royal Caribbean International (2018)
- Best Western Hotels & Resorts (2019)
- Travelport (2019)

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



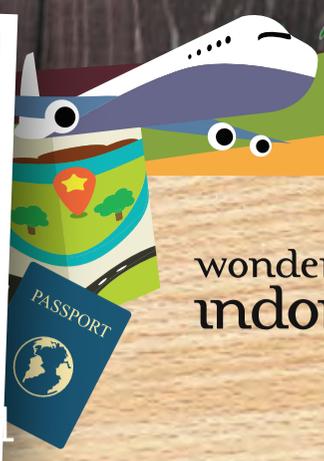
Signatories of the 59 airlines for IATA's 25by2025 resolution



2



1



wonderful indonesia

TOP 10 WONDERFUL EVENTS 2020



6

1 Jakarta, 28 Feb - 1 March 2020
JAVA JAZZ FESTIVAL
Jakarta International Java Jazz Festival (JJF) is one of the largest jazz festival in the world and arguably the biggest in Southern Hemisphere, held in Jakarta, Indonesia. The annual Jazz Festival is held every early March, with approximately 102 groups and 1,227 local and international artists perform in 146 shows.

6 North Sulawesi, 8 - 12 August 2020
TOMOHON INT. FLOWER FEST
The event will feature millions of Tomohon's natural beauty through a parade of flowers and a parade of ornamental vehicles, which are the inheritance assets of Tomohon residents.



3

2 Bali, 13 June - 11 July 2020
BALI ARTS FESTIVAL
During one whole month, the best of this idyllic tropical island's dance, music, and artistic expressions will be displayed to the public when Bali showcases its best cultural presentations, presented and revived by villagers across the island.

7 Bali, 21 - 25 August 2020
SANUR VILLAGE FESTIVAL
Sanur Village Festival (SVF) is a community event founded by Sanur Development Foundation (YPS) which is a combination of several large-scale activities involving food festival, creative economy exhibition, various contests and competitions, art and cultural attractions, music as well as various types of environmentally-friendly activities.



7



4

3 Yogyakarta, 23 July - 31 August 2020
ARTJOG MMXX
ArtJog is an international contemporary arts festival based in Yogyakarta. A place where to find a various presentations of interdisciplinary arts, and at the same time developing and maintaining the existing network between artist, market, stakeholder, and the public. ArtJog is a space for sharing; sharing knowledge and aesthetic experiences along with the latest development in art.

8 Riau Islands, 30 August 2020
IRON MAN 70.3 BINTAN
Challenge yourself at Asia's best destination triathlon on an exotic island with Iron Man Bintan. The Water is perfect for swimming due to the warm temperature of 29°C with excellent visibility and no currents. A bike course with the lush and dense forests of Bintan accompanied by beautiful coastal views. Ends with stunning run course that winds through spectacular scenery along the manicured Lagoi Bay Lake.

4 East Java, 25 July 2020
BANYUWANGI ETHNO CARNIVAL
A world class tourist festival that shines the spotlight on local culture. A worth praising art installation which always consistently highlighting the vibrant of Wonderful Archipelago (Nusantara).

9 South Sulawesi, 7 - 11 October 2020
F8 MAKASSAR
Makassar International Eight Festival and Forum or famously known as F8 Festival will be back at Pantai Losari - Makassar to present the best cultural attraction package starting from Fusion Music, Fashion, Film, Fine Art, Fiction Writers & Font, Food & Fruit, Folk and also Flora & Fauna.



8



5

5 East Java, 6 - 7 August 2020
JEMBER FASHION CARNIVAL
It was the first that started the trend in Indonesia, parading unbelievably spectacular modern costumes that are rooted in the multiple traditions and cultures around the world. JFC has represented Indonesia and won in Multiple International Carnaval Competition.

10 Central Java, 15 November 2020
BOROBUDUR MARATHON
Borobudur Marathon gives a new experience for runners to explore Biggest Buddhist Temple in the world and also UNESCO World Heritage Site, through passion and beauty. The event is also a treat for runners and tourists to breathe in the refreshing scenic view, experience the warm local hospitality, and enjoy the richness culinary.



10



9

Explore Further

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Whether as a tourism destination or source, Vietnam is seen as one of Asia's hottest markets; Ho Chi Minh City pictured

Tourism in 2020: what lies ahead?

In the current climate of global economic slowdown, geopolitical risks and trade tensions, what does the year ahead have in store? We ask travel industry chiefs to give their take on how South-east Asia's tourism sector is shaping up in 2020

OUTBOUND TRAVEL: STRONG OUTBOUND DEMAND FROM ASIA

SINGAPORE

Ongoing socio-political unrest in Asia and beyond has limited impact on the travel confidence of Singaporeans, a market that does not typically shy away from riskier destinations.

For instance, following the Easter Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka, groups from Singapore continued to travel there without worry, as "they feel safe because security is really tight", said Maleha Maarof, sales manager of Prime Travel & Tour.

However, this mindset has not applied to travel to Hong Kong. As riots rage on in the once-popular destination, Singapore's travel agencies are reporting mass cancellations, triggered in part by heightened travel advisories from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"Tourism to Hong Kong has definitely been impacted by declining numbers, especially for the leisure travel segment. Forward enquiries and bookings have dropped significantly due to the local political unrest," shared Alicia Seah, director, public relations & communications, Dynasty Travel.

Euro-Asia Holidays' managing director Maggie Tay agreed, explaining that while a few still dare to brave the city despite ongoing protests, the vast majority are shunning it altogether.

Instead, Singaporeans are fulfilling their wanderlust in other Asian destinations like Japan, where smaller unknown prefectures are capturing the attention of travellers.

Diana Ho, general manager of

Royal Wings Travel, said: "Our focus next year will be on Japan. Singaporeans will travel around the Olympic Games or avoid Tokyo, so we will promote more tours into Kochi Prefecture and Aomori Prefecture."

Longhaul destinations, including Eastern and Northern Europe, and the Balkans, are also attracting Singaporeans as the euro weakens against the Singapore dollar.

To ensure safety and quality in their tours, agencies are doubling down on efforts to build and maintain strong relationships with in-destination partners.

Dynasty Travel, for example, is involving its suppliers and partners in product development and planning, as well as inviting them to travel events as presenters. Come 2020, Dynasty Travel will launch even more exotic products, such as the first-ever Svalbard Expedition Cruise and packages for Iran. – **Pamela Chow**

MALAYSIA

Malaysia's outbound travel sentiment remains strong in 2020, fuelled by new packages and destinations to whet travellers' appetite, despite the US-China trade war uncertainty and a weak ringgit.

Sheikh Awadh Sheikh Abdullah, managing director, Gotz Travel & Tours, revealed that demand for longhaul holidays remained strong for the Chinese New Year period, with Turkey, the Balkans and Western Europe being popular destinations. For Muslim families, he said programmes to Spain and Morocco were



Millennials love soft adventure and discovering new places, but with limited disposable income, they focus on regional travel. They love venturing off the beaten path, exploring beyond the normal attractions.

RAAJ NAVARATNA
General manager,
New Asia Holiday
Tours & Travel

in demand.

The company will be promoting the Caucasus region this year, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, as Sheikh Awadh believes that these destinations would appeal to the luxury and middle income travellers seeking new destinations beyond Europe. The Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents Kuala Lumpur chapter, of which Sheikh Awadh is also a committee member, will be organising fam trips for its members to visit the three countries in 1Q2020.

Overall, he expects outbound business in 1Q2020 to increase by two to three per cent from the corresponding period in 2019.

Raaj Navaratna, general manager, New Asia Holiday Tours & Travel, shared that the company was seeing stronger demand from millennials travelling regionally to off-the-beaten-track areas in 2020.

"Millennials love soft adventure and discovering new places, but with limited disposable income, they focus on regional travel. They love venturing off the beaten path, exploring beyond the normal attractions," he said, adding that there is strong demand for travel to Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and India.

He added that NGOs and clubs in Malaysia are also showing increased interest in volunteer tourism, which are mainly community-based projects in the region such as helping with repairs and upgrading of rural school facilities.

William Chu, director, VIP

– Corporate Travel & Tours, noted a keener interest to visit Japan in 1Q2020 as Malaysian travellers wanted to shun the higher ground rates during the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. – **S Puvaneswary**

INDONESIA

Indonesian outbound travel companies are expecting brighter market prospects in 2020, driven by a positive confluence of factors including aggressive marketing and promotions by international NTOs and in airlines.

Pauline Suharno, managing director of Elok Tour and secretary general of the Indonesian Travel Agents Association (ASTINDO), said: "Travelling has become a lifestyle for Indonesians. They even take a short break or a long weekend to travel out of town."

With the re-election of Joko Widodo as the Indonesian president during the recent election, the market's interest in travel has risen.

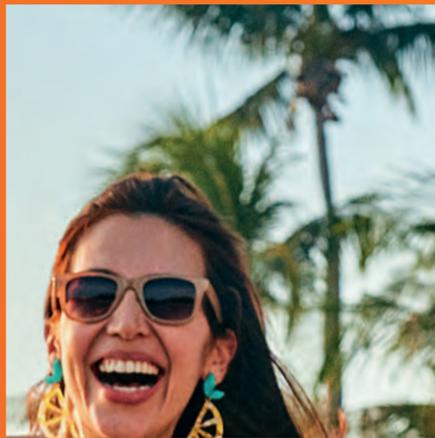
Meanwhile, high domestic airfares have also given impetus to the outbound push. "With domestic airfares remaining high, we expect to see higher outbound traffic in 2020," Pauline said.

While Japan and South Korea remain top of the list, travellers now have many more choices, thanks to promotions from various NTOs.

The Taiwan Tourism Information Center opened an Indonesian representative office in Jakarta in 2019 to grow outbound traffic from Indonesia, while India has launched its charm offensive in the country, starting with visa-free facilities.

Likewise, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Butan and Uzbekistan are stepping up their destination marketing efforts in the country. Uzbekistan Airlines also recently started direct flights between Tashkent and Jakarta, boosting connectivity between the two countries.

Anton Sumarli, director of Travellux Travel Services and ASTINDO board member said: "Sri Lanka is a visa-free destination for Indonesians and the country is eager to grab the outbound market from here. They have invited (agents) for a fam trip, participated at travel fairs here and is planning to organise photo exhibitions to create more awareness among Indonesians."



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Pauline added: “Nepal and Bhutan are high-end destinations that are likely to attract Indonesia’s younger travellers who are more enthusiastic to walk and hike, rather than the mature ones who like exotic destinations but still enjoy luxury and comfort.”

Sharing similar sentiments, Anton said: “Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan have the potential to attract special interest tourists, especially those who like adventure or photography.”

Meanwhile, the memorial complex of famous theologian Imam Al-Bukhari in Uzbekistan is expected to attract Indonesian Muslim travellers, according to Anton. – **Mimi Hudoyo**

INBOUND TRAVEL: ASIA PROPS UP REGIONAL TOURISM

MALAYSIA

Inbound agents specialising in European markets are banking on stronger demand on the back of Tourism Malaysia’s more aggressive promotions in Europe over the last two years, coupled with the increased budget allocation to promote the *Visit Malaysia 2020* campaign.

Asian regional markets are also expected to see a pick-up this year, thanks to improved air connectivity, visa relaxation for Chinese and Indian tourists, and the anticipated opening of Resorts World Genting’s outdoor theme park.

Saini Vermeulen, executive director, Within Earth Holidays, shared that the company has received strong bookings from Western and Eastern Europe, resulting in a 30 per cent hike in forward bookings over 2019. He said that this was partly due to the company’s efforts to conduct more

sales calls in Europe last year, as well as Tourism Malaysia’s initiative of being partner country at ITB Berlin 2019 which generated further interest in Malaysia from Europe.

He noted that Qatar Airways’ flights to Penang and Langkawi have also triggered the interest of European tourists to visit both destinations, so the company has created more tour packages in both destinations to capture the European market.

Manfred Kurz, managing director, Diethelm Travel Malaysia, remarked that while travel demand from Central Europe and North America was strong, he expected bookings from the UK to be slow due to the uncertainty of Brexit. He said: “Once Brexit is solved, we expect demand from the UK to pick up. With the current uncertainty, the British people are reluctant to plan too far ahead.”

Ganneesh Ramaa, vice president, Destination Explore, projected a 10 per cent increase from Indian and regional markets this year, partly due to the recent relaxation of the visa rules for Indian nationals. He shared that the main challenge in 2019 was the Indian election in May which coin-



Destinations like Phu Quoc, Inle Lake, Jaipur and Udaipur are going to grow in 2020 as people seek places that are a little bit less touristy.

MICHAEL ISSENBERG
Chairman & COO,
Accor Asia-Pacific



decided with the peak summer travel period to Malaysia, resulting in a drop in Indian arrivals. He is upbeat that the upcoming summer travel season will fare better in 2020.

He opined that once Resorts World Genting’s outdoor theme park becomes operational, it will further boost arrivals from Asian markets. His company is also working closely with Sarawak Tourism Board to promote Sarawak packages to its Asian clients. For European markets, the company has created new packages highlighting nature and beach stays in Johor. – **S Puvaneswary**

INDONESIA

Indonesian inbound players are forecasting growth from countries in the Asia-Pacific as bookings from Europe and the US slow down.

INA Leisure is expecting the growth in inbound arrivals from the Indian and Middle Eastern markets in 2019 to continue into 2020, according to its owner and executive director Jongki Adiyasa.

“Most Indian travellers are still attracted to Bali, but Middle Easterners have started to venture beyond Bali to Lombok and East Nusa Tenggara,” he said.

Aneka Kartika Tours is also seeing a spike in visitor arrivals from South-east Asia in 2020, on the back of more direct flights between Indonesia and its neighbouring nations.

Its operations manager, Adjie Wahjono, said: “The South-east Asia market is quite promising for us. We are in the process of bidding for big incentive groups (over 100 pax) from the Philippines and Vietnam, which is a new market that has opened for us, thanks to Vietjet’s and Vietnam Airlines’ recent launch of (five-times weekly) direct flights between Ho Chi Minh City and Bali.”

Adjie said that his company’s foray into the Vietnam market four years ago started bearing fruit towards the end of last year when group enquiries rolled in, with scheduled arrivals between December 2019 and February 2020 at press time.

“Malaysia Airlines is offering competitive airfares from Vietnam to Bali via Kuala Lumpur, which also opens up more options for travellers from Vietnam to visit Indonesia,” Adjie said.

However, both Jongki and Adjie are seeing a slow start to inbound bookings from the longhaul markets of Europe and the US.

Jongki said: “Summer bookings from Europe are not looking promising yet. The beginning of the year seems to be very quiet and we expect to see the market start moving from April onwards and grow stronger after June, provided that the (social and political) conditions in Indonesia continue to stabilise.”

Adjie added: “On one hand, we have seen the market’s confidence, as our business partners have extended their contracts and new accounts added. We have also started to get group bookings, but there haven’t been many FIT bookings, which usually start pouring in between November and February, so I have not been able to project how summer 2020 will be like.”

While Panorama Destination’s director of business development Ricky Setiawanto said it’s too early

to predict the longhaul market’s performance, the company has received positive feedback from its European business partners on its 2020 outlook.

He said: “Generally, our business partners, particularly from the Netherlands, are optimistic that our performance in 2020 will be better than 2019. However, we should see a clearer picture in January or February. Vakantiebeurs (a travel fair taking place in the Netherlands in January) is usually a (barometer) to see how the market will perform during the year.”

Meanwhile, a promising market is Denmark, whose extensive airline capacity to Asia reflects the market confidence in this part of the world.

Emirates, for example, offers extensive flights to Asia, including Indonesia; as well as a daily A380 service between Copenhagen and Dubai. Meanwhile, Singapore Airlines and Turkish Airlines also fly to Copenhagen. As well, South Africa is another longhaul market which is faring well, according to Ricky.

“The country has been performing well in 2018 and 2019, and should the economic situation in South Africa remain stable, we expect the market to grow even bigger in 2020 – both in volume and spending,” he said. – **Mimi Hudoyo**

HOSPITALITY: SPOTLIGHT ON DESTINATIONS OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Asian destinations that sit off the well-trodden tourist trail will shine in 2020, predict hospitality leaders.

Interest in Vietnam has shown no sign of waning as a swathe of international hospitality brands gear up to expand in the country’s established and emerging destinations.

Javier Pardo, vice president of operations for Avani Hotels & Resorts, said: “Vietnam is developing rapidly and is improving its air and land infrastructure, allowing more developments into other destinations within the country.”

The brand plans to open properties in Doc Let, Nha Trang, Ho Chi Minh City and Cam Ranh by 2022.

Vietnam is also on the radar of Michael Issenberg, Accor’s chairman and CEO for Asia-Pacific. Besides Vietnam, he believes that India, Cambodia and the Maldives will be some of 2020’s “hottest” spots.

Added Issenberg: “Destinations like Phu Quoc, Inle Lake, Jaipur and Udaipur are going to grow in 2020 as people seek places that are a little bit less touristy.”

Despite travellers’ growing appetite for off-the-beaten-track destinations, Issenberg said that “places like Singapore, Bali, Bangkok, Sydney and Melbourne will continue to perform well”.

Even in the established tourist destination of Thailand, secondary cities are now growing in prominence among international travellers, noted Paul Wilson, executive vice president of commercial at Cross Hotels and Resorts.

“Kanchanaburi, for instance, is becoming a hotspot. Hotel infrastructure is getting better with more five-star hotel openings, including our two properties there, which come



From above: Georgia is projected to be one of the hottest destinations for Asian travellers; Thailand’s Kanchanaburi is gaining prominence with the entry of upmarket resorts like the X2 River Kwai Resort



MARKET OUTLOOK

on top of existing attractions like the Death Railway, as well as easier access to the destination,” he remarked.

Neo Soon Hup, executive vice-president, operations, for Pan Pacific Hotels Group, said that Asian source markets will continue to drive business across the region come 2020, with China leading the pack.

Despite a slowdown in the Chinese economy, Issenberg said that this will not impact business due to the size of China’s population and fast-growing middle class. He added that Asia’s hospitality industry will be eyeing up some of 2020’s fastest-growing outbound markets – India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

As well, India is a market that “cannot be ignored,” said Wilson, as Cross Hotels plans to open a GSA in the country soon. “Although we don’t have that many guests from India yet, we want to be ahead of the curve in tapping business from the country.”

In spite of a healthy outlook, challenges remain. Pardo said that human resources is the biggest hurdle to overcome, alongside retaining staff in an industry where competition is rapidly growing.

He said: “Looking for passionate hospitality (staff) and preparing young hoteliers for future career progression is difficult. Maintaining the talent is the next challenge, as the industry is quite competitive now with all the major consolidations, so turnover is quite fast.” – **Marissa Caruthers and Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

AIRLINES: CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

Asian airlines are bracing for slower growth in 2020 amid softening Chinese outbound travel demand and economic uncertainty owing to the ongoing US-China trade war, but industry leaders also say it is not all doom and gloom.

That was the common consensus among airline chiefs at the CAPA Asia Aviation Summit and Corporate Travel Summit held last November in Singapore, who said they saw pockets of opportunities in growing ancillary fees, focusing on untapped inbound traffic and market segmentation.

For regional LCCs, Jetstar Asia and Thai AirAsia both reported that revenue for ancillary fees were growing – at about one to two per cent annually – and now constitute between 18 per cent and 30 per cent of revenue.

Jetstar Asia’s CEO Barathan Pasupathi said that there are opportunities for airlines in the “vertical chain” and sharing platforms where passengers not only book air tickets, but also rides to and from the airport via a car-hailing service, and booking of hotel rooms, etc.

Ancillary fees for Jetstar Asia have jumped from the “tens” to around 30 per cent, he noted.

Thai AirAsia’s executive chairman Tassapon Bijleveld said that OTAs were “not selling ancillary (products and services)” and that the airline would have to drop big OTAs in China and work with those willing to sell ancillary products and services.

Chinese traffic has been slowing down over the last two years, he added, and despite a two per cent pick up, the market was not what it used to be.

Tassapon added: “The Thai baht is very strong and there are no fundamentals to explain why. We are suffering because of the exchange rate.”

AirAsia group CEO Tony Fernandes said that he remains “very, very optimistic” about 2020. “We see further growth in network and passengers in 2020 and beyond, both in the domestic and international sectors,” he said, citing the carrier’s purchase of 353 Airbus A321neo aircraft as the backbone for its expansion plans.

The A321neo, which has a 27 per cent increase in capacity compared to the present fleet of 180-seat Airbus A320 and 186-seat A320neo, will eventually replace AirAsia’s existing fleet throughout the network.

For IndiGo, the Indian LCC is betting big on the potential of East Asia, with the launch of new services to Chengdu, Guangzhou, Yangon, Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, according to the airline’s CCO Willy Boulter.

Boulter said that the airline was changing its domestic focus, going international and tapping the Chinese inbound market to India, both for leisure and business. He added that IndiGo was also eyeing more outbound traffic to Thailand, with the introduction of visa fee waivers.

For full-fledged airline Garuda Indonesia, its strategy is to work with companies that provide services for travellers looking for a luxury experience such as private jet services.

Elsewhere, Tamas Hanyi, Finnair’s general manager for Asia-Pacific, was optimistic with forward bookings for 1Q2020.

He said: “Bookings on the Singapore-Helsinki route in 1Q2020 are looking really good, and hopefully, we can maintain it,” despite acknowledging headwinds as the result of the ongoing US-China trade wars and the uncertainty of Brexit.

Finnair will further expand its network in North Asia, by offering daily flights to Haneda from March 29 and three weekly flights between Helsinki-Busan from March 30.

Hanyi told TTG Asia at the recent ITB Asia in October that overall passenger growth on its Singapore-Helsinki route had increased by seven per cent year-to-date over last year, while group travel had increased by 30 per cent for the same period. He believed the reasons for this were the continuous education to consumers and travel partners that flying via Helsinki is geographically the shortest way between Europe from Asia as well as its high consistency and reliability of its product offerings.

Indonesia is an increasingly consolidated market where the government set a cap for the selling price of airline tickets, said Garuda Indonesia’s CEO I Gusti Ngurah Askhara Danadiputra.

Meanwhile, CAPA – Centre for Aviation chairman emeritus Peter Harbison said that the industry would face four game changers in the coming decade.

He said that there would be environmental headwinds caused by “flight shaming” and the impact on corporate travel; distribution and technology change due to data analytics and big tech companies that know more about the customer; new aircraft technology revolutionis-



From top: AirAsia takes delivery of first Airbus A321neo; iFly skydive simulator onboard Royal Caribbean International’s *Quantum of the Seas*

ing route planning; and partnerships and foreign ownership changes, where individual airlines have to respond to bilateral agreements because of market needs and groupings like Star Alliance, Oneworld and SkyTeam being challenged. – **Caroline Boey and S Puvaneswary**

CRUISES: CHARTING NEW WATERS

To draw more Asians on board cruising holidays, industry players are churning out more immersive and pampering products that regular travel cannot offer.

With new ships and infrastructure in the region – such as Royal Caribbean Cruises’ *Quantum of the Seas* homeported in Singapore until April 2020 and Dream Cruises’ *Global Dream* launch in 2021 – Asia’s cruise industry is set for an uptick in growth momentum starting 2020-2021, expressed Dream Cruises’ president Michael Goh.

The cruising experience has also been redefined by personalised guest engagement. Goh explained: “*Global Dream* will be equipped with state-of-the-art digital technology, such as facial and speech recognition, as well as climate and mood lighting controls via a mobile app. It will be optimally designed to meet the advanced digital requirements of the Asian cruise market.”

For Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection & U River Cruises, that personalisation is exempli-

fied in afternoon tea gatherings with guests and handwritten postcards with personal greetings post-trip that create “a very good relationship between consumers and cruise liners”, explained Henry Yu, director, Asia.

Some companies have also collaborated with partners and authorities to enhance the off-ship experience. For example, Royal Caribbean International (RCI) recently entered into a five-year multimillion-dollar marketing partnership with Singapore Tourism Board and Changi Airport Group (CAG) to promote fly-cruises.

Under this partnership, RCI will tap on CAG’s seamless intermodal transfer service for passengers flying into Singapore and sailing out on cruise lines and ferries. RCI guests sailing out of Singapore from China will have their bags delivered from their arriving flights to their departing ship and enjoy facilities of the Changi Lounge located in Jewel Changi Airport, before being transferred to the cruise terminal.

RCI is also looking into drawing in more multigenerational travellers. Angie Stephen, managing director Asia-Pacific, Royal Caribbean Cruises, said: “We’re also working on a new children’s programme that we hope to announce next year. We’re also looking at themed cruises – for instance, we’re partnering a local radio station in March 2020 – and we’ve also successfully completed a halal-certified cruise for a partner in Malaysia with 500 guests on *Voyager of the Seas* (in November 2019).”



(Global Dream) will be optimally designed to meet the advanced digital requirements of the Asian cruise market.

MICHAEL GOH
President, Dream Cruises



The next big thing in travel

Asia-Pacific's fragmented tours and activities market remains predominantly rooted in the offline world, but Blanca Menchaca, CEO and co-founder at BeMyGuest, a Singapore-based distributor of travel activities and tours, believes the sector is now at a technological tipping point. She shares her projections of this fast-growing sector with **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

BeMyGuest recently secured a Series B funding, so what's next in the company's growth trajectory?

I think we have the basis of our business foundation already, so now we are focusing on the B2B distribution and technology side of the travel sector. There has been a lot of investment on the B2C side, and for any sector of travel, especially online, to really bloom, you need to build the pipelines in the back.

What we have been doing since (our inception) is focusing on developing the technology for operators to be able to sell online. Most recently, we rolled out a SaaS (Service as a Software) platform called Xplore, which operators can use for their own business as well.

A little of what we do is (improving) the connectivity of our distribution partners, which are mostly OTAs or online resellers accustomed to having savvy customers booking online. Those same customers are now demanding that travel activities are available for instant booking and at the same level of speed that they are accustomed to for their flight or hotel bookings.

We will continue to build more distribution partnerships. Right now, we have secured around 50 partners in the region that are fully integrated with our API, and we also have hundreds of non-API partners buying products from us and reselling them to their different customers.

In Asia, you cannot forget about the offline travel agents like Chan Brothers, JTB and HIS. They are still prominent in certain markets, and they are the ones helping consumers to buy products, just in a more traditional way. As well, Chan Brothers is also one of our investors.

Are you looking at the next funding round soon?

That's something we cannot really comment on.

Is BeMyGuest pivoting away from being just an aggregator to focus on growing your tech lead in the B2B space?

Well, you have to have technology to be a player. Period. I would describe our business as having the distribution side as well as the booking system side, and both of them are interconnected through the main engine, which is the platform that we've been building. This main platform allows us to distribute to partners and collect products from operators. The aggregation piece is always there, and in terms of securing the right amount of products, we have a fairly large database that can be broken down for different strategies of selling.

What has changed was that we used to have a B2C strategy, but now we always partner with somebody in an advance or sizable market to sell

to the customer. In a sense, we are B2B2C – we are not fully B2B or B2C – so this model not only shows how different we are but is also a reflection of the region. We realised very rapidly that one size doesn't fit all, especially in Asia. We have to find the distribution channels for operators to find the model attractive, so we partner with as many OTAs, travel activity websites or offline agents selling travel products to give wider exposure to operators' products.

But operators were lacking the technology to give correct information for us to digitise those products and deliver them through instant confirmation to the consumers or our partners, so we built an engine (to collect the information) and then pass it over to our partners upon check-out. The information is then passed back to the operator in milliseconds to confirm the booking. We have removed layers of customer service in a lot of manual processes, and we are able to deliver that instant bookability too.

To sell online, you need to be able to deliver an electronic ticket pricing and fulfil a booking instantly. Nobody likes to fill in a form anymore and wait 48 hours for a confirmation email; you want everything in milliseconds. But when you look at the operators who offer these in-destination experiences, they are behind in terms of technology adoption.

Are Asian operators lagging in the tech race?

In general, operators of travel activities are behind in the adoption of technology but Asia specifically more, because the region is more fragmented due to its cultural, language and currency differences across countries, and payment methods are not as

homogeneous as in markets in the US or Europe. And this is just natural because unlike products sold in the hotel or airline spaces – which are pretty standard or can be standardised more easily, and hence, pricing and booking management systems are correspondingly much easier to develop – the travel activities products are so diverse and fragmented and span across so many categories that the sector was the last to be digitised.

If you think about things to do in a destination, even the check-out process for a day tour booking will be more complex than selecting the

type of room or seat. In addition, we deal with day tours, activities, attractions, and sometimes events, so the fragmentation and the differences between product types are so big that the engine behind the booking technology needs to be a lot more complex than a hotel or flight booking engine.

But now, with hotels and flights pretty much commoditised and bookable everywhere online, everybody starts looking at the next revenue opportunity. When the industry starts taking the activities sector seriously, you start seeing a lot of changes in terms of the products offered by the big brands.

For example, Booking.com is offering its customers the possibility to book travel activity products on their own website without having to book hotel rooms. AirAsia is positioning itself as a full travel platform, while Traveloka launched its Xperience products as well, so there is a lot of interest in this new revenue stream.

How about multi-day tours?

Actually, the multi-day tour is something that we tested out very early on back in 2013, but we decided to not focus on them. A multi-day tour requires still a lot of selections, but a majority of the products sold in this sector are activities or things to do for a few hours or half a day.

Now that we have all the products online – not just ours but a lot of companies are investing and bringing all this inventory online – and they are fully instant confirmation and electronic ticket enabled, then we can make amazing strides. I think that (multi-day tours) will be the next phase, although we are still a few years out.

In a fragmented and diverse marketplace as Asia, what challenges lie in rolling out tech solutions for the tours and activities sector?

We try to help operators in Southeast Asia the most because they're the ones lagging the most behind. Unique activities are often run by lo-



10 NEED TO KNOW'S ABOUT BLANCA MENCHACA

■ **Who's in your family?** I am happily married to an amazing man called Ola, who is also my business partner.

■ **What do you do for fun?** I spend my free time with Chaser and Taco, my two crazy but lovely beagles!

■ **Your ideal vacation?** An unplugged holiday on a sailing boat surrounded by water and having nothing else to do but cook daily meals for my husband and I.

■ **How do you book your own leisure trips?** Completely online and usually very last minute – due to work, I have to keep it spontaneous and flexible.

■ **What are you reading right now?** *The Last Girl* by Nobel Prize winner Nadia Murad.

■ **How do you stay healthy?** I don't drink soft drinks or eat fast food. I should exercise more, for sure!

■ **Favourite food?** Home-made Mexican food.

■ **A bad habit you cannot kick** Being a workaholic!

■ **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you** Some say I could be a better listener, so I'm working on that.

■ **Most people don't know** I wanted to be a pilot or a professional dancer when I was a kid.

cal operators, who sometimes might not even speak English, let alone another language like Bahasa Indonesia, which lends to Asia's complexity.

In the region, Japan is probably the slowest in tech adoption due to its traditional business thinking, not because they are averse to technology, so it's more of a cultural factor at play. But with the government pushing for increasing international visitation to the country, I hope that will change.

Singapore, despite its small base, is an attractive destination and the operators are a little bit more advanced in tech adoption. Malaysia is a little more difficult to navigate, as the country is a bit more bureaucratic.

Indonesia is kind of split into Bali versus the rest of the country. Bali is much more used to welcoming international travellers, so that is reflected in the (tech readiness of its) tour operators as well. The Indonesian market is still generally very domestic though – as a source of travellers, it is definitely one of the biggest markets but as a source of supply, it doesn't have that many destinations featured apart from Bali. Vietnam is both a destination and source, while Cambodia is still largely a destination.

For Thailand, travellers tend to stop in the tier one cities, but there is a rising trend of going into second- and third-tier cities, driven by the increase in low-cost carriers connectivity.

Is technology the missing piece in this whole tours & activities space?

Definitely. There's been a change. When we sign a business, one of the main things that we do is fulfil tickets electronically via the API, but to be able to do that, sometimes we have to buy printed tickets. It was not too long ago that I had to queue up at the ticket counter at a major attraction and wait for 10,000 tickets to be printed in order for us to turn them into e-tickets. Know what? We don't collect printer tickets anymore.

Operators are adopting technology slowly, but there has definitely been a shift. They are starting to understand that they need to adopt some form of technology, whether it is our system or somebody else's, to deliver the electronic ticket, because the printing generates costs – staff costs, printing costs, time, and that it's not very eco-friendly.

It's astonishing that you still need to queue up for the tickets.

Remember that the tours and activities sector is not new, but it is very offline. It is a sector worth US\$150 billion but a majority of these transactions are still offline, although a transformation is now underway. A lot of traditional travel agents like Chan Brothers are starting to look at alternatives.

The biggest wave is online in Asia-Pacific, which already surpassed Europe and the US in terms of the

market size, specifically for travel activities. It is also the fastest growing and that is why nowadays, a lot of tech developments or innovations are coming from Asia, and then being adapted to the US and Europe markets, versus the usual trend of tech innovations originating in the US or Europe before being adapted into Asia.

How has competition in Asia's tours and activities sector changed for BeMyGuest?

One of our largest competitors is all the B2B resellers in the offline space. They are competitors, but also partners – we try to enable them, to be honest. There are a lot of traditional resellers in the B2B space and some have adopted technology, but not at this scale that we have built because all of our technology is proprietary. We have won multiple awards, including one of the world's top 50 most innovative companies by American entrepreneurship magazine *Fast Company*. In terms of technology, we are quite advanced but there is still a lot of volumes in the B2B offline reselling space.

Do you foresee greater competition from consumer-facing sites like Ctrip, who is also your client?

We also understand that the dynamics in the online space is very interconnected and that it is a reflection of the operators as well. Operators

always want to hedge and have more than one sales point, so they are going to work with Ctrip, TripAdvisor, GetYourGuide, BeMyGuest, Klook, etc. It will come to a stage where they cannot manage (the many sales points) any more, so they are going to pick and choose those channels that generates more volume for them, and then they will want to stop and aggregate the rest with somebody.

We are really successful in this strategy where we partner with companies. For any player who is focusing in, say, South Korea or Taiwan, we are basically adding value by supplying them with every other destination they are not in. With some partners, we hold a large market share or share of their products that they sell in certain destinations.

You boast a strong background in startups and tech. How is it like being a woman entrepreneur in the travel tech sector?

I don't know, because I've been here forever (laughs). I don't know how it's like not being here. But the online space is amazing, super fun and friendly. At conferences, people are peers even if you are competitors. And the travel space is not that big. There are big brand names, but the network of individuals running the corporate companies is not huge. When you get to interact with people around the world running the global companies, that is pretty cool.



In a sense, we are B2B2C – we are not fully B2B or B2C – so this model not only shows how different we are but is also a reflection of the region. We realised one size doesn't fit all, especially in Asia.

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Son Doong, the largest cave in the world, is at the heart of the Phong Nha Ke Bang National Park in Quang Binh, Vietnam

SE Asia's most wanted

The tourism landscape in South-east Asia is constantly evolving, with travel trends moving towards sustainable tourism and slow travel. Hear from ASEAN NTOs and industry stakeholders which of the region's game-changing destinations should make it to our watchlist for 2020

BRUNEI

Ulu Temburong National Park is on my 2020 radar as the 30km Temburong bridge linking Brunei-Muara to Temburong will be opened, thereby reducing travel time between the two districts and making it easier to promote and market the national park as a tourist attraction. – **CP Foo, general manager, Century Travel**

CAMBODIA

In 2020, the Ministry of Tourism will be actively promoting ecotourism offerings in the provinces of Stung Treng, Rattanakiri, Mondulkiri and Kratie. Visitors will have the opportunity to mingle with indigenous tribes and see wild elephants in Mondulkiri. River dolphins are re-

nowned in Kratie, as are the many natural wonders in Stung Treng and Rattanakiri. – **Prak Vuthy, director of overseas tourism marketing and promotion department, Ministry of Tourism Cambodia**

Ecotourism is growing in rural Cambodia and we have created itineraries to cater to its demand. Kratie is a good destination for viewing endangered Irrawaddy dolphins, and there are plenty of homestay options in both the province and Mekong River islands. We will also be promoting more community-driven products in lesser-known provinces such as Stung Treng and Rattanakiri. – **Mak Kun, product manager, VLK Royal Tourism**



We hope the new tourism development will be a world-class leisure destination with attractions, hotels and other lifestyle offerings.

JEAN NG
Executive director, attractions, entertainment and tourism concept development, Singapore Tourism Board



Oriental Travel & Tours takes visitors into Singapore's heartland



INDONESIA

President Joko Widodo has mandated the development of five “super-priority destinations” (Labuan Bajo, Mandalika, Borobudur, Lake Toba and Likupang) to encourage visitors to explore the archipelago beyond the popular tourist resort island Bali.

The ministry has earmarked Rp9.4 trillion (US\$668 million) in developing their infrastructure, amenities, destination marketing and other aspects. It is then important to create an ecosystem of preserving culture and empowering communities economically to ensure continuity in sustainable tourism. We project the growth of new businesses and job creations with more international tourism events happening in Indonesia. – **Wishnutama Kusubandio, Indonesia minister of tourism and creative economy**

Our focus in 2020 is to develop train tours in West Java, as some routes have been built or reopened. Bandung's municipal government is in talks with Kereta Api Indonesia with developing alternatives to support existing train routes from Jakarta via Bogor.

The reopened Bogor-Sukabumi route features a number of historical attractions such as a megalithic site on Gunung Padang. Train journeys will also

enable travellers to pass the longest bridge on Java Island – named (Jembatan Cikubang) – and tea plantations – both of which have been around since the Dutch colonial era.

Air-conditioned trains also connect Bandung to other tourist destinations such as Pangandaran and Garut in West Java. – **Daniel Nugraha, director, Exotic Java Trails**

LAOS

Due to improvements in infrastructure and air connectivity, we are expecting significant tourism growth for Laos in 2020. Heritage boutique hotels in the UNESCO site of Luang Prabang, in particular, have proven to be a huge draw for customers seeking new experiences. This means we can offer additional options as an add-on extension for those travelling in other Indochina countries. – **Ian Woods, group business development director, ICS Travel Group**

MALAYSIA

A new destination highlighted in our domestic and international promotions is Desaru Coast in Johor, which is relatively unknown to international markets. Launched in July 2019, this integrated destination has attractions and facilities that will appeal to both leisure and business travellers. Desaru Coast spans over 1,600ha along a pristine 17km



Clockwise from above: Myanmar's Mergui Archipelago is seeing more cruise and tour operations; Brunei's Ulu Temburong National Park is home to virgin rainforest; Nagas Luang Prabang, a boutique hotel in Laos' former royal capital

beachfront. Tourists can stay at up-scale hotels, play golf and have fun at Adventure Waterpark Desaru Coast, which is home to one of the biggest wave pools in the world. – **Musa Yusof, director-general, Tourism Malaysia**

Langkawi is a very good destination for ecotourism, and its UNESCO Global Geopark status adds to its touristy appeal. It is also a duty-free island where alcohol can be purchased at a lower price compared to other parts of the country. The availability of liquor, good resorts, sun, sand and sea make this the perfect destination experience for western markets, which we wish to grow. – **Nigel Wong, director, Urban Rhythms Tours, Adventures & Travel**

MYANMAR

Myanmar is a country with diverse attractions offering culture, nature, heritage, food and festivals. In 2020, we will introduce Tanintharyi Region as a destination ideal for adventure trips and island stays with its abundance of natural rainforests and unspoilt marine resources. – **May Myat Mon Win, chairperson, Myanmar Tourism Marketing Association**



Recent developments in infrastructure have led to growth in cruise and tour operations in the Mergui Archipelago, a hidden paradise that I believe is turning into a hotspot. – **Zarni Htwe, managing director, Adventure Myanmar Tours & Incentives**

PHILIPPINES

Iloilo is a prime tourist area not only for leisure travellers but also for MICE thanks to its beaches, sustainable urban development, rich cultural heritage, and cuisine that fuses Spanish, Chinese and local influences.

The presence of an international airport and wide thoroughfares also make Iloilo more accessible to travellers while

the rehabilitation of the Iloilo River, completion of the scenic 8km Esplanade, and renovation of historic and heritage buildings and sites are all targeted at the development of sustainable tourism. – **Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, tourism secretary, Philippines**

Puerto Princesa, El Nido and Coron islands in Palawan are popular among tourists due to their diver-

sified offerings, ranging from underground river wonders to karst and limestone scenery. The pristine white beaches of Palawan's San Vicente are also meriting a number of enquiries.

Those from the US, Australia and other longhaul markets usually spend 8D/7N exploring these destinations. – **Irine Maliwanag, general manager, Im-ACTIVE Tours, Events, MICE Management & Services**



Dotted with red-brick ruins where kings and queens once lived and worshipped, Ayutthaya is on the cusp of a renaissance with new cafés and boutiques popping up, bringing a fresh, youthful vibe with lots of Instagram-worthy venues.

TIM COOK
Country manager, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, Abercrombie & Kent



Southeast Asia
feel the warmth

EXPERIENCE THE WONDERS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA



SINGAPORE

Following the recent close of the Jurong Lake District's Expression of Interest exercise, we are reviewing concepts from interested parties in 2H2020. We will consider attraction concepts such as nature or tech-based edutainment that appeal to families and working adults, as the site will complement the neighbouring Jurong Lake Gardens and the new Science Centre.

We hope the new tourism development will be a world-class leisure destination with attractions, hotels, and other lifestyle offerings. It will be aligned with the wider vision of the Jurong Lake District becoming a vibrant mixed-use business and leisure district that leverages its unique waterfront setting and surrounding greenery. – **Jean Ng, executive director, attractions, entertainment and tourism concept development, Singapore Tourism Board**

We are looking at going into more heartland areas, as there are many pockets still unexplored by tourists in Singapore. Our Ang Mo Kio Bird Singing Club tour is doing very well, so we hope to explore other neighbourhoods such as Toa Payoh. For our customers who are mainly from Europe and America, and especially those who have visited Singapore before, they are looking for experiences beyond attractions such as the Merlion and Sentosa. – **Jasmine Tan, co-founder, Oriental Travel and Tours**

THAILAND

The Tourism Authority of Thailand will continue to focus on promoting linkages between major and emerging destina-



Clockwise from above: Jaro Belfry, a historical landmark in Iloilo, the Philippines; aerial view of Cikubang Bridge in West Java, the longest active train bridge in Indonesia; fishermen at Tonle Sap Lake, Kratie, Cambodia



tions to balance the seasonality factor and achieve a better distribution of tourist arrivals between urban and rural areas.

For the longhaul markets, we are creating awareness in emerging destinations offering a combination of natural and cultural travel experiences such as Nakhon Si Thammarat, Trang, Phatthalung, Chiang Rai, Nan, Phayao, Chanthaburi and Trat.

For the shorthaul markets, including South-east Asia, we are promoting Surat Thani, Ko Samui and its vicinity as affordable luxury destinations. Our Get Active Retreat Islands initiative will encourage responsible tourism and diving activities. – **Yuthasak Supasorn, governor, Tourism Authority of Thailand**



From above: Wat Chaiwatthanaram, one of Ayutthaya's best known temples; Tanjung Rhu Beach in Langkawi Island



Ayutthaya, Thailand's ancient royal capital, is the destination to look out for this year. Dotted with red-brick ruins where kings and queens once lived and worshipped, the city is on the cusp of a renaissance with new cafés and boutiques popping up, bringing in a fresh, youthful vibe with lots of Instagram-worthy venues. Guests can travel by helicopter to see the ruins and countryside from a different

angle, or take a more leisurely route with an immersive overnight journey along the river from Bangkok.

– **Tim Cook, country manager, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, Abercrombie & Kent**

VIETNAM

Hoi An, Hue and Dalat will undoubtedly see an increase in traffic for 2020, as they offer unique experiences from Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City. Phuc Quoc is gaining attention too, with direct flights from Kuala Lumpur and its year-round accessibility.

Personally, I hope Phong Nha gets more attention. Their cave system and landscape are serene and captivating. Access and infrastructure remain limited but this will change in the next few years.

– **Ken Lau, CEO/founder, Adventoro Travel**



A new destination we will be highlighting in our domestic and international promotions is Desaru Coast in Johor.

MUSA YUSOF
Director-general, Tourism Malaysia



TTG Travel Trade Publishing is proud to be the travel trade media partner of the ASEAN Tourism Competitive Committee, working together to support the ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy and promote ASEAN destinations for tourism and business events



Nara Park is home to hundreds of free-roaming deer

Destination

The quality approach

Japan is leveraging the marketing wave of the recently concluded Rugby World Cup and the upcoming Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games to attract more longhaul visitors with higher spending. **Pamela Chow** speaks to industry stakeholders to find out what their plans are

As Asian inbound markets settle into maturity for Japan, the country is now looking farther afield to plump up arrival volumes from the US, Europe and Australia – western markets primed for opportunity, thanks to publicity from the 2019 Rugby World Cup and the approaching Tokyo Olympics and Paralympic Games in May.

These longhaul markets have also been identified for their high expenditure potential. According to a 2018 case study conducted by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), Australian visitors spent approximately 7.6 per cent more per head compared to Chinese visitors, with the bulk of expenditure – 39 per cent – allocated to accommodation. These trends are representative of the overall difference between the western and Asian markets, said Michinori Yamasaki, executive vice president, JNTO.

“We are seeing a relatively low rate of business from the western markets now, and visitors from these markets have high spending (power). If we boost the number of visitors from the western market alongside the Asian market, we will be able to achieve our goals of raising our total

visitor numbers and expenditure,” Yamasaki affirmed.

Currently, Japan’s inbound numbers are on track to meet the country’s 2020 goal of 40 million international visitors, with the period of January to October 2019 registering almost 27 million arrivals. Of these, Asia held the lion’s share of Japan’s inbound traffic, with 85 per cent coming from China, South Korea and Taiwan.

Hence, JNTO has begun its efforts on the longhaul front, launching the *Enjoy My Japan* campaign in 2018 to target travellers from the US, Europe and Australia, which Yamasaki identified as “markets with high potential in boosting visitor numbers”.

The campaign features enhanced digital marketing efforts that directs consumers to regional government tourism websites, in order to diffuse tourism throughout the lesser-known prefectures of the country.

Moreover, JNTO is also expanding its global presence. Opening soon is an office in Mexico City, with plans to establish offices in other cities, revealed Yamasaki.

More recently, JNTO worked with local prefectural governments and suppliers to launch the *100 Experiences in Japan* book detailing hidden

gems and obscure activities that are now open to international guests, signalling the increasing receptiveness of Japan’s smaller towns and cities to foreign visitors.

In Nara Prefecture, Kansai Nara Treasure Travel is one such DMC that is broadcasting the destination’s lesser-known activities to its trade partners, many of whom hail from the western markets.

Seiho Fukui, the DMC’s assistant sales manager, explained: “When visitors think of Nara, many only know the deer park and Todaiji Temple. They don’t know about all the other things they can see and do. We want to explain more about this prefecture to travel agencies around the world, through tradeshows like Visit Japan Travel Mart and on our website.”

Travel company Arttrav is also expanding its business beyond publishing travel guides, and is now diving into organising wellness group tours for international visitors. Its co-founder Yucaco Kimura told *TTG Asia* that Arttrav is working closely with DMCs and hotels around Japan to open up their secluded natural attractions and luxury resorts to small group tours.

However, as the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympic Games approach

and Japan braces for a spike in activity in the city, concerns are surfacing that tourists may be put off by sky-high hotel prices and overcrowding.

Tadashi Kaneko, executive vice president, JNTO, explained: “The number of visitors we are expecting during the Olympics and Paralympics (period) will create a crowding-out effect. There will be a visitor spike in a concentrated area during this period, and hotel prices will rise. People will hesitate to visit Japan – we have already observed such an impact on longhaul travellers, who tend to plan early.”

Kaneko also voiced his worry that tourists may also continue to avoid Japan even after the Olympics and choose other destinations.

To mitigate this, JNTO is rolling out a slate of measures over the coming months, focusing on three areas: lodging, location and period of travel. To promote a shift in lodging away from Tokyo, JNTO is working to raise awareness of the availability of convenient accommodation options in the suburbs an hour from the city centre.

Additionally, JNTO will focus on promoting local gems in outlying regions, which are expected to be even less crowded as local tourists flock to Tokyo for the Games.

Kaneko expressed confidence that this option will be “especially attractive for repeat visitors”. Currently, repeat travellers make up 60 per cent of all incoming traffic, and 80 per cent of these come from Asian countries.

Thirdly, he said JNTO will “strongly suggest travellers avoid the period of the Tokyo Olympics and visit Japan in a different season”. JNTO will also launch a “strong final push” this year to encourage visitors during the rest of the year beyond the Olympics.



If we boost the number of visitors from the western market alongside the Asian market, we will be able to achieve our goals of raising our total visitor numbers and expenditure.

MICHINORI YAMASAKI
Executive vice president, Japan National Tourism Organization

Destination

Embracing quiet charms

Riding on the growing trend of experiential travel, Shikoku is touting its lesser-known experiences such as yuzu picking and runcations, writes **Pamela Chow**

A sleepy mountainous island south of Hiroshima, Shikoku, is looking to the upcoming Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in May to bring in a stream of visitors, with its tourism board and stakeholders working to raise awareness of the island's many charms.

Shikoku comprises four prefectures – Ehime, Kochi, Kagawa and Tokushima – and has been increasingly welcoming more direct flights from the rest of Asia. Ehime's Matsuyama Airport is connected to Seoul and Shanghai, while Kagawa's Takamatsu Airport is linked to Taipei, Seoul and Shanghai.

And travel to Shikoku is set to become even more accessible, with China Airlines' flights between Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport and Takamatsu Airport coming online, and a new highway connecting Kochi Regional Airport and Kochi City currently under construction.

Now, Singapore is next on the agenda, shared Yuka Minami, manager, Tourism Shikoku. She said: "We are currently focusing on the Singapore market. In August 2019, we joined JNTO to exhibit at the NATAS Travel Fair, and we have found that Singaporeans like food experiences such as soba noodle-making and yuzu fruit-picking.

"Over the next two years, we plan to return to Singapore's travel fairs



Nakatsu Gorge (pictured) can be found along the Niyodo River

again in August or September."

Minami added that Tourism Shikoku also plans to step up participation in global tradeshows such as Visit Japan Travel Mart, as well as trade outreach events in England and France. Other than Asian visitors, the bulk of longhaul visitors to Shikoku currently hail from English-speaking markets such as the UK and the US.

Meanwhile, Kochi is slowly turning its strength as a popular domestic holiday destination towards attracting more international travellers, particularly from Singapore, said Taichiro Oogi, staff, department of inbound tourism, Kochi Visitors & Convention Association.

Last year, the Kochi Prefectural Government joined hands with travel and fitness companies to craft hybrid tours for FITs and interest

groups from Singapore. It struck a collaboration with Singapore agency Royal Wings Travel to develop two 7D6N free-and-easy tours to encourage in-depth exploration of the east and west regions of Kochi.

These unguided itineraries – which can be tweaked according to preference – include three-star hotel reservations; train tickets; local businesses and attractions; as well as maps and tourist information, compiled within a travel guidebook. The tours were launched at an Experience Kochi travel and food fair in October in Singapore, where they were sold by agencies Pegasus Travel Management, Siam Express and JOYOJ.

The Kochi Representative Office also joined hands with Singapore-based ABCDE Fitness on a marathoner package that includes flights, accommodation at the new Mont Bell Mountain Lodge, warm-up sessions with a local running group, passes for the Kochi Ryoma Marathon in February 2020, private tours and workshops, and a dinner party with local residents.

Such creative collaborations are essential to attracting visitors today, said Takanori Asai, deputy director of the Kochi Representative Office in Singapore. He expressed: "It has become really hard to promote a destination through traditional means, so we've had to come up with new ways to promote Kochi."

What's hot

Plod off the beaten path

1 Skirt beside the whirlpools

The majestic whirlpools in Tokushima's Naruto Straits can be viewed from several vantage points. Visitors can admire the phenomenon from 45m above, through glass panels from the Naruto Bridge Observatory along the Uzu-no-Michi Walkway, or take a sightseeing boat ride – with operators like Naruto Kanko Kisen and Uzushio Kisen – for an up-close view.

2 Ride with the wind

Cycle down the Shimanami Kaido bridge on a bicycle and enjoy breathtaking views of the cerulean sea. Tracing a dedicated bikeway, the tour by Fuji Travel Service is led by a guide from a local cycling team, and provides drinks, a pick-up service, meal and sightseeing along the route, as well as a support car. Tourists can choose from different bicycles such as road bikes and tandem bicycles.



3 All trails lead to yuzu

Pay a visit to Yanase Shinrin Tetsudou Heritage Railroad in Kochi, the site that produces Japan's largest supply of yuzu. Developed in the early 20th century, this rail belt running through a mountain forest affords a beautiful view of the yuzu orchards that are recognised as a Japan Heritage Site by the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs. There are also yuzu aroma workshops on offer.

4 Hold back the river

Enjoy the scenery of Kochi either while drifting along a peaceful river in a canoe, or on an adrenaline-inducing whitewater rafting session through the rapids. Kochi's rivers – Yoshino, Shimanto and Niyodo – are clear and unpolluted, and a number of companies around the prefecture offer such outdoor activities. Fly fishing and stand-up paddling is also available.

5 Stay in a thatched cottage

Ochiai Village in Iya is home to a number of thatched-roof cottages available for rent. Dating as far back as 300 years, these cottages have been renovated and elegantly furnished into lodging facilities that overlook the peaceful valleys of Iya. Catering services with food from local harvests can also be reserved, along with cottage booking, through the Togenkyo Iya-no-yamazato Office.

Tried & Tested

All you knead is soba

Tokushima's serene Iya Valley holds many surprises, one of which is visiting an award-winning folk singer's home to learn the art of soba-making. By **Pamela Chow**

WHY Iya Valley is peppered with numerous surprises for the experience-hungry traveller, with local stories and historical tales waiting at every turn. The humble making, and cooking of soba (buckwheat noodles) – one of Shikoku's specialities – is one such example.

WHAT Deep in the valleys of Tokushima's rugged mountains sits

a quiet studio run by Tsuzuki-san, an elderly soba-making master who supplies the noodles to restaurants and hotels across the region.

Classes taught by Tsuzuki-san are peaceful, but at the same time, fun and even challenging. She guides participants through the soba-making process, and the workshop is followed by a meal of vegetable tempura, cold dishes, and free-flow soba. As time drew to a close for my class, Tsuzuki-san brought us from noodle stirring to a heart-stirring end with a short performance of her award-winning folk singing.

HOW We participants first had to don aprons and bandanas, before Tsuzuki-san embarked on the soba-making experience. She started by demonstrating how to mill soba grains with a hand-powered millstone. We then moved on to kneading, cutting, and finally, boiling the

noodles.

Although she was only able to converse in Japanese and through hand gestures, Tsuzuki-san was encouraging and good-humoured, patiently guiding us in milling and kneading the soba.

The meal that followed was simple but scrumptious, and filled me with contentment as we sat on tatami and cushions in the cosy, homely restaurant. Tsuzuki-san's performance at the end was the cherry on top of an enjoyable afternoon.

VERDICT Ideal for smaller travel groups or even solo travellers, Atelier Tsuzuki is one of Iya Valley's truly hidden gems that offer an indelible taste of Tokushima.

Duration Approximately two hours

Rate 1,350 yen (US\$12.30)

Contact

Website: iyajiman.com





Severe air pollution is stifling New Delhi's tourism business

Destination

Combating Delhi's smog crisis

As hazardous levels of air pollution in Delhi casts a pall over inbound tourism, Indian tour operators are finding ways to fight the confidence crisis in the face of falling arrivals and flight of tourists to other cities in the country, writes **Rohit Kaul**

The recent toxic smog that engulfed Delhi and grabbed global headlines may not have had a dire impact on inbound arrivals to the country but have kept tourists away from the national capital, reported a number of Indian tour operators.

Some international tourists have also shelved their travel plans.

"It is the peak travel season and the decline in New Delhi's air quality has raised concerns among travellers but not to an alarming level. However, solo and business travellers are looking at postponing their business trips," said Rohit Walter, brand leader, FCM Incoming.

"Some foreign tourists are cancelling or shortening their stay in Delhi as hazardous smog envelops the capital, disrupting normal life and causing a spike in respiratory illnesses. Inbound tourism from Singapore and Japan have been majorly affected as they are very particular about their health," added Walter.

Last November, air pollution in New Delhi and surrounding towns

reached the worst levels so far in 2019. According to a few tour operators, many inbound travellers opted for alternative destinations in India to shun the smog in New Delhi.

"The inbound figures for October/November were higher than the previous years, meaning that whatever the media or foreign press said (about New Delhi's air pollution) had very little impact on the inbound tourist arrival numbers," said Subash Goyal, chairman, STIC Travel Group.

Foreign tourist arrivals in India for last October grew by 6.1 per cent to 944,233 from 890,223 in October 2018, according to statistics from India's Ministry of Tourism.

"Tour operators change the itineraries to include South India and other parts of the country, and change the stay in Delhi to only a day. The Indian trade associations also created awareness in the market about the reduction in e-tourist visa fee to reduce any impact that the Delhi smog will have on inbound tourist arrivals," added Goyal.



The inbound figures for October/November were higher than the previous years, meaning that whatever the media or foreign press said (about New Delhi's air pollution) had very little impact on the inbound tourist arrival numbers.
SUBASH GOYAL
Chairman,
STIC Travel Group

Tour operators also built up confidence among their foreign associates by informing them how it was business as usual in New Delhi, as well as the government's initiatives to reduce the smog in the city.

"We keep our clients informed of events that have successfully taken place in Delhi during such periods. For instance, the India-Sri Lanka cricket match and the visit of German chancellor Angela Merkel were both conducted smoothly, indicating that the situation in Delhi was manageable. By convincing our foreign clients that this is a temporary phase as the Indian government is actively working on to sort out soon, we are able to take care of their confidence," said Walter.

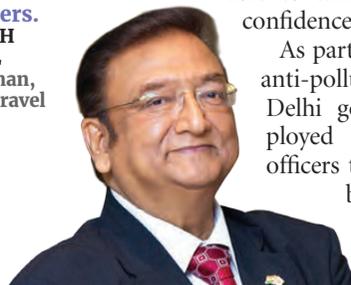
As part of the nation's anti-pollution push, the Delhi government deployed environmental officers to stop garbage burning and also imposed restrictions on con-

struction work in the capital city. An odd-even road rationing plan was also launched by the government to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion on Delhi's roads.

"We have responded (to Delhi's pollution crisis) by sending photographs of the clear skies to our overseas partners to instill confidence in them. Thanks to the rainfall, the smog cleared. Had it lasted longer then, yes, tourism would have been affected. We must ensure that both the Delhi government and the central government take care of crop burning in the next season, otherwise tourism can be affected," said Goyal.

"If the spiralling pollution level in Delhi is not permanently addressed in the near future, inbound tourism arrivals to the country will take a beating," said Arun Anand, managing director, Midtown Travel.

"Perception is key to tourism and international travellers may look at alternative tourist destinations if the pollution levels in Indian cities don't go down."



Destination

Beating the economic slump

Despite economic headwinds, domestic tourism is keeping India's hotel industry afloat, aided by GST rate cuts and the liberalisation of e-visa regime, reports **Rohit Kaul**



A worsening economic slowdown has thrown up challenges for Indian hoteliers, with the effects rippling across both domestic and international markets.

Reeling under pressure too are Indian business sectors like automobile, which have been plagued with declining sales.

Tourism in Goa is among the hardest hit from the economic slowdown and the collapse of Thomas Cook UK

“The slowdown in the automobile sector has impacted the hospitality industry in Pune, with demand going down by about four per cent,” said Pankaj Saxena, general manager, Radisson Blu Pune Hinjawadi.

It is a double whammy for markets like Goa who have also been hit by the closure of Thomas Cook UK,

noted industry players.

“The market sentiments are certainly down, and it has affected both domestic and international guests. Hotel occupancies have declined. Destinations like Goa are among the hardest hit with more declines in international business than any other destination,” said Sarbendra Sarkar, founder and managing director, Cygnett Hotels and Resorts.

“Hospitality players are facing a tough time because of the current economic slowdown. Besides a drop in demand from international tourists, corporate travellers are also shortening their stay or curtailing their expenses,” said Victor Soares, senior general manager, Radisson Blu Resort Goa Cavelossim Beach.

On the bright side, domestic tourism is throwing a lifeline to the majority of hospitality players in India, especially those in the non-metro markets. “Tier II markets are becoming the key focus, especially in leisure segments. Domestic travellers with disposable income are looking forward to exploring new cities apart from traditional places,” said Sarkar.

Several hoteliers remain positive

about the growth both in inbound and domestic markets.

Sanjeev K Nayar, general manager, WelcomHeritage, said: “After the liberalisation of the e-visa scheme, inbound tourism hasn't weakened. Nevertheless, the domestic market is definitely very buoyant and coming up really well. Domestic travel is seeing steady growth as the middle class continues to travel for religious and festive reasons.”

Helping Indian hoteliers to weather the economic headwinds too is the recent move by India's GST Council to cut tax on room tariffs of Rs7,500 (US\$105) and above from 28 per cent to 18 per cent, and tax on room tariffs of less than Rs7,500, from 18 per cent to 12 per cent.

“The GST cut was a very big step for boosting tourist numbers and creating widespread publicity for Indian tourism. There has been an increase in queries and subsequent bookings,” said Nayar.

Sarkar agreed: “This landmark move will act as a catalyst to revive the slow-growing Indian hospitality industry. It will help hotels win back guests and gain traction that was not evident over the past months.”

What's hot

A smorgasbord of new offerings

1 WelcomHeritage Inderpura Resort

WelcomHeritage (WH) recently opened the WH Inderpura Resort, which is situated in the Udaipurwadi of Jhunjhunu district in Rajasthan. The 0.7ha property sits on the foothills of the Aravalli mountains, boasting stunning sunset vistas and 21 keys across three room types: Super Deluxe, Deluxe and Standard.

2 Hyatt Regency Dharamshala Resort

Hyatt Hotels' first mountain resort property in India, Hyatt Regency Dharamshala Resort, has opened in the scenic Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. Surrounded by mountains and lush forests, the resort is spread across 2.6ha of land.

It offers 80 keys, including 10 Regency Club guestrooms, three suites, and four deluxe villas, ranging from one- to five-bedroom properties. Each guestroom is well-equipped with modern amenities and provides views of the gardens, cedar wood trees or the snow-capped Dhauladhar range of the Himalayas.

3 Courtyard by Marriott Amritsar

Marking the brand's 18th property in India, Courtyard by Marriott Amritsar opened with 104 guestrooms in the revered city of the Golden Temple. Guests can enjoy Indian and international cuisine at Amritsar Kitchen, the hotel's all-day dining outlet; unwind at the rooftop bar Vue Bar & Grill that overlooks the cityscape; or go for a dip in the rooftop pool.

4 The Marketplace

Get a taste of the world's cuisine at this casual buffet-style dining restaurant situated in Kirti Nagar, West Delhi. Serving up 11 global cuisines from Indian street food to American burgers and steamy Nepalese momos, this restobar has something to tickle everyone's tastebuds.

With vibrant neon-lit decor and graffiti walls in a fun bar set-up, this F&B venue boasts Instagrammable interiors and the buzz of an actual market place with appealing food stations.

5 More Vietnam-India connections

VietJet has started direct flights from New Delhi to Ho Chi Minh

City and Hanoi. The New Delhi-Ho Chi Minh City route will be operated four-times-weekly every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Hanoi-New

Delhi route will be operated three-times-weekly every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

6 Port Muziris, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel, Kochi

Marriott International has opened Port Muziris, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel, in Kochi, marking the brand's debut in India. Situated in the port city of Kerala, this art-centric hotel boasts 54 rooms, including two Executive Suites, and stands a mere 300m from the Cochin International Airport. Amenities include a swimming pool, pool bar, fitness centre, two F&B venues, and 1,649m² of banquet and meeting space.



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Mandarin Orchard Singapore is an icon of world-class Asian hospitality for close to 50 years, preferred by discerning business and leisure travellers for its service excellence and prime location in the heart of the city's most prominent shopping belt, Orchard Road.

The 1,077-key hotel boasts over 30,000 square feet of prime event spaces backed by the dedicated service of Meeting and Event Specialists.

Delegates can look forward to an exciting line-up of food and beverage outlets that include Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro—the highest Michelin-rated Chinese restaurant in Singapore since

2016, and Chatterbox—home to the legendary Mandarin Chicken Rice.

For those seeking bespoke business amenities, Mandarin Orchard Singapore offers guests exclusive access to a host of preferential privileges—from detailed attention and personalised service by Meritus Ambassadors, to elegantly prepared all-day refreshments by an award-winning culinary team.

Mandarin Orchard Singapore was awarded Best City Hotel Singapore at the TTG Travel Awards in 2010, and consecutively from 2013 to 2019.

Be ushered into a world of ethnic charm at **Meritus Pelangi Beach Resort & Spa, Langkawi**, located on the white sandy shores of the famed Cenang Beach.

Designed to depict a traditional Malay village, the resort features 355 guest rooms housed in wooden chalets, each with stunning views of the ocean, lake, pool, or lush landscaped gardens.

Themed food and beverage options, as well as the exclusive Meritus Club Lounge facility, blend seamlessly with the resort's tropical landscape. Guests can also enjoy holistic beauty and massage treatments that rejuvenate mind, body and soul in the Zen-inspired environment of Pelangi Spa.

Meritus Pelangi Beach Resort & Spa, Langkawi boasts versatile indoor and outdoor venues including a grand ballroom with natural daylight. Be it spending a balmy day seaside or celebrating an important occasion, the resort promises an idyllic escape for corporate and teambuilding retreats, and incentive groups.

Meritus Pelangi Beach Resort & Spa, Langkawi was named Best Resort in Ctrip Traveller's Top Spots 2017.

For enquiries or to plan your Meritus experience, please call +65 6235 7788 or email gso.singapore@meritushotels.com.



Mandarin Orchard Singapore



Meritus Pelangi Beach Resort & Spa, Langkawi

