

TTG

ASIA

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VISITORS IN FOR A TREAT

Food-related festivals, campaigns and tours in Asia are whetting appetites for gastronomic and cultural travel, feeding a growing niche market

View from the top

Louvre Hotels Group's CEO Pierre Frédéric Roulot tells **Raini Hamdi** how Jin Jiang International's acquisition of the French chain changes his life

+

SE Asian airlines fly into the future

Bookings at the eleventh hour

Manila: a city bypassed



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Why it must start from the top



In my years of covering the industry, I have not seen a more aligned and effective public/private sector collaboration than this.

For travel & tourism to grow, it has to start from the top and, all the more today, we need strong leaders. The central discussions at the just-concluded WTTC Global Summit in Bangkok had moved from – in previous years – the disruption wrought on businesses by technology to the rise of nationalism and even anti-tourism that we’ve all seen in recent months, which of course hits the movement of travel and trade.

It has thus become even more imperative for everyone to understand the industry’s transformative powers, not just on the nuts-and-bolts of jobs creation and GDP contribution but in the deeper aspects such as changing people’s lives and livelihoods, and bridging a world that is more than ever divided by fear and mistrust.

Former British prime minister David Cameron understood. He described how when he came to office in 2010, there was literally a note left by his predecessor saying there was no more money left. His prime task therefore was to rescue the public finances. He recognised travel & tourism was key, and rather than delegate it to a junior minister, he took direct responsibility for it. Because of that, travel & tourism’s contribution to the economy rose by one-fifth in the first few years he was prime minister.

That’s one example that to harness the industry’s transformative industry, it has to start from the top. Another example from the summit is even more remarkable. It’s the last summit for David Scowsill as president & CEO of WTTC, since he’s stepping down in June. Also for Taleb Rifai, whose term as secretary-general of UNWTO ends this year. In my years of covering the industry,

I have not seen a more aligned and effective public sector/private travel & tourism collaboration than this. Usually, each side only *tries* to work together, or then they simply groan about each other behind their backs.

But these two leaders were able to forge a real partnership that has benefited the global industry immensely. The collaboration produced 84 meetings with presidents and prime ministers, where messages on why tourism must be taken seriously were sent, always with well-researched evidence. It led to a coalition of global travel & tourism associations worldwide and soon enough we saw they were in one voice over key issues such as travel facilitation, terrorism, infrastructure development and sustainability.

The coalition is the best chance this industry, which has such diverse sectors, rallies together and be cohesive in overcoming common challenges. I hope the new WTTC and UNWTO heads will be able to forge a relationship as tightly knit. “Half-brothers”, they called each other on stage during a panel featuring them both. And when the usually non-emotional Scowsill publicly told Rifai “*I don’t think I could carry on without you*”, it brought an *oooh* from the audience – a rare, touching moment at WTTC Summit that reflects the power of the right leaders to bring about tourism’s power to transform.

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COMING UP



ASEAN YOUNG STARS They are young, talented and making waves in the tourism industry. Check out ASEAN’s most promising travel leaders

CAMBODIA In a fast-growing tourism destination lacking in regulations and enforcement, the Ministry of Tourism is finally making serious bids at raising tourism and hospitality standards

INDONESIA In South Kalimantan, Banjarmasin has drawn the attention of local hotel investors and visitors, who are attracted by its rustic offerings centred around its riverine lifestyle

BEACH RESORTS TTG Asia’s pick of new beach resort destinations (right) in Asia-Pacific that should be on every travel agent’s radar



Koh Lipe in Satun, Thailand

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2015 – 2016

Analysis

Manila: A city bypassed

The Philippine capital city has become a mere transit or bypassed altogether as carriers go straight to secondary gateways. **Rosa Ocampo**, based in Manila, looks at its plight, which is worsened by other challenges



From several years ago when virtually all tourists arrived at the country's only gateway at Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), as of January, only 68 per cent do so, with the rest through secondary international gateways.

The percentage of arrivals at NAIA is likely to drop further as, since last year, more non-stop flights have been mounted from the country's top source markets – South Korea, the US (Los Angeles), Japan and China – to the most popular sun-and-sea destinations Cebu, Kalibo and Caticlan (Boracay) and Palawan, where an international airport has just opened (late-April).

More regional and chartered flights are also expected for Clark, Davao and other destinations outside Manila, said Erwin Balane, chief of route development at the Philippine Department of Tourism (DoT).

As a result, leisure travellers are bypassing Manila to save time and cost or, if they're unable to do so, shorten their stay in the metro given their perception that it has few tourist attractions, a lot of grime, traffic congestion and one of the worst airports in the world.

Blue Horizons Travel and Tours senior sales and marketing manager, Marjorie Aquino, said: "For our mainly European clients, Manila is only a drop-off point for tours, with clients spending three-day/two-night upon arrival before embarking on beach holidays, and spending another night in Manila before departing the country."

While it used to be the destination, "Manila has become a destination for casino players and MICE," said Rajah Tours president Jojo Clemente.

Within the strip of reclaimed land at the Enter-

tainment City are three integrated resorts and a fourth to be launched within the next three years or so. They were built on the premise of getting high rollers from China that initially didn't materialise due to the Chinese government clampdown on corrupt activities, said Joey Bondoc, research manager, Colliers International.

These integrated resorts continue to increase the supply of upmarket hotels along Manila Bay which is also known as MICE area. Meanwhile, Colliers has projected 4,000 additional keys to be added to the total stock in metro Manila this year.

Clemente noted that some Makati hotels have already "substantially" reduced their rates from three-and-a-half years ago. "They realise they cannot sustain the rates...only casino hotels can do that," Clemente explained.

Makati CBD hotels, which used to command the highest rates in Manila (except for the Marriott at Resorts World Manila which is raking in good business), do not any more com-

mand a rate premium over their Manila Bay counterparts. There has also been a growing geographical grouping of hotels in Bonifacio Global City, Ortigas and Quezon City.

What to do?

So what's being done to make Manila more sellable?

The reduced rates may help, along with the weakening of the Philippine peso, from 47.50 last year to 50 pesos to the dollar early this year.

In fact, tourism secretary Wanda Teo in an earlier interview in February lamented the "exorbitant rates" of tour packages including some in Manila. "Throughout my long career in the travel and tour business, travel agents and tourists complained about the expensive tour packages to the Philippines. I found it difficult to market our country with these exorbitant rates," she said.

Teo explained that other South-east Asian countries, and even Japan, "sell reasonably priced packages, especially after a natural calamity or political upheaval, so foreign travellers would be enticed to visit after a crisis."

Rajah Tours' Clemente agreed: "It's still

a price-driven industry especially compared with Thailand, so anything that makes us closer to what Thailand is offering is better for us."

But to make Manila more sellable, other efforts are being done. A travel consultant has created tours that avoid passing through seedy and grimy areas which the metro has become notorious for.

Philippine Tour Operators Association (Philoto) president Cesar Cruz noted a "modularisation" in tours, which entails less travel time through simplified means of transport and better road connectivity. As well, tours that don't combine cities instead focus on one area like old Manila for example, without crossing over to Makati lest the tourist remembers the traffic congestion the most.

Philoto is also mapping out tours combining neighbouring cities to lessen travel time, such as Marikina and Pasig for arts and crafts; Navotas and Malabon for culinary programmes; and a branding such as eco-hub for Quezon City tours.

Cruz pointed out there are now tours that were impossible in the past, such as shopping tours in the huge retail and wholesale area in Divisoria which is now cleaner and more organised. There also are some interesting tours of Luzon such as Tagaytay, Laguna and Batangas with Manila as starting point.

Hararah Tours managing director Jasmine Tan said the company has opened Hararah Eco Park in Tanay, Rizal, just a couple of hours from Manila as the easily accessible and bucolic Rizal with its varied landscape of mountains, rivers, caves and waterfalls is not yet known to tourists.

Tan recommends a night's stay after arrival in Manila and another night before leaving "more for resting and getting to know the capital and the areas around it".

Clemente suggested encouraging more investors in areas that are not yet popular and in new destinations that can be accessed from Manila, to take back some of the critical mass from major destinations like Boracay and Cebu.

Meanwhile, tourism secretary Wanda Teo is in discussions with Manila stakeholders to revitalise urban tourism in the metro, saying that it is paying the price of progress in the form of traffic, congestion and lack of urban planning.



For our mainly European clients, Manila is only a drop-off point for tours, with clients spending three-day/two-night upon arrival before embarking on beach holidays, and spending another night in Manila before departing the country.

Marjorie Aquino

Senior sales and marketing manager, Blue Horizons Travel and Tours

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Analysis

Eleventh hour bookings

Last-minute bookings may be costing tour operators and travel agencies the ability to guarantee departures. **Barathi Narayan** looks at how Singapore travel companies cope with this

It's the classic chicken-and-egg. Travellers are wary about booking tours that are not guaranteed, yet tours are not guaranteed unless passengers start booking them. The conundrum is understandable in down times, say, a weakened economy which causes a slow-down in bookings or a wait-and-see-if-prices-will-drop mindset, as was the case in Singapore last year.

But a bad habit of travellers in booking travel at the eleventh hour, which is increasingly cropping up, may be costing tour operators and travel agencies the ability to guarantee departures.

Singapore's outbound travel kicked off on a high this year, with an increase of 11.2 per cent in January 2017, compared with the same period last year according to the Singapore Department of Statistics. The Lion City's love for travel was also ev-

ident through the strong turnout for the two major travel fairs, NATAS Travel Fair and Travel Revolution, in February.

While Singaporeans are known to be avid travellers who religiously plan their holidays well in advance taking into account upcoming public holidays and long weekends, an estimated 15 per cent book less than 30 days from their tour departure date, with five per cent booking less than two weeks beforehand, a check at Chan Brothers Travel shows. A significant proportion comes from travellers opting for free-and-easy packages who prioritise flexibility as they face time constraints and are unable to plan ahead.

At Dynasty Travel, last-minute bookings of less than three weeks are evident for shorthaul destinations, or due to other tour agencies cancelling their group departures in view of insufficient numbers.

Ideally, travellers should seek travel consultation at least four to six weeks before departure, said Dynasty's spokesperson Alicia Seah.

What to do?

Given the better climate this year and as a means of incentivising travellers to book early, Trafalgar (Asia) has guaranteed that 100 per cent of its 2017 tours encompassing 109 guided summer tours in Europe and Britain, as well as 17 tours across Asia departures, are definite. "This is unprecedented. In 2014, we had 90 per cent definite departures for our Europe and Britain trips," a spokesperson said.

It is also giving a raft of incentives including an early payment discount of 7.5 per cent which could be combined with Trafalgar Frequent Traveller discounts to enable another five per cent savings.

On many trips, young travellers (five-17 years old) can enjoy up to 10 per cent discount when accompanying an adult, and solo travellers can save by pairing up with a fellow traveller (of the same gender) in a twin room. If Trafalgar is not able to find a match, then the solo traveller could stay in a single room at no extra cost.

Trafalgar (Asia) president, Nicholas Lim, said of its Definite Departures: "At Trafalgar, we are wholly focused on strengthening relationships with our valued industry partners, ensuring that they are fully equipped to sell our guided holidays with confidence and ease. We are thrilled to be able to guarantee agents that the chances of winning with Trafalgar are 100 per cent when it comes to selling our extensive portfolio of 109 guided holidays for summer in Europe and Britain and 17 different trips across Asia."

Chan Brothers Travel spokesperson Justine Koh opined that large travel operators have the luxury of a higher number of confirmed departures that numbers to over 1,000 at any point of time, appealing to travellers who wish to have that assurance for their holidays. Also, limiting departure dates for its celebrity-led tours, which only have one or two specific departure dates, increases the likelihood of definite departures.

According to Dynasty's Seah, travel agencies are also conceptualising tours with fewer number of travellers of four to 10, to depart to places such as Bhutan, Uzbekistan and even Egypt where it is hard to form bigger group sizes, as a way to ensure a higher propensity of definite departures.

However, even major players like Dynasty Travel or Chan Brothers Travel are not immune to being forced to cancel tours due to travellers delaying their travel purchases.

Seah shared that without sufficient numbers of travellers or time for consolidation, the agency is compelled to release seats back to the airlines to avoid penalty or surcharges.

Said Seah: "We usually have to manage the customers' expectations; we are sincere and truthful in our transactional procedures. We believe that if we are able to provide professional and honest advice or provision of alternatives or refund made seamlessly, the impact of cancelling trips is minimal and customers will return to the travel agency in future."

Consumers are generally made aware of potential cancellations in the fine print under the terms and conditions. In the event of tours being withdrawn, travel agencies ensure their customers are informed and facilitated with alternative trips well before the departure dates.

Chan Brothers' Koh said that while cancellations might lead to a loss of revenue and more importantly customer confidence, the tour operator tries to minimise such cancellations by offering more modes of travel and multiple departure dates for each tour.

Koh stressed the importance of leisure travellers to be proactive in making their travel decisions and not wait until the eleventh hour. Every group size has to start from zero. Prudent travellers understand that if they wish to secure a preferred departure date at the best possible rate, the modus operandi is to fix their travel plans and schedule their bookings early, she said.

We believe that if we are able to provide professional and honest advice or provision of alternatives or refund made seamlessly, the impact of cancelling trips is minimal and customers will return to the travel agency in future.

Alicia Seah, spokesperson, Dynasty Travel



Destination Representation Services for Tourism Tasmania – China; Hong Kong; Singapore

Tourism Tasmania is seeking professional destination representation services in the key international markets of China; Hong Kong; and Singapore. Tenderers must be based in the market for which they are tendering, and can only tender for one market. Each successful contractor will be responsible for the delivery of Tourism Tasmania's annual marketing plan and management of all partner activities and relationships in that market.

Documents are available from www.tenders.tas.gov.au or by contacting Ms Cathryn Carey, Executive Manager – International Markets by telephone on +61 3 61655 310 or by email at cathryn.carey@tourism.tas.gov.au

Tenders must be submitted by 2pm Tasmanian time on 31 May 2017 by electronic lodgement at www.tenders.tas.gov.au



www.tenders.tas.gov.au

View from the top



Jin Jiang's Louvre affair

Louvre Hotels Group's CEO Pierre Frédéric Roulot tells **Raini Hamdi** how Jin Jiang International's acquisition of the French chain changes his life, in an interview on the sidelines of the International Hotel Investment Conference in Berlin recently

What does the new ownership mean for Louvre Hotels Group?

It's a big change. Before, the owner was Starwood Capital. As with all funds, it's natural that the investments are short-term, they want to increase the value and exit. Jin Jiang is a strategic, long-term player. It does not want to exit but to keep and improve the quality of the product. For example, we put a lot of money in renovations in the last two years to improve the products and make each of our brands interesting.

Were you not able to do that before?

No, we didn't have the financing. When Jin Jiang came on board, it gave me a credit line to not only invest in existing properties but to acquire hotels. The chairman asked me to do a strategic plan. I did it seriously even though I did wonder if it was just for fun or he was just testing me. I was surprised when he approved my plan and gave me the green light to follow it through immediately.

What's the plan?

It's called Plan to Win. To quickly increase the number of hotels in the big European countries through organic development

and small acquisitions. That's what we did in Poland, Germany and India (Sarovar Hotels). It's for strategic reasons.

How are Poland, Germany and India strategic?

Let's take Germany. We want to have a strong presence in the three big European markets, the UK, France and Germany. We are strong in France – number two with more than 850 hotels. We focused on Germany first as acquisitions are harder in a more mature market like the UK, plus Brexit has created some uncertainties. India is strategic as the Chinese government aims to create infrastructure along the Silk Road belt.

Why did Jin Jiang buy Louvre?

We already had a relationship. I was looking for innovative ways to grow Louvre and was interested in the Chinese market but in China, you have the big local players.

In 2012, I decided to do a partnership and talked to many local players. Finally in 2013 we started a partnership with Jin Jiang, something that's simple, easy-going. We chose 15 hotels in Paris and 15 in Shanghai. Chinese visitors who came to our hotels had everything in Mandarin – TV, newspapers, signages – and we changed the food to soup, congee, etc. We were also famous for providing Chinese guests with a hotline they could call when they were not in the hotel, then someone would translate for them if they were lost or needed something. French guests who stayed in Shanghai would get French newspapers, French TV channels, Bordeaux wines, croissants at breakfast.

Step by step, our relationship grew and in 2014, we even shared the same booth at ITB Berlin. We even crossed jobs between the two companies.

My wife is Chinese and I could speak a bit of Cantonese and Mandarin, so I guess they perceive me as someone who understands their culture.

They know how we work, they think we are professional – the fact that we have lots of success everywhere in the world from Indonesia to India which all have different cultures, currencies, IT systems, etc. They can see we have the expertise and can adapt the product to the market.

So it started from just a small idea, but it changed my life.

So you aren't worried that new ownership may change things?

No, we are lucky that Jin Jiang respects our DNA. They said manage the company as before and if you need help, we will help you. Now they've asked me to manage Jin Jiang in China and we've created a new entity for this, Jin Jiang Louvre Asia, to grow the brands in China and Asia (<http://bit.ly/2oIXtyf>).

Are you planning to buy more hotel companies after Sarovar?

Some small platforms perhaps but for now, the main message is integration, getting synergies from our acquisitions, so that we're ready for the next cycle. There is enough to do already.

I think too that we will have to rationalise the brands a bit and have fewer brands. If you rationalise, you save costs. It costs a

lot to market on the web, or if you work with OTAs and have so many brands you lose SEO (search engine optimisation).

It's not the number of brands but brand differentiation. You could have as many brands if each brings something really special, a brand for women, millennials, cats, whatever it may be.

What are your current thoughts on industry consolidation?

There are only two big OTAs, Priceline and Expedia. In front of them are a lot of hospitality groups. Now you have two hotel giants against lots of small companies but even the biggest, Marriott International, covers only seven per cent of total hotels worldwide. So that's why we've seen the consolidations in the past couple of years – Marriott with Starwood, Accor with Fairmont, Jin Jiang with Plateno – because you need to be a bit bigger to face the digital competition like OTAs and Airbnb. You have no choice. You could be very small or very big. In the middle, you lose. We choose to be big.

(Jin Jiang Louvre Asia has a portfolio of 2,500 hotels in 52 countries. It comprises a range of hotels from one to five stars. The brands from Louvre are Première Classe, Kyriad, Campanile, Tulip Inn, Golden Tulip, Royal Tulip and brands Sarovar Hotels which it acquired recently. The four Chinese brands from Jin Jiang are Metropolo, Jin Jiang Inn, Bestay and Goldmet Inn. The plan is to open more than 1,200 new hotels in Asia within the next three years.)

Will the whole company be called Jin Jiang Louvre one day?

Let's take it step by step and keep it simple. We have quite enough to do as it is.

10 NEED TO KNOW'S ABOUT PIERRE FRÉDÉRIC ROULOT

■ **Who's in your family?** Twins and a girl working in hospitality as front desk manager

■ **What do you do for fun?** I listen to music and see a lot of concerts

■ **Your ideal vacation?** Hike in the mountains

■ **How do you book your own leisure trips?** By listening to my friends' *coups de coeur* (suggestions 'you'll like it') as the last time in the Oman mountains

■ **What are you reading right now?** A book about Chinese evolution and the influence of history in Chinese politics

■ **How do you stay healthy?** By hiking

■ **Favourite food?** Tomato salad

■ **A bad habit you cannot kick?** I drink too much coffee

■ **Your pet peeve, something that never fails to annoy you?** Lateness in transportation

■ **Most people don't know that...** my dream is to buy my grandparents' vineyards

On the radar

Learn from the experts, take heed of technology currently shaping the travel landscape and pick up new ideas on how to do business better

INNOVATORS By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

Beating OTAs at their own game

WHO The vision of wresting control back from giant OTAs is what led a group of hospitality veterans – COO Yann Gouriou, CFO Martijn Dekker and CTO Bjorn Harvold – to launch Traveliko, a new hotel booking engine that seeks to return pricing control to hoteliers as well as to rebalance travel ethics.

Traveliko takes a flat 10 per cent commission, a rate significantly lower than the 15-17 per cent typically charged by major OTAs in the market now, Gouriou revealed.

Former Miss Universe Natalie Glebova has been appointed Traveliko's brand ambassador.

WHAT Every hotel is equally visible on Traveliko, according to Gouriou, unlike other OTAs that charge hotels a premium to improve their rankings on their sites.

Hotels can also choose three main targeted segments (e.g. spa, solo travel and family friendly, etc), enabling hoteliers to leverage their strengths to enhance their visibility on the site while travel customers can better customise their search

through filters.

"Because of Traveliko's fixed low commission, the booking engine has also been optimised for selling additional hotel products that hoteliers would not want to sell anywhere else. It will give customers more options and an overall better experience," said Harvold.

Hotels, for instance, can package a room together with transfers or a bottle of champagne.

And unlike the current OTA practice of sharing with hotels just basic booking information – date of arrival, etc – Traveliko will include customers' preferences if they wish to reveal too to facilitate more seamless travel for travellers.

Traveliko will also donate 20 per cent of the net commission to local charities in Thailand selected by guests. "We deem ourselves a social venture too," added Gouriou.

WHY Traveliko is conceived as a business model to help hotels, especially small and boutique properties, save money on commission and focus on giving their customers

a better experience, according to Gouriou.

"We want to give power back to hotels and not aggregate power at the top (of the industry), not to those who made immense profits on the back of the tourism industry."

"We translated our frustration into solution. We see hotels as partners. I'm a hotel person too, so I want to give hoteliers a solution," said Gouriou, a former hotel general manager who now heads Bangkok-based Unicorn Hotels & Resorts as CEO.

TARGET Since officially launching in April 2017, Traveliko now boasts 450 hotels in its portfolio, having received sign-ups from international companies like Absolute Hotel Services, Centara Hotels & Resorts, Dusit International and Red Planet, plus other hospitality chains and independent hotels in Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Gouriou hopes bigger chains like

Accor and InterContinental Hotels Group will come on board soon, and would like to expand Traveliko coverage across Asia-Pacific through the founders' personal networks as well as word of mouth.

While the focus will be kept on

the B2C side for the time being, Gouriou wants to expand into B2B and flights sector to grow Traveliko into a "travel Facebook" for travellers to create their personal profile, post comments and gain loyalty programme points.



Dekker, Gouriou, Glebova and Harvold

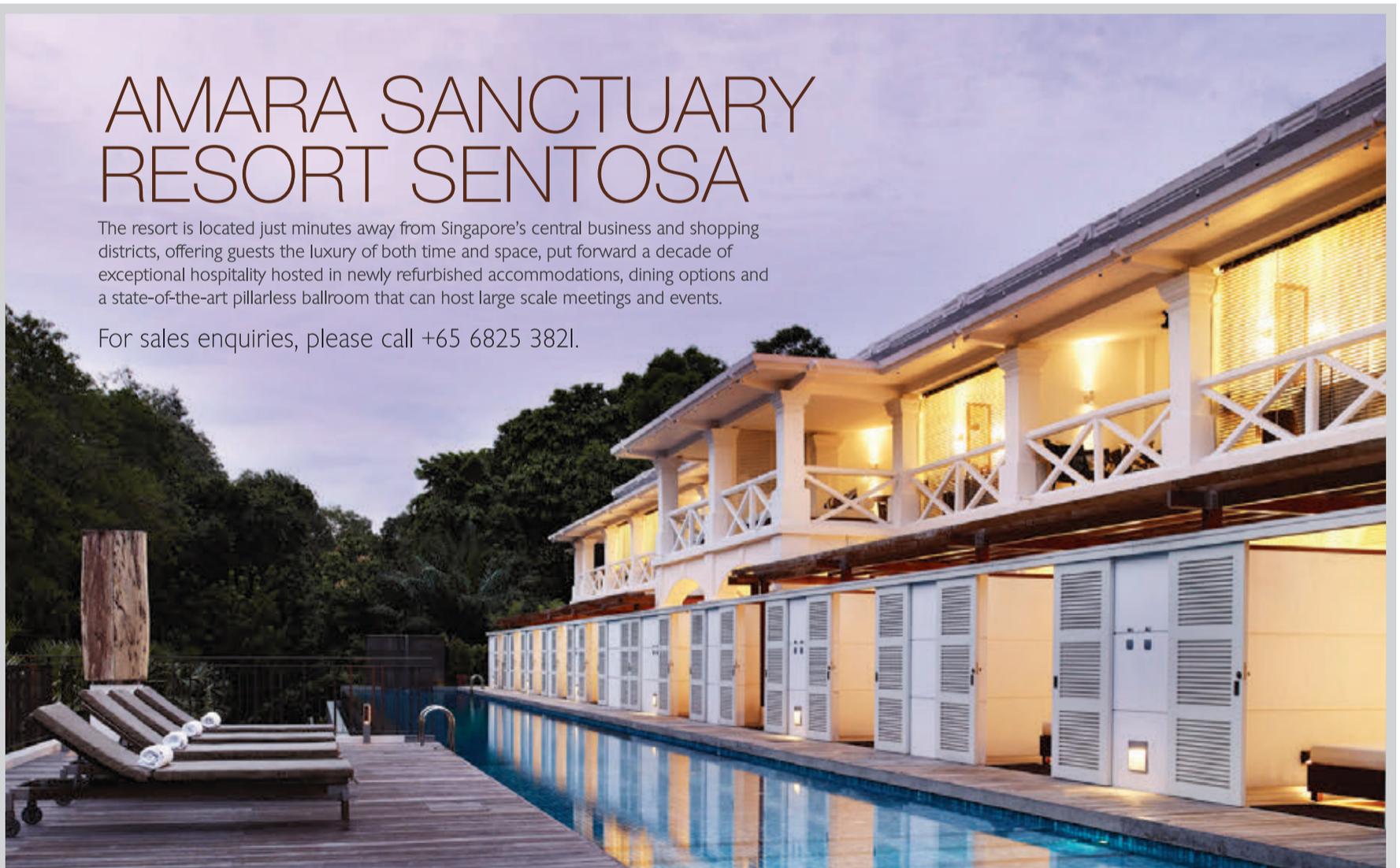
We want to give power back to hotels and not aggregate power at the top (of the industry), not to those who made immense profits on the back of the tourism industry.

Yann Gouriou, COO, Traveliko

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Winner of

Intelligence

A look at arrival projections into APAC and the types of food travellers from Singapore

PATA: visitor forecasts 2017-2021

PATA takes a look at the expected future trends of travel demand for Asia-Pacific with its latest five-year forecast data of international visitor arrivals and receipts into the region.

“Although visitor arrivals growth remains impressively strong for destinations in Asia-Pacific over the next five years, ongoing global economic uncertainty, coupled with rising political populism in the US and Europe, will present a continued challenge to and impact upon disposable income of travel consumers, travel demand and movement between countries,” said PATA CEO Mario Hardy.

International visitor count to exceed 630 million in 2017

Collective foreign arrivals into 39 Asia-Pacific destinations will grow by 5.9% over 2016 and add around 35 million additional foreign arrivals in 2017.

Between 2017-2021, foreign arrivals into Asia-Pacific are expected to grow at an average rate of 5% per annum, reaching a combined foreign inbound count of close to 758 million.

By 2021 the Americas (as defined by PATA) will receive 156 million foreign arrivals annually while Asia can expect to receive over 573 million. The Pacific is forecast to receive over 28 million.

China, Hong Kong, the US, South Korea and Canada will all remain the top five traffic-generating markets for the Asia-Pacific region.



Notes: • AAGR – average annual growth rate, expressed as a percentage
• IVAs – international visitor arrivals • MNS – millions

Russia: growing source market

By 2021 Russian will grow to third place by absolute volume gain over 2017, following China and Hong Kong, to generate four million additional foreign visitor arrivals to the region.

Thailand (+37.5%), Laos (+9.7%) and South Korea (+7.5%) will register the highest average annual growth from Russia over the next five years, while Hong Kong (-5.0%), Cambodia (-3.6%) and the Northern Marianas (-2.3%) are expected

to face a slowdown in numbers from this source market.

Visitor source markets: top performers vs losers

Kuwait will top the source market chart in percentage growth terms with an average growth rate of 63% annually between 2017 and 2021, followed by Finland (31%). Iraq and Myanmar are predicted to rank far behind with these source markets each contracting by around -15% annually over the same period.

Singapore's five types of foodie travellers

To eat or to take a pic, that was Zuiji's question to 768 Singapore-based travellers in a recent poll to reveal insights their gastronomical preferences while travelling. The OTA uncovers five types of foodie travellers:

1. Local foodie – 58%

Fifty-eight per cent of Singaporeans prefer to have a taste of dishes that are uniquely local when they travel. However, au-

thentic local food is not limited to inexpensive street or hawker food for this group, as 20% out of the 449 local foodies are willing to part with more than S\$50 (US\$70) to satisfy their cravings.

2. Insta-foodie – 21%

Surprisingly, less than half (33%) of the 161 foodstagrammers favoured an eatery based on its popularity on social media.

Sixty-five per cent indicated

that they will take no more than 10 minutes to create a #foodstagram, with almost half (48%) of them taking only a minute or less.

And 22% shared it's all about the food for them, so no cameras needed before digging in.

3. Gung-ho (adventurous) foodie – 7%

Singaporean-based travellers are still conservative when it comes to trying bizarre food, with only 7% falling under this category. Even among the 52 gung-ho foodies, only 17% actually embrace the YOLO mentality.

4. Atas (bougie) foodie – 7%

Not all with bougie food tastes are willing to reach deeper into their pockets for delectable cuisines. Of the 52 atas foodies in this poll, as much as 44% of them will not be keen to spend above S\$50 for meals overseas.

5. Bochup (anything goes) foodie – 7%

This category of travellers will opt for any place just to satisfy their hunger.



Karamea, NEW ZEALAND

UNLOCK THE ADVENTURE

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New Zealand, The Karamea Highway

This road is rich with scenery and little towns along the way and despite its physical dead-end status, this drive is anything but dead-end. It finishes spectacularly as the road turns into a pathway, the Heaphy Track. The drive has plenty of bends to keep drivers alert as they journey through the beautiful sub-tropical rainforests; and then a long straight road along the coast opens up the view for miles out to the Tasman Sea.



USA, California Pacific Coast Highway

This stretch of Highway 1 chases the ragged central California coastline to Big Sur, going via the picture perfect Carmel. This drive is renowned for its sensational views over rocky cliffs, revealing the Pacific Ocean's whitecaps as they rush past staggering dark rocks. Featuring a mixture of sweeping curves, straights and some more tricky bends to navigate, it is the endless views out over the ocean that will make one want to drive this road time and again!



There are many more roads waiting to be explored. With more than 5,500 rental locations in 170 countries, Avis can lead the way!

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HOTELS



HAKONE KOWAKIEN TEN-YU, JAPAN
At this onsen resort in Japan's Hakone, a hot spring destination near Mount Fuji, all 150 Japanese-style rooms have private open-air hot spring baths overlooking the scenery. Set within the Hakone Kowakien complex, resort facilities include a spa, restaurant, bar/lounge and two hot spring facilities, one of which has an open-air infinity-style bath.



KERRY HOTEL, HONG KONG
Set along Hung Hom Bay on Victoria Harbour, the 16-storey hotel offers 546 rooms, ranging from Deluxe Sea View (42m²) to Presidential Suite (294m²). Facilities include a fitness centre, 25m-long outdoor infinity swimming pool, Jacuzzi, steam bath, sauna, spa, the 1,756m² Grand Ballroom and 1,125m² Hung Hom Ballroom, in addition to five F&B concepts.



BEST WESTERN THE LAGOON HOTEL, INDONESIA
Overlooking Indonesia's Bay of Manado and Manado Tua island and located 45 minutes from the Sam Ratulangi International Airport, the mid-scale, 187-room hotel features a restaurant, a spa, fitness centre, an outdoor swimming pool, and conference and banqueting space including a large ballroom.



HILTON JIUZHAIGOU RESORT, CHINA
The 426-key hotel in Sichuan features rooms of at least 46m² and 10 villas between 320-460m². Facilities include a spa, fitness centre, kids' club, seven function rooms, a foyer and a pillarless Grand Ballroom for up to 1,300 pax. F&B options include all-day dining restaurant Open; Simmer for Sichuan hot pot; Xang Xung for Tibetan specialties; and Jiu lobby lounge.

ACTIVITY

AQUA LUNA II SETS SAIL IN HK HARBOUR

A new traditional Chinese wooden junk boat, *aqua luna II*, has joined the aqua luna family to offer harbour cruises of Hong Kong's iconic skyline.

Commissioned by Aqua Restaurant Group, *aqua luna II* is the younger but larger brother to the iconic red-sailed junk *aqua luna*, which was launched over a decade ago by founder David Yeo.

Measuring 29m in length and holding up to 80 guests on its two decks, *aqua luna II* boasts sails that feature an ornate blue-and-white dragon of the Ming Dynasty, often seen on antique Chinese porcelain.

In Chinese, *aqua luna* and *aqua luna II* are named after Hong Kong pirate Cheung Po Tsai, who sailed Hong Kong waters over

100 years ago and is said to have stored his stolen treasures in the caves of Cheung Chau.

Aqua luna is Cheung Po Tsai and *aqua luna II* is Dai Cheung Po (big brother of Cheung Po) – indicating its greater size.

The aqua luna fleet, with its two traditional Chinese junk boats, offers 45-minute evening harbour cruises while in the day guests can explore locations around the harbour on the hop-on/hop-off Harbour Discovery Tour.

From May 1, longer daytime



cruises are available to a wider list of destinations including Stanley, Cheung Chau and Lamma Island for its nature trail.

A new offering is the Dim Sum Cruises, which allows guests to enjoy signature dishes from Dim Sum Library, Aqua Restaurant Group's modern Chinese restaurant.

TRANSPORTATION

NORWEGIAN TO LAUNCH LONDON-SINGAPORE LOW-COST FLIGHTS

LCC Norwegian will expand its UK longhaul network into Asia when it launches the London Gatwick-Singapore route come September 28, 2017, with one-way tickets starting from S\$199 (US\$142.70).

Norwegian UK will operate the new four-times weekly service on the Boeing 787 Dreamliner, offering up to 344 seats across economy

and premium cabins, before bumping the frequency up to five-times weekly in winter (October to March).

With a huge aircraft order and new traffic rights in place, the new Singapore route marks the first step in Norwegian's ambitions to expand its longhaul network into new global markets, according to a statement from the airline.



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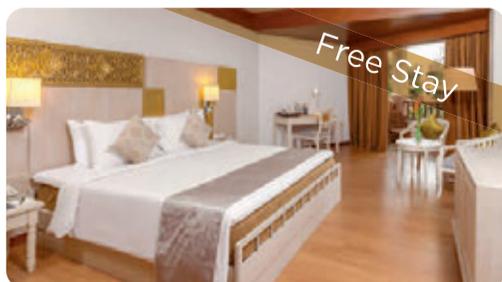




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Report Airlines

Flying into the future



Thai Airways International's new Airbus A350-900 XWB

TTG Asia looks at how South-east Asia's national airlines have fared in their performance last year, whether global uncertainties have affected sales, as well as their plans to bolster growth in 2017

Thai Airways International

Thai Airways International's (THAI) European routes continue to emerge as strong performers, said its vice president of sales, Bryan Banston, with the airline intensifying its presence with more services and new routes and sprung back from the red in 2016.

Last year, the airline reintroduced four-times weekly Bangkok-Moscow flights, launched a new link between Frankfurt and Phuket, as well as deployed A380s on its Paris, London and Frankfurt routes.

Meanwhile, the delivery of two Airbus A350-900 XWB aircraft has also enabled THAI to pursue European capacity growth by deploying the new widebody aircraft on its Milan and Rome routes, while the third A350 (see page 17 for the review) – delivered in mid-April – will enter service on the Bangkok-Frankfurt route come May 1.

“One of our key strategies is to grow European routes to daily in the short term. These include Brussels, Milan, Rome and Moscow,” he told TTG Asia.

THAI currently flies to 12 European destinations including seven Star Alliance hubs: Brussels, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, Munich, Oslo, Stockholm and Zurich. Banston highlighted that Scandinavia “has a particular strength as it serves three ports: Copenhagen, Stockholm and Oslo”.

China is another key market for THAI, especially as the Chinese market has recovered since the Thai government's clampdown on zero-fee tours and more Chinese FITs are visiting Thailand, according to Banston.

The carrier currently flies to six cities in China – Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Xiamen and Kunming – as well as Hong Kong and Taipei. Most recently in March, it launched a four-times weekly service connecting Beijing and Phuket, adding to its Kunming-Chiang Mai and Hong Kong-Phuket routes that bypass the Bangkok hub.

The Thai national carrier has also revealed clear ambitions to position itself as a network carrier in South-east Asia through its Bangkok hub. “We see good growth in network selling,”

said Banston. “We also see opportunities to focus on our network to move passengers beyond Bangkok to other parts of South-east Asia, Asia and Australia.”

Regional subsidiary Thai Smile will hence play an integral role to generate new feed for THAI's longhaul network, as it has fallen behind competitors in terms of regional network development in recent years. For instance, it has identified Europe to be a good source for Thai Smile's Kota Kinabalu-Bangkok service starting in end-March.

When asked if the aggressive competition of the Gulf airlines on the Europe-Asia market poses any threat, Banston said: “THAI's edge lies in our non-stop operations, which comprise one long and short sector. Premium and corporate passengers prefer such arrangements than to have the leg broken up into two.” – *Xinyi Liang-Pholsena and Barathi Narayan*

Philippine Airlines

Philippine Airlines (PAL) is increasingly propelling its international growth through secondary gateways including Clark and Cebu, given that the runway congestion at Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) limits its expansion.

The Philippine national flag carrier debuted in Clark last December by mounting flights from Incheon to Caticlan (Boracay), immediately followed by flights from Clark to Cebu, Davao to Puerto Princesa and Coron in Palawan.

Also in 1Q this year, PAL mounted more domestic services from Cebu to Puerto Princesa, Coron, General Santos and Surigao, enabling tourists to visit major tourist attractions without transiting in Manila, said president Jaime Bautista.

The increased domestic services from Cebu came on the heels of the successful Cebu-Los Angeles services that began last year, its first longhaul flight outside NAIA.

Bautista said PAL is planning more frequencies from China, including Beijing and Shanghai, and a new service from Chengdu, in addition to more chartered flights from other mainland cities.

PAL is currently the only carrier that flies non-stop from Philippines to Europe. Its Manila-London route was made a daily service in mid-2016, up from thrice weekly. However, Bautista has indicated that its European expansion is currently on hold.

While Bautista did not cite the reason for deferring the European expansion, observers note that it's a good decision as it will be difficult for PAL to compete in terms of product, pricing and the extensive European networks of the Gulf carriers that have been flying aggressively from Manila and Clark to Europe last year, with a stopover in their Middle Eastern hubs.

It is also understood that PAL does

not currently have a suitable aircraft for Europe. It will receive its order of six A350-900 aircraft in 2018, which will be used for non-stop flights to the US.

In the meantime, Bautista said that the carrier is currently focused on upgrading its Skytrax rating from its current three- to five-star rating by 2020. Initiatives underway include upgrading product and services such as cuisine, technology, onboard amenities and entertainment; developing and rationalising routes, network and connectivity; and delivering the desired passenger experience.

Once all these are in place, perhaps PAL would then be more on an even keel to expand in Europe. – *Rosa Ocampo*

Singapore Airlines

Singapore Airlines (SIA) operated an average of 106 weekly flights to and from 14 destinations in Europe in 2015 and 2016. According to an SIA spokesman, the passenger load factor for Europe in the first half of the 2016/2017 financial year was at 77.2 per cent, compared with 81.5 per cent for the same period in the previous year.

With regard to its 2016 performance in the European sector, the spokesman said: “Outbound demand remains under pressure due to uncertainty in the macro economic environment following Brexit, coupled with weak inbound sentiment surrounding security concerns.”

For 2017, plans will include launching services to Stockholm via Moscow, as well as introducing the A350 on more European routes. Stockholm would be the airline's second destination in the Scandinavian region. The flights will be operated on the airline's new Airbus 350-900s, and would complement the airline's existing flights to Copenhagen in Denmark, boosting connectivity between South-east Asia and Northern Europe.

Subject to approval from the relevant authorities, the new



Philippine Airlines' A330 aircraft (left) and Singapore Airlines' economy class (above)





**DISCOVER UNIQUE EXPERIENCES AT
THAILAND TRAVEL MART PLUS (TTM+)**

The 16th Thailand Travel Mart Plus Amazing Gateway to the Greater Mekong Subregion (TTM+) 2017 will be held in the northern Thai capital of Chiang Mai, from 14 – 16 June, 2017, at the expansive Chiang Mai International Exhibition and Convention Centre (CMECC).

This marks the second time TTM+ will be hosted in Chiang Mai, following its debut there last year, which saw an overwhelming response from the attending buyers and sellers.

Organised annually by TAT, the TTM+ has gained a reputation among the Thai and international tourism industries as a “must-attend” event in their calendar. It has proven to be very popular for exhibiting the many creative new travel products and services emerging all around the country and the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS).

In its 16th year, the TTM+ 2017 will bear the theme of “Discover Unique Local Experiences”. The event will be featuring Thailand’s unique experiences that travellers can obtain exclusively in a specific area to uncover distinctive stories with its own history, culture or tradition. Offering a special perspective, the full range of pre-post tours will allow delegates to personally discover Thailand’s world-renowned natural beauty and rich cultural heritage.

The event, which provides an excellent platform for networking opportunities for all participants, is set to welcome 400 sellers throughout Thailand and the GMS, and 350 quality international buyers from over 60 countries worldwide.

Chiang Mai’s charming reputation as a global MICE city, capable of hosting international mega events, continues to grow with its establishment of new hotel facilities and convention centres.

Known also as the “Rose of the North”, Chiang Mai is a cultural and natural wonderland with ethnic diversity and a multitude of attractions. It is one of the few places in Thailand where it is possible to experience both historical and modern Thai culture co-existing side by side as the city features centuries-old pagodas and temples next to stylish shops and hotels.

www.thailandtravelmartplus.com



Report Airlines



Malaysia Airlines' A380 plane

services will also be included in a joint venture agreement between SIA and Scandinavian Airlines. The agreement took effect in 2013 and covers flights between Scandinavia and Singapore.

According to the SIA spokesman, the passenger load factor in the East Asian region stood at 78.6 per cent from April to December for the FY2016/17, an increase from 76.9 per cent for the same period in FY2015/16.

The spokesman shared that frequency to various points in South-east Asia will also increase during the northern summer season (March 26, 2017 – October 28, 2017) to meet growing travel demand. In South-east Asia, the Bangkok flight frequency will increase from five to six daily with effect from March 26, 2017. Ho Chi Minh City will also be served 19 times per week, up from 17.

The spokesman said: "2017 is expected to be another challenging year amid tepid global economic conditions and geopolitical concerns, alongside other market headwinds such as overcapacity and aggressive pricing by competitors. Loads and yields for both the passenger and cargo businesses are projected to remain under pressure."

To combat this, SIA will tap into initiatives such as their joint venture with Lufthansa, which will allow better connectivity to new markets, and a more efficient fleet deployment.

The spokesman added: "It is our policy to carefully match our capacity to market demand. We will continue to monitor air travel demand closely, and be flexible in making adjustments to our frequencies."

Meanwhile the carrier's subsidiary Scoot is also preparing to launch services to Athens on June 20, 2017. This will mark it as the longest flight operation of any budget carrier with a journey time of 11 hours and flight distance exceeding 10,000km. – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Malaysia Airlines

Malaysia Airlines will expand its network in China this year by serving eight new destinations and 11 new routes with 35 additional frequencies between Malaysia and China.

Malaysia Airlines' CEO Peter Bellew said: "We plan to triple our Chinese business over the next five years. I see poten-

tial for direct flights to 20 Chinese cities from Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching by 2019. We have huge confidence in China. The improved connectivity will foster deeper business (and tourism) links between the two nations.

"In addition to this initial growth, we will promote tourism in Malaysia and China through seasonal or ad-hoc services to key leisure markets such as Langkawi, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu."

As part of its cost-cutting measures in 2015 and 2016, Malaysia Airlines suspended services to Amsterdam and Paris in January 2016, and Frankfurt in May 2015, with London remaining as the only European destination served. The Kuala Lumpur-London route is operated twice daily utilising an A380 aircraft, but the airline plans to replace it with A350s in April 2018.

In 3Q2016, the airline became the official global airline partner of Liverpool Football Club in a bid to increase brand awareness in the UK and globally.

On how this effort has panned out, Malaysia Airlines said in an email response: "Targeted marketing has led to a 14 per cent market share increase on the Kuala Lumpur-London route, from 45 per cent in May to 60 per cent in September. December saw the load factor increase to 86.2 per cent."

The carrier remains bullish about de-

We plan to triple our Chinese business over the next five years. I see potential for direct flights to 20 Chinese cities from Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching by 2019.

Peter Bellew
CEO, Malaysia Airlines

mand on this route in 2017, and expects it to "continuously grow throughout 2017".

Overall, Malaysia Airlines announced a "marked improvement" in revenue and passenger loads as of 3Q2016. Passenger load factor improved to 79 per cent, up from 69 per cent in 2Q.

Regarding the expansion of services to Europe, Bellew said in an *Aviation International News* report in January this year: "Market conditions have to be right before we start flying to Europe again. I do not see this happening before the 2019-2021 time frame."

The airline is adopting a cautious stance for 2017. In a statement, it said: "A weak Malaysian ringgit, Brexit uncertainty and overcapacity in the Malaysian market will be the dominant features of 2017. We have hedged significant fuel requirements but we will continue to be exposed to dollar volatility in 1H2017.

"We expect unit costs will fall by a further three per cent in 2017. The price of fuel in 2017, combined with increased efficiency measures, are expected to deliver significant savings and these savings will be passed on to our customers."

– **S Puvaneswary**

Vietnam Airlines

Vietnam Airlines enjoyed record results in 2016 as it works towards its goal of becoming South-east Asia's second largest full-service carrier.

Last year saw the Vietnamese national carrier enjoy an 18.7 per cent increase in traffic, welcoming 20.6 million passengers on board more than 133,000 flights. Revenue also grew by 10 per cent, hitting US\$3.4 billion. Pre-tax profits jumped by a staggering 140 per cent to US\$113.7 million.

Despite showing strong growth and record results, the airline is fighting off fierce competition from rising LCC rival Vietjet to retain its title as the country's largest domestic carrier. CAPA Centre for Aviation predicts Vietjet is on track to surpass Vietnam Airlines this year as the country's largest domestic carrier.

The latest figures show Vietnam Airlines holds 42.5 per cent of the domestic market versus Vietjet's 41.5 per cent.

However, the airline's modernisation and expansion of its longhaul fleet is paying off as it continues to plough ahead with bolstering its international offerings. In March, the Hanoi to Tokyo (Haneda) route welcomed its inaugural Airbus A350-900 XWB service, becoming the fifth destination worldwide to be served by the new A350 fleet.

From October 2015, the fleet has been used for the Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC)-Paris and Hanoi-Seoul routes. The A350 has been deployed in HCMC-Shanghai route from April 2016

and HCMC-Osaka route from October 2016.

Vietnam Airlines CEO Duong Tri Thanh said this is part of the carrier's plan to replace the widebody fleet on longhaul flights.

In a significant move, Vietnam Airlines forged a partnership with All Nippon Airways in January 2016, linking Japan with Vietnam. This helped to strengthen its position to enter the US market, with a direct route linking HCMC and Los Angeles slated to start in October, after Vietnam Airlines acquired 40 A350-900s.

The airline launched a thrice-weekly service from Hanoi to Sydney in end-March, the latest in a series of new routes that span Myanmar, Indonesia, Central Vietnam, Bangkok and Cambodia.

And in February, it was unveiled Vietnam Airlines secured long-term leases

with Aviation Capital Group for six new Airbus A321neo aircraft to be used on domestic and shorthaul routes, which are scheduled for delivery in 2018 and 2019.

It currently boasts a fleet of 83 aircraft, which fly to 52 destinations in 17 countries. By 2020, Thanh said the airline plans to operate 170 aircraft, making Vietnam Airlines the second-largest full-service carrier in South-east Asia. – **Marissa Carruthers**

Garuda Indonesia

Garuda Indonesia is keen to expand its international network this year by increasing the number of flights to existing destinations as well as opening new routes.

The Indonesian national carrier recently announced that it would increase seasonal flight frequencies on the Jakarta-Australia routes from four- to five-times weekly flights and Bali-Australia routes from six- to seven-times weekly flights from May until October 2017. Destinations in Australia on its radar include Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

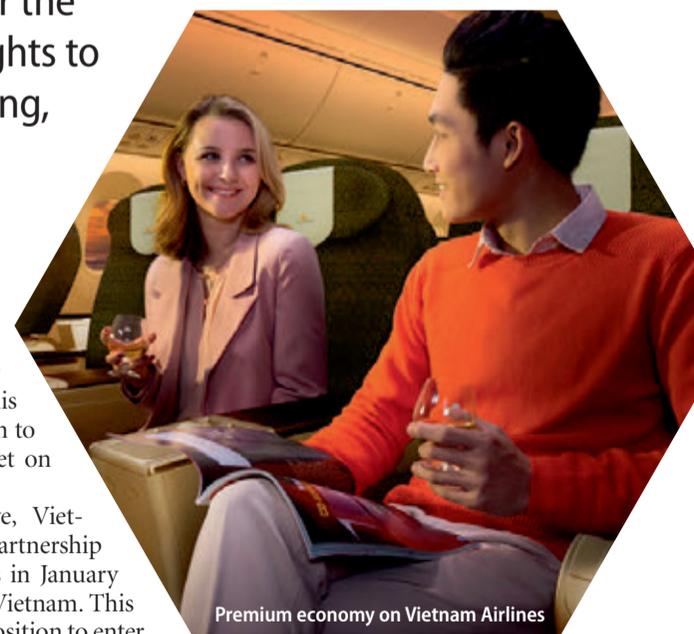
With an average load factor of 75 per cent, Garuda last year carried 644,000 passengers on its Australian services, 17 per cent higher than in 2015. With the additional flights it is expecting to carry 650 passengers this year.

In the mean time, other new routes include connecting Jakarta with Mumbai, Moscow and the US.

The first direct connection between Jakarta and Mumbai started on December 12, 2016. The service is served through Bangkok three times a week with Boeing 738 aircraft with a two-class cabin configuration.

The airline is also planning to start thrice-weekly services using Airbus A330-200 aircraft between Jakarta and Moscow in August 2017. The direct flight connection from Moscow is expected to improve Russian tourist visits to Indonesia to 100,000 this year, according to the airline's vice president communications Benny Butarbutar.

In addition to Moscow and Mum-



Premium economy on Vietnam Airlines

bai, Garuda Indonesia will also launch Jakarta-Los Angeles via Tokyo in mid-2017.

However, with the recent reshuffle within Garuda, which sees Arif Wibowo replaced by Pahala Nugraha Mansury as president and CEO at press time, the new management has indicated a review of the airline's network and route expansion. – **Mimi Hudoyo**

Catch the northern lights in Fairbanks

The gateway to Alaska's interior is an all-year destination and **Scott McCrea**, Director of Tourism, Explore Fairbanks, shares what else visitors can expect to experience.

What factors make your destination more appealing to travelers?

The unsurpassed natural beauty and majestic wilderness of our region, in particular, the midnight sun in the summer time and the northern lights from August 21 to April 21 are compelling reasons. We are definitely one of the best places in the world to see the northern lights, and that makes us a very attractive destination to the Asian market.

Brand USA is a very important partner and is helping us raise awareness about what the destination has to offer.

What activities and attractions do you recommend for travelers from South-east Asia?

Our destination is very different in summer and winter. Summer visitors tend to gravitate towards taking an Alaska cruise, while winter visitors come to Fairbanks to see the northern lights and enjoy other winter activities.

For summer, an ideal itinerary would include taking an authentic sternwheeler trip on the local river, panning for gold, looking for wildlife, going to Denali National Park and making a trip north to go across the Arctic Circle.

For winter, an ideal itinerary would be built around looking for the northern lights at night, and during the day, enjoying traditional winter activities such as dog mushing, ice fishing, snowmachining and cross-country skiing. Making a trip

north to go across the Arctic Circle is very popular in the winter as well.

In either season, Fairbanks offers a variety of exceptional museums to explore, as well as opportunities for shopping, dining and learning about the Alaska native culture.

It sounds like visitors will have a great outdoors experience. Tell our readers more.

Great outdoor attractions are what we are all about! There are so many to mention, whether it is Denali National Park, two



Admiring Alaska's glacier
Photo: Ashley Johnston



Riverboat Discovery



The Alaskan Railroad at Bartlett Glacier Photo: Glenn Aronwits



Aurora borealis over cabin Photo: Todd Paris

hours south of Fairbanks, or the Arctic region of Alaska north of Fairbanks.

That said, the greatest outdoor attraction we have that seems to garner the most attention are the northern lights. We are, as I have

already said, one of the best places in the world to see the northern lights.

Our "aurora season" as we define it runs from August 21 to April 21, so there are many months out of the year visitors can choose from to visit Fairbanks to have the opportunity to potentially see the northern lights.

Alaskan seafood is a huge draw to the Asian market! Alaskan king crab, Alaskan king salmon and halibut are all very popular and easy to find in restaurants in Fairbanks and around the state.



SCOTT MCCREA
Director of Tourism
Explore Fairbanks

What is one message you want to convey to our readers?

Our job at Explore Fairbanks is to help you be successful and to provide you with the knowledge and tools you need to effectively promote our destination to your clients. With this being a relatively new market to Fairbanks and Alaska, we are aware that there needs to be a lot of education about what we have to offer and we are constantly looking for opportunities to do that.

Asians love to eat. What interesting food facts can you share?

Without question, Alaskan seafood is a huge draw to the Asian market! Alaskan king crab, Alaskan king salmon and halibut are all very popular and easy to find in restaurants in Fairbanks and around the state.

What about shopping?

Fairbanks is a smaller city of about 100,000 people, so we do not offer a lot of high-end shopping that this market may be looking for. But what we do have are unique and authentic Made-in-Alaska products that cannot be found elsewhere.

For more information, please go to VisitTheUSA.com



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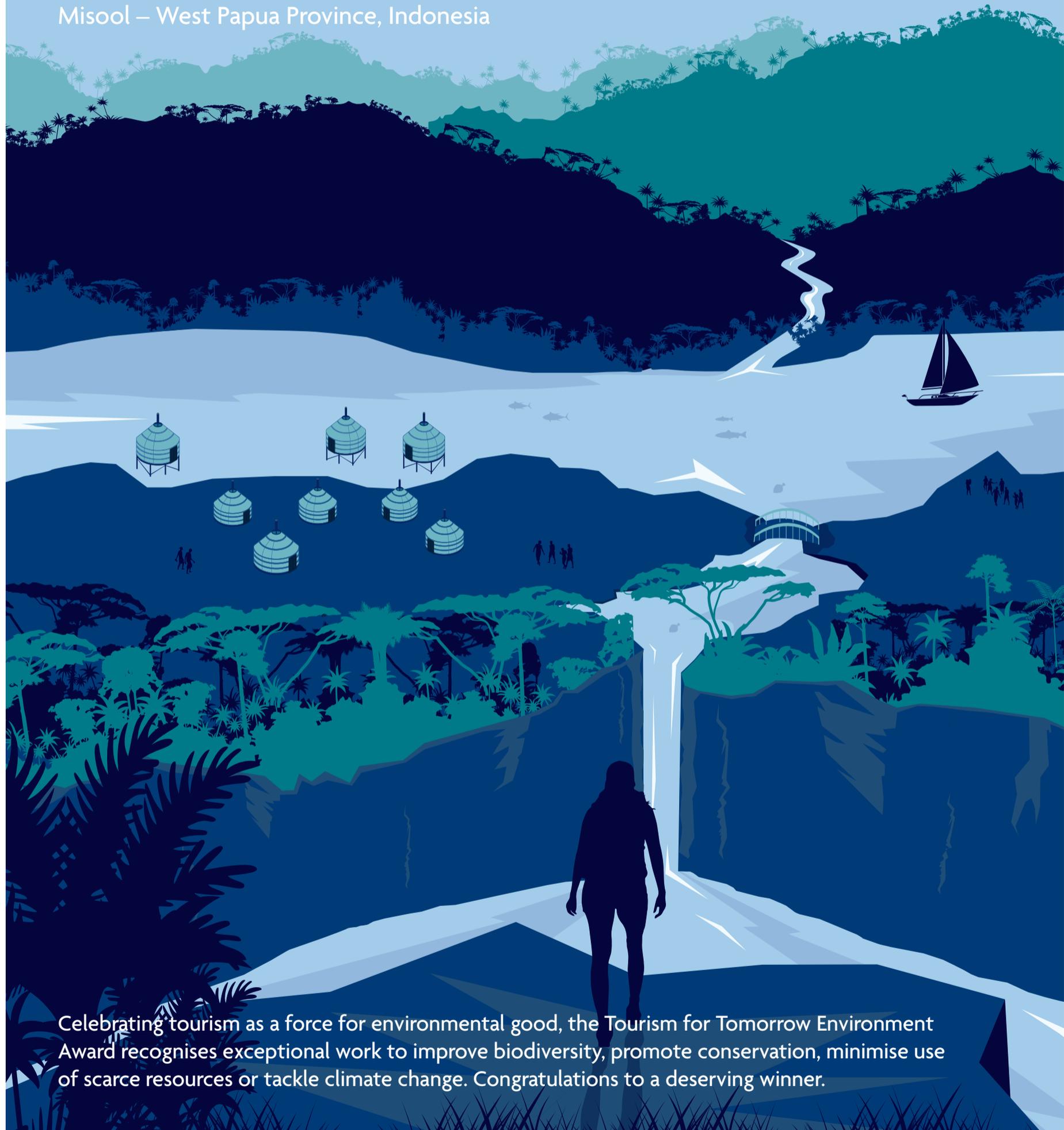
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THE GLOBAL GOALS
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Report Airlines

TRIED AND TESTED

Thai Airways A350-900 XWB

Xinyi Liang-Pholsena was one of the lucky few to experience Thai Airways' newest Airbus A350-900 XWB during its delivery flight from Toulouse to Bangkok

WHY Thai Airways International (THAI) was taking delivery of its third A350-900 aircraft and invited the media to join the ferry flight THA8904 from the Airbus base in Toulouse to Bangkok in April.

This aircraft will soon go into service on May 1 on the Bangkok-Frankfurt route. The two earlier A350-900s delivered last year have already been deployed on the Rome and Milan routes. The carrier has a total of 12 A350s on order, with five coming this year and another five next year.

WHAT Everyone was visibly excited when we spotted the new THAI aircraft – with its signature curved wings and shades-like cockpit windshield – sitting on the tarmac at the Airbus Delivery Center.

Coming straight from the Airbus manufacturer, the cabin interior still carries a whiff of the brand-new smell and had a protective plastic covering lining the aisles. There was no in-flight entertainment and the two meals served on board were catered by Airbus, instead of THAI.

HOW THAI's A350 XWB offers two classes – royal silk (business class) and economy. The 32 business class seats are arranged in a 1-2-1 configuration, with a width of 21 inches and convertible to fully flat beds. The 289 economy class seats boast a 3-3-3 configuration, with an 18-inch width and 32-inch pitch.

The customisable cabin mood lighting that the A350 is known for certainly worked to great effect by THAI. Upon stepping into the brand-new aircraft, I was greeted with the signature carriers of purple and amber, which blend in perfectly well with the seat cushions of either purple or amber tones.

When it was time for breakfast, the dark cabin slowly took on deep purple and orange tones before progressing into



Seats in royal silk class and economy class (left)



a lighter shade and finally all bright to cajole passengers to wake up.

My window seat (12K) was easy to operate, with various modes from upright to relax to flat.

There was plenty of room to store my handbag, laptop and rest my feet. Each suite also comes with a big 16-inch touchscreen, with a handheld remote tucked beneath the armrest, plus a power point and USB input.

After dinner was served, I chose the flat mode and made a couple of adjustments to find the perfect position to curl up and sleep for the night. Being four

months pregnant, I fully appreciate the fully reclined seat as it allows me to rest my weary and increasingly bulging body for the overnight 11-hour flight.

The extended overhead area, larger overhead luggage compartment and wider windows also gave a more spacious feel, whether in business or economy class.

VERDICT Despite not experiencing the full THAI experience due to the lack of in-flight services and entertainment on this ferry flight, the technical crew doubled up in their temporary service roles with all smiles.

The A350 clearly met expectations for a longhaul route with its smoother take-off and landing, quieter cabin and eye-friendly ambient lighting. I'm already looking forward to my next A350 flight with THAI.



BEIJING

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Organizers



Conference & Exhibition Management Services Pte Ltd (Singapore);
CEMS (Beijing) Conference & Exhibition Co., Ltd (China)

Report **F&B** tourism

Visitors in for a treat

Food-related festivals, campaigns and tours in Asia are whetting appetites for gastronomic and cultural travel, feeding a growing niche market

SINGAPORE

Food has long been an important part of the country's national identity and heritage, and the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) is continuing its efforts to incorporate cuisine in its destination messages and promote Singapore's food culture through partnerships and events.

Ranita Sundramoorthy, STB's director, attractions, dining & retail, elaborated: "We support events with good tourism potential, like the inaugural Michelin Guide Street Food Event (April 14-15, 2017), and regionally, *MasterChef Asia* (Season 1)."

STB also spearheaded the Singapore Food Festival (SFF) in 1994.

She added: "Till today, it is the only food festival in Singapore to spotlight Singapore cuisine, feature Singaporean chefs, and showcase the inventiveness of Singapore's dining scene."

Last year, STB launched the inaugural 50 Cents Fest, as part of the 2016 SFF. It transformed Chinatown Food Street into a nostalgic street hawker lane, depicting what Singapore was like back in the 1950s and 1960s.

When the Michelin guide was first launched in Singapore last year,

it further elevated the country's status as a gastronomic hub. As a result, Ranita told *TTG Asia* that there was "an increase of 24 per cent in F&B spending by visitors from January to September last year".

Christine Kaelbel-Sheares, vice president of F&B, Marina Bay Sands (MBS) indicated that the resort's Epicurean Market has brought in visitors from Australia, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Last year, the fourth edition of Epicurean Market attracted over 16,000 visitors from Singapore and the region. MBS is currently working on its fifth edition to be held in August 2017.

Kaelbel-Sheares shared: "We continue to bring in new experiences by enhancing the offerings to keep the event fresh every year. For instance, we introduced the Sands Signature Series which is a selection of premium masterclasses led by wine and spirits experts."

As well, in September 2016, John Ng Pangilinan, CEO of Ovenbaked Ideas, launched Makan Bus – a hop-on, hop-off concept where 13-seater vans take passengers to 10 neighbourhoods known for their signature local dishes.

He started Makan Bus as he considers local hawker food gems, and it was "for the purpose of bringing tourists to the local scene in Singapore, to places where they would never think of visiting or find it hard to visit". – *Rachel AJ Lee*



Chefs and mixologists come together at Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival

MALAYSIA

Malaysia's multi-ethnic, multicultural background has given the country its diverse array of food, a strong asset for its tourism industry.

Tourism Malaysia promotes Malaysian food overseas through renowned celebrity chef, Ismail Ahmad, who is also its tourism ambassador. Ismail has helped promote Malaysian food around the world through cooking demonstrations in the US, the Middle East, Europe, Japan and South Africa.

Larger-scale events that put the country on the world map include the Malaysia International Gastronomy Festival (MIGF), in its 17th iteration this year. The month-long festival has doubled participating restaurants since its 2001 inception from 13 to 26 last year.

Steve Day, MIGF's organising chairman, said: "The festival period is not a short-term money-making exercise. It is a time for investment, heavy publicity and cut-price promotions that will create a regular stream of customers for each participating restaurant for the whole year."

Moreover, putting the spotlight on local chefs shows that culinary talents are in ready supply in the country to keep standards up year-round, a message that will reach Malaysians, travel agents and business event organisers.

"For this reason, we do not simply fly chefs in from overseas to prepare one or two dinners for an elite few. Instead, we build the festival around our local resi-

The programme is 11 days, but can be shortened and customised based on the clients' (needs). This is a popular tour with Singaporeans as they are adventurous when it comes to food."

Another inbound operator, Lee Choon Loong, executive director of Discovery Travel and Cuisine, specialises in food tours on Langkawi Island with visits to crab and fish farms followed by a seafood dinner. Such tours are especially popular among the affluent mainland Chinese tourists, he told *TTG Asia*. – *S Puvaneswary*

THAILAND

With a record nine entries in Asia's 50 Best Restaurants 2017, the World Gourmet Festival's 17th edition coming up in September and its first Michelin Guide due to debut by this year-end, Thailand is well positioned to compete as a culinary destination.

"Tourists now want to have authentic local experiences. In the past, they would only come here for our beaches, temples and bars, but now they are interested in our local food and traditional markets. In fact, the demand for food tours is on the rise," said Kitichai Siraprapanurat, founder of Bangkok Food Tours.

In fact, Thai street food has gained such global renown that Bangkok authorities' recent announcement to ban street food vendors was met with wide consternation locally and abroad. Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) governor, Yuthasak has since come out to assure visitors that food stalls will remain on the streets of Bangkok.

Recognising the strong appeal of Thai cuisine worldwide, the TAT has launched, as part of its *Amazing Thai Taste* programme, the *Thai-licious* campaign to promote local culinary heritage among international foodies.

It has also appointed Andy Ricker, one America's best-known chefs of Thai cuisine, as the first Amazing Thailand Culinary Ambassador. Ricker will assist TAT in promoting Thai cuisine, including taking a group of influential visitors on a journey to discover Thailand's hidden culinary gems – the trip will be filmed and turned into a web series.

This is also the year of the Michelin Guide's much-anticipated arrival in Thailand, after TAT pledged considerable financial support to a five-year partnership with the renowned French guide.

And at the 17th World Gourmet Festival in September, top Michelin-star chefs from across the globe will gather at the Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel to cook their home favourites for an international gourmand crowd.

In the past, (visitors) would only come here for our beaches, temples and bars, but now they are interested in our local food and traditional markets. In fact, the demand for food tours is on the rise.

Kitichai Siraprapanurat
Founder, Bangkok Food Tours

dent chefs and make the festival accessible to as many people as possible."

Inbound agents like Raaj Navaratnaa, general manager at New Asia Holiday Tours & Travel in Johor, meanwhile, have found a niche creating food tours in the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia for Singaporean clients. His tours start from Johor and move up north to Penang, combining history and culture with local specialities in the different states along the way.

He said: "We take guests to small towns such as Muar and Parit Jawa...

Thai green papaya salad with crab





“In 2016, we had around 1,400 participants, with people flying (in) from Hong Kong, Singapore and South-east Asia to attend the festival. This year, we expect an even higher attendance from an even more international crowd,” said Anantara’s general manager Patrick Both. – **Jessica Tradati**

PHILIPPINES

Long under-celebrated, Philippine cuisine has started to gain interest from abroad since a month-long culinary event became a nationwide tradition in recent years.

Held in April, Flavors of the Philippines, highlighted by Madrid Fusion Manila (MFM), is in its third year as the only Asian edition of global gastronomy event Madrid Fusion.

Flavors features culinary activities held throughout the Philippines, among them pub crawls, food bazaars, farmers’ markets, food festivals, gourmet fairs and dining with celebrity chefs.

This year’s Flavors started in mid-March, making it a “longer, grander and more delicious food journey nationwide” in a bid to establish the Philippines “as a centre of culinary excellence in Asia” and “a hub for different flavour profiles, even those of foreign origins”, tourism secretary Wanda Teo explained.

Teo added that the activities “will go on an all-in-one enriching celebration of Philippine history, arts, culture, tradition, literature and music through the language of food”.

Madrid Fusion Manila 2017 was expanded to include B2B components with local culinary tours specialists, plus the International Gastronomy Congress and International Gastronomy Expo.

Another coup for the Philippines is the return of the World Food Street Congress to Manila last year after having been hosted by Singapore for two years.

The congress will take place from May 31 to June 4 this year, graced by some 28 of the world’s best Street Food Masters from 12 countries to dish out authentic street food.

These two culinary events are the joint work between the government (Department of Tourism, Tourism Promotions Board and Department of Agriculture) and the private sector (Philippine Association of Convention/Exhibition Organizers and Suppliers, plus travel agencies and tour operators).

Vilma De Claro Mendoza, president of Mart Evers Travel and Tours, who is involved in Flavors activities in Cavite, said the two events push the country to develop and improve its culinary offerings.

As Filipino cuisine gets noticed abroad, Ine Faustino, general manager of CCT 168 Tours, said more agencies are whipping up *kulinarya* packages, including her company which is already featuring food trips in its tour itineraries. – **Rosa Ocampo**

HONG KONG

With meals outside hotels the third largest category of visitor spend in Hong Kong (after shopping and accommodation), it is no wonder Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has chosen dining as one of seven core experiences to promote in the city.

The HKTB will step up promotion of key homegrown events, including the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival, having received additional government funding to enrich the city’s tourism appeal.

A spokesperson said: “We will also continue to offer... epicurean culinary events, and wine and dine offers during the Hong Kong Great November Feast.”

As well, the HKTB will support the overseas promotion of local culinary events by third parties such as Taste of Hong Kong and Chill Out at the South by Ocean Park. It will highlight the local food trucks initiative for food tourism.

Inaugurated in 2016, Taste of Hong Kong is not only about sampling food but also offers social elements including cooking and cocktail making through Marriott Studio masterclasses.

A spokesperson for the event said:



From left: Epicurean Market at Marina Bay Sands; a hawker at work in Penang

“We’ve had visitors from Asia coming to Hong Kong for the festival so we can definitely see that food tourism drives (visitor arrivals). So far, most fairs and F&B-related events are more focused on trade and are not consumer-driven, so we can definitely grow in this area in the future.”

New food tourism products recently introduced in the city include Crystal Bus, which brings participants sightseeing while dining on gourmet dishes, either as part of a 2.5-hour day tour or five-hour night tour charter. Dinner will be provided by its partner restaurant upon request.

Apart from gourmet dining, tours focused on humble local eateries are also growing in popularity, observed Silvana Leung, director of operations at Hong Kong Food Tours.

With many repeat clients requesting for similar tours in other districts after having experienced its signature Sheung Wan route, the company has added two routes in Sham Shui Po and Taipo, with plans to introduce another this year.

“Hong Kong is perfect for food tourism especially when you are spoilt for choices, from street hawker food to high-end restaurants. The outlets we pick are real neighbourhood outlets where Hong Kongers would go. There is language barrier issue in these outlets so we’d accompany with guests through out the journey.” – **Prudence Lui**

JAPAN

Japan has combined its parallel loves of technology, anime and food to promote its diverse cuisine to foreign visitors.

A new *Taste of Japan* campaign launched on March 1 by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries features Hatsune Miku – a 16-year-old virtual pop star with turquoise hair and a global following – singing and dancing

her way on an “oishii trip” that incorporates food like Hokkaido crab, Aomori apples, sushi, sukiyaki and green tea.

Aimed at younger travellers, the web site (<http://tasteofjapan-videos.jp/oishiitrip/>) emphasises the wide regional and seasonal variations in its food and how Japanese cuisine has been added to the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list.

According to the ministry, the Hatsune Miku video has been viewed around 80,000 times to date on various platforms.

Anime may not be the first thing that comes to mind when talking about food, but Hatsune Miku’s growing popularity – having opened for Lady Gaga on her 2014 tour – could be an effective way to bring attention to Japan’s cuisine.

Said Kenshi Hamaoka, who oversees the campaign for the ministry: “*Washoku* (Japanese food and food culture) is becoming better known around the world and we want this collaboration to create a synergy between the two.”

The *Taste of Japan* website has a number of short animated videos with different themes, such as *Sushi and Beyond* as well as a selection of documentary-type programmes examining the roots of Japanese cuisine.

Elsewhere across the country, F&B events are being used to celebrate regional cuisine and attract more visitors, both domestic and foreign. Fukushima City holds its ramen show over 10 days from late April, Hiroshima has an oyster festival in January as well as an *okonomiyaki* (savory pancake) event in March, while Saitama Prefecture hosts an annual whisky festival.

National broadcaster NHK sponsors the two-day Japan Local Food Festival each March, while the B-1 Grand Prix has swiftly evolved into the nation’s largest culinary event and is a movable feast that changes location each year and promotes no-frills regional dishes. – **Julian Ryall**

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Destination Macau

Macao Light Festival at the Ruins of St Paul's



Lighting up with events

Macau brandishes a robust calendar of events round the year to attract international visitors and give them reasons to stay longer. **Prudence Lui** reports

Positioning Macau as a City of Events is one of the main ways that Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) plans to attract visitors and encourage them to stay longer.

A MGTO spokesperson commented: "Macau has been enhancing the city's events, as well as ensuring they are distributed throughout the year, so that visitors may plan holidays to experience all these during their stay."

MGTO, together with travel trade partners, has been leveraging event-themed packages, such as the Macau Grand Prix

or the Macao International Marathon, as "windows for visitors to experience the destination".

In line with MGTO's efforts, integrated resorts (IRs) are also bringing to Macau "high-profile performances and events".

"Some players bring big names from the regional and world entertainment industry, and stage resident shows for long seasons. Their calendar of performances usually comes along with special packages (that aim) for longer stays," the MGTO spokesperson said.

Examples of shows currently running at IRs include the indoor ice sculpture

showcase and other activities by Kung Fu Panda Adventure Ice World with the DreamWorks All-Stars at The Venetian (through July 9); magician shows scheduled for the House of Magic at Studio City (year-round); the *Monkey King - China Show* at Sands Cotai Theatre (through December 31).

"This favours not only the host hotel-resorts but the overall destination, since visitors also tend to visit other attractions while in town," shared the MGTO spokesperson.

Echoing the sentiment that events across the city can bring collective benefits to the industry, Artyzen Hospitality Group, Macau, area vice president, Rutger Verschuren, said: "Considering how small Macau is, and the relative short time since we came on the international travel map, we cannot complain. We are lucky to benefit from Macau's (events) treasure chest and its efforts to reach out to an international crowd.

"Our hotels, like the entire city, feast on large events by receiving more exposure as a destination, and by generating extra RevPAR during events," he added.

Meanwhile, entertainment is at the heart of Sands China's business. Its six venues have hosted a total of 60 different live entertainment events over 144 event days in 2016, attracting more than 228,000 visitors. The theatres offer a variety of ticketed events – everything from Broadway-style musicals to magic shows to classical ballet.

Said senior vice president of marketing and brand management, Ruth Boston: "The live entertainment programme

Destination in numbers

10%

The percentage increase in overnight-stay visitors to Macau to reach 15.7 million in 2016. However, overall arrivals grew just 0.8 per cent to 30 million.

2.1 days

The average length of stay of overnight visitors

37,634

The total number of rooms across 113 hotels as of end-2016, an expansion of nearly 14 per cent year-on-year

US\$161

The average room rate of three- to five-star hotels, down 12.7 per cent

Viewpoints

What new event and entertainment products would you like to see in Macau? Why?



Paul Kwok, general manager, Grand Hyatt Macau

To attract a bigger share of the Asian market, as well as high-profile entertainment,

the Macau government could arrange a jazz extravaganza festival, which would be a good opportunity to connect cutting-edge (artists and musicians) from around the region. Making use of Macau's unique cultural venues and heritage sites could also increase its appeal to visitors across Asia.



Eric Chang, general manager, Air Cruise

The more diverse the shows are, the better for Macau. Given how Mainland Chinese dominate

inbound arrivals, I reckon action-oriented (not too westernised) shows would appeal to them. Moreover, the burgeoning family travel segment means demand for kids' shows. The IRs have recently come up with more entertainment shows targeting families so that's a good direction to go.

at our properties is a key traffic driver... The diversity of entertainment offered by Sands Resorts Macao sets it apart from other gaming destinations."

Welcoming Macau's new positioning is Metropole Hotel's general manager, May Wong, who looks forward to grow the vast potential in events tourism.

"Apart from local culture and customs, the city also celebrated Thailand's Songkran Festival. Why don't we expand in this direction by blending other nations' festivals in addition to our homegrown ones?"



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 GOLDEN CELEBRATION 2017

Destination Macau

Issue of the day

Better access a work in progress

With access into Macau looking set to improve, what remains to be done? By Prudence Lui



Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge under construction

Accessibility has been a stumbling block for Macau's tourism, but industry players will soon see the light of day as infrastructure takes shape, albeit with a few kinks to straighten out.

The long-awaited New Ferry Terminal in Taipa is expected to start operations this year, adding another option for visitors to access Macau, according to the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

A MGTO spokesman added: "(Soon), Zhuhai will be linked by high-speed rail to three more provincial capital cities, namely Zhengzhou (Henan), Kunming (Yunnan) and Nanning (Guangxi), bringing the total number of high-speed rail connections from Zhuhai to eight."

The expansion is expected to help attract mainland visitors to Macau from beyond Guangdong province.

Compared with other cities, Artyzen Hospitality Group, Macau, area vice president, Rutger Verschuren, does not think accessibility is a major impediment for Macau but welcomes the upcoming improvements the city will see.

"Regretfully, it will take a few more years for some of these elements to come online, but all in all it is a very positive outlook," he commented.

Verschuren added that if he had a bone to pick, it would be with the fact that "Macau and Hong Kong governments, to our knowledge, have not concluded who will actually be allowed on the (Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau) bridge".

As well, he suggested that operating hours of ferries could be longer.

Meanwhile, he pointed out that getting from Macau to the modern Zhuhai airport – via Hengqin – is a similar if not shorter trip than by ferry to/from Hong Kong International Airport.

He opined: "Domestic flights to Zhuhai are much cheaper than flights to Macau or Hong Kong, so Macau should pay more attention to Zhuhai airport's developments, as well as Guangzhou airport, which is less than two hours away."

MY WAY



Olinto Oliveira

Director, business development and events, MCI Macau

What are the current challenges Macau faces as a destination?

Macau is a great event destination, but it still faces two major challenges.

Firstly, while the government continues to make strides to stimulate the MICE industry through incentive packages, access into the city for international travellers is still a challenge with most flights landing in Hong Kong, forcing guests to ferry across to Macau. This extra step to reach the city can at times be a major deterrent, especially for long-haul groups coming from Europe or the Americas.

The second challenge, as with any event destination heavily dependant on inbound business, is the pressure to constantly innovate and roll out new offer-

ings and attractions to encourage repeat visitations.

If I had my way to improve things, I would... simply make Macau more accessible, especially via more modes of transportation (which is underway with the upcoming bridge megaproject) and additional direct flights from more destinations.

Aside from that, I would continue to foster Macau's rich and fascinating culture through film, art, culinary and music festivals as well as encouraging the development of non-gaming oriented attractions. I believe these will be the key for Macau to make the leap from a 'gaming haven' to 'must-visit destination'.

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 MGM Cotai's opening pushed to 4Q

MGM Cotai is scheduled to open in 4Q2017 and bring with it 1,400 keys, meeting facilities, a spa, retail and F&B outlets and Asia's first dynamic theatre. The first international Mansion at MGM will also make its debut, offering a luxury experience for moneyed travellers.

the patisserie serving both healthy nosh throughout the day and handcrafted pastries for afternoon tea; and The Gift Gallery showcasing gourmet sweets, teas, fashion accessories, home and kitchenware, books and artistic seasonal floral arrangements.

2 New cafe in Galaxy Macau

The 58-seat Cha Bei opened its doors at The Promenade Shops in Galaxy Macau last December. It marries the concepts of dining and retail under one roof, with

3 Say hello to pandas

The Giant Panda Pavilion in Coloane has welcomed twin cubs Jian Jian and Kang Kang, offspring of giant pandas Kai Kai and Xin Xin. Visitors can also say hello to the red panda couple, Luo Luo and Tong Tong, at the Pavilion of Rare Animals.



4 Free entry to museums

Free entries to both the Macao Museum of Art and the Museum of Taipa and Coloane History have been made available to the public since the start of 2017, in an effort to promote the destination's art and history.

5 A storied library

After an extensive refurbishment, Patane Library has opened to the public as a library and art space. It was originally a cluster of seven buildings with a history of over 80 years, and today seats about 150 readers.



The Opulence Ball



The Opulence Ball - Pre Function



Shanghai 1930s



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TRIED AND TESTED

Wynn Palace

The Wynn Palace opened a decade after the Wynn Macao Hotel first burst onto Macau's hospitality scene. **Prudence Lui** checks in for a day to see how the newcomer stacks up



Barbara Kraft

LOCATION It sits near the Cotai Strip but outside the cluster of integrated resorts, a stone's throw from the Taipa Ferry Pier and Macau International Airport.

ROOMS I had high hopes and was not disappointed by my Fountain Suite (these make up 540 of the hotel's 1,706 rooms). Luxury comes in the form of space here. Suites are sized 85-107m², featuring a separate living space with floor-to-ceiling window. The view of the Performance Lake and the Cotai Strip was spectacular.

As a tea lover, I appreciated the range of in-house tea flavours available.

A downside was noise from the lake despite the windows being soundproof.

F&B Of the 12 dining outlets, Wing Lei Palace won my heart with its authentic Cantonese delicacies and focus on the tea craft, apparent from the staffing of four tea sommeliers.

The SW Restaurant is a novel reimagination of the American steakhouse. Its 179-seat dining room pioneers a theatrical animation with 3D mapping vignettes. Plays themed around a waking dream run every 30 minutes from 19.00.

FACILITIES Apart from a dedicated floor of function space, the property takes care of leisure too. The 26,783m² Performance Lake greets guests with a display combining water, music and light. A dazzling mini show of three or so minutes takes place on the hour from 12.00 to 00.00.

Your experience is not complete if you don't take a ride on the SkyCab, which is the first of its kind for check-ins or check outs.

SERVICE Staff are friendly and responsive. They helped me avoid a queue on check out.

VERDICT Wynn Palace met my expectations, and is ideal for both business and leisure travellers who like consistently good service and quality.

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Destination China

When dynamism meets heritage

Shanghai's new-meets-old skyline

Its economic prowess aside, Shanghai is also a powerhouse in tourism, tapping its unique blend of western and oriental influences, old and new to pull in visitor numbers. **Prudence Lui** takes a look at what makes tourism tick in this megacity

Shanghai's history may be short vis-à-vis the storied cities of China, but this cosmopolitan city, often dubbed the Paris of the East, and its contrasting blend of old and new, openness, and mix of cultures is often what travel experts find most compelling in its attraction to international visitors.

It is a dynamic city whose tourism scene is constantly brimming with new attractions. The latest additions include Shanghai Disneyland last year; the 632m Shanghai Tower, which launched in January as the world's second tallest building; and the soon-to-complete Shanghai Hai-chang Polar Ocean Park.

The Shanghai government is also keen to position the city as an international destination and has laid out plans for new tourist areas, which include the creation of six national-level tourism areas centred around Sheshan, Dianshan Lake, the Bund and the Dongtan Wetland Park by 2020.

The new attractions notwithstanding, it is still Shanghai's blend of heritage and modernity that tour operators often look to for inspiration in their creation of novel experiences and packages.

Faces of China, CEO, Cindy Zhang perceives Shanghai as a gateway city that leverages her recent history well. She said: "Shanghai's rich history over the past 100 years can be seen in many buildings from the Art Deco period. We have Shanghai Museum, one of the best in China, while the Kun Qu opera is an interesting programme to international audience. We have developed several exclusive private programmes led by experts like museum curators, expats and Chinese historians to offer cultural perspectives."

Zhang added: "Shanghai has a lot more to offer than just the 1930s. Overall, it's cosmopolitan with strong contrasts and diversity. It is a dynamic destination where changes are happening every day and always fun."

Frank Gao, vice general manager of Shanghai branch at Century Holiday International Travel Group, shares a similar view and sees Shanghai as a mature destination in both its hard and soft aspects. Repeat visitors no longer opt for sightseeing tours but in-depth experiences, he noted.

"That's why we offer insightful itineraries combining culture and local livelihood with authentic Shanghaiese culinary experience at the Old City of Shanghai. By taking visitors to view architecture with centuries of history, they can immerse themselves and trace how people lived in the olden days," he said.

Furthermore, for a city already known for its diverse dining options, the launch of the inaugural Michelin Guide Shanghai last year lent a further buzz to its dynamic, cosmopolitan dining scene.

A total of 35 stars were awarded to 26 restaurants in the city, with the T'ang Court of The Langham Hotel clinching the coveted three stars. A further 25 restaurants received the Bib Gourmand recommendation for offering good-value meals for under RMB200.

The guide's international director, Michael Ellis, said: "The city is an economic and cultural crossroad, and its gastronomy is the result of a strong culinary heritage which makes the dining scene very exciting."

According to Pudong Shangri-La, East Shanghai, area general manager, Mark

Kirk, Shanghai's allure as a modern city with heritage, multitude of experiences and attractions makes it more desirable. The addition of the Michelin Star Guide further propelled it into the limelight as an international dining destination.

Furthermore, general manager of Hilton Shanghai Hongqiao, Joseph Zitnik, noted: "Bringing back the image of romantic-old Shanghai paired with the new, vibrancy of our Michelin Star-rated restaurants, only adds to our city's mystery and luster. The restaurants on the Michelin Star Guide were fully booked upon its release and this is a great lead-in for tourists and locals alike to try new restaurants, foods and experiences."

Pacific World, destination manager of Shanghai, Violet Wang, commented: "It's a plus as we can sell our destination by restaurants, food and wine. For programmes in Shanghai, we usually take clients into local outlets that serve traditional Shang-

Destination in numbers

8.5 million

The number of inbound tourists to Shanghai last year, six per cent more than the year before. Shanghai Tourism Authority aims to receive 8.7 million tourists this year

17%

The percentage growth of Russia, which is the city's best performing market with 90,000 visitors last year

RMB6.2 billion

Tourism receipt in 2016, equivalent to US\$899 million, representing an increase of four per cent year-on-year

238

The number of star-graded hotels in Shanghai as of end-2016. Average room occupancy was 67.8 per cent while average room rate was RMB\$692

hainese snacks or dim sum. With this culinary guide, we will produce a brand-new itinerary with Michelin dining in them.

"However, my concern is that these restaurants are small in size and ideal for group in 30-50 pax only. Therefore, they can't accommodate big groups and could be very expensive."

Viewpoints

What needs to be done to drive longer length of stay for visitors?

David Bark, general manager, Sofitel Shanghai Hongqiao

Shanghai has its own identity and people want to experience it. If we promote Chinese culture, it is better not to lose this element. Moreover, it's good to have something new for visitors. For my hotel, I created jogging maps and travel tips on surrounding areas like old water towns and Sheshan.

Gigi Chan, director of sales and marketing, Kerry Hotel Pudong Shanghai

Many of our guests extend their stays after their meetings to experience Shanghai's culture and attractions. The opening of Disney helps a lot and the tourism bureau is doing a good job in organising international and culture events, and these provide more options for visitors to the city.

No threat from sharing economy

Vacation rentals have not infringed on growth of traditional travel players in China, finds **Prudence Lui**

The rise of sharing economy in China has given birth to home-grown players like Didi Chuxing and Tujia while home-sharing giant Airbnb has doubled down its investment in the country, but industry members interviewed do not see threats arising from such platforms for the time being.

Safety and security are the greatest differentiators between traditional hotels and home-sharing accommodation, observed Creamy Chen, general manager, Century Holiday International Travel Service (Guangzhou) Branch.

She said: "Clients prefer reliable hotel brands when planning trips to China. Under Chinese regulation, hotels have to scan foreign guests' passports for registration but if they opt to stay in local residences, it's necessary for them to inform a nearby police station.

"In fact, we have agreements with ho-

tels to guarantee guests' personal and food safety during their stay but I doubt home rentals could offer the same confidence."

Chen also believes that local agents catering to the domestic travel market are more affected than inbound operators handling foreign visitors.

And while Tujia has joined forces with agencies like Nanjing China Comfort Travel Service to enable agents to offer home rentals to their clients, she does not think that such partnerships will become a trend "given the service limitations".

Shanghai Jin Jiang Tours' operations department manager Rong Rong, meanwhile, sees home rentals as a popular option only for FITs and small groups. She added: "It's a kind of distribution channel targeting a different type of audience and will not compete head to head with our group business."

Hoteliers, likewise, are unfazed with the

growth of vacation rentals in China.

Hilton Shanghai Hongqiao, general manager, Joseph Zitnik, contended: "There is a place for Airbnb in the overall hotel market and distribution system but the traditional hotel business and reservation systems will remain strong. Most guests trust that international hotel brands can ensure them high-quality facilities, service standards and F&B."

Pudong Shangri-La, East Shanghai, area general manager, Mark Kirk believes that Airbnb tends to attract budget-sensitive travellers, which makes the impact on luxury hotels minimal.

Johnny Li, founder and managing director of Gateway Group, which represents resorts and hotels in Asia and China, surmised: "The mainland market is not mature enough with many domestic travellers still sticking to traditional booking channels.



"Unless Airbnb aggressively goes for the niche market or dangles attractive perks like best offers or affordable rates, it'd be hard to get domestic Chinese travellers to switch from the OTAs that they have patronised for years."

MY WAY



Derek Yang
CEO, Key & Fork Travel

What are your current challenges?

As bespoke travel is still a new concept in China, most people do not even fully understand the definition of this travel style.

Introducing a new concept takes time, endurance and the right approach, plus awareness of the characteristics of each market. It is never easy to bring Chinese clients out of their comfort zone, but food is where this

concept seems to be best-received.

Furthermore, many agencies try to compete with lower prices, however, that is not good for the market as it will eventually numb people to the true meaning of bespoke travel.

If I had my ways to improve things, I would...

first educate clients on what bespoke travel is and what to expect from it. What my team and I are creating is a platform for our clients to be connected to the genuine concept of bespoke travel. Each of our trip is based on a client's likes and dislikes; even for repeat destinations there will be a brand-new trip designed for him/her

accordingly each time.

Food plays a very important role in our itineraries. Instead of blindly chasing after Michelin-starred restaurants, we take our clients to underrated ones which truly worth a visit. Sometimes clients are treated with a specially designed menu based on their likes. It is like collecting secret gems along your whole trip and our clients are obsessed with it. And even for leisure holidays on islands like the Maldives, we still make sure they will travel deliciously.

It is not about the price and it never will be. It is always about how much do you understand about your clients and what comes out of it.

NEWS IN A MINUTE

1 New Meliá hotel in Shanghai

The 190-room Meliá Shanghai Hongqiao opened in March 2017 to become the second Meliá hotel in China. Located in Hongqiao Center Business District, it's a 10-minute drive from Hongqiao Airport and the high-speed railway station.

Facilities include The Level, ballroom and meeting rooms, two restaurants, indoor swimming pool, gym and YHI Spa. At the top of the accommodation selection are the separate 400m² Chinese villas, which feature a green garden terrace of 200m² and personal butler service.

2 Summer debut for Bellagio

The first Bellagio hotel outside North America is scheduled to open this summer in Shanghai. Set by the Suzhou River on the North Bund, the 164-room, Art Deco-inspired Bellagio Shanghai has three signature restaurants of which Lago by celebrity chef Julian Serrano offers a large outdoor terrace and multi-

function meeting rooms covering almost 2,000m².

Other international debuts this year include the 374-room W Shanghai and the Bulgari Hotel Shanghai with 82 rooms and suites, including the 400m² Bulgari suite.

3 The Peninsula Hotels journeys

The Peninsula Hotels in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing have partnered with Imperial Tours in China to launch three epic journeys spotlighting culture and heritage, gastronomic and family travel, travelling by private jet, helicopter and yacht.

The 10-day culinary voyage, for example, showcases distinctive cuisines of Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Hong Kong. In Shanghai, key highlights include a Cantonese meal at the two-Michelin-starred Yi Long Court and a Chinese spirit tasting with a sommelier.

The programme also includes a guided tour of the former French Concession wet market and a day



trip to Hangzhou for guests to explore the hillside plantations cultivating the Longjing green tea and learn the influence of TCM on Chinese cooking.

4 More longhaul connections

Air China kicked off the thrice-weekly Shanghai-San Jose route last September and on June 7 will begin a four-times weekly Beijing-Zurich connection.

Air Canada launched daily Montreal-Shanghai flights on Boeing 787 Dreamliner in February 2017.

5 New metro lines underway

Shanghai will have three more new metro lines when the third phase of Line 8 and the east extension of the third phase of Lines 9 and 17 come online later this year. The three lines will add a further 55km to the network.

TRIED AND TESTED

Sofitel Shanghai Hongqiao

At this new luxury outpost, **Prudence Lui** finds a winsome blend of French elegance, Chinese grandeur and fine dining in Shanghai's up-and-coming business hub of Hongqiao

LOCATION Strategically located within the city's newest CBD near Hongqiao District, it's only a five-minute drive to the train station, airport and metro, as well as National Exhibition & Convention Centre (NECC). The surrounding area is still under development with newly-constructed low-rise office blocks dotted around, so traffic is not too busy.

ROOM I stayed in the 50m² Club Luxury King on the fifth floor, facing the river and flyovers in the distance. This high-ceilinged room evokes living in Paris and Shanghai with details like a map of Paris drawn on wall, French-blue fabrics and floral art in the bathroom resembling the flower of Shanghai – Yulan Magnolia. These elements, together with the comfy bed, combine to create a homey feeling and restful sleep at night.

The ample room space allowed me to move my big suitcase around easily, while the abundant supply of three-pin sockets sees no need for me to take out my adaptor. Though there was no ceiling-to-floor window, there was plenty of daylight.

F&B Dining options are aplenty in the hotel with three quality restaurants and two bars, but there aren't any good options in the surrounding area. While Kwee Zeen offers all-day dining with unique interactive kitchen concept, Takara is named after the first Japanese restaurant in Paris and Le Chinois serves authentic Chinese cuisine.

There are two private dining rooms on the eighth floor that can cater for small groups of 25-30 guests. Its dome glass roof design enables dining under the sun or stars with a tailor-made menu created by in-house chefs. What appealed to me is the signature high tea and creative cocktail experience at the Le Bar lounge where it's easy to kill the afternoon with friends.

FACILITIES MICE is a key direction for the hotel as the area expects an increase of corporate offices nearby and shows in NECC, with the 1,027m² Perrault Grand Ballroom and seven meeting rooms ranging from 42-191m². Leisure facilities include a 25m infinity pool with outdoor terrace, a spa and gym.

SERVICE I called for direction from the Pudong International Airport and the operator patiently explained to my taxi driver the hotel location. Being a new hotel in a new area, it's harder to hail cabs but the concierge offered assistance by calling one for me.

VERDICT A pleasant stay outside the typical bustling CBD. The brand speaks for itself in terms of service and products.

No of rooms 354
 Rates From RMB2,188 (US\$317)
 Contact details
 Tel: (86) 021 3669 6666
 Email: H9933@sofitel.com



Barbara Kraft



A PATAcademy-HCD Workshop

“Unlocking the Secrets to Effective Public Speaking”

Inspire audiences and speak to make an impact

June 26-28, 2017 | PATA Engagement Hub, Bangkok, Thailand

Achieve and experience the miracle of powerful public speaking.

Public speaking is no longer an option in your professional life. Whether you are a CEO, business owner or line manager you are a public speaker every day – addressing your many stakeholder groups including your colleagues and workforce. Your skills in public speaking are tested every day in different scenarios even when you are not on stage - from a sales pitch to a recruitment interview.

This 3-day workshop empowers participants to develop presence to connect with and inspire others, build trust and credibility and be clear and energetic in their speech. The programme is led by two complementing international experts in public speaking training:



Amélie Yan-Gouiffes
International Speaker, Conference Facilitator and Inner Diamond Miner

“This lady packs a powerful message. Amélie had us spellbound with her passionate delivery.”
 - Robin Pullen, National President (2015 - 2016), Professional Speakers Association for Southern Africa



Stu Lloyd
Chief Hothead, Hotheads Innovation / TopDog & Training Director, CATMATDOG

“The Perfect Storyteller!” - The Telegraph, UK

For an immersive training experience, the programme includes a field visit to the Thai-Chinese Bangkok neighbourhood of Talad Noi before sharing their adventures through a public speaking practice session.

For further information, please visit:

PATA.org/patacademy-hcd-june-2017



Official Publication



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ICYMI: Tune in to what's been going on at ttgasia.com and the social media space



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Travel Hall of Fame

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

- At present, these exceptional organisations and their years of induction are:
- Singapore Airlines (2002)
- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Hertz Asia Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Sabre Travel Network Asia-Pacific (2009)
- SilkAir (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)
- Regal Airport Hotel (2015)
- Banyan Tree Spa (2015)
- Qatar Airways (2016)
- Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (2016)
- Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (2016)

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



MOST READ

WHY TRAVEL AGENTS SURVIVE

TTG Asia's senior editor Raini Hamdi's opinion piece on why travel agents survive has obviously struck a chord among industry members. Airport strikes at Berlin-Tegel airport during the recent ITB Berlin put a spanner into the works for many attending the show, prompting Raini to think about the role of valuable travel agents during times of travel disruptions.

She wrote: "No wonder I am seeing talks of travel agents dying because of OTAs and direct bookings thinning. In fact, the more customers recognise there is no guarantee they won't be hit by a disaster while on the road today, the more they yearn for a guarantee that there will be someone there for them if ever they are hit."

Compared with OTAs' "technology, marketing and branding" strengths, travel agents hold their upper hand in terms of "fulfilment, which encompasses the human touch, first-hand knowledge of destinations and consumer protection", therefore it's time for travel agents to hone their strengths and get rid of their weaknesses, she added.

GTA BOUGHT BY HOTELBEDS

Hotelbeds Group has swooped in on its rival, Kuoni GTA, for an undisclosed price, which together with its recent acquisition of Tourico Holidays, will make it the biggest global B2B bedbanks players.

While the Tourico deal will strengthen its footprint in North America, the GTA buy will give Hotelbeds significant presence in the fast-growing Asia-Pacific and Middle East markets. GTA sells around 40,000 room nights per day online, and these are particularly sourced from fast-growing markets in Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

Hotelbeds Group was bought over from the TUI Group last year by a consortium led by Cinven and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board. At the time, the new owners emphasised they were keen to consolidate the highly fragmented wholesale accommodation market.



Time will tell how the Hotelbeds Group intends to integrate GTA into the company. Joan Vilà, executive chairman of Hotelbeds Group, will not comment on questions such as if the GTA brand would be kept. GTA's CEO, Ivan Walter, did not respond how GTA would be integrated into Hotelbeds and whether the consolidation would lead to job cuts.

TRADE OPPOSES MALAYSIA'S TOURISM TAX BILL

Malaysian agents are up in arms over the government's recent passing of the tourism tax bill in parliament, deeming the latest move to tax tourists staying at accommodation premises an unfair practice that will be a damper on domestic and inbound tourism.

Malaysian Association of Hotels, together with Malaysian Association of Hotel Owners and Malaysia Budget Hotel Association (MyBHA), held a joint press conference to voice opposition against the proposed tax implementation, seek clarification of the move and share their proposed solutions. "If hotels were to collect the tax, it must then be placed in a special fund which should be used to promote hotels only," said MyBHA president, PK Leong.

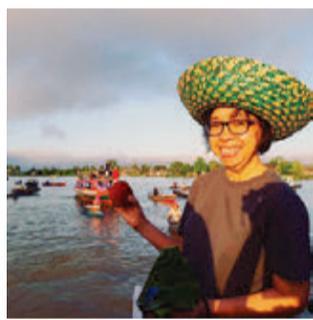
Ally Bhoonee, executive director at World Avenues, urged the government to provide incentives for tourists to visit Malaysia instead.

WHO'S SAYING WHAT

Instagram



David Cameron, former UK PM, on stage with David Scowsill, president and CEO of WTTC, to discuss about globalisation at #WTTC Global Summit #Bangkok



Our #Indonesia editor Mimi Hudoyo's all ready to shop at Lhok Baintan Morning Floating Market during the POP! Hotel Banjarmasin media fam trip



Thai Airways' third and newest A350-900 ready for its first flight home to Bangkok! #Airbus #a350xbw #thaiairways #Toulouse #ferryflight



TTG Asia's Raini Hamdi chats with #BrandUSA's president and CEO Chris Thompson on the sidelines of #WTTC Global Summit in #Bangkok

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WE LIKE Snippets of happenings good and bad surrounding the travel trade



MAKING TRAVEL ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL

Kudos to Amadeus for taking the lead in pushing for awareness of accessible travel in its upcoming white paper set to be launched in June. It is estimated that 15 per cent of the world population has some accessibility needs, and this is not restricted to those with mobility or disability issues, pointed out vice president industry affairs, Svend Leirvaag. It could simply be a condition or temporary needs, such as a two-metre tall person who requires more legroom on a flight.

The travel technology giant hopes to advocate the industry on the commercial opportunities as well as social responsibilities that companies have towards inclusive and sustainable travel, while encouraging suppliers to implement measures and standardisation in catering to this market segment, Amadeus executives told *TTG Asia* during an interview on the sidelines of the WTTC Global Summit in Bangkok.

CHIANG MAI HOTEL AIDS ELEPHANT CONSERVATION

In a departure to the elephant trekking tours typically offered in northern Thailand, Akyra Manor Chiang Mai seeks to raise awareness of elephant conservation with its new Elephant Day Care Package, which involves a day trip to an elephant hospital operated by Friends of the Asian Elephant (FAE) for guests to develop a deeper connection

with these majestic creatures and understand the medical and wellbeing treatments provided by FAE. This will be followed by a visit to Elephant Parade Land, where guests can visit the world's largest art exhibition of decorated elephant statues in aid of elephant conservation and see acclaimed artists at work creating the elephant statues.



DRAGGING INCIDENT ON UNITED

Need we say more about the dragging incident on United Airlines that sparked global outrage? A doctor was violently dragged out of his seat on an overbooked flight from Chicago, with the entire process caught on video. But the troubles didn't end there for CEO Oscar Munoz, who, already embattled with a public image crisis, at press time has to grapple with the death of a valuable giant rabbit named Simon after a long flight on the airline from London. Looks like misfortunes never come singly.

TTG TRAVEL AWARDS 2017



Cast Your Vote Now!

You Determine Who Clinches The Top Honour In The Industry

TTG Travel Awards, Asia-Pacific travel trade's most celebrated event, is back for its 28th year to honor the industry's crème de la crème. Tell us which company has made exemplary achievements and contributions that have raised the bar of excellence and taken the industry to greater heights.

Vote now and help your favorite travel suppliers and agencies bring home the title of being the best in the travel industry.

www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards

Closing Date: 7 July 2017

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Award Categories

1. Travel Agency Awards

Winners in this category are decided by votes from industry suppliers.

- Best Travel Agency – Australia
- Best Travel Agency – China
- Best Travel Agency – Chinese Taipei
- Best Travel Agency – Hong Kong
- Best Travel Agency – India
- Best Travel Agency – Indochina (Cambodia, Laos)
- Best Travel Agency – Indonesia
- Best Travel Agency – Japan
- Best Travel Agency – Malaysia
- Best Travel Agency – Singapore
- Best Travel Agency – South Korea
- Best Travel Agency – Thailand
- Best Travel Agency – The Philippines
- Best Travel Agency – Vietnam
- Best Corporate Travel Agency
- Best Online Travel Agency

2. Travel Supplier Awards

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

Airline Awards

- Best North American Airline
- Best European Airline
- Best Middle Eastern Airline
- Best South-east Asian Airline
- Best North Asian Airline
- Best China Airline
- Best Pacific Airline
- Best Regional Airline
- Best Asian Low-Cost Carrier

Hotels, Resorts, Serviced Residences & Spa Awards

HOTEL Chains

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

HOTELS – Individual Property

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

RESORTS – Individual Property

- Best Beach Resort
- Best Resort Hotel (Non-Beach)
- Best New Beach Resort
- Best Integrated Resort

SERVICED RESIDENCES

- Best Serviced Residence Operator

SPAS

- Best Spa Operator

BT-MICE Awards

- Best Airline – Business Class
- Best Business Hotel
- Best Meetings & Conventions Hotel
- Best BT-MICE City
- Best Convention & Exhibition Centre
- Best Convention & Exhibition Bureau

Travel Services Awards

- Best Airport
- Best GDS
- Best Cruise Operator
- Best NTO
- Best Theme Attraction

3. Outstanding Achievement Awards

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

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

4. Travel Hall of Fame

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

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

Inducted Travel Hall of Fame honourees are:

- Singapore Changi Airport (2002)
- Singapore Airlines (2002)
- Hertz Asia-Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group (2006)
- Star Cruises (2008)
- Abacus International (2009)
- Silkair (2010)
- Lotte Tour (2011)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)
- Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts (2015)
- Regal Airport Hotel (2015)
- Qatar Airways (2016)
- Thai Airways (2016)
- Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (2016)

VOTING INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES

For Travel Agency and Travel Supplier Awards

1. Please use the correct voting form.

Voting Form A: Travel Agency Awards

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

Voting Form B: Travel Supplier Awards

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

Online Voting Forms

You can also opt to vote using our online form www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards

2. Voting Criteria

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

3. Voting Rules

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

- No responsibility will be accepted by the organisers for voting forms lost, delayed or damaged in the post.
- There are no pre-nominated contenders for any voting awards.
- The results for TTG Travel Awards 2017 are final and no correspondence will be entertained.
- Voting forms will be tabulated and evaluated by an independent auditor in Singapore.
- Voting Closes 7 July 2017.

4. Voting Form Submission

Completed voting forms are to be returned to:

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Ms Wan Ling Kwek (TTG Travel Awards 2017)
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Singapore 117528
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8/F, E168, 166-168 Des Voeux Road Central,
Sheung Wan, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2237-7272 Fax: (852) 2237 7227

VOTING FORM A: TRAVEL AGENCY AWARDS

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

VOTE ONLINE AT
www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards

Criteria

Best Travel Agency in its respective category in terms of:

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

- Best Travel Agency – Australia
- Best Travel Agency – China
- Best Travel Agency – Chinese Taipei
- Best Travel Agency – Hong Kong
- Best Travel Agency – India
- Best Travel Agency – Indochina (Cambodia, Laos)
- Best Travel Agency – Indonesia
- Best Travel Agency – Japan
- Best Travel Agency – Malaysia
- Best Travel Agency – Singapore
- Best Travel Agency – South Korea
- Best Travel Agency – Thailand
- Best Travel Agency – The Philippines
- Best Travel Agency – Vietnam
- Best **Corporate** Travel Agency
Best travel agency specialising in serving the needs of corporate travellers.

16. Best Online Travel Agency

Best online-based travel agency offering the most user-friendly and effective interface to meet client needs. This online travel agency must also boast the best sales and marketing network in terms of service innovation.

VOTER INFORMATION

Name:	<input type="text"/>	Passport no.:	<input type="text"/>
Job title:	<input type="text"/>	Company:	<input type="text"/>
Address:	<input type="text"/>		
Country:	<input type="text"/>		
Telephone no.:	<input type="text"/>	Fax no.:	<input type="text"/>
Email:	<input type="text"/>	Signature:	<input type="text"/>

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

VOTING CLOSES
7 JULY 2017

VOTING FORM B: TRAVEL SUPPLIER AWARDS

VOTE ONLINE AT
www.ttgasia.com/ttg-awards

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

Airline Awards

Criteria

Best airline in its respective category in terms of:

- Providing the best service, network and schedules.
- Most agent-friendly in terms of reservations, confirmations and commission payments.
- Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas, incentive programmes and servicing.

17. Best **North American** Airline
Best airline based in North America operating Asia-Pacific routes.
18. Best **European** Airline
Best airline based in Europe operating Asia-Pacific routes.
19. Best **Middle Eastern** Airline
Best airline based in Middle East operating Asia-Pacific routes.
20. Best **South-east Asian** Airline
Best airline based in Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand or Vietnam operating Asia-Pacific routes.
21. Best **North Asian** Airline
Best airline based in South Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei, Macau or Hong Kong operating Asia-Pacific routes.
22. Best **China** Airline
Best airline based in China operating Asia-Pacific routes.
23. Best **Pacific** Airline
Best airline based in the Pacific operating Asia-Pacific routes.
24. Best **Regional** Airline
Best airline based regionally operating Asia-Pacific routes.
25. Best **Asian Low-cost Carrier**
Best airline based in Asia-Pacific that operates on a low-cost strategy.

Hotels, Resorts, Serviced Residences & Spa Awards

Criteria

Best Hotel Chain in its respective category in terms of:

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

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

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

HOTEL CHAINS

26. Best **Global** Hotel Chain
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties globally.
27. Best **Regional** Hotel Chain
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties in the region.
28. Best **Local** Hotel Chain
Best hotel chain operating a network of properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
29. Best Hotel **Representation Company**
Best company providing the most agent-friendly products and services and showing the best marketing effort in generating sales for member hotels via agents.
30. Best **Luxury** Hotel Brand
Best hotel chain operating a network of luxurious properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
31. Best **Mid-range** Hotel Brand
Best hotel chain operating a network of mid-range properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.
32. Best **Budget** Hotel Brand
Best hotel chain operating a network of economical properties within any one Asia-Pacific country.

HOTELS – Individual Property

33. Best **Luxury** Hotel
Best hotel catering to the upmarket traveller. This hotel must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting upmarket status.
34. Best **Mid-range** Hotel
Best mid-range hotel catering to the traveller who seeks three- to four-star quality and comfort.
35. Best **Budget** Hotel
Best hotel catering to the budget traveller.
36. Best **Independent** Hotel
Best non-chain (ie not part of a network of properties) hotel.
37. Best **Boutique** Hotel
Best small, fashionable and unique hotel.
38. Best **City Hotel – Bangkok**
39. Best **City Hotel – Delhi**
40. Best **City Hotel – Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City**
41. Best **City Hotel – Hong Kong**
42. Best **City Hotel – Jakarta**
43. Best **City Hotel – Kuala Lumpur**
44. Best **City Hotel – Macau**
45. Best **City Hotel – Manila**
46. Best **City Hotel – Seoul**
47. Best **City Hotel – Singapore**
48. Best **City Hotel – Taipei**
49. Best **City Hotel – Tokyo**

50. Best **New City** Hotel
Best city hotel that opened in 2016/2017

51. Best **Airport** Hotel
Best hotel – located within the vicinity of an airport – that caters to travellers in transit.

RESORTS – Individual Property

52. Best **Beach** Resort
Best resort located by a beach. This resort must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting local flavour.
53. Best **Resort** Hotel (Non-Beach)
Best resort not located by a beach. This resort must also boast the best visual appeal and ambience reflecting local flavour.
54. Best **New Beach** Resort
Best beach resort that opened in 2016/2017
55. Best **Integrated** Resort
Best hotel offering comprehensive accommodation, shopping, dining, entertainment and sports.

SERVICED RESIDENCES

56. Best **Serviced Residence** Operator
Best serviced property catering to mid- and long-term staying guests.

SPAS

57. Best **Spa** Operator
Best managed and operated spa or network of spas in the region.

BT-MICE Awards

Criteria

- Best services and facilities catering specifically to the BT-MICE market.
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing the BT-MICE market.
 - Most desirable and attractive incentives and value added services to business travellers and MICE planners.
58. Best **Airline – Business Class**
Best business class airline across the board.
Refer to Airline Criteria.
59. Best **Business** Hotel
Best hotel catering to the business traveller.
Refer to Hotel Criteria.
60. Best **Meetings & Conventions** Hotel
Best hotel catering to meeting and convention needs.
Refer to Hotel Criteria.
61. Best **BT-MICE City**
The city most friendly and desirable to business travellers and for MICE planners to host their events.
62. Best **Convention & Exhibition** Centre
 - Best facilities.
 - Best value for money.
 - Most flexible in catering to MICE planners.
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.
63. Best **Convention & Exhibition** Bureau
 - Most efficient, flexible and friendly in terms of response to enquiries and information.
 - Most effective in raising awareness of MICE at government and community levels.
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.

Travel Services Awards

Criteria

- Best product, services and facilities
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.
64. Best **Airport**
 - Best facilities.
 - Most user-friendly, efficient and hassle-free immigration.
 - Most organised baggage claim.
 - Best planned floor layout, with easy ground access.
65. Best **GDS (Global Distribution System)**
 - Most comprehensive network offering ease of operation and user friendliness.
 - Most efficient and reliable system.
66. Best **Cruise** Operator
 - Best product in terms of service, routes and schedules.
 - Best onboard programme and facilities.
 - Most agent-friendly in terms of reservations, confirmations and commission payments.
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas, incentive programmes and servicing.
67. Best **NTO (National Tourism Organisation)**
 - Most efficient, flexible and friendly in terms of response to enquiries and information.
 - Most effective in raising awareness of tourism at government and community levels.
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.
68. Best **Theme Attraction**
 - Best ambience.
 - Best facilities and services.
 - Most professional sales and marketing team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing.

VOTER INFORMATION

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

VOTING CLOSES
7 JULY 2017



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THE
MACAU ROOSEVELT

THE HOLLYWOOD COOL

The Macau Roosevelt,
sister hotel of the Los Angeles
flagship and namesake, world
famous Hollywood Roosevelt,
is set to become the sexiest
hotel in Asia's favorite
playground

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MACAU (NEXT TO JOCKEY CLUB)

BY
THE
Hollywood
Roosevelt

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