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Human touch prevails

Personalised products, hybrid models will give travel agents the edge

By Dannon Har

Travel agents that are able to cater to the ever-evolving needs of their customers and offer specialised, integrated online and offline services, will continue to be well sought after despite growing competition.

They first need to recognise their need as subject matter experts rather than a sales channel, said members of the trade interviewed by the *Daily*, so that they don't compete in the same space as OTAs or metasearchers.

"Reservations by travel agents account for over two-thirds of all SLH (Small Luxury Hotels of the World) bookings," said Mark Wong, the group's vice president Asia Pacific.

"Many of our luxury resorts and country houses are not located at point-to-point destinations. Therefore, our guests need more assistance with planning."

Wong attributes the value of agents to their luxury clientele who are mostly "cash-rich, but time-poor". "Trusted travel agents provide a one-stop service that will assure customers of hassle-free trip planning and experienced travel advice, pre- and post-trip," he explained.

According to an Amadeus study released last week, traditional travel agents still account

for a large proportion of global travel sales. For instance, 80 per cent of Chinese travellers booked via an offline agent last year, stated the Chinese Outbound Tourism Research Institute.

The report added that successful travel agencies have a virtual presence to help customers discover them. Personalised, expert service by consultants should then follow, providing a human touch and sealing the deal. The success of such a hybrid approach is also evident in some OTAs opening call-centres and brick-and-mortar stores.

In the study, Claude Blanc, CEO of Travel & Co, surmised: "We work on a research online, purchase offline model. We have websites and

a limited social media presence, but most customers like to talk to our experts via the call-centres."

Dynasty Travel is one agency forging ahead with a hybrid approach. They had in July this year launched a Mobile Concierge service where agents travelled to meet clients at a venue of their choosing. This marks the first time a full-service agency is offering this in Singapore, said spokesperson Alicia Seah.

Using technology to aid the know-how of agents is favoured by DMC Diethelm Travel as well. Managing director Lisa Fitzell

said they are "developing technologies to reinvent our business", such as APIs that connect directly to their agents' systems.

"Technology has changed the landscape of travel... but DMCs create packages – we design itineraries that create amazing memories that can't be purchased online," she commented.

Moreover, Vijay Sharma, country director Singapore & Malaysia of Club Med, which works through a "big network of agents", highlighted the need for travel agents especially in the luxury and family segments. He said: "Travel agents are a strategic priority for Club Med due to their customer reach and ability to sell upscale products.

"Families are almost 70 per cent of our clientele (as) we cater to children's needs as much as adults in terms of food, entertainment and activities. Travel agents play a role in advising the right resort to families depending on their wish list."

Sharma added that he prefers offline agents as the level of engagement offered through OTAs is very low.

Similarly, Fitzell said: "The online space is cluttered and the consumer is looking for expertise (and personalisation). Agencies will... focus more on being destination specialists and (serve) segments such as luxury, adventure and weddings."



Fitzell: designing specialised trips

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HUNK OF THE DAY



BABE OF THE DAY

China arrivals shine for Singapore

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

Arrivals to Singapore rose 12.5 per cent in 1H2016 over the same period in 2015, according to latest figures from the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), and of the resulting 8.2 million visitors, the majority came from Indonesia (1.4 million, up 7.3 per cent) and China (1.5 million, up 55.2 per cent).

This signals a change in source market potential for Singapore, with China quickly overtaking Indonesia as the chart-topper.

Low See Peng, regional director, Greater China, STB said: "This strong performance could be attributed to Chinese residents' increased propensity to travel and STB's increased efforts to market Singapore in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities since June 2015."

Low added that the increased flights from cities like Guangzhou, Chengdu and Chongqing

were important contributors as well.

Daniel Goh, manager of Siam Express, said: "(China) will be a strong performing market in 2017 because of the strengthening Chinese yuan."

However, inbound agents here are bracing for slower business from other markets in 2017, due to economic uncertainties.

Judy Lum, senior vice president sales & marketing international market at Tour East Singapore, said failing industries and rising unemployment as well as the "effects of Brexit setting in" will "affect (UK) holidaymakers' decisions".

GTMC Travel's CEO Samson Tan urged Singapore to "create more niche tourism products, step up (courtship of) untapped central Asian markets and do more roadshows" to combat 2017's expected slowdown.

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Serviced Suites | Bangkok Ningbo Singapore Tianjin Xiamen New openings: Johor (2018)

News

Thailand eyes growth in more markets

TAT plans more offices in South-east Asia, Central Europe and South Africa to beef up in-market reach, activities

By Chadamas Chinmaneevong

A fragile world economy and unpredictable tourism sentiments in Thailand's main source markets have pushed the Tourism

Authority of Thailand (TAT) to minimise losses by investing in emerging markets, TAT governor Yuthasak Supasorn told *TTG Asia Show Daily*.

He said risk reduction was a priority since he took office in September 2015, and one of the things TAT has done is to crack down on zero-fare tours to reduce

the country's dependence on high-volume markets like China and Western Europe.

TAT has also turned its focus to South-east Asia, which contributes almost as much arrivals as China. As of August, the region accounted for 25 per cent of international arrivals into Thailand. Chinese arrivals made up about 30 per cent.

Yuthasak said there is potential to grow South-east Asian numbers by promoting Thailand as a weekend destination and by

dangling shopping, medical treatments and wellness programmes as key lures.

TAT plans to open offices in countries such as Cambodia, Myanmar and the Philippines over the next few years. Yuthasak believes that "(arrivals from) these countries will grow at least 10 per cent in the first year of the establishment of the new offices".

Beyond the region, TAT opened an office in Prague mid-August to tackle Central European markets, and will further extend its reach in the western world with an office in Sao Paulo, Brazil and Toronto, Canada by September 2017.

Once these are accomplished, TAT intends to establish a physical presence in Johannesburg to oversee marketing in South Africa.

"With the South African office, TAT's network will cover all regions of the world," remarked Yuthasak.

IN BRIEF

MBS revamps guestrooms

Singapore's Marina Bay Sands (MBS) is in the midst of a rejuvenation of all its 2,560 guestrooms, targeted for 2017 completion, with 1,000 guestrooms in Tower 3 already upgraded. Besides aesthetic changes, upgrades include additional direct data portal, USB ports, power outlets and reading lights, said Mike Lee, vice president of sales.

Renovations typically kick in at the seven-year mark for hotels, but MBS is revamping in its fourth year due to high occupancy (96.4 per cent from April-June), Lee explained. — **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

The Face Suites offers luxury living

Opened in early 2016, The Face Suites is a 200-suite hotel located within walking distance of the Petronas Twin Towers. It offers one- and two-bedroom suites in four categories to cater to leisure and business travellers. All suites feature a living area, kitchenette, bedroom with en-suite bathroom and a work space.

Mariner of the Seas extends season

Mariner of the Seas has extended its sailings in South-east Asia till next June, making it Royal Caribbean International's longest-ever Southeast Asian season. Vacationers will now have 64 sailings in the region to choose from. Highlights include the Salsa Cruise this December and the second Cosfest Sea Cruise next February.



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Qatar Tourism Authority

Qatar Tourism Authority works with the public and private sectors to plan, regulate and promote a sustainable tourism sector in Qatar.

The organisation's leadership is highlighting tourism as a priority sector and an important part of the nation's efforts to diversify its economy in pursuit of the Qatar National Vision 2030.

It projects that the tourism sector's total contribution to the country's economy will reach 5.2 per cent by 2030, and up to 9.7 per cent of Qatar's non-hydro-carbon economy.

According to the UNWTO, Qatar is one of the fastest growing destinations in the world, and the only country in the Middle East

to have achieved consistent growth over a decade. Between 2010 and 2015, tourism arrivals averaged 11.5 per cent annual growth.

In August, Qatar Tourism Authority launched a new corporate brand and domain name to align with the destination brand launched last November, and to unify the organisation's online presence under the single VisitQatar.qa domain.

The first phase of its new corporate website was also launched, promising more up-to-date information on its destination promotion efforts. Work is also underway to make VisitQatar.qa available in multiple languages such as French, Italian and German.
Contact: info@qatartourism.gov.qa



Jayakarta Hotels & Resorts

One of the major hotel players in Indonesia, The Jayakarta Group owns two hotel brands – Jayakarta Hotels & Resorts and J Hotel.

Properties under Jayakarta Hotels & Resorts are of four-star standards and geared towards leisure and business travellers. Facilities include meeting rooms, swimming pools, fitness centres, spas, and other amenities to provide a comfortable stay.

J Hotel properties are built with budget-conscious travellers in mind, and come with essential facilities needed for a convenient stay.

Currently, the group manages eight hotels, two boutique suites and one residential condominium in various business and resort areas in Indonesia.

Contact: jhr@jayakartahotelsresorts.com

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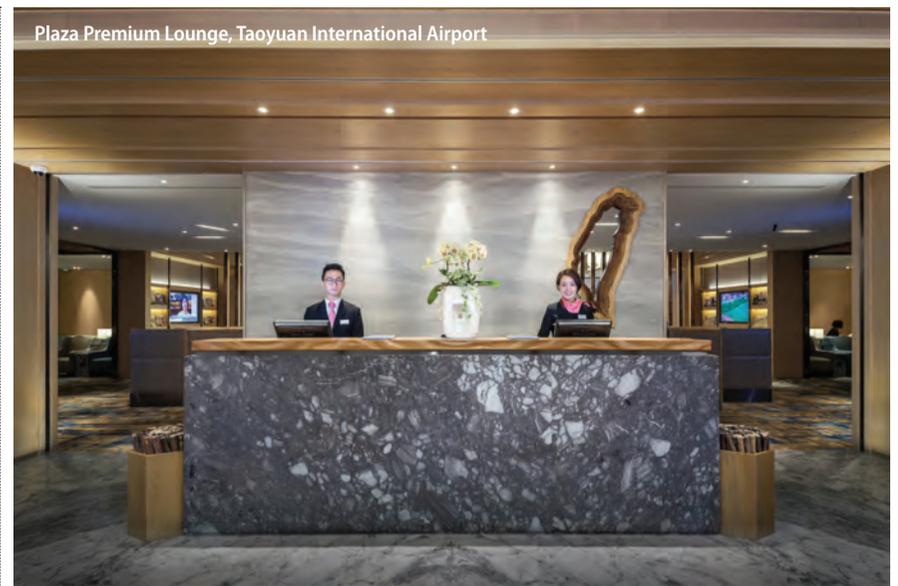
The new upscale hotel in Malaysia's Genting Highlands is scheduled to open in 4Q2016, offering a collection of 300 rooms, ranging from studios to one-, two- and three-bedroom suites, all with separate living areas, bedrooms and kitchenettes. All rooms will offer modern amenities including flatscreen TVs, international power outlets and complimentary Wi-Fi, as well as spacious bathrooms and large windows that overlook the lush Titiwangsa Mountains.

The new hotel also incorporates a vast array of amenities. There are no fewer than six restau-

rants and bars, most of which offer floor-to-ceiling windows or al fresco seating areas that merge seamlessly with the natural surroundings. There will also be a sky garden, a heated swimming pool, luxurious spa, fully-equipped fitness centre, children's play area, and extensive space and conferences and events.

Guests will be able to access the Genting Highlands' many other attractions – including Resorts World – using the hotel's complimentary shuttle bus service.

Contact: (60) 1 800 22 8218



Plaza Premium Lounge

Headquartered in Hong Kong, Plaza Premium Lounge is a global service brand and industry leader in Premium Airport Services.

It broke into the market in 1988 with the world's first independent airport lounges at Hong Kong International Airport and Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

Since then, Plaza Premium Lounge has grown to provide a range of services from designing, operating and managing premium airport lounges, both independently and on behalf of airlines, transit hotels, private relaxation suites, meet and greet services, dining concepts, business and conference centres

and limousine services.

It now operates in over 140 locations in 35 airports globally, and counts over 3,500 employees.

Most recently in July, Plaza Premium Lounge made its debut in Taiwan with four airport lounges at Taoyuan International Airport. Located at the departure terminals in Terminal 1 and Terminal 2, the new lounges – decked out with a timber and trees theme – span over 2,500m² and can comfortably seat 600 in total.

Contact: businessdevelopment@plaza-network.com

Pan Pacific Hotels Group

Pan Pacific Hotels Group is a wholly-owned hotel subsidiary of Singapore-listed UOL Group Limited, one of Asia's most established hotel and property companies with a portfolio of investment and development properties. Based in Singapore, Pan Pacific Hotels Group owns and/or manages 40 hotels, resorts and serviced suites with some 12,000 rooms including those under development in Asia, Oceania, North America and Europe. The Group comprises two brands: Pan Pacific and Parkroyal.

The Pan Pacific brand promises premium accommodation and services in Asia and the

Pacific Rim, while the Parkroyal brand offers leisure and business hotels and resorts in the heart of cities and interesting locales across Asia-Pacific.

The group will open Pan Pacific Beijing in May 2017, its first property in a first-tier Chinese city.

Other properties in the pipeline include Pan Pacific Yangon in 2017, Pan Pacific Serviced Suites Puteri Harbour and Parkroyal Langkawi Resort in 2018, as well as Pan Pacific London and Parkroyal Melbourne in 2019.

Contact: enquiry@pphg.com





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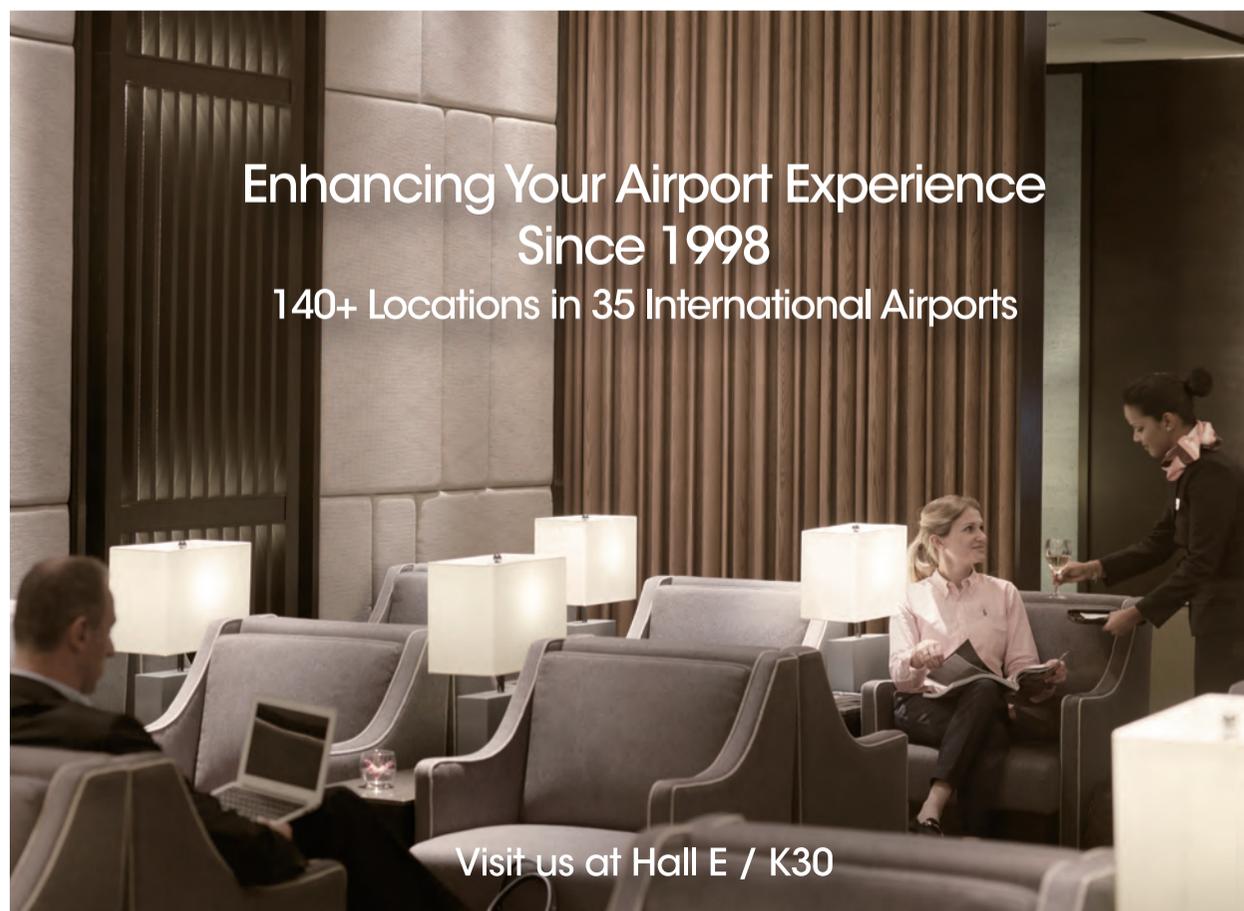
Analysis

A whole sale of the market

The wholesale accommodation market is ripe for another round of consolidation. **Raini Hamdi, Paige Lee Pei Qi, S Puvaneswary** and **Mimi Hudoyo** explain why

The hotel wholesale business, which has been unravelled by online technology, is ripe for yet another round of consolidation as big players become more acquisitive while small and/or traditional players struggle to make it in a highly competitive industry.

The latest trigger is the sale of Hotelbeds (<http://bit.ly/261FLD1>) to UK private equity firm Cinven Capital Management and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, and that of Kuoni Group – which owns GTA – to Swedish private equity firm EQT (<http://bit.ly/1UyCROe>).



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Analysis

With new ownership flushed with funds, both Hotelbeds and GTA have made no bones of their intention to expand market share through further investment in IT, tapping growth in Asia and other markets, and consolidation in the wholesale accommodation sector.

The accommodation industry itself, on the other hand, is being rocked by the consolidation of global hotel chains, the dominance of the sharing economy and

the increasing size of Priceline and Expedia, all of which promise a good round of marry-making in both the hotel and intermediary sectors in the months to come.

Marry-making

So how will the hotel wholesale business be further remade?

Once upon a time, hotels worked with specialist wholesalers who gave them access to markets they cannot reach di-

rectly. Wholesaler contracts also enabled hotels to forecast occupancy patterns and generate volume business, especially for those with high inventory.

However, this system has been challenged by both B2B online distribution channels with cheaper cloud-based technology and B2C digital platforms. The former include the likes of Hotelbeds, GTA, Bedsonline, Travco, MetGlobal and JacTravel, while the usual suspects in the



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latter include Agoda, Expedia, Hotels.com, Trivago, Booking.com and, for good measure, throw in sharing economy giant such as Airbnb and B2B2C players like Asiatravel.com, which has added transfers and sightseeing into its offerings.

As a result, the market has splintered in many directions.

B2B platforms have spun off many new white-label online wholesale or online retail operators – for example, MetGlobal powers HotelsPro.

Some of the new players are started by people in technology, not travel, in the hope of being acquired in three to five years after operation, observed Judy Lum, group vice president sales & marketing of Tour East.

“Their objective to start a travel distribution channel is different from people who want to provide enjoyable holiday experiences; nevertheless, they seem successful,” she said.

Some traditional wholesalers have blurred the lines by building their own bedbanks, creating another variant in the sector.

For example, within Indonesia’s AntaVaya Group is the AntaVaya Hotel Reservation System, a bedbank for its retail agent partners and corporate clients.

It is for “convenience”, said director Bagus Priatna, as clients have their own login and password to book a hotel from their own office. It is also attractive as they have credit terms instead of instant payments when booking through an OTA.

Other traditional wholesalers remain indigenous and compete by packaging more complicated products comprising flights, accommodation, transfers and day tours. These are usually small players with loyal clients.

Niklas Andreen, Travelport’s senior vice president & managing director for hospitality, car and partner marketing, observed: “Their historic model of allotments and prepaid dedicated inventory is becoming replaced by models such as dynamic discounts of BAR. Many of them are becoming specialists or consolidating to have global coverage by plugging in other companies. In summary, they now compete in a new bedbank landscape.”

But fragmentation is not necessarily as negative as the word connotes.

Said Lee Choon Loong, president and CEO of DiscoveryMICE, Malaysia: “The wholesale market is indeed fragmented but in a positive way, as each wholesaler finds its own specialisation in reaching out to and integrating with tour operators.

“There are online wholesalers who offer a large inventory of hotels worldwide with instant confirmation; wholesalers with XML connection to partner hotels inventory to which tour operators can access last-minute distressed inventory and discounted dynamic rates; and last but not least, traditional wholesalers with room allotments who package hotels usually with airport transfers.

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Analysis

“The market is equally (splintered). The wholesale industry merely seeks to deploy different strategies and approaches in meeting tour operators’ requirements,” said Lee.

Yet, it is this very shaken-and-stirred market that opens opportunities for consolidation.

Ivan Walter, CEO, GTA, said: “The market is so huge. There are a lot of small players out there that are involved in intermediary accommodation and destination services distribution. They can be small bedbanks or DMCs that have no differentiated value proposition – purely selling hotel rooms, which we think is not sustainable.

“So the market today is not dominated by a couple of bedbanks. In fact, it is very fragmented and is in the hands of hundreds if not thousands of small individual players. Thus, there are lots of opportunities for consolidation.”

Why consolidate?

Said Walter: “It’s crucial today for any B2B or B2C player to have relevance, and that relevance has to do with a certain size, negotiating power with suppliers and clients, global footprint and scale.”

There are also other forces at play. Observed Manuel Ferrer, chairman & founder of Olea Consultancy Asia, who previously headed Hotelbeds in the region: “What is really changing in this industry is the growth and size of Priceline and Expedia. They are already entering the B2B business and I have no doubt they will grab a part of the business of current B2B players.”

Ferrer also foresees a transformation of the hospitality sector.

“This industry has changed minimally over the past decades, much less than any other industries. But now it will change fundamentally because many clients want products that they don’t offer and, whether fair or not, the competition from the likes of Airbnb or Zizaike.com is forcing them to change,” said Ferrer.

Chains too, have stepped up efforts to get more direct bookings of late, while M&As in the sector, such as Marriott International buying Starwood Hotels & Resorts, are being done partly to fend off dominance of OTAs and to harness more direct bookings from loyal guests.

“Towards this end, the large hotel chains backed by strong management companies will continue to sell direct to end-consumers. This will ultimately result in stagnant growth of the B2B market segment,” pointed out John Chan, business development director of Kris International Traveltours, Malaysia.

DiscoveryMICE’s Lee added: “While the total number of tourist arrivals have exceeded over one billion worldwide, the number of OTAs has not increased (proportionately). In the future, I envision that large hotels chains with similar brand character would consolidate than compete.”



There’s a place for everyone, say hoteliers

Andy Khen, executive director, L Hotels & Resorts and The Shanti Collection Bali

My discussions with conventional wholesalers showed they were feeling the pressure from online players. However, hotels like us still deal with both conventional wholesalers and bedbanks. We need offline wholesalers to boost occupancy as online booking is usually last-minute – three days or even less lead time.

There are so many channels of distribution. Each has its own strength and we need to be in many channels to capture the business.

To compete with regional and global players, homegrown bedbanks must not only grow their inventory, but invest in the latest technology all the time, do a lot of promotions and also invest in people: dedicated account managers that work (with the hotels to find ways to) generate roomnights.



Bernold Schroeder, CEO, Pan Pacific Hotels Group

We work with many different business partners from corporate travel agents and MICE businesses with large incentive houses to OTAs and bedbanks. As a hotelier, I don’t just depend on one segment, as I have to manage my risks.



Vivi Herlambang, director – sales marketing and business development, Sahid International

The conventional hotel wholesalers still survive despite the competition from bedbanks and OTAs. Each offers a different business proposition that we need, besides our own brand website. We cannot rely only on one or the other. That is how fragmented the market is.

One of the reasons we still deal with traditional wholesalers is because the rooms are bought in advance. This gives us certainty on room sales at a flat rate. The online players, on the other hand, gives us the liberty to make changes on room allotments and prices according to the dynamism of the market at any given time.



Patrick Fiat, general manager, Royal Plaza on Scotts, Singapore

Traditional hotel wholesalers are still in business and they have expanded their business to keep up with the competition by focusing on online distribution channels with dynamic systems.

The distribution landscape is ever-changing, thus there is no hard and fast rule as it is largely dependent on the strategies of the brands. The key for hotels is to gain an in-depth understanding in order to use these booking funnels to influence conversions.



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Host city

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From treetop walks to Michelin-star hawker grub, Singapore has much to offer its overseas visitors.

Paige Lee Pei Qi identifies a few choice picks for a memorable time in Singapore



Fort Siloso Skywalk

Sentosa has launched a new Skywalk that leads to Fort Siloso. The 11-storey high Skywalk functions as an elevated bridge which guides visitors on a trail through the treetops, providing a memorable aerial view of Sentosa. The free attraction also offers information on the fort's history and the surrounding area.

Website: sentosa.com.sg/Explore/Attractions/Fort-Siloso-Skywalk

and South-east Asian art. A variety of programmes including guided tours, artist talks and conversations with curators to gain deeper insights into the exhibition are available.

Website: nationalgallery.sg

Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum

Singapore's newest museum, Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, is home to over a million plant and animal specimens. The main gallery showcases the history and biodiversity of plants and animals, while the heritage gallery presents Singapore's natural history and treasures. There are more than 2,000 specimens spread across 15 zones for visitors to explore.

Website: lkcnhm.nus.edu.sg

National Gallery Singapore

The latest jewel in Singapore's art crown, the National Gallery Singapore is a new visual arts institution that houses an unparalleled collection of modern Singapore



Hong Kong Soya Sauce Chicken Rice & Noodle

Hong Kong Soya Sauce Chicken Rice & Noodle stall at Chinatown Complex is one of two Singapore hawker stalls to bag a Michelin star this year. Since then, the stall has pulled in massive crowds of diners who are willing to queue for up to two hours just to get a taste of its signature soya sauce chicken dish. Sold at a humble price of S\$2 (US\$1.50), this is probably the cheapest Michelin-star meal in the world.

Contact: (65) 6304 9053

National Kitchen by Violet Oon

Violet Oon is one of Singapore's earliest local celebrity chef and she's known for her exquisite Peranakan dishes. Her latest project is the National Kitchen by Violet Oon at the National Gallery. Its interior is as beautiful as her food and pays equal tribute to the Peranakan culture through the use of intricate mosaic tiles over floors and walls. On the menu are well-loved dishes like fish head curry, satay, dry laksa and kueh pie tee.

Contact: (65) 9834 9935





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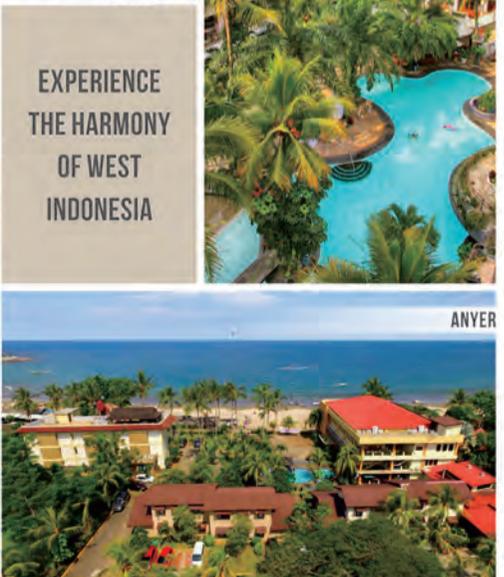
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Singapore National Museum



The Rink

Fancy some ice skating in tropical Singapore? That's possible at The Rink, Singapore's first Olympic-size ice rink, located within JCube shopping mall. Newbies to the sport are welcome and skating lessons are available. Corporate bookings for teambuilding activities are welcome too. Stay through the night for a chance to catch an exhilarating ice hockey match.

Website: therink.sg

Coney Island Park

A new haven for nature in built-up Singapore, Coney Island Park opened to the public late last year. This 50-hectare ecologically sustainable park has since attracted nature enthusiasts who are drawn to activities held there, such as bird watching and nature photography. Guided walks are available.

Contact: (65) 1800 471 7300



Coney Island

Monumental Walking Tours

Monumental Walking Tours offers 90-minute thematic tours created and led by heritage enthusiasts who are passionate about sharing their knowledge in the history and architectural features of Singapore's national monuments. Join a night tour to discover the secrets held within the walls of the 128-year-old National Museum.

Contact: NHB_NationalMonuments@nhb.gov.sg

Darren Sim



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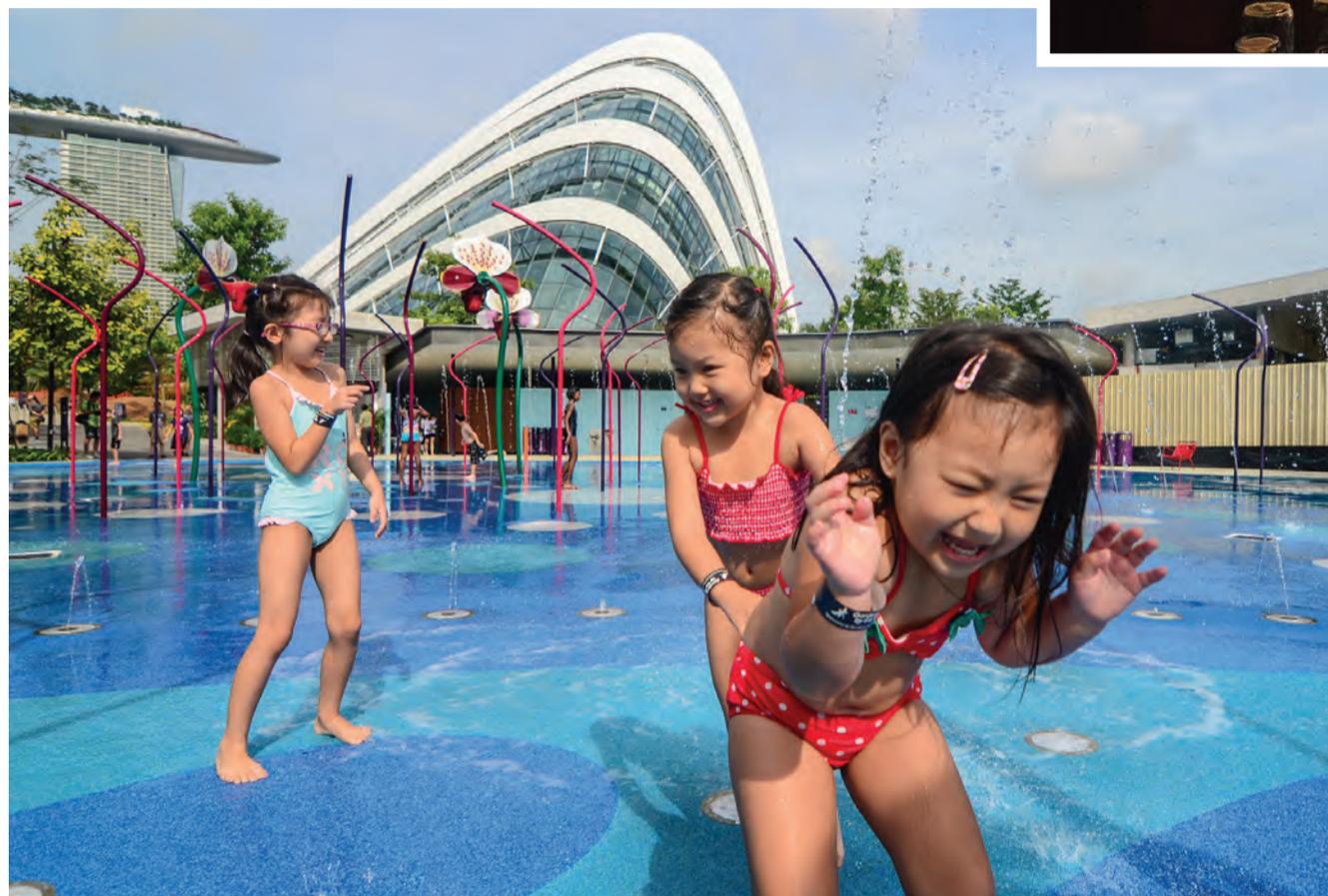
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Host city



INSIDER'S PICK

TTG Asia's editorial team in Singapore reveals how best to experience the soul of the Lion City



Clockwise from left: Children's Garden by Far East Organization at Gardens by the Bay; Don't Tell Mama cocktail bar; ayam buah keluak, Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum; local ice-cream sandwich

Escape the heat at free water parks



Karen Yue
Group Editor

Singapore's sweltering heat can make you rather uncomfortable when you are out exploring some of the city-state's best outdoor attractions.

Fortunately, at both the Singapore Zoo and Gardens by the Bay, a welcome reprieve from the heat can be found at the Rainforest Kidzworld and the Children's Garden by Far East Organization respectively. And, hurrah, they are free for everyone!

Both water parks feature elaborate and thoroughly fun water play features as well as plenty of space to run about and splash around. They are perfect even for toddlers. They come with spacious changing and shower facilities, so when you and your young ones are done, simply wash up and head to the next big draw in Singapore.

Connect with Singapore's parks



Raini Hamdi
Senior Editor

Every time I return to my home country, I try and check out what the city calls a 'park connector'.

Hop on a bike, put on your rollerblades or stroll/jog your way along car-free routes, picturesque rivers and canals that link you

to the major parks in Singapore. Most recently, I tried the Alexandra Park Connector and how wonderful it was to see fellow Singaporeans relaxing or exercising after a hard day's work, and a stunning skyline of local buildings and condominiums with fantastic architectural details.

If you're staying at Marina Bay Sands, it's perfect: run by the river pass Grand Copthorne Waterfront and just go on as the route will lead you to Zion Road. The connector will then take you along Alexandra Canal and Tanglin Road. It's easy and it gives you a real taste of Singapore.

Visit a wet market



Xinyi Liang-Pholensa
Deputy Editor,
TTG Asia & TIG India

Wet markets, as fresh markets are called in Singapore, are a microcosm of the country's diverse cultures and wide-ranging taste in food.

Swing by in the morning, when markets are at their busiest and you will find a cacophony of colours, smells and sounds. Stalls are stacked with fresh vegetables and seafood, butchers carving their meat and market-goers haggling with the vendors for the best cut or prices. Besides, these markets are great spots to stock up on cooking advice and local food souvenirs – fresh curry powder, anyone?

For visitors to recreate their favourite Singaporean dishes back home. Check out fresh markets in more central locations like Tekka (in Little India), Chinatown or Tiong Bahru.

Enjoy free concerts at the Esplanade



Paige Lee Pei Qi
Assistant Editor, Singapore

Did you know that the iconic Esplanade is a prime spot for free concerts? These are quality performances by homegrown music talents, and are held regularly at the indoor concourse area or the outdoor theatre by the bay.

I like how this arrangement spotlights promising artists in Singapore and encourages people to appreciate local talents.

And if you feel peckish after the performance, just pop into one of the many restaurants or cafes within Esplanade's three-storey mall.

Bar-hop in Little Korea



Dannon Har
Assistant Editor,
TTG Asia Online

Forget the usual Chinatown and Little India tourist haunts. Thanks to a burgeoning community of South Koreans in Singapore, a section along Tanjong Pagar Road has become an unofficial Little Korea, characteristically filled with bars, bars and more bars.

A personal favourite is Don't Tell Mama – a tiny cocktail bar hidden between other bars. It serves up killer drinks at relatively pocket friendly prices alongside Korean-Mexican fusion tapas that are artery-clogging delicious. Be sure to try the Beergarita (a highly Instagrammable margarita-beer concoction) and the Kimchi Chicken Quesadilla.

Along the street are other equally great options including Chicken Up that is more suitable for dinner and the popular 2D1N Soju Bang barbecue haunt. To round it off, head to Lotte Mart and buy home a bottle of Makgeolli or two as a nightcap.

Eat ice-cream by the roadside



Rachel AJ Lee
Sub Editor

A part of every Singaporean's childhood is visiting the ice-cream truck! Here in the Lion City, you can find these ice-cream vendors – look out for a giant beach umbrella attached to a motorbike – along Orchard Road or in the town centre of residential estates.

Skip the usual chocolate and vanilla flavours and dive right into local favourites such as yam, durian and red bean. You can choose to have your ice-cream in a cup, or cut into a thick rectangular slab that comes sandwiched between slices of colourful bread or two crunchy wafers. Prices start at S\$1.20 (US\$0.88) for one.



Catch an alternative film



Yixin Ng
Sub Editor

Film and an easy, unpretentious vibe are what make The Projector one of my favourite haunts in Singapore. Although carrying the label of an "independent cinema", it (thankfully) does not exclusively screen the art-house genre – film festival lineups, old classics or even mainstream box office flicks are also commonly featured here.

Occupying a refurbished old cinema in the decrepit Golden Mile Tower, the space has a lived-in quality that is almost seductive. The Projector creates an iconic "third place" and alternative cinema (it's one of the only cinemas in the city that sells beers at the door), and in the process, pulls guests into its spirited celebration of storytelling and inclusivity.

Feast on a Peranakan meal



Redmond Sia
Creative Designer

I am always craving for food and what I love most is Peranakan cuisine. An amazing ingredient iconic in Peranakan cooking is the *buah keluak* nut from Indonesia which has naturally-occurring cyanide. What a challenge! But it is safe to eat of course, as *buah keluak* is detoxified before it is cooked. The content of the nut is smooth and buttery, and used along with a tangy, spicy gravy and chicken or pork to create the popular *ayam* or *babi buah keluak* dish. This tastes absolutely heavenly!

Learn about natural history



Goh Meng Yong
Creative Designer

I highly recommend the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum. Located in the quiet Kent Ridge Road area towards the south of Singapore, away from town, the museum is a little out of the way. But a trip there is worth it, as visitors can see all sorts of interesting things from nature, from a Narwhal horn twice the size of a man to a bird's egg as large as the fingernail on your pinkie.

It is not the biggest museum in Singapore, but it has enough draws to keep children interested.

Take time to smell the flowers



Lina Tan
Editorial Assistant

If peace is what you seek, Gardens by the Bay is where you should go. The attraction celebrates the different seasons and festivals of the year with special themed displays of flowers, and as I love all kinds of flowers, Gardens by the Bay is my little heaven on earth.

My personal favourite area in Gardens by the Bay is the Flower Dome, where the air always bear a fresh floral fragrance and displays are always spectacular.

There are many other areas to explore and I can easily spend a whole day there.

The perfect finale is a meal of *satay* and other local delicacies at Satay By The Bay next door.

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ITB Asia 2016 Delegates and Media are invited for a free KidZania Singapore tour. Limited seats available.

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Destination **Malaysia**

Building for the wealthy folks

New tourism hardware in Kuala Lumpur and Penang are helping Malaysia to attract bigger spenders and grow its tourist receipts. **S Puvaneswary** reports

New infrastructure developments and attractions in Malaysia are helping the country to attract more high-yield and middle-income tourists, which is in line with the government's vision that tourism should contribute RM168 million (US\$41.2 million) in receipts by 2020.

In the capital city, Kuala Lumpur Tourism Bureau aims to make the city an attractive option for the luxury segment, as the city has supporting infrastructure to cater to demand.

New luxury hotels, such as The St Regis Kuala Lumpur which opened in May, and several other international brands that are coming online within the next two years, such as W in 2017 and Four Seasons in 2018, will help make the destination more attractive to well-heeled travellers.

The city's grand dame of opulent accommodation – the 19-year-old Ritz Carlton Hotel, Kuala Lumpur – has also stepped up its game by undergoing its first refurbishment this year. The result is a brighter, fresher and more modern property.

To ensure software is on par with hard-

ware advancements, Kuala Lumpur Tourism Bureau has been conducting hospitality seminars for taxi drivers and trained 80 Tourism Ambassadors in the city this year.

Over in the north, the state of Penang earned a major tourism boost by hosting the inaugural edition of WTM Connect Asia. The event was attended by 70 hosted buyers from 25 countries, including Lithuania, Mexico, Norway, the Czech Republic, Canada, Denmark and Slovakia – markets that have never been on Penang's radar in the past.

Ooi Chok Yan, CEO of Penang Global Tourism, said: "Having a world-class show like this in Penang is good branding for the state. It offered an opportunity for us to tap new markets."

Penang Global Tourism hosted fam tours for buyers and provided four choice of activities to showcase new tourism products.

One of the highlighted attractions is Habitat Penang Hill, a new eco-tourism product located a 10-minute walk from the top station of Penang Hill. The owner and management company, Flagstaff

Holdings, invested RM32 million on this four-hectare site to develop attractions that are suitable for both leisure and MICE travellers. Habitat Penang Hill features a guided nature trail, the Curtis Crest Treetop Walk which opened in August and the 230m-long Canopy Walk bridges. And at 40m above the forest floor at its highest point, Habitat Penang Hill lays claims to having the highest viewing platform in Penang, where visitors can even spot the islands of Langkawi on a clear day.

This month Habitat Penang Hill will unveil the Canopy Discovery Tour, an area for teambuilding activities. A variety of high and low ropes as well as tree climbing activities will be available at opening, while South-east Asia's longest dual zip-line over a rainforest will debut in 2017. The latter, known as Big Zip, will span 800m in two directions.

Business event delegates in Penang are seen as a high-yield market, as they spend an average four times more than leisure tourists. To attract more business event delegates, the state government has established a state funded bureau early this year. Penang Convention & Exhibition

VIEWPOINTS

Which source markets will perform best for you this year and why?



Uzaidi Udanis,
general manager,
Eyes Holidays

We are getting good numbers of MICE business from MNCs based in Singapore.

We think this is due to the exchange rate and the close proximity which makes it easy to organise a short trip. For leisure business, Indochina is doing well because of the availability of direct flights.



Adam Kamal, CEO,
Olympik Holidays

We think the stigma against Muslims in the US and Europe will cause a shift of Middle Eastern

travellers to South-east Asia, and Malaysia will benefit from it. The exchange rate is favourable and many Middle Eastern airlines offer promotional rates to Malaysia from time to time, which encourages Middle Eastern agents to promote Malaysia.

Bureau is headed by Ashwin Gunasekeran as its CEO.

In 1Q2017, the state will have its first purpose-built convention venue. The Subterranean Penang International Convention and Exhibition Centre will be able to serve large gatherings of up to 8,000 people. Its massive ballroom on the subterranean floor is suitable for large events, such as company dinners, meetings, conventions and exhibitions.

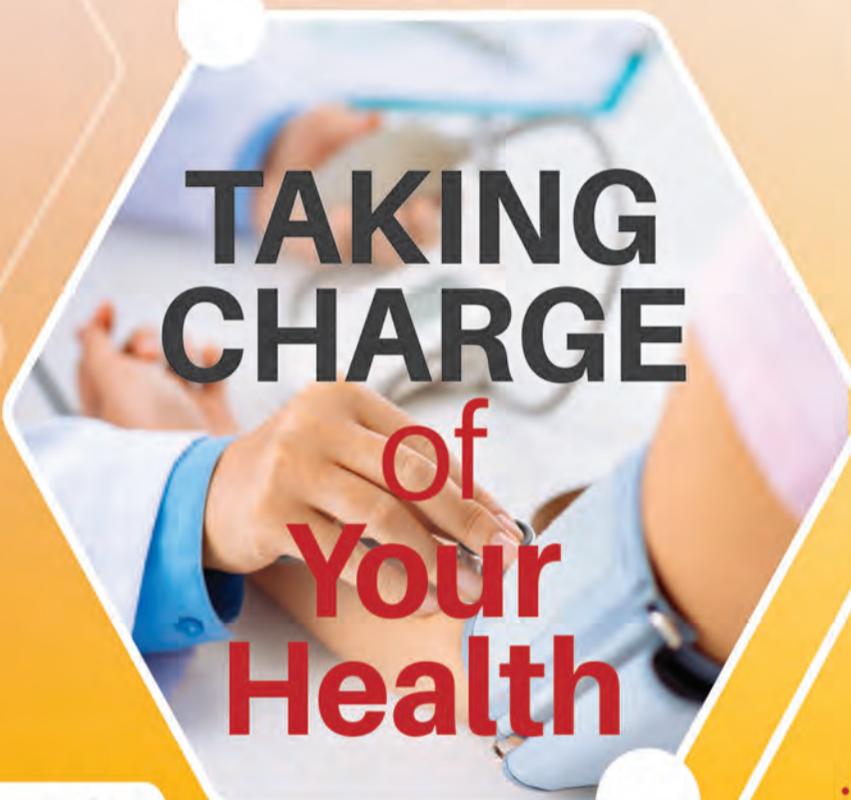


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Destination Malaysia

Destination in numbers

30.5

In millions, the number of foreign arrivals targeted for 2016, up from 25.7 million arrivals in 2015

103

The amount of tourist receipts in billions of ringgit (US\$25.8 billion) Malaysia aims to achieve in 2016, up from RM69.5 billion contributed in 2015

199,725

The number of cruise passengers that sailed into Malaysia in 1Q2016, a 32.7 per cent increase from 150,473 during the same period last year

PRODUCTS

1 Penang Amazing World Studios

As the world's first Warner Brothers licensed gallery, this attraction houses more than 30 trick arts, featuring mainly Warner Brothers cartoon characters against a Penang backdrop. Visitors to the highly interactive studio have endless fun taking amazing trick photography. Particularly fun is the virtual reality section where visitors can don a headset and glasses, and be transported on a roller coaster for an Indiana Jones type adventure.



From left: Penang Amazing World Studios; TOKB Café



2 The Ghostbusters Adventure Live

Sunway Lagoon's Lynton V Harris Scream Park unveiled a new interactive attraction, The Ghostbusters Adventure Live, in July. The attraction, said to be Asia's first Ghostbusters attraction, is based on the movie franchise and its famous characters. It occupies the top level of Scream Park and takes visitors through a harrowing 20-minute journey that visits locations based on the relaunch of the movie.

can be chartered for private functions. Packages and catering services can be customised to meet the requirements of clients. Organisers hiring the catamaran have a choice of two routes, from Kuching Waterfront to BCCK and from the Isthmus jetty up to the mouth of the Sarawak River. *Sayang Sarawak* will take passengers past quaint villages, verdant jungles and wetlands along the Sarawak River.

3 Sayang Sarawak

Since early 2016, Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCCCK) has been operating the *Sayang Sarawak* catamaran which

4 Visit Kedah Year

This year has been designated as Visit Kedah year and to draw visitors to the mainland, the state is banking on archeo-tourism. Visit Kedah campaign theme,

Where it all began, capitalises on Bujang Valley where relics uncovered at the Sungai Batu Civilisation Complex there were found to date back to 535 BC. Tourism Kedah has trained 20 guides to provide interpretation services for tourists to the archaeological sites at Bujang Valley while local tour operators sell packaged tours to the historical sites.

5 AirAsia Premium Red Lounge

AirAsia has opened its first airport transit lounge, the AirAsia Premium Red Lounge at klia2. The 24-hour facility is complimentary for the LCC's Premium Flatbed and Premium Flex passengers departing

from klia2, the carrier's operating headquarters in Malaysia, while walk-in access is available to anyone with a valid boarding pass for RM79 (US\$19.30). The lounge takes up a 302m² space located at the mezzanine level of the international departure area at klia2.

6 TOKB Café

Located in Section 13, Petaling Jaya, the new café serves authentic Kelantanese cuisine in a military theme environment that celebrates the owners' love for wartime memorabilia. TOKB – an abbreviation of Taste of Kota Bharu, the state capital of Kelantan – can seat 100 diners.



Artist impressions of Desaru Coast

DESTINATION TO WATCH

Desaru: coastal city awakens for leisure and corporate events

Once known for its laid-back ways and kampung (village) feel, Desaru in south-eastern Johor state is coming alive with a massive redevelopment led by a subsidiary of Themed Attractions Resorts & Hotels.

The Desaru Coast integrated resort project, scheduled to be completed in 2017/2018, have pulled in big hotel brands such as Aman, Anantara, Westin and Hard Rock and will offer many recreational facilities such as water theme parks and golf courses.

Renowned for its luxurious facilities and excellent courses, The Els Club is the first to open in Desaru Coast in September. It features two golf courses – the 27-hole Ocean course designed by Ernie Els and the 18-hole Valley course designed by Vijay Singh.

For the young and young at heart, The Desaru Adventure Waterpark beckons with several attractions, from one of the world's largest surf wave-pools to exhilarating water and raft-slides, all set in a fishing village environment.

The Riverwalk waterfront landscaped village, housing a host of retail outlets, chic restaurants, al fresco cafes and entertainment venues, will be located within easy reach of hotels and theme parks in Desaru Coast.

But with the entire Desaru Coast spanning 1,700ha of land, travellers can expect far more to come. In fact, these infrastructure, and more to be unveiled as it approaches opening, form just phase one of the project and occupy 30 per cent of the available land space.

Supporting the Desaru Coast development is the future state convention and exhibition bureau for Johor which will be established by the year-end and a projected four new convention centres (in addition to the existing Persada Johor International Convention Centre) in Iskandar Malaysia and Desaru Coast by 2020. Altogether, these spell new hope for the state of Johor's MICE business.



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Calls for a stronger push



A more aggressive tourism ministry, new products and improved reputation needed to raise arrivals. By **Rohit Kaul**

Stakeholders of India's travel and tourism industry are a worried lot today. The lack of an aggressive marketing campaign by the Indian Ministry of Tourism coupled with the absence of new tourism products are likely to dent inbound tourism performance this tourist season beginning October.

Subhash Goyal, chairman of STIC Travel Group, said: "Even though the ministry shows an increase in arrivals, the figures are just notional. Leisure arrivals have not gone up as most of the hotels are experiencing low occupancy.

"People who are coming to India are mostly non-resident Indians who are here to visit friends and relatives, or Indian origin investors who have been motivated by our prime minister, Narendra Modi, to invest in India."

Echoing a similar sentiment, Ravi Gosain, managing director of Erco Travels, told the *Show Daily*: "The present state of inbound tourism is gloomy. We are facing a severe slow-down that has occurred over the last few years due to multiple factors. India isn't expensive but it just isn't on the minds of holidaymakers. Our neighbours, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Bhutan, are pricier but they are doing good tourism business."

E M Najeeb, managing director of Air-travel Enterprises India, blames the slow-down on softening travel demand in the longhaul markets, which are traditionally drawn to India.

"(Travel movements today are mostly) intra-region and some of India's neighbours have (moved faster than India) to leverage their competitive prices to become popular places for economic vacations," he said.

Some local tour operators believe that the absence of new tourism products is costing the country dearly.

Gosain said: "Our industry has been pleading with the Ministry of Tourism to come up with major reforms (in order to) promote India as a fresh destination. I heard that some concrete promotional activities are in the pipeline but as long as

they won't materialise, we can only live in hope. We can't sell the same products for long because travellers' needs are changing and we need to change as well or create new attractions to lure new customers."

Goyal also sees an urgent need for India to create a vision of it being a safe destination, to counter the past media coverage on India's violent crimes against women.

Najeeb agrees, saying: "The negative publicity and tourism advisories imposed on India by various countries turn tourists away from us."

Meanwhile, India's hoteliers have another cause of woe to tackle – a multiple layer of taxation imposed on hotels that is complex and irks customers.

Sanjeev Bhatia, general manager, The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa New Delhi, said: "There is an immediate need to streamline the tax structure in India. The current system on room tariffs has a number of taxes like luxury, service, sales, VAT and more. Furthermore, a new tax can be imposed suddenly, making it even harder for us to explain to our guests who've booked in advance, why they now need to pay more."

Bhatia also urged the establishment of world-class safety and cleanliness standards at key tourist places.

Destination in numbers

137.7

The year-on-year percentage growth in tourist arrivals on e-tourist visa to India in June 2016, reaching a total of 36,982 people

10.7

The percentage growth in foreign tourist arrivals in April 2016 over the same period in 2015. Bangladesh makes up the highest share of tourist arrivals that month, followed by the US and the UK

3.1

The millions of foreign tourist arrivals from January to April this year, up 10.1 per cent from the same period in 2015

Industry players opined that if the above issues were addressed quickly, India's tourism fortunes would turn around for the better.

VIEWPOINTS

Which source markets do you think will perform best this year?



Debit Dutta, director & CEO, Impression Tourism Services

I operate in east and north-eastern part of the country which is an upcoming destination for the global market.

However, some tourists are unwilling to travel to this region as it is situated near to a place (in Bangladesh) where there was a terrorist attack recently. However, I expect Asian markets like China, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong to do well since they are (more resistant to) uncertainties as compared to the traditional western markets. I think it is time (to explore) regional markets. They may not be very high paying, but definitely have a lot of potential.

Arun Anand, managing director, Midtown Travels

I expect South-east Asia, China, the US and European markets to fare well this year.

And if there are marketing campaigns by the tourism ministry, we can expect a good number of arrivals.



PRODUCTS

1 Rakkh Resort

This new premium property in the heart of the Kangra district in the state of Himachal Pradesh promises to be a venue for relaxation. Sitting at the top of one of the foothills of the Dhaulandhar mountain range which belongs to the Himalayas, and comprising 17 cottages over more than four acres of land, guests of Rakkh Resort can enjoy serenity and awe-inspiring views of the snow-capped mountains. Yoga classes and tours around the area are offered.

2 Costa neoClassica

For the first time, travellers can look forward to embarking at Mumbai and going on a cruise that calls at numerous enchanting Indian destinations such as Goa and Cochin, as well as farther destinations in the region including the Maldives and Colombo. The highly-anticipated *Costa neoClassica* will offer weekly sailings from December 16, 2016 to March 18, 2017. *Costa neoClassica* has 654 cabins with capacity for 1,700 passengers, a casino, a theatre, a disco, a ballroom and a grand bar. Plenty of entertainment is promised on the high seas.

3 Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity

Pride Group Hotels has opened its first luxury hotel in the Indian capital. Strategically located in close proximity of Delhi

and Gurgaon, the hotel features 385 exquisite rooms and suites, five state-of-the-art banquet halls, eclectic dining venues, an outdoor swimming pool, fitness centre and the ORA spa.

4 Mustard, Goa

This new restaurant in Goa's Sangolda area specialises in European and Indian Bengali cuisine. Menu highlights include chicken scallopini with a pesto mustard dressing, crispy fish with ratatouille, pork medallions served with a sweet potato mash, as well as old Bengali favourites like *dal puri* and *kumror chhokka* and *bhapa doi*. Mustard can seat 150 guests.

5 Varun Beach Bheemili Resort

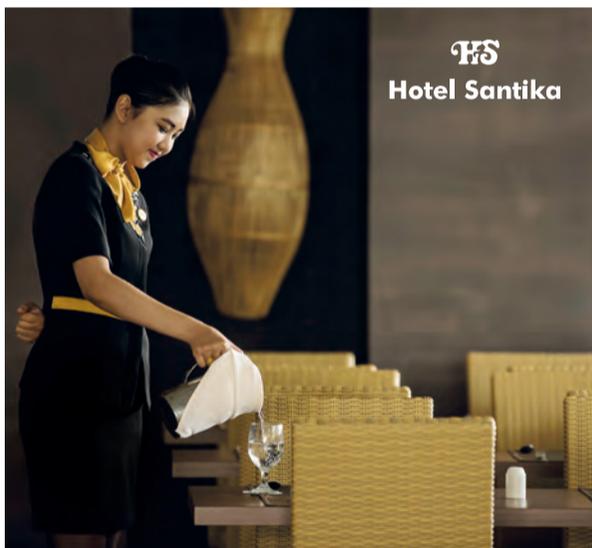
AccorHotels has opened this 28-key resort some 25km north-east of Visakhapatnam city. It overlooks the scenic Bay of Bengal and offers guests five acres of pristine shorelines and easy access to Bheemili beach. Facilities include various F&B outlets, a rooftop infinity pool and a spa.

6 Courtyard Bengaluru and Fairfield by Marriott Bengaluru Outer Ring Road

These two hotels are part of an integrated property complex by Marriott International, providing a total of 292 rooms. Guests staying at both hotels can enjoy facilities across the complex. The hotels are close to Global Tech Park.



Kava Bar, Fairfield by Marriott Bengaluru Outer Ring Road (above); Oriental Spice at Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity



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Kayaking in Bathurst Harbour, Tasmania

Quick success for new campaign

Leads to industry partners swell by 85 per cent in just nine months, thanks to a heart-throb and virtual reality in Australia's latest campaign, writes [Rebecca Elliott](#)

It has been just nine months since Tourism Australia launched the new iteration of its *There's Nothing Like Australia* campaign, showcasing Australia's aquatic and coastal assets, off the back of the hugely successful *Restaurant Australia*.

Restaurant Australia, launched in December 2013, has seen spending on food and wine by international visitors increase by nearly 25 per cent to more than A\$1 billion (US\$7.6 million), according to figures released by the national tourism body. Needless to say, while *Restaurant Australia* continues, the aquatic and coastal campaign had some big shoes to fill.

As such, Tourism Australia pulled out the big guns and employed Aussie actor and Hollywood heart-throb Chris Hemsworth

as the global ambassador to help share the aquatic and coastal story.

According to managing director of Tourism Australia John O'Sullivan: "Having Chris involved gave us an authentic Australian voice to help share the country's experiences with the world in a genuine way."

However, Hemsworth alone isn't the sole driver of the campaign. O'Sullivan said a key contributor has been making the use of Virtual Reality and 360 technology widely available to consumers, industry and trade partners to give them a more immersive experience of what a holiday in Australia has to offer.

"Since its launch, the new campaign assets have been viewed more than 10 million times across Facebook, YouTube and

Australia.com. Significantly, leads to industry partners have grown 85 per cent," added O'Sullivan.

The campaign was first launched to the American market at the end of January, and in mid-April it was rolled out in China during Australia Week, specifically targeting the FIT and premium markets.

O'Sullivan said that over a 10-week period, the campaign reached 13.4 million Chinese consumers via out of home, print, digital and social media platforms.

"There were more than two million unique visitors to australia.cn during the campaign period, of which more than 200,000 clicked into partners' sites for further travel conversion activities," he said.

O'Sullivan said that working with industry, in market Key Distribution Partners (KDPs) and Aussie Specialist Travel Agents have been important to the success of the campaign, and converting interest into visitation.

For example, KDPs in China extensively promoted FIT and premium packages with new aquatic and coastal experiences. Based on preliminary statistics, they have sold more than 15,000 aquatic and coastal themed travel packages during the campaign period, valued at A\$52 million.

Local operators have also been enjoying the spoils of the campaign.

Destination in numbers

7.8

The millions of international visitors to Australia in 2015-2016, up 10 per cent

14

The percentage increase in overnight expenditure by international visitors in Australia to reach A\$38.1 billion (US\$28.5 billion) in 2015-2016

2,000

The number of global media stories generated by employing Chris Hemsworth as the country's aquatic and coastal ambassador

A spokesperson for One&Only Hayman Island said: "Millions of Chris Hemsworth fans on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook were able to follow the actor and his family on their recent trip throughout Australia. This has translated into an increase in bookings from around the globe to One&Only Hayman Island."

Looking at the bigger picture, Tourism Australia has been working towards growing overnight visitor expenditure to more than A\$115 billion per annum by the end of the decade as part of its Tourism 2020 strategy.

According to Tourism Research Australia's latest Tourism Forecasts 2016, the total annual overnight spending is forecasted to reach A\$127 billion by the year 2020 – well ahead of the original A\$115 billion target.

"The latest figures show that international spending is currently growing at more than twice the rate of visitor arrivals, accelerated by the growth in visitation from key markets in Asia," O'Sullivan concluded.

VIEWPOINT

Which source markets will perform best for you this year and why?

Haydn Long, investor and media relations, Flight Centre Travel Group

The Chinese market has been an important source of inbound traffic and I suspect that it will continue. I think we may also see some growth in inbound from the UK if there is ongoing uncertainty surrounding Brexit. Sometimes, people take a gap year or a working holiday when there is uncertainty and they travel to places where conditions are more stable. We saw that to some degree during 2009.

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QATAR

Destination Australia

DESTINATION TO WATCH

Canberra: soaring on new wings

It seems hard to believe that Australia's capital city, Canberra, only commenced its first-ever international flights just a month ago to Singapore and New Zealand's capital city, Wellington through Singapore Airlines.

International flights are a game changer for Canberra and the surrounding region; up until now, international visitors have had to catch a connecting domestic flight from the likes of Melbourne or Sydney. Traditionally, Canberra's tourism sector has relied on domestic tourism, so no doubt direct flights four times per week will markedly increase inbound tourists from not just Asia and New Zealand, but also across Europe where the airline has an extensive network.

And Canberra has poured its heart and soul into preparing for the influx of international visitors. In recent years, the Canberra Airport Group has invested more than A\$420 million (US\$314 million) on upgrading the airport to include an international terminal, and most recently, the addition of an airport hotel, Vibe Hotel Canberra, run by the Toga Far East Group.

According to VisitCanberra, members of the region's tourism industry have spent the last 24 months drumming up business during sales missions in Singapore, Malaysia and New Zealand. The tourism body has also been educating the local industry to ensure they have 'international ready' commissionable product.



The Parliament of Australia, Canberra

FieldIMAGE/shutterstock.com

PRODUCTS

1 Explore Perth and the Swan River

Explore Tours Perth has created the ultimate day out in Western Australia's capital city with the launch of its new tour, Explore Perth and the Swan River.

The 10-hour tour departs from multiple city locations and includes a stop at Kings Park, a ferry ride on the Swan River, a Segway tour and lunch on the riverbank, visits to Mosman and Freshwater Bays before making its final stop at Cottosloe Beach for sunset drinks. Prices start at A\$159 (US\$121) per person.

2 Camels and Canapes

Camel milk is said to have 10 times more iron and triple the amount of Vitamin C than cow's milk. Visitors to the Sunshine Coast can learn about camel milk and more on Live It Tours' new excursion,

Camels and Canapés.

The three-hour experience transports guests to the QCamel Farm to meet camels Maxi and Gracey, and visit the first dairy in Australia credited with producing pasteurised camel milk.

Set against the backdrop of the Glasshouse Mountains, guests can sip champagne and try camel's milk panna cotta with fresh pomegranate or camel's milk tzatziki and zaatar bread. Prices start at A\$110 (US\$84) per person.

3 Kombi Surf Tours

In a new tour by Coast Capers, wannabe surfers can now learn all about the sport while cruising the Gold Coast in a fully restored 1969 Kombi bus. With seating for seven, the half-day tour departs daily from Surfers Paradise and takes guests to prom-

inent National Surfing Reserves as far as the border of New South Wales. A visit to the Surf World Museum is also included in the price of A\$89 (US\$68) per adult.

4 Jupiters Hotel and Casino

Jupiters Hotel and Casino on the Gold Coast has unveiled the first of its refurbished Superior Deluxe Rooms as part of the hotel's A\$75 million (US\$57 million) transformation.

Located on the 5th to 17th floors, the luxurious rooms were designed by Steelman Partners and feature bespoke bedheads, local artwork and natural wood finishes, along with The Star Entertainment Group's custom-created 'The Cloud' mattress topper. All 600 rooms in the hotel are on track to be completed by the end 2016.

5 The Mackerel Islands

Made up of 10 islands, The Mackerel Islands – located 22km off the coast of Onslow in Western Australia – are now open for business after a partial closure for renovations.

Thevenard and Direction Islands offer accommodation, with Thevenard home to 13 refurbished beachfront cabins, while Direction has just one cabin for up to eight people. Activities include diving, fishing and kicking back on the beach.

6 Skypeak Adventures

A new aerial adventure park, Skypeak Adventures, has opened on the outskirts of Sydney, offering 80 different challenges ranging from aerial crossings and free falls to tree climbs and ziplines.

Corporate groups are catered for with customised packages determined by the organisation's desired outcomes of the experience. Air-conditioned conference facilities and catering are also available. Discounted rates are available for groups of four or more.

7 Magill Estate Kitchen

Magill Estate Kitchen is the latest dining addition to the sprawling Penfolds Magill Estate in Adelaide Hills, just 15 minutes by car from Adelaide city centre. Its warm wooden interiors and large window panes that let in views of its verdant surroundings make it a charming venue for casual get-togethers in the day and romantic night-outs after sunset.

It is available for corporate hire and can accommodate 60 guests seated or 200 people for a cocktail party setting. Dining, canape and wine packages are available for event planners to choose from. All dietary requirements can be catered for with prior notification. Full venue hires are only accepted in the evenings. Minimum spend applies.

The winery also offers a degustation experience in its Magill Estate Restaurant, canape-style parties in various locations such as the Magill Estate Gallery, and a nine-course tasting menu in the Max Schubert Cellar. A structured Penfolds Tour and Wine Tasting programme is available as an add-on to a main event.



Clockwise from above: Magill Estate Kitchen in Adelaide Hills; Explore Tours Perth offers a new tour; cruise the Gold Coast in a restored Kombi bus; whale-spotting off The Mackerel Islands, Western Australia

THAILAND

An amazing feast for the senses



Amazing stories unfold every day in Thailand, where a feast for the senses awaits. From intricate artisanal textiles and palate-pleasing gastronomic delights to rejuvenating massages set amidst serene natural landscapes, discover unique and unforgettable local experiences in the Land of Smiles.

Timeless pleasures

World-renowned for the quality of its wellness treatments, Thailand is introducing novel yet traditional types of massages that can be found in various places around the Kingdom.

Travellers can pamper themselves with a hot sand mud spa in the middle of the mangrove forest in Krabi's Had Soi Rawn, or travellers visit community-based tourism destination Ban Rai Kong Khing for the Yam Khang foot massage - in which they receive a massage by foot! In Trat province, the locals of Ban Chang Tune Community sit in bamboo-woven, traditional chicken coops as part of a herbal sauna, an experience open to visitors too.

Food is always another highlight of any trip to Thailand. Food tours and fruit buffets showcase the diversity and freshness of local cuisine, and cooking lessons make sure visitors take a piece of Thailand home with them. Travellers should take time to tickle their tastebuds in Bangkok, home to some of the best restaurants and innovative chefs in Asia.

True blue foodies can also visit and stay with local communities along the Mekong and indigenous hill tribes in Chiang Rai to see how rice is grown, harvested, and even processed. Each visit offers insight for the visitor and a way for local communities to sustain their livelihoods. Alternatively, the ongoing Organic Agriculture Project at Sukhothai Airport grows many types of organic fruit and vegetables, and visitors can take a tour around its greenhouse, vegetable gardens and demonstration field to learn more about an organic way of life.

The art of living



Thailand is a mecca for shoppers. While there are many malls in Bangkok to meet every budget and desire, the country's year-round balmy weather makes it perfect for visiting any of the outdoor shopping streets around the country that come alive after the sun sets.

As dusk approaches, designated roads are closed to traffic and turn into walking streets with food stalls and shops bursting to life. Wander through Bangkok's legendary Khao San Road, or the walking streets of Chiang Mai and neighbouring Lampang for accessories and items that reflect their northern Thai styles, while seafood is a particular specialty on the streets of beach-side towns Hua Hin, Samui, and Phuket.

Travellers to Thailand can also witness for themselves how some of these souvenirs are made by going right to the source. A long history of art in Thailand has translated to many skilled artisans who honour their rich culture by continuing to use traditional production methods even today.

For instance, Ban Rai Jai Suk in Chiang Mai is a living museum and learning center where master weavers instruct visitors on the traditional production process through workshops on doll-making and natural dyeing. Or, tourists can try making their own porcelain works of art at Benjarong Porcelain in Don Kai Dee, Samut Sakhon province, where they can buy, admire and learn about porcelain-making traditions.

Thailand is a major destination for holidaymakers looking for a rich cultural lesson and also to kick back and relax with the finer things in life.



However, the ultimate experience combining all that Thailand has to offer is a wedding in Thailand, where romance, culture and pleasure meet for that special once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The couple can choose between a northeastern style Isan wedding, a southern Chinese style Baba wedding, or a northern Lanna wedding - each with its own aesthetic styles and special customs.

Donning costumes unique to the regional grouping, the couple can expect a fully immersive cultural experience as they go through the rites.

Whether it's art, romance, shopping, or wellness - [Discover Amazing Stories in Amazing Thailand.](#)



Destination China

Stepping up promotions

Sanya is shouting its new wares through more international platforms, but the trade thinks more airlift, better trained service staff and friendlier visa procedures are needed for the destination to truly grow. By **Caroline Boey**

Sanya Tourism Development Commission has intensified its global marketing



The international reputation of Sanya, often dubbed the “Oriental Hawaii” and “St Tropez of China”, built on the five-star international chain hotels located on Yalong Bay is set to rise with better connectivity and new brands making their debut in the new Haitang Bay area.

Flights from Frankfurt, Ho Chi Minh City and Kaohsiung started in 1H2016 and 14 flights from Japan, South Korea, Russia, Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are operating since the start of 2015, said Wang Feifei, deputy director, Sanya Tourism Development Commission (STDC).

It is critical for Sanya to continue to develop its connectivity with the massive injection of hotel rooms in Haitang Bay, where 32 luxury hotels have been planned and 12 have opened so far.

In the past, direct international access to China’s only beach destination was limited with most travellers having to connect via gateway cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

Kris Van Goethem, inbound and MICE director, Thomas Cook China, said: “Access for the Western markets was weak and clients from our main longhaul markets – the UK, France, Italy, Spain and Germany – come to China mainly for the culture and some may stay at a beach resort at the end of such a tour.”

Joy Liao, sales director, Inbound and MICE Center, Century Holiday International Travel Group, added that although

VIEWPOINTS

Which source markets will perform best for you this year and why?



Kaci McAllister,
deputy general
manager, **Destination Asia (China)**

With regard to Sanya and just looking quickly at our enquiries this year, interest in the

destination has come from the US, France and from within Asia.

So far we haven’t noticed any major uptick in requests as a result of the new flight options, but that will likely take some time. Sanya is often a repeat destination for clients who have already done events in Beijing and Shanghai but want to come back to China for something different.

Sanya is a popular beach resort destination and is well known in Asia, “it is still quite a small market for us”.

International tourism is what Sanya is targeting and Hoss Vetry, general manager, Ritz-Carlton Sanya, Yalong Bay, commented that the local government has responded very quickly to feedback on airport infrastructure and capacity.

Every major international hotel chain and top brand is going to be represented in Haitang Bay.

Sitting side by side are hotels such as



Violet Wang,
destination manager,
Pacific World, China

For the English-speaking international market, travellers that go to Sanya combine a beach and city

destination, and are looking for exclusivity.

Overall for China, the US is still number one for us and other key markets are Australia, New Zealand, the UK, France and Germany. Asia-Pacific is picking up and we are seeing big groups from Singapore.

Real estate and financial clients expanding into China are booking a lot of meetings and client engagement events.

Atlantis Sanya, Sanya EDITION, The Westin Sanya Haitang Bay Resort, Sanya Haitang Bay Conrad Hotel, Wanda Sanya Haitang Bay Doubletree by Hilton Resort Hotel, Shangri-La’s Sanya Resort & Spa Hainan, Grand Hyatt Sanya Haitang Bay, Sheraton Sanya Haitang Bay Resort, and more.

Haitang Bay is where Accor has planted its first Sofitel beach resort, the Sofitel Sanya Leeman Resort, some 10 minutes by car from the new CDF Mall, said to be the world’s largest duty-free store.

To better promote Sanya and what’s new, STDC has expanded its digital footprint with new websites in Japanese, Korean and Russian and is on six major social media platforms.

“We began using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and TripAdvisor since late 2015,” Wang noted.

STDC is attending ITB Asia, partnering CNBC and appointing overseas representatives, like in Germany with the launch of flights from Frankfurt. Wang added Sanya has also embarked on a programme to beautify the destination, introduced policies that encourage sustainable development and launched the Tourism Police last year.

Kevin Chen, operation events manager of regional DMC EXO Events, thinks Sanya could still do with more airlift and “staff who are better trained and are able to speak English and understand the needs of international travellers”, as the US and Europe are its main markets.

For Christophe Hazebrouck, general manager, Sofitel Sanya Leeman Resort and area general manager, Hainan, Sofitel Luxury Hotels, “direct flights from Asia, a few weekly flights from key cities in Europe and visa-free access or visa-on-arrival for all countries” are on his wish list.

Hazebrouck noted: “While Sanya is under pressure to push its aviation development, there is also the security issue being a military base and where the flight corridor is under military control.”

Industry players also agree Sanya needs to step up its marketing and promotions, stand on its own right and not continue to be branded the “Oriental Hawaii” or the “St Tropez of China”.

Xu Feng, vice president, North Star Events Institute, which handles a number of medical groups and corporate meetings, said the safety and low-risk aspects of Sanya has been gaining attention and should be further highlighted.

Others say the promise of more attractive rates as room inventory grows will mitigate the image of Sanya being expensive as it is a sought-after destination among domestic travellers who throng the destination during winter and as China’s only beach resort is very popular among Fortune 500 companies in China for incentives and corporate meetings.

Apart from Sanya being safe, it also possesses qualities like natural environment, good weather and MICE infrastructure, which are important factors for corporates.

Julien Delerue, general manager of 1000meetings, commented: “What is important to a company when picking a destination in China is that there is no pollution.”

Sanya received 7.8 million overnight tourists in 1H2016, a year-on-year growth of 8.9 per cent. The numbers included 192,000 overseas tourists, up 13.6 per cent year-on-year.

Hong Kong continues to be a key source market followed by Taiwan, Russia, South Korea and the US.

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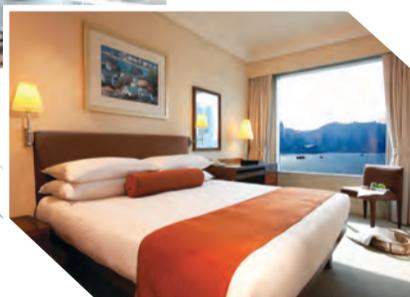
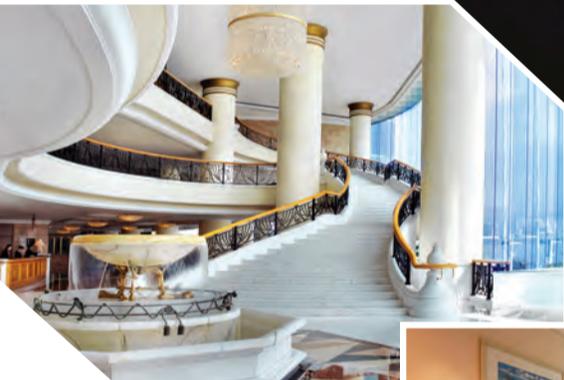


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Destination China

DESTINATION TO WATCH

Xi'an: more rooms, more airlift

Shaanxi's capital Xi'an – known as Chang'an in the past and one of four traditional historic capitals of ancient China – is growing in popularity thanks to the Economic Silk Road Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, known as One Belt One Road.

That aside, the big draw card of the Terracotta Warriors has put ancient Xi'an firmly on the map for anyone wanting to see the "real China", according to James Walden, general manager, The Westin Xian.

"As Shanghai and Beijing are becoming more expensive and already well visited, demand for Xi'an is stable and growing. However, Xi'an is still not firmly on the radar in some Western markets, yet in others there is strong interest for MICE and incentive travel."

Several new direct international flights to Xi'an added in the last two years – Finnair from Helsinki, Hainan Airlines from Sydney, Paris, Rome and Tokyo, and United Airlines from San Francisco – are making the destination more accessible.

The improved access will come in handy as Xi'an is gearing up for a five-star hotel boom and showdown.

Walden noted: "In the Qujiang area, where The Westin Xian is located, we have seen the arrival of a 500-plus-room Wyndham Grand hotel and a 400-room Gran Meliá hotel in late-2014 and more recently a 300-room Hyatt Regency.

"In addition, construction is under way on Grand Hyatt, Ritz-Carlton and W properties, just to name a few of the new players about to join the market."

AccorHotels first entered Xi'an in 2004 and Rudy Rodas, general manager, and area general manager Sofitel Central China, said: "Xi'an is an increasingly popular destination for tourism and MICE, and more international hotel groups have impressive expansion plans in the coming years."

Driving demand are Huawei and Samsung where business travellers book between 500 and 700 room nights per day in five-star hotels.



Qin Shi Huang Mausoleum of the First Emperor of China

Julian Delerue, general manager of 1000meetings, observed: "Corporate travel as well as MICE are growing with Huawei and Samsung's factories, and many companies go to Xi'an for annual parties, training, product launches, etc.

"As far as I know, more than 10 international brand hotels are in the pipeline to open in the next five to 10 years and because of increased competition, rates this year are lower compared to last year."

PRODUCTS

1 CDF Mall/Haitang Bay International Shopping Complex

At 70,000m² in size and costing RMB5 billion (US\$750 million) to build, CDF Mall/Haitang Bay International Shopping Complex is said to be the world's largest duty-free shopping centre. It is developed by CITS Group and managed by China Duty Free Group.

About 90 per cent of the retail space opened in September 2014, and premium brands such as Louis Vuitton and Prada quickly followed suit soon after during the 2015 Spring Festival. In all, the mall carries some 300 top international luxury brands and features F&B and entertainment facilities.

2 Rosewood Sanya

Scheduled to open in April 2017, Rosewood Sanya will offer 246 rooms across 14 floors of a 46-storey building.

Part of an integrated resort in Haitang Bay, the hotel is set within 16ha of landscaped gardens surrounding the International Finance Forum Convention Center,

also opening next year.

Rosewood Sanya will offer a various dining destinations including a beachside restaurant and bar, signature Sense spa, a 103m infinity-edge sky pool, a 130m swimming pool cascading to the edge of the beach, a fitness centre, 1,500m² ballroom, two 370m² adjoining meeting rooms and The Pavilion residential-style meeting and function space measuring 625m².

3 Seven-star Beauty Crown Grand-Tree Hotel Complex

Officially opened in January 2016, the visually stunning and massive complex of a crown-shaped theatre and several tree-shaped hotel towers belonging to the Seven-star Beauty Crown Grand-Tree Hotel Complex has played host to the Miss World event six times.

Run like a club, guests can join as a member for RMB5,000 and enjoy room rates starting from RMB98, buffet breakfast for RMB28, buffet lunch for RMB68 and buffet dinner for RMB88.

Its spacious European-designed one-bedroom suite is reminiscent of the French Riviera and features a sitting area, work desk and a large decked balcony offering 180°-views of the surroundings that can be used for small gatherings.

On site are 48 F&B outlets, 11 cinemas, including one IMAX Cinema, a 1,800m² Spa Center, a soon-to-open 300,000m² International Luxuries Flagship Store featuring top global brands, the Beauty Crown Seven-star Yacht Club and Beauty Crown Boeing 737-800 Idly Club.

The complex has its own bar street and is also close to Sanya's bar street.

4 Sofitel Sanya Leeman Resort

Located at Haitang Bay and opened in January 2016, this is Accor's first Sofitel resort hotel in Greater China.

About 85 per cent of the 477-room resort are sea-facing and soothing shades of blue have been used to create its modern and tastefully appointed rooms.

On the resort's spacious lawn is a helicopter parking apron and close to the



CDF Mall/Haitang Bay International Shopping Complex

beachfront are the resort's villas.

Guests can take helicopter rides around the bay and enjoy horse riding on the beach. A Thai restaurant will open soon to complement the Hainan Pearl Chinese restaurant and International Cuisine restaurant, the Lobby Lounge and Eau Bar pool bar.

The Sofitel is a 10-minute drive from the duty-free CDF Mall/Haitang Bay International Shopping Complex.

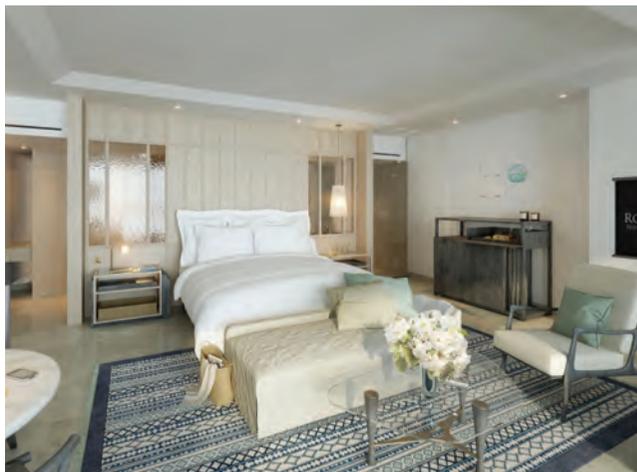
5 DoubleTree Resort By Hilton Hainan – Chengmai

Away from Sanya and not to be confused with Chiang Mai in Thailand, the 305-room resort is located in Mangrove Bay, a new wetlands area next to Mangrove Golf Course, not far from Haikou, Hainan's capital.

Located about a 40-minute drive from Haikou Meilan International Airport and a 45-minute drive from Haikou's commercial centre, the resort officially opened on October 15, 2016.

Outdoor spaces include a spacious courtyard and lawn and there are three F&B outlets, a lobby lounge, a 24-hour fitness centre and 1,500m² of outdoor swimming facilities.

Surrounding attractions include the Mangrove Bay Wetland Park, Foshan Coffee Town, Jinshan Temple, Haikou Volcanic Cluster Global Geopark, Yongqing Temple and the Hainan Tropical Wildlife Park.



From left: DoubleTree Resort By Hilton Hainan – Chengmai; artist's impression of the future Rosewood Sanya



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Marketplace

Theme Attractions Resorts & Hotels

Established by the Malaysian government's strategic investment fund, Khazanah Nasional Berhad, Theme Attractions Resorts & Hotels has a vast investment portfolio of tourism products that include Iskandar Puteri which houses Hotel Jen Puteri Harbour, Puteri Harbour, Sanrio Hello Kitty Town and

Thomas Town; Legoland Malaysia Resort, Desaru Coast which is due to complete in 2017/2018; KidZania Kuala Lumpur and KidZania Singapore; and Teluk Datai Resorts, which The Datai Langkawi and The Els Club Teluk Datai are part of.
Contact: enquiries@tarh.com.my



One Farrer Hotel & Spa

Located in one of Singapore's heritage districts, One Farrer Hotel & Spa is a five-star urban hotel-resort that encompasses three 'hotels within a hotel' – the Urban Hotel, Loft Apartments and Skyline Hotel & Sky Villas – offering 243 keys in total.

Guests can marvel at the hotel's permanent collection of over 700 pieces of original contemporary abstract art from across Greater Asia, and explore 15 water and tropical gardens, including a fully operational farm.

Multiple dining delights await guests too, such as the 24-hour dining restaurant and lounge, Escape, and the modern neighbourhood-style deli, Local Fresh Seasonal. Cooking demonstrations and classes are offered at the Origins of Food food studio.

To refresh the body and mind, One Farrer

Hotel & Spa offers two of the finest spa and fitness facilities in the city and region. Spa Retreat features seven private spa suites, Japanese-style (male and female) onsen gardens with Jacuzzi water lounges, cold plunges and natural mineral pools, while the Asian Wellness Spa provides a wide range of rejuvenating treatments and targeted programmes incorporating western, traditional Chinese and Thai modalities.

One Farrer Hotel & Spa's state-of-the-art Conference Centre satisfies the MICE market, offering a grand ballroom, three meeting rooms and an air-conditioned Garden Pavilion. The technology enabled centre is equipped with video-conferencing capabilities linked to Farrer Park Hospital's 18 operating rooms and Origins of Food.

Contact: enquiry@onefarrer.com



Park Hotel Group

Established in Hong Kong with one hotel in 1961, Park Hotel Group has since grown into an international hotel company with 14 properties across 10 cities such as Xi'an and Kunming in China, Otaru in Japan, Bali in Indonesia, and Singapore. Properties sit under two brands – luxury Grand Park and upscale Park Hotel – and offer more than 4,000 rooms in the region's key gateway cities altogether.

Its latest milestones this year include its entry into South Korea with the opening of Park Hotel Yeongdeungpo, Seoul by early 2017; and into Malaysia with Park Hotel Melaka, scheduled for a 1H2019 launch.
Contact: sin@parkhotelgroup.com



Sentosa

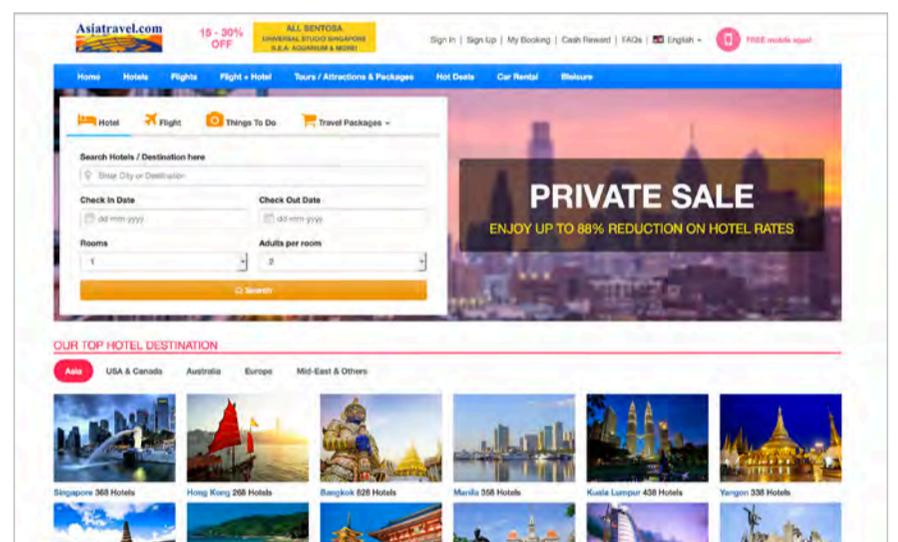
Recognised as Singapore's premier island resort getaway, Sentosa is home to an exciting array of themed attractions, award-winning spa retreats, lush rainforests, white sandy beaches, resort accommodations, world-renowned golf courses, a deep-water yachting marina and luxurious residences – all located across 500 hectares of land.

True to its State of Fun promise, Sentosa

is designed to please visitors of all ages and travel objectives, be it for leisure or business events.

Sentosa is managed by Sentosa Development Corporation, which also manages the Southern Islands and owns Mount Faber Leisure Group which manages Faber Peak Singapore and Singapore Cable Car.

Contact: guest_services@sentosa.com.sg



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Established in 1995, Asiatravel.com Holdings has gone on to be listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange since 2001 and is today Asia's leading online travel company with a global inventory of over eight million travel products worldwide.

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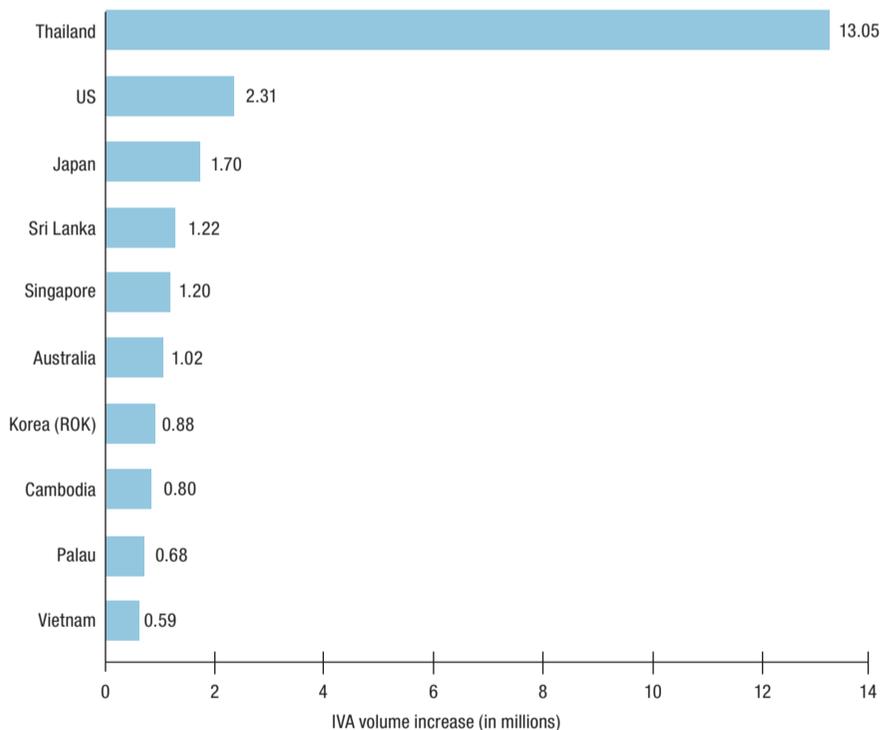
Too much of a good thing

Today, there are few corners of the globe where tourists haven't reached. As tourists flood into historic city centres and remote islands, causing bottlenecks and environmental damage, how can the tourism sector avert disaster and turn the rising tide of tourism into an opportunity? PATA's Strategic Intelligence Centre sheds light on the growth trends and posits the merits of dispersing tourist traffic

For some years now, we have been on a trajectory of unprecedented growth in international travel, driven by a new generation of consumers who are more technologically connected and more globally aware. However, many destinations across Asia and the Pacific are struggling to manage the growth in demand, while others – more remote but equally as attractive – have barely noticed a rise in visitor numbers.

Nevertheless, if congestion at some locations around Asia is already a problem, and if PATA's projections are borne out, then it is only likely to become worse in the next few years. China's outbound market is one to watch in particular, given its volume and rapid rate of growth. There are few destinations in the world which have not registered an increase in arrivals from China in recent years as Chinese travellers start to explore the world in even greater numbers. Data from PATA's five year forecast on international visitor arrivals (IVA) shows that 10 Asia-Pacific (APAC) destinations¹ are forecast to see an increased volume of arrivals from China of 500,000 or more over the period 2015 to 2020.

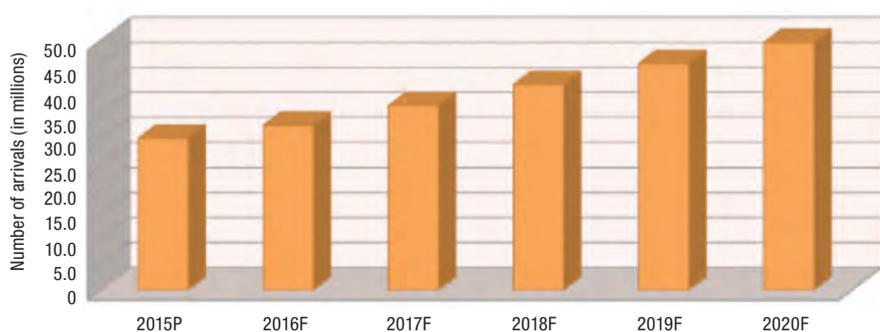
Graph 1: Top 10 APAC destinations by volume increase of IVAs from China, 2020/2015



Source: PATA Asia-Pacific Visitor Forecasts 2016-2020

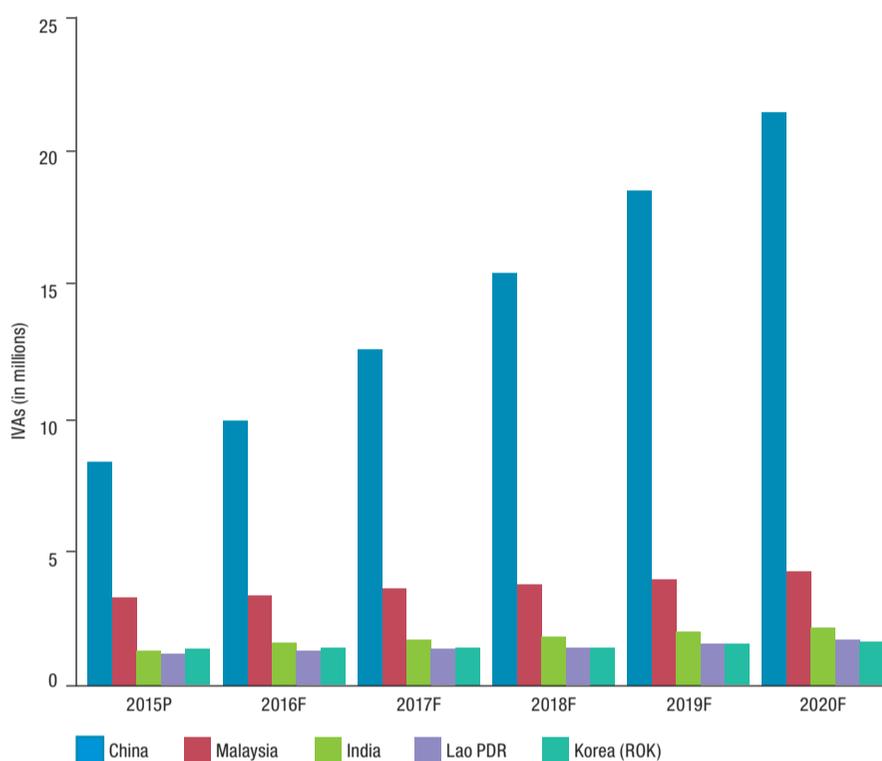
What stands out about these 10 destinations is their considerable disparity in terms of their geography and level of economic development. Five of the destinations listed in the graph are advanced economies (US, Japan, Singapore, Australia and Korea (ROK)), while two of the countries listed in the graph are small island states (Sri Lanka and Palau) with relatively low GDP per capita. Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam are each at different levels of economic development, but can still be considered as 'developing countries'.

Graph 2: Thailand: Forecast visitor arrivals, 2016-2020



Note: P = Preliminary; F = Forecast
Source: PATA Asia-Pacific Visitor Forecasts 2016-2020

Graph 3: Thailand: Forecast top five source markets from Asia by volume, 2016-2020

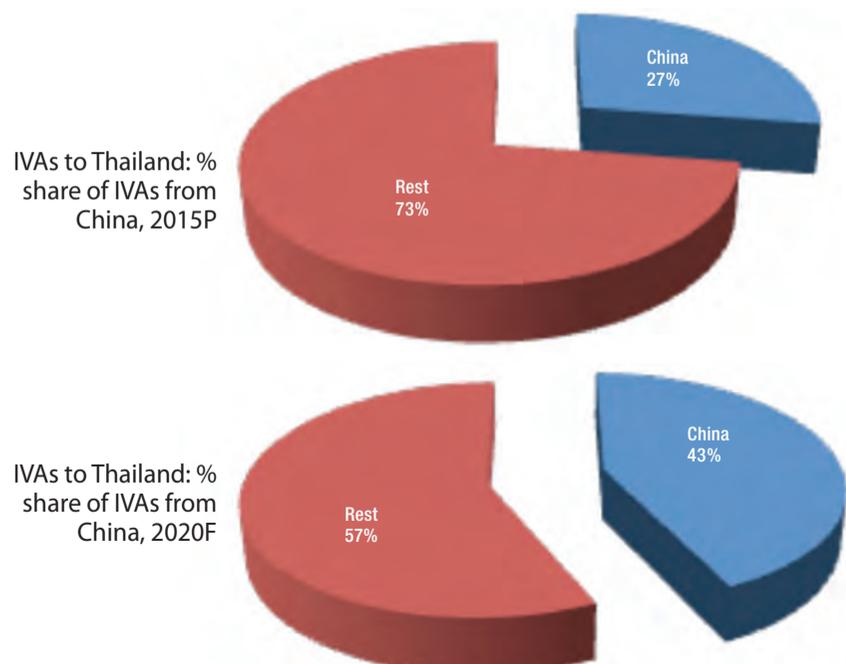


Source: PATA Asia-Pacific Visitor Forecasts 2016-2020

Thailand, in particular, faces a dilemma. Decades of investment in infrastructure and product development have helped to position Thailand as the leading destination for IVAs in South-east Asia. Bangkok has become established as the crossroads of air traffic in the region, and the country's main resorts and city destinations are well connected to the country's leading overseas markets, notably China.

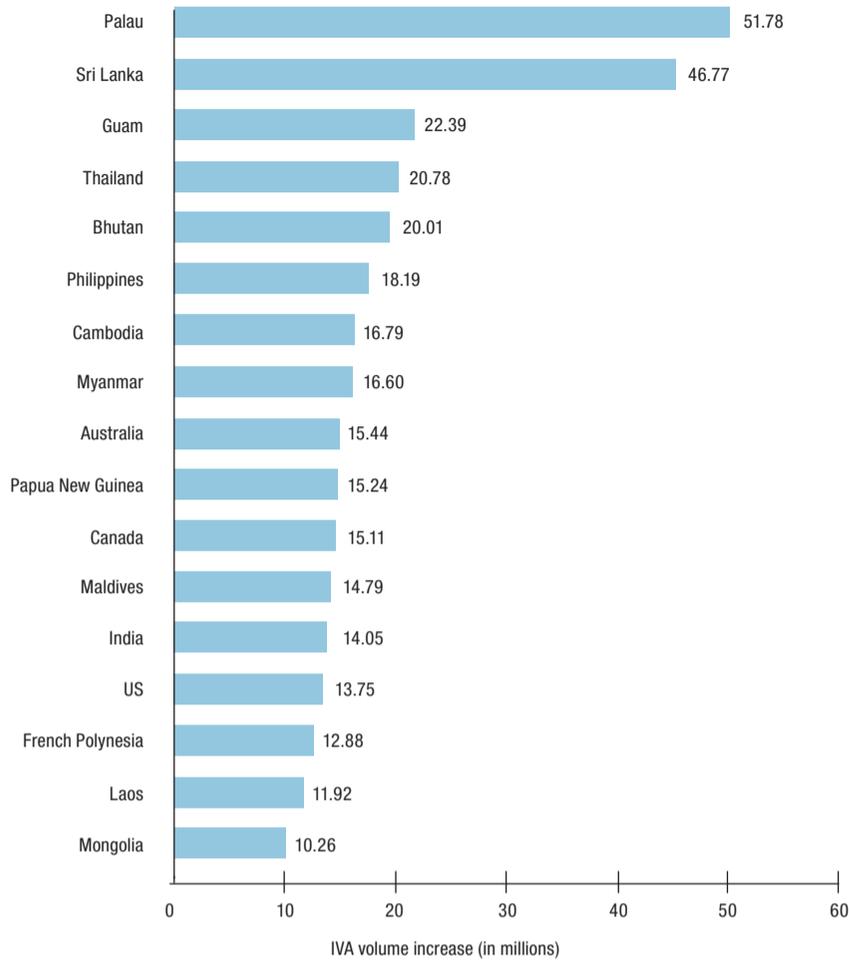
In 2015 Chinese visitors to Thailand accounted for around one quarter of all foreign travellers to the country, and this share is expected to increase significantly. While growth from China and other inbound markets could provide a well-needed boost to Thailand's economy, if it is not managed adequately it could cause lasting damages to the country's environmental and cultural resources, thereby compromising its attractiveness as a destination in future decades.

Graph 4: Thailand: % share of IVAs from China, 2015 and 2020



Source: PATA Asia-Pacific Visitor Forecasts 2016-2020

Graph 5: APAC destinations forecast to receive % AAGR of IVAs from China of >10%, 2015-2020



Source: PATA Asia-Pacific Visitor Forecasts 2016-2020

Crucially, the rate of growth is just as (if not more) important as the volume. According to PATA forecasts, 17 APAC destinations are set to receive an average annual growth rate (AAGR) from China of more than 10 per cent per year over the forecast period. The Pacific island nation of Palau stands out, because it is forecast to receive an increase of Chinese arrivals of nearly 52 per cent every year over the forecast period, rising from 96,850 in 2015 to 780,055 in 2020². This is significant because the country's population was only 21,000 in 2015³, and its land mass is only 459km² (approximately equivalent to the land area of the Seychelles), leaving many to question at what point its physical and social carrying capacity will be reached before limits on growth have to be applied.

Yet China is not the only source market in the region that is undergoing rapid expansion. In Asia and the Pacific, Korea (ROK), Hong Kong SAR, India, Thailand and Vietnam are just a few of the rapidly growing markets that will see strong growth in the near future, each with its own distinct market profile. Of course visitors will not just pour into APAC destinations from the region itself. Beyond APAC, growing outbound markets from Latin America and West Asia are also starting to make waves, while demand from Europe is expected to remain steady.

In summary, too many destinations in the APAC region are suffering imbalances in the profile of their inbound visitor arrivals: depending too strongly on one or two markets, suffering the effects of acute seasonal changes in demand or quite simply unable to cope with crowds of tourists who flock to see the same sites in the same places, in ever-greater numbers. As the leading catalyst for the responsible development of travel and tourism to, from and within APAC, PATA has a huge responsibility to ensure that this growth does not ultimately create more problems than it solves. This is one of the main reasons why we decided to analyse this subject in detail, and propose concrete solutions on how destinations could promote tourism dispersal.

¹Hong Kong SAR and Macau SAR are actually forecast to receive a much higher volume of arrivals, but have been omitted here due to the unique nature of high volume and purpose of travel between mainland China and the two Special Administrative Regions.

²In accordance with the Palau government's statistical method, arrivals figures from China to Palau are for China and Hong Kong SAR combined.

³UNDESA Population chart, July 2015



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Intelligence

PATA also found that Asia's highly-connected, globally-aware youth are demonstrating their interest and ability to seek authentic experiences that take them away from the crowds.

This works in favour of our belief that there is a smarter way for destinations to encourage the dispersal of tourist traffic over a wider area and give tourists reason to visit outside of peak season. We also want to help young people travel in a responsible way while seeking the experience they are looking for.

With this said, here are some findings on millennial travel desires and preferences, along with recommendations for our members and industry partners.

Why millennials?

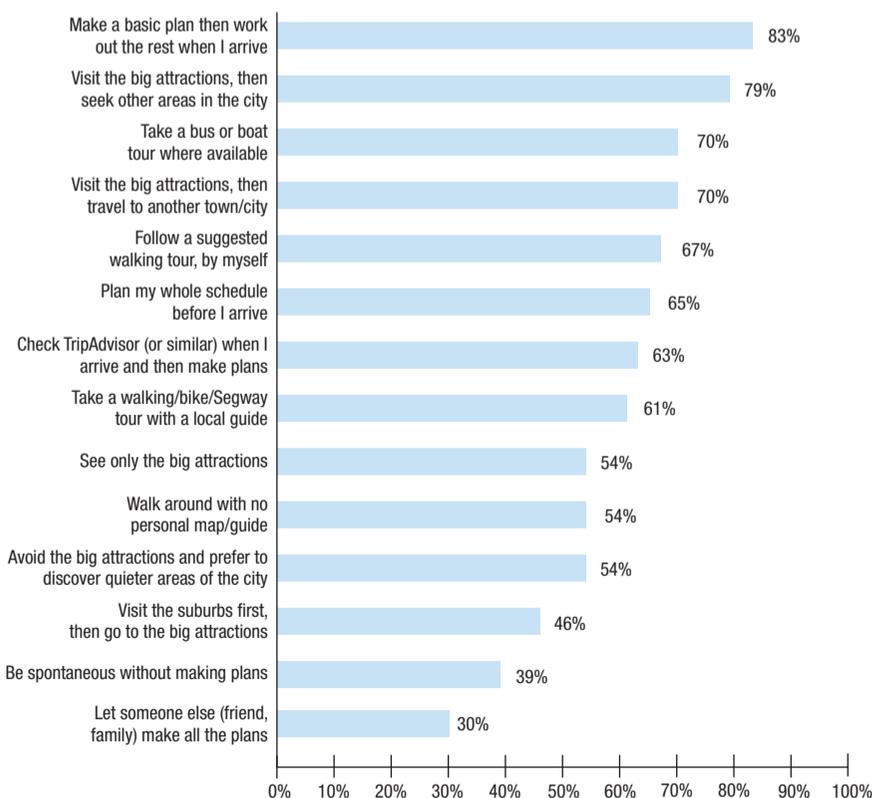
The world's most popular destinations draw travellers of all ages from around the globe so it is relevant to ask 'why focus on millennials?', and 'why focus on millennials from Asia?'

Over the next 10 to 15 years, the future growth in international visitor arrivals for tourism is set to be driven by travellers especially from Asia, where a range of economic, social and demographic factors will converge to make travel an attractive and realistic option for this generation – millennials aged 16-35 years old – who also appear to be leading the growth of free and independent (FIT) travel. When travellers become FIT, they are liberated to seek alternative experiences that are off the beaten track. In a survey of destination management organisations (DMOs) carried out for this report, all destinations recognised the millennial generation as occupying an increasing share of visitor arrivals, as well as being the most frequent and adventurous FIT travellers.



What did we find?

On city trips, Asian millennials prefer to plan on the ground but make the best use of their time with tours of the highlights, before exploring further afield.



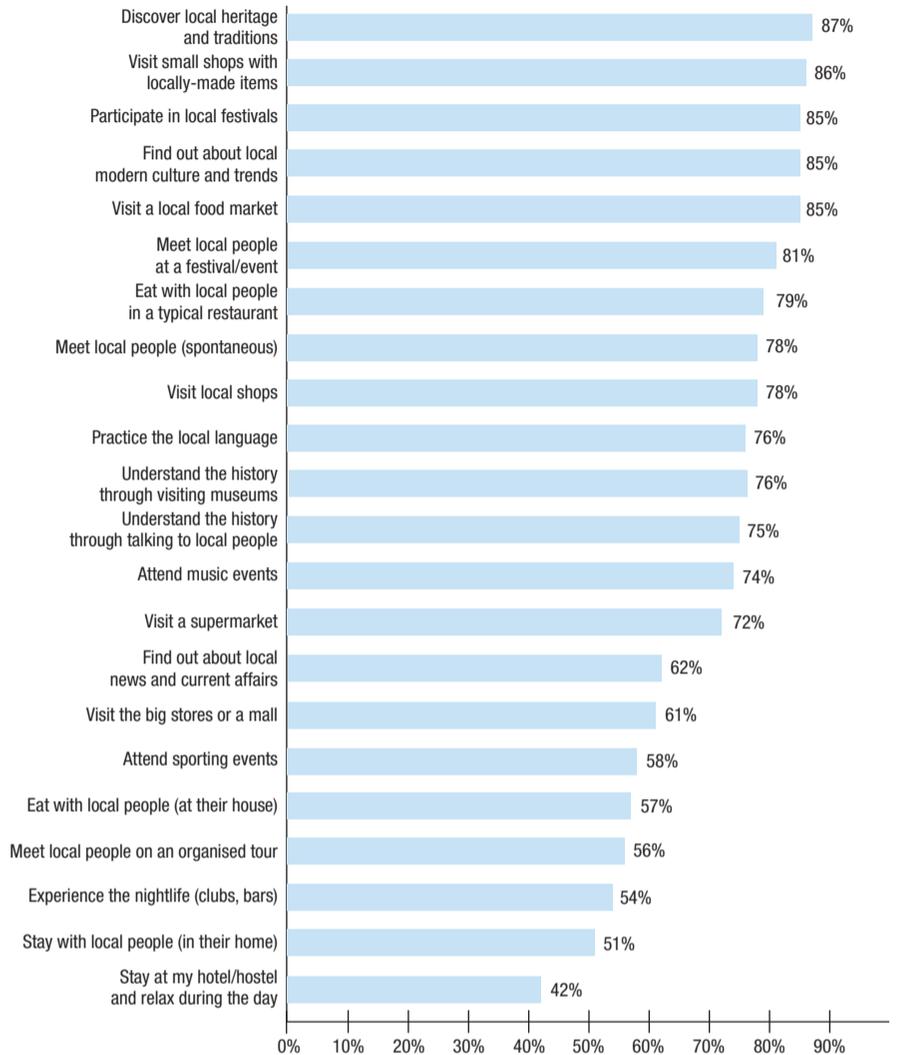
Graph 6: When visiting a large city in a foreign country, I prefer to...

- 83 per cent of respondents said they make a basic plan of what they will see in advance, then work out the rest once they arrive, often with a mobile device. This means that those who offer services such as city tours need to consider at what point they are getting on Asian millennials' 'path-to-purchase' and via which online channels.

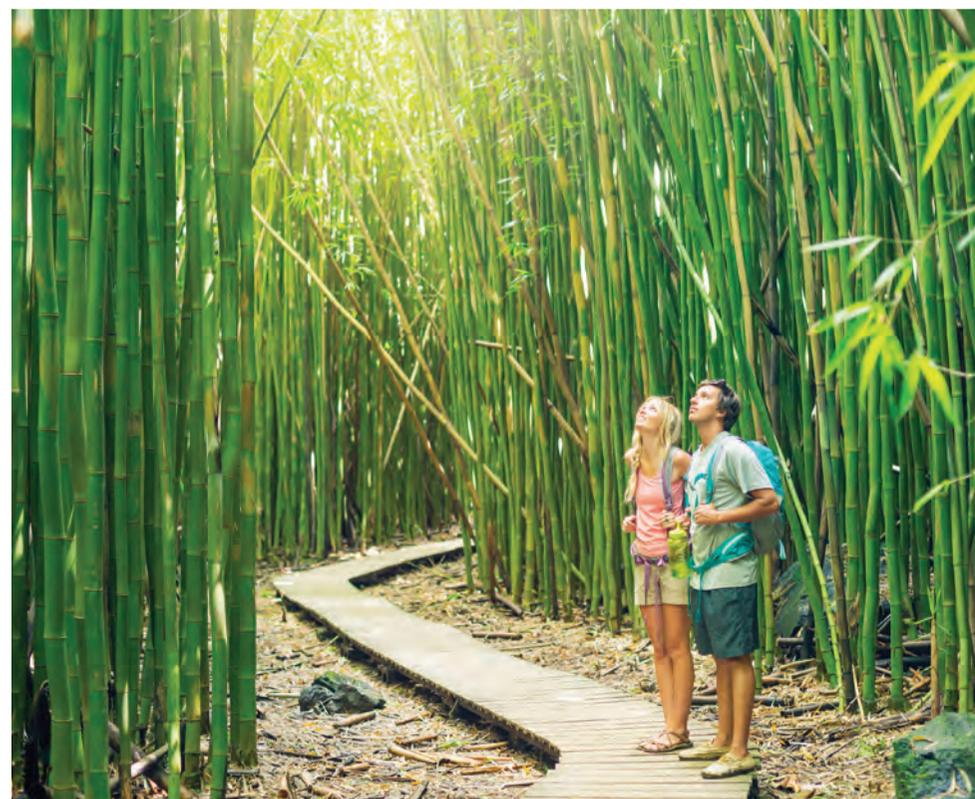
- Asian millennials highly prioritise seeing the big attractions first, seeing the city with an organised tour (e.g. especially by bus or boat), or doing a pre-designed walking tour by themselves. Joining a city tour can take the frustration out of getting lost and wasting valuable time. Practical information and pre-planned itineraries will therefore be highly appreciated by young Asian travellers.

Discovering a new city through the eyes of a local is by far the favourite option

Graph 7: When visiting a large city in a foreign country, how important are the following elements of your visit?



- Making a connection with the city through its heritage, traditions, events and locally-produced items is a major priority for 87 per cent of respondents, but modern culture and cool things to do for local youth are also a major attraction for 85 per cent.
- Food is fundamental – but more so in the streets and at the supermarket, rather than at the table since 85 per cent of respondents say that they love to visit a food market, and 72 per cent indicated they like to visit a supermarket when in a foreign city.



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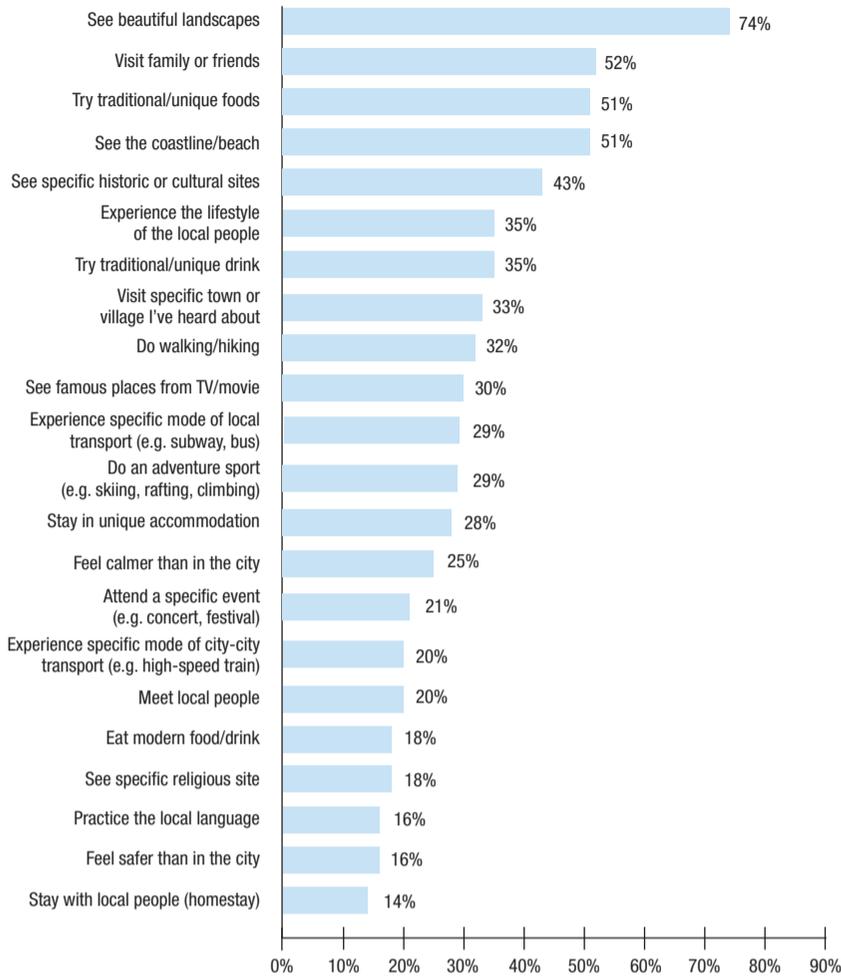

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Intelligence

Luscious landscapes and local cuisine draw young Asian travellers out of the cities

Graph 8: What motivated you to take a trip outside of the city?



- The opportunity to see beautiful landscapes is by far the biggest draw for Asian millennials when it comes to taking a trip out of the city. Crowded, polluted cities are growing fast in Asia, and so opportunities for escape are becoming popular. Therefore, it is a good idea to highlight distinctive and attractive landscapes nearby your city, describing its features and practical advice on how to get there.
- Discovering local cuisine is also ranked high as a reason for travelling out of the city. The concept of traditional and unique food is strongly associated with the authenticity of ingredients and cooking methods, and seen as a connection to the destination's past. Hence, creating experiences based around local food could prove to be a big attraction. Leaving the city is seen as a good way to experience the life of local people.



About the report

Stepping Out of the Crowd was released earlier this year by PATA. It was authored by Peter Jordan, a leading expert on millennial traveller trends, and produced in partnership with Visa Inc. and Toposophy Destination Marketing Agency.

The report draws on unique consumer research on the millennial generation carried out among 13 Asian outbound markets, expert opinion, case studies from leading travel brands and data from PATA's own forecasts on cross-border travel. It also provides practical recommendations on where to start when putting a dispersal strategy in place

For more information, and to download the full report, please visit www.pata.org/store.



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