



The Future of Travel

A TTG Asia Media 50th Anniversary Special / May - Jun 2024 FREE /

Sustainability as a baseline, or perhaps intensified technology application?

Travel and tourism leaders draw lessons from the progression of the industry through the decades to project how business would look in the future



TTG Asia
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PATA Gold Awards



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MPAS Awards



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**FEATURE
OF THE YEAR**
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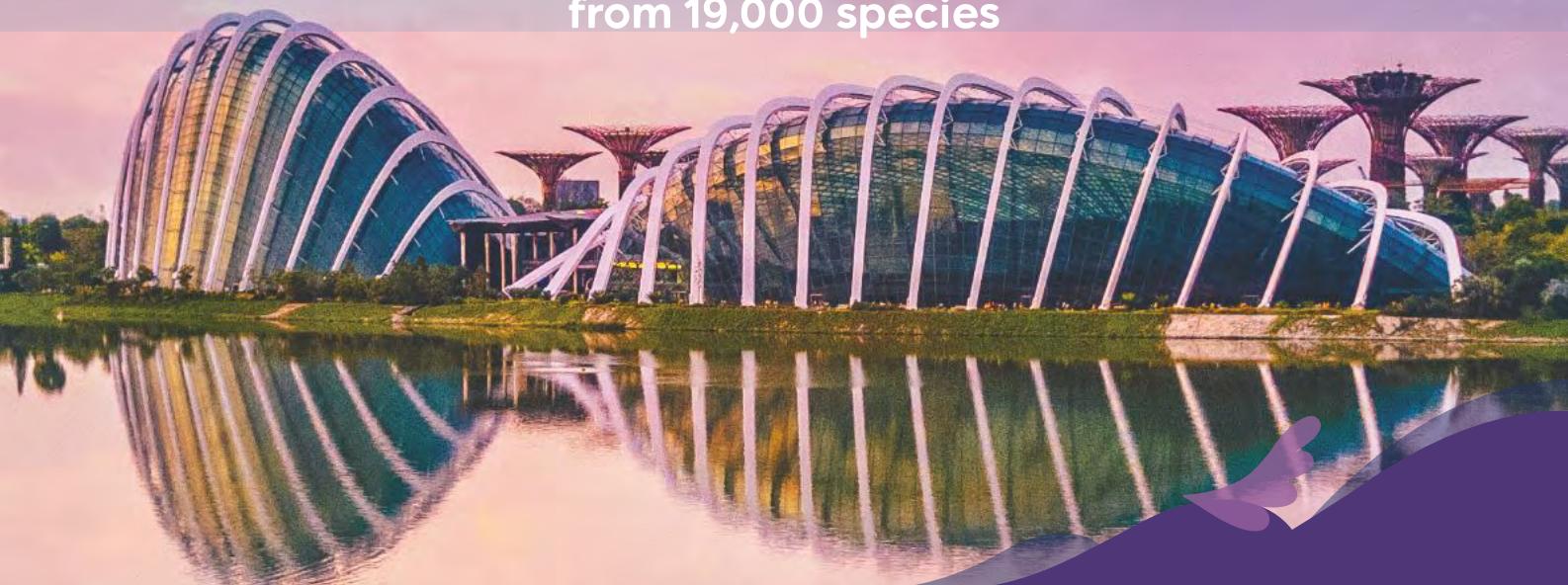


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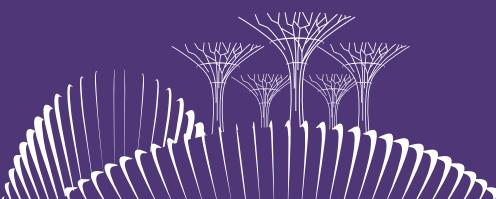
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Where luxury meets sustainability

RIU Hotels & Resorts' two new all-inclusive hotels in Mauritius signify several firsts for the Spanish hotel group

Newly launched on tropical Mauritius, the Riu Palace Mauritius and Riu Turquoise are luxurious additions to the Spanish hotel group's portfolio and marks the entry of the first Spanish hotel chain on the island.

Opening in May this year, they replace two of its former hotels in the same location and have been rebuilt with an elevated concept with sustainability at the forefront.

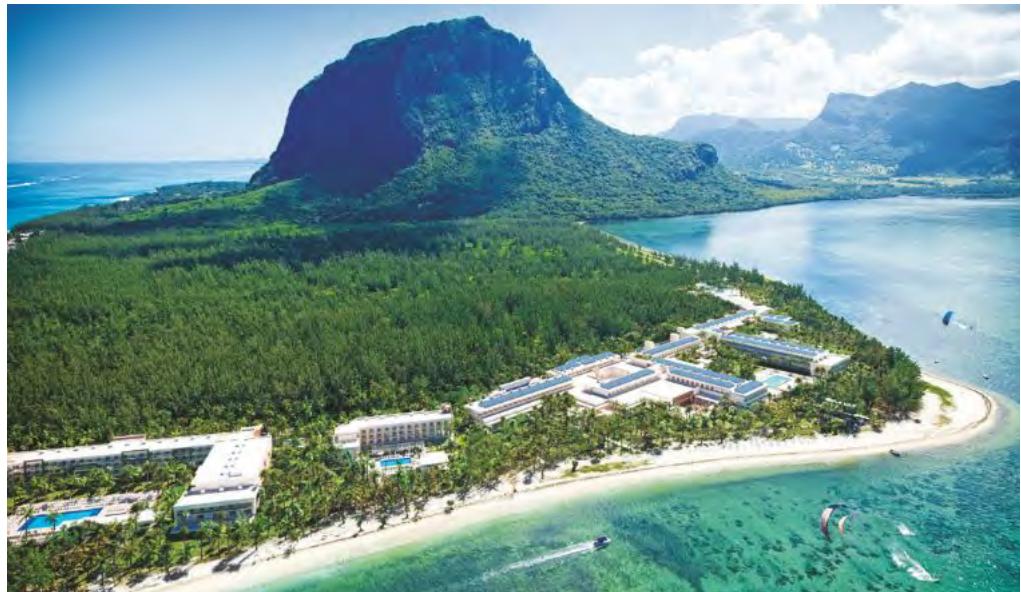
Nestled on the south western Le Morne peninsula, they are also the most energy efficient hotels in the RIU portfolio, running on clean energy generated from over 2,400 solar panels.

Both hotels are 24-hour all-inclusive resorts where guests have access to food and drinks at all hours of the day.

Apart from the lush surroundings and stellar service, each establishment promises its own brand of hospitality and guest experience.

The Riu Palace Mauritius, a 4-star superior adults only hotel and the first Palace brand for RIU in Mauritius, has 310 rooms, 255 of which are junior suites, some with panoramic ocean views. When it comes to food and beverage, guests will be able to try a variety of delicious cuisine at the hotel's main restaurant and five themed restaurants, — comprising an Indian, Asian, fusion, grill and steak restaurant — a patisserie and ice cream parlour, and six lounges and bars.

Amenities are designed to provide ultimate enjoyment with three swimming pools including one with



From top: Riu Palace Mauritius and Riu Turquoise are located on Mauritius' south western end, the Le Morne peninsula; Model of a room in the Riu Turquoise that opens out to panoramic views of the sea; Main restaurant Riu Palace Mauritius

a swim up bar and a private pool for Elite Club guests.

The Riu Turquoise on the other hand is a family-friendly 4-star establishment. With 390 rooms, including 244 with sea views and 10 family rooms, each is thoughtfully designed to accommodate the needs of families.

Hotel amenities are planned for travellers of all ages. Out of the three outdoor pools, one has a swim up bar for those 18 and above, the other is a children's pool with slides.

The restaurants in the Riu Turquoise include the main restaurant and three themed restaurants — one Indian, one grill and a steakhouse. Adults can get a nightcap in one of the four lounges and bars.

Apart from these, guests staying at Riu Palace Mauritius can enjoy all the facilities of Riu Turquoise.

Both hotels offer a variety of activities for guests such as an in-house gym, spa, RiuFit, a daily sports programme, and water activities like stand up paddle surfing, kayaking, snorkelling and more. For those who want a bit more adventure, professional windsurfing, kitesurfing, and scuba diving are available for a fee.

Wind down at night with a variety of entertainment from live music and karaoke, to stage shows, game shows and even catch a traditional Mauritius dance.



Elevating the experience with Elite Club

For an elevated experience, the Elite Club at the Riu Palace Mauritius offers an array of exclusive privileges.

From personalised late check in and late check out, to private pool and lounge area access, and priority reservations for the themed restaurants, Elite Club guests are treated to a bespoke experience tailored to their needs.

They can stay in one of the 55 junior suite rooms specially catered for Elite Club guests, some of which include their own private swim up room.

They also have exclusive access to the hotel's premium branded drinks in the pool area, a special room service menu, and upgraded minibar with in-room drinks.

Visit riu.com for more information.

AT A GLANCE...

Riu Palace Mauritius

- 310 rooms including Elite Club rooms
- 3 pools, 2 outdoor, 1 private for Elite Club
- 1 main restaurant, 5 themed restaurants
- 6 lounges and bars
- 1 patisserie and ice cream parlour

Riu Turquoise

- 390 rooms
- 3 outdoor pools
- 1 main restaurant, 3 themed restaurants
- 4 lounges and bars
- Gym
- Kids Club



RIU
HOTELS & RESORTS

Cheers to us

You have in your hand a special issue, one that marks the 50th anniversary of both TTG Asia Media as a company and the well-known travel trade title *TTG Asia*. This milestone is not easy to come by when you consider how vulnerable the travel and tourism industry is to macroeconomic ebb and flow.

Yet, TTG Asia Media and its flagship title have continued to serve Asia-Pacific's community of industry professionals uninterrupted, even through various crises that impacted travel and tourism. Along the way, the company has expanded its stable of travel trade titles, and established and grown other business divisions to support a wider range of industry organisations and functions.

I like to think that TTG Asia Media's success is the sum of its people's contribution. I am so proud to count many brilliant and resilient people as colleagues past and present. In developing this commemorative issue, I gave myself the fun assignment of interviewing some colleagues who play critical functions in the company. I hope their stories will allow you to better know TTG Asia Media and the work we collectively do.

And as we celebrate our Golden Jubilee, we also look ahead to the next decades through the projection of industry leaders and brave imagination of how travel and tourism should and could be.

Karen Yue
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“
TTG Asia Media's success is
the sum of its
people's contribution.
”

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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.

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- Singapore Airlines Limited (2002)
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- Hertz Asia Pacific (2005)
- Royal Cliff Hotels Group (2006)
- Sabre Asia Pacific (2009)
- Lotte Tour (2011)
- Hong Kong International Airport (2013)
- Raffles Hotel Singapore (2013)
- Regal Airport Hotel (2015)
- Banyan Tree Resorts & Spas (Thailand) (2015)
- Qatar Airways (2016)
- Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (2016)
- Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (2016)
- Royal Plaza on Scotts (2018)
- Royal Caribbean International (2018)
- BWH Hotels (2019)
- Travelport (2019)
- Harbour Plaza Hotels & Resorts (2023)
- Phoenix Tours International Inc. (2023)
- Resorts World Sentosa Pte Ltd (2023)

TTG Asia Media is pleased to announce that it has set up a virtual
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.



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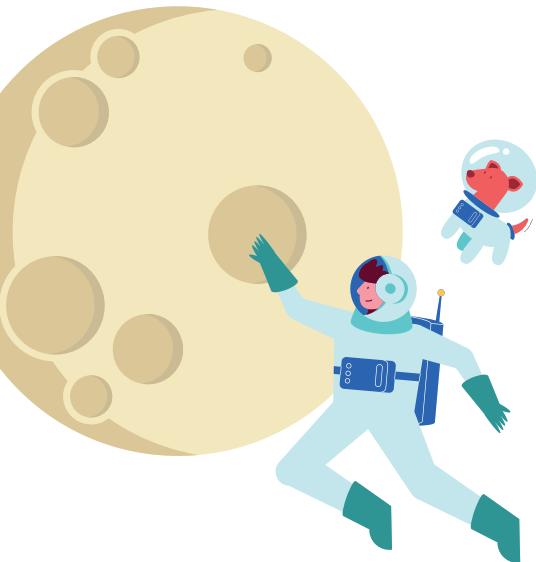
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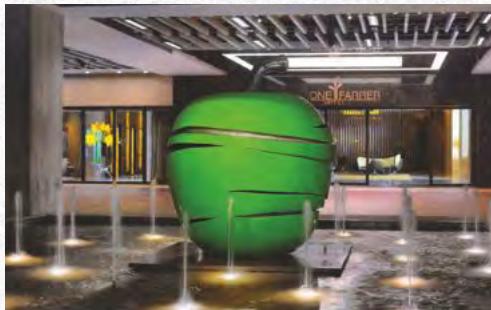
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Growing with the industry

Established in 1951, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) bears witness to Asia-Pacific's stunning rise as both a tourism destination and source market. CEO Noor Ahmad Hamid looks back

/ By KAREN YUE /



NOOR AHMAD HAMID
CEO, PATA

PATA must have witnessed many incredible milestones. What were some of these watershed moments?

They would include the opening of China to international tourism in the late 1970s, the region's economic boom during the 1980s and 1990s, the rapid expansion of low-cost carriers in the 2000s, and organising the first travel shows in the region 47 years ago. These events contributed to increased international travel to, from and within the region, tourism economic growth, and cultural exchange in the region.

Within PATA, the most significant contribution to the industry is pioneering the sustainable development of tourism. At the 1991 Annual Conference in Bali, Indonesia, on the occasion of PATA's 40th anniversary, there was a call from over 1,500 delegates from more than 50 destinations to promote ecologically responsible travel and tourism under the conference theme, *Enrich the Environment*. That marked the beginning of PATA's role as an authoritative voice for sustainable and responsible tourism in the region.

In January 1992, the PATA Board of Directors approved the PATA Code for Environmentally Responsible Tourism, which was officially adopted at the PATA Annual Conference in Hong Kong later that same year.

How has PATA evolved with the changing tides?

PATA has evolved to address changing trends in technology, market demands, and sustainability. It has embraced digital platforms, social media, and data analytics to stay relevant. Key functions such as fostering collaboration, promoting responsible tourism, and providing industry insights have remained critical and unchanged, reflecting the enduring values of the organisation.

You are a young leader in a long-established organisation. If you could travel back in time to witness any of the milestone events that shaped the industry, what would it be?

I would go back to the economic boom. This period marked a transformative phase for the region.

The opening up of economies, particularly in East Asia, led to unprecedented levels of trade, investment, and prosperity. Moreover,

elevated living standards fuelled a surge in travel and tourism activities.

The emergence of newly affluent middle classes in Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Chinese Taipei created burgeoning demand for leisure travel, while the relaxation of travel restrictions and the liberalisation of aviation policies facilitated easier movement across borders, fostering greater connectivity within the region and beyond.

This economic dynamism shifted global tourism focus towards Asia-Pacific. Destinations here began to attract visitors from around the world. The rise of China and India as economic powerhouses not only transformed them into significant outbound travel markets

but also contributed to the enrichment of Asia's tourism landscape.

This period was also a critical juncture for PATA. Recognising the potential of the Asia-Pacific travel and tourism industry, it strategically relocated its headquarters from San Francisco to Bangkok in 1998.

This period provides valuable insights into the factors driving the rapid expansion of travel and tourism in the region.

Such knowledge is invaluable in guiding strategies and initiatives to navigate future challenges and opportunities in the ever-evolving landscape of travel and tourism.

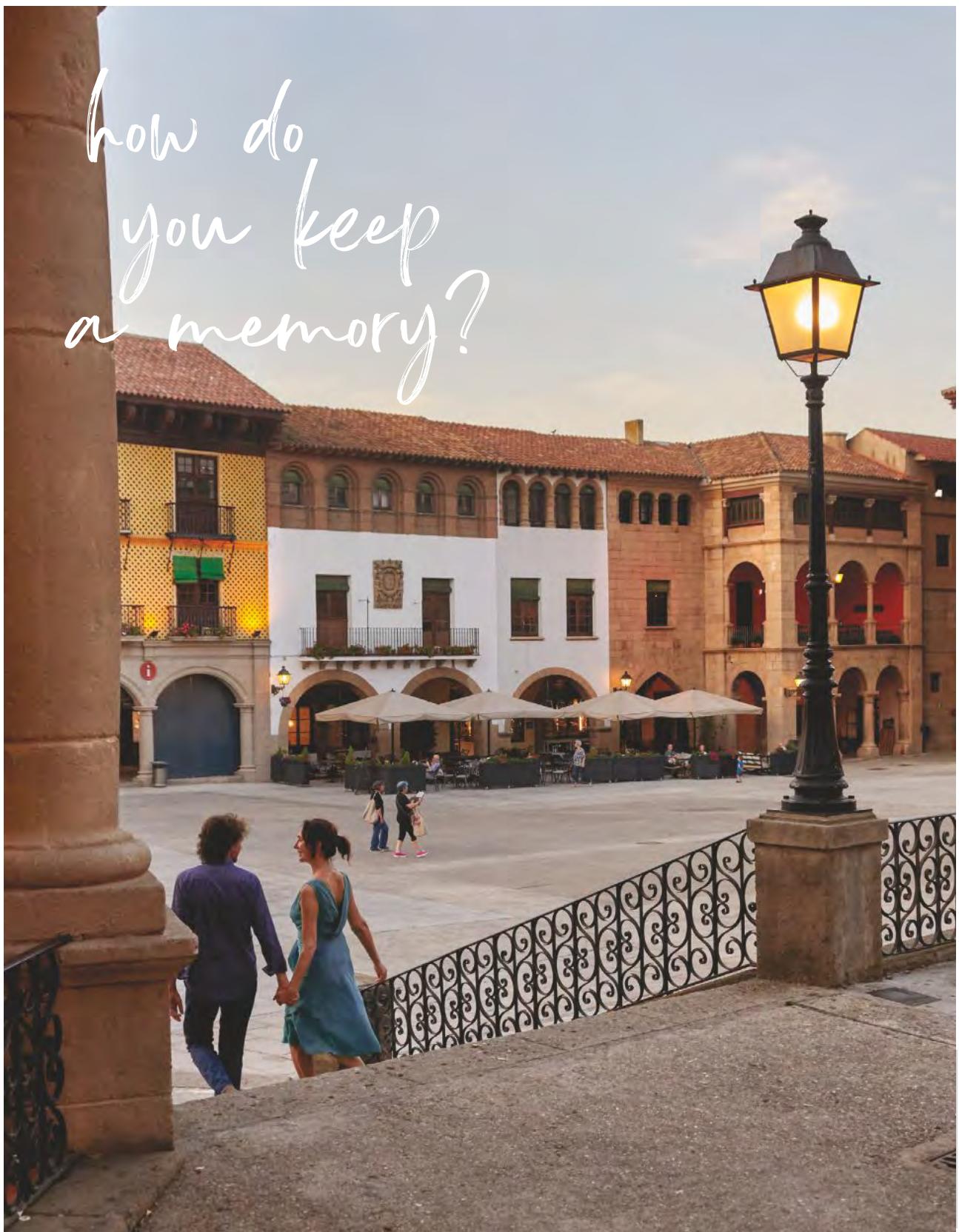
If you had a crystal ball, how would travel look in the next 50 years? And would you go back to the past to change the future of travel and tourism?

By extrapolating current trends, the future of travel might involve advanced technologies like immersive virtual and augmented reality experiences, and even more sustainable travel options, particularly with advancements in sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). Biometrics and AI could streamline security processes, making travel more efficient.

However, the industry will need to navigate challenges related to privacy, environmental impact, and social responsibility to ensure a positive future for travel.

If I could go back to the past to create the future, I would like to humanise tourism, by enriching the travel experience, ensuring environmental care, and being responsible to our culture, heritage and planet.

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Forward as one

ASEAN has achieved much to advance the region's travel and tourism industry, but more can be done to market South-east Asia as a single destination, opines Eddy Soemawilaga, president of ASEAN Tourism Association

/ By **Mimi Hudoyo** /

You have been with ASEAN Secretariat and are now with ASEAN Tourism Association (ASEANTA). What have the organisations achieved?

The establishment of the ASEAN Open Skies in 2010 is one key milestone, as it changed the landscape of South-east Asian aviation. I was involved in the process. Before, such matters were governed by bilateral agreements. With the new policy, it became easier for airlines to begin operations and ask for certain routes. It also led to the rise of LCCs, which encouraged regional travel.

The second milestone is the visa facilitation signed in 2002. It started with a framework that required ASEAN member states to push for visa facilitation based on bilateral agreements. Today, all member states are visa-free (for nationals), with the exception of between Malaysia and Myanmar.

These policies contribute massively to travel within South-east Asia, which was crucial during the pandemic. In 2022, intra-ASEAN travel rose to 50 per cent of total arrivals; usually it was 38 to 40 per cent.

I would also count the ASEAN Tourism Agreement as a third achievement. It pushes all member states to facilitate travel and undertake joint marketing. Along with this come the ASEAN tourism standard and mutual recognition arrangement for tourism professionals. However, the agreement may need another look, as an article within calls for no levies on travel within the region. Now, for different reasons, Bali and Malaysia have applied tourist taxes. I have raised this issue (at ASEAN Tourism Forum 2024) and asked that the agreement be revisited.

Has ASEAN reached its goal to be a single destination?

I think not quite. Joint marketing efforts are done from time to time, driven only by events or country-specific aims. Efforts are neither continuous nor periodically implemented and organised by the ASEAN Secretariat or the ASEAN marketing coordinator.

Yes, we see member states taking single country pavilions at international tradeshows, pitting against each other. How can the region do better?

One challenge is the lack of a single coordinator undertaking (full participation of ASEAN member states) in certain events, (resulting in) member states joining individually instead of as one ASEAN. Another challenge is that each member state has a different capacity for participation.

There is actually (potential) to pool resources and establish a common area with a coordinator. When I was with the ASEAN Secretariat, we had a project from South Korea (that led all) 10 member states to participate in a travel fair as

one ASEAN village, but each country was able to design their own booths.

As president of ASEANTA, what are your priorities now?

Firstly, we want to grow both inbound and outbound traffic. Secondly, apart from intra-ASEAN travel, we also need our neighbours, like India, China, Japan, South Korea and Australia, as source markets.

India has become a new big market

Extended life expectancy in Asia will lead to a rise in silver tourism, so quality service and human touch will be even more valuable.



EDDY SOEMAWILAGA

President,
ASEAN Tourism Association

for ASEAN, with recovery at 120 per cent (compared to pre-pandemic). However, seat capacity is an issue. Connectivity among member states with India is governed by bilateral agreements. Some, like Thailand, are running out of capacity. We are asking ASEAN to negotiate for ASEAN-India open skies.

With China, an ASEAN open skies policy exists, but recovery is slow. Besides being the last country to open after Covid, domestic travel has remained strong due to the government's domestic promotions, easy access, language ease, and a familiar payment system. A way to speed up Chinese inbound recovery is for ASEAN to bring Chinese payment mechanisms into our region.

How would you like travel and tourism to look in the future?

Many rank-and-file jobs may be taken over by AI and robots in the future; driver-less buses and robot chefs, perhaps. However, human interaction will still be important and people will continue to travel. Tourism activities will accelerate, thanks to tech advancements, but people will no longer want to visit common places. New and unique destinations will be king.



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Sustainability is calling

Views of sustainability are evolving for the better in the travel and tourism industry, but Randy Durband, CEO of Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) says there is still room for improvement

/ By KAREN YUE /



RANDY DURBAND
CEO, GSTC

Since the start of GSTC's work in 2007, has the travel and tourism community changed the way it regards sustainable tourism concepts?

Indeed, there have been very significant changes.

One, we had a role to define sustainability to include social issues, community impacts, cultural respect and heritage conservation, and governance that supports sustainability to go along with environmental issues.

Two, few businesses thought about sustainability in 2007. All too often we heard, "well, the customer isn't asking for it". Today, there is social, business and regulatory pressure to make a big change.

Three, back then, when businesses thought about sustainability, their typical action was to bring in a consultant. Today, businesses take a team approach.

One thing that has not changed – the industry does not understand how to apply standards and to speak the language of standards and verification systems. People refer to any form of external review as certification. We're trying to get the word out that external review comes in many forms. For example, we're partnering with WTTC to communicate that the WTTC Basics is a starting point for hotels to focus on a small number of attributes. Hotels should over time add more attributes they're working on and higher levels of external review.

GSTC offers training and certification programmes – why are they increasingly important and necessary?

Awareness of the sustainability definition and training on how to do it are strongly needed. People always ask me how they can get certified. They expect me to tell them who to call and where to go online. However, I like to tell them to make their business practices more sustainable, which requires staff training, adjustments to processes and systems, self-awareness through honest self-assessment, and development of skills to report and provide evidence of compliance. Only after all that they might be ready to apply for certification.

In 2014 we launched a general course by teaching the essence of our two long-time standards, the GSTC Industry Criteria and the GSTC Destination Criteria. That is very successful, and continues to grow with online and offline classes in many languages.

We've added courses specific to industries, starting with hotels and now tour operators. The flagship course will carry on, but the real growth is providing staff and practitioners with very practical training.

Hotels of size should have at least five people taking such classes; not just the engineer but all department managers and perhaps more.

Are there aspects of sustainability that are not getting enough attention within the global travel and tourism arena?

Attention to social issues for staff and community impacts for residents is needed because sustainability is not just about carbon and plastics.

One critical social issue is skills training and management promotion opportunities for local residents including ethnic minorities. Businesses thrive when they're part of the community, and there's no better way than to hire, train, and promote community members into your business.

Rate Asia-Pacific's progress in sustainable tourism development on a scale of 10. How do you see this score changing in the next decade?

I'm not fond of this question because scores are all over the place. Furthermore, I often hear Asians say that they are behind Europeans on sustainability; to that I say, your societies have been a bit behind but you're all rapidly catching up.

We're working with several Asian hotel brands that are quickly rising above western ones. In part, this is due to a higher degree of ownership and therefore control than most western brands have with their franchise model.

Asians are ahead on innovation. Nobody does urban composting like the South Koreans and Japanese. Only Europe has the clean-energy high-speed rail networks that are on par with Japan or China.

Invent one thing to catalyse the adoption of responsible tourism practices.

The best sustainable aviation fuel and I would get it to market.

There is another thing I wish for, but isn't an invention – I want CEOs of large western-dominated global hotel brands to go to their next annual owners meeting and say that they must put significant sustainability requirements into the brand structure. They have good but voluntary internal programmes. Sustainable practices need to be baked into standard operations manuals and practice.



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AWE welcomes diverse international events, some of which made their Hong Kong debuts here



A hub for diverse events

AsiaWorld-Expo welcomes a strong line-up of international events this year, with a spotlight on convenience and connectivity

The AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) is gearing up to host a diverse array of events in 2024. From established international B2B trade shows to a newly introduced aviation expo and summit, as well as B2C festivals, the venue promises a calendar packed with diversity and excitement.

The number of visitors at AWE is expected to see a significant increase this year, signalling a promising return to pre-pandemic levels. This surge in attendance is expected to have a positive impact on Hong Kong's tourism industry and economic development, with hundreds of thousands of business travellers from around the world expected to converge at the venue.

Rising demand for “Multi-Stop in One Journey” itineraries

Hong Kong's strategic geographical location and established transportation infrastructure position it as an attractive destination for the exhibition industry. With Hong Kong International Airport serving as a key international aviation hub, AWE benefits from its connectivity to over 220 destinations worldwide. The venue's proximity to major transport links such as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge enhances its accessibility to the rapidly developing Greater Bay Area with a population

of 86 million, making it a preferred choice for exhibitors and visitors alike.

As international travel gradually resumes, there is a growing preference among business travellers for efficient itineraries that encompass multiple destinations. Hong Kong's accessibility enables exhibitors and buyers to incorporate logistical visits to manufacturing hubs in mainland China before or after participating in events at AWE. This multi-stop format enhances the overall effectiveness of business trips, contributing to AWE's appeal as a preferred MICE venue.

Additionally, some event organisers have begun adopting the “One Event in Multi Locations” model to scale up their events and facilitate participation from different cities. Take for instance, the “Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Fair for Trade in Services” held in December last year. Its main venue was in Zhuhai, with secondary venues set up in Hong Kong and Macau for hosting forums.

Right: AWE's proximity to various cross-border facilities enhances its accessibility to the rapidly developing Greater Bay Area

Zhuhai

Macao

Strong line-up of international events

COMPLEXCON HONG KONG (March 22 to 24, 2024)

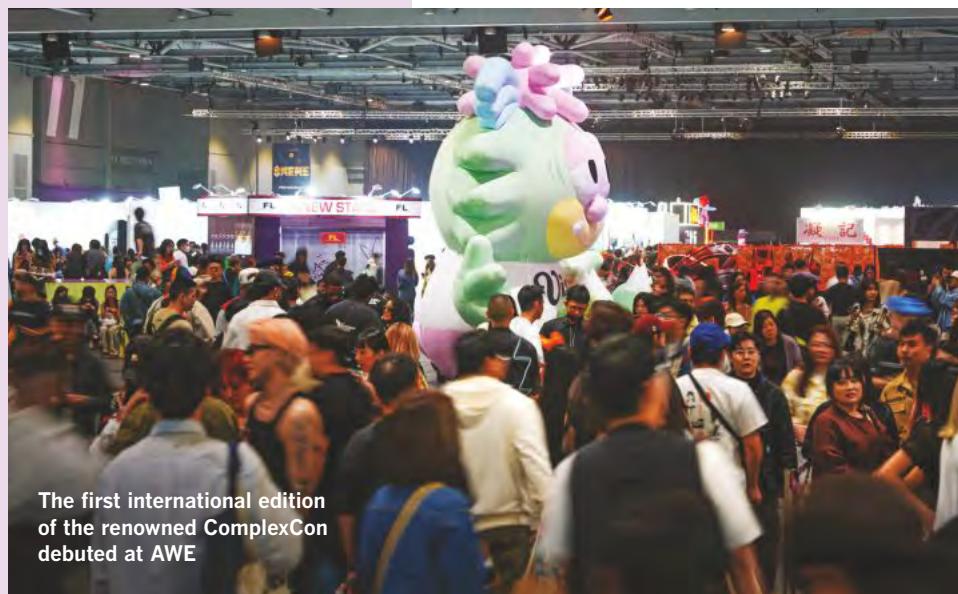
The first international edition of the renowned festival from the United States debuted in Hong Kong. Attracting around 30,000 attendees worldwide, they had an immersive experience in the latest trends in pop culture, with a diverse programme featuring street style, sports fashion, art, food, and music.

There were also enlightening panel discussions with trend-setting creators and cultural thought leaders, while the marketplace showcased over 200 global and local brands, offering a glimpse into the future of fashion and lifestyle trends.

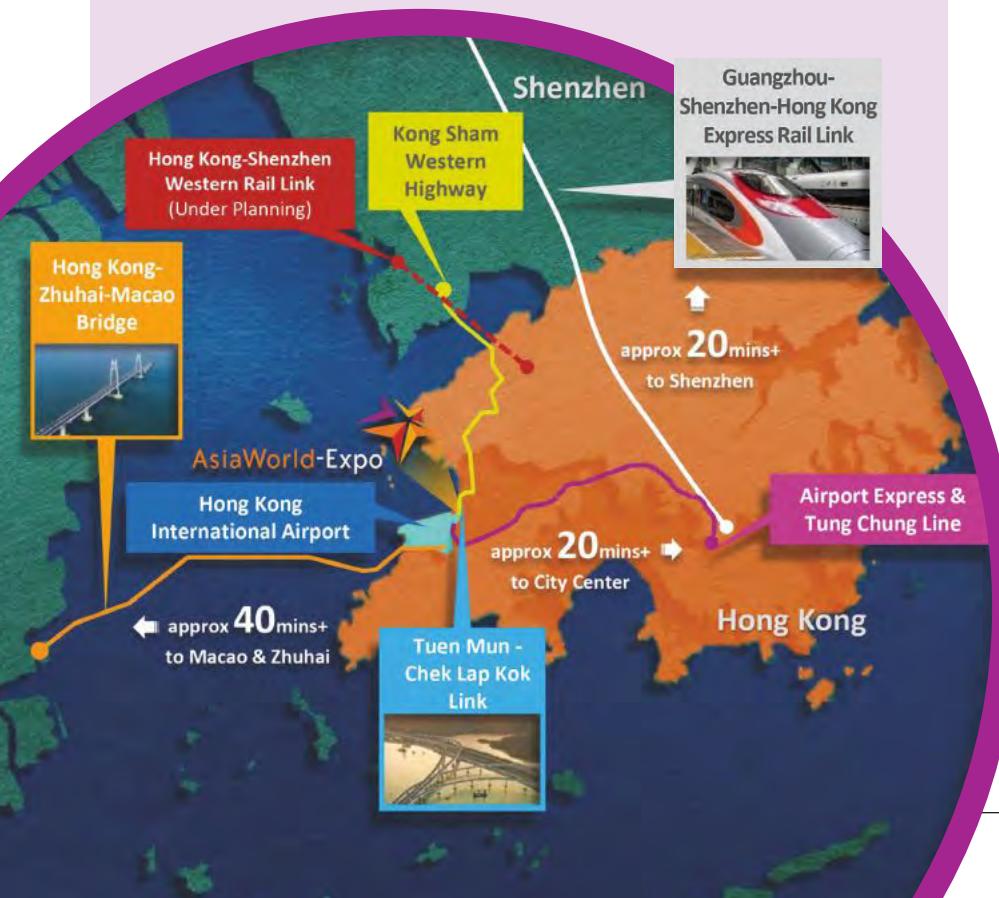
Nightly concerts featuring global hip-hop talents at Complex Live! entertained the audience, with impressive installations from leading global contemporary artists.

KCON HONG KONG 2024 (March 30 to 31, 2024)

Another first for the Hong Kong event calendar was KCON HONG KONG 2024, a renowned Korean cultural festival. The event was a combination of exhibition, convention and concert where attendees experienced various aspects of Korean culture, ranging from music and fashion to television and food.



Delegates can check in for their flight and get their luggage delivered to Hong Kong International Airport without leaving the venue



AWE is highly committed to providing a seamless experience. For designated events with many overseas attendees, AWE offers a special check-in and baggage delivery service at the venue itself. Attendees can complete check-in procedures and have their luggage delivered before they head to the airport.

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Positive attention

CresentRating's intelligence on the Muslim travel market and advocacy for halal tourism have led to positive shifts in perception among industry players of the importance of this segment, reflects founder and CEO, Fazal Bahardeen

/ By S PUVANESWARY /

FAZAL BAHARDEEN

Founder and CEO,
CrescentRating

What spurred changes to the Muslim travel market over the decades?

CrescentRating was launched in 2008 to play a crucial role in formalising the Muslim travel market. Prior to that, there was increasing awareness but limited formal recognition.

CrescentRating not only introduced a dedicated rating system to assess the Muslim-friendliness of travel services and destinations, it also provided valuable insights to this segment. These efforts helped bridge the gap between Muslim travellers and the broader tourism industry, encouraging both service providers and destinations to consider the specific needs of Muslim tourists.

Then came the inaugural World Islamic Tourism Conference & Expo 2008 in Kuala Lumpur. It was one of the earliest dedicated conferences on Halal tourism.

The introduction of the *Mastercard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index* in 2015 was another milestone. This benchmarking tool significantly raised awareness and understanding of the Muslim travel market, enabling stakeholders to assess their performance and identify opportunities for enhancement and investment. It spurred a shift in perspective, with numerous destinations recognising the importance of Muslim travellers and incorporating their requirements into strategic planning and development efforts.

How is CrescentRating addressing sustainability and ethical travel concerns within the context of halal tourism?

CrescentRating has a comprehensive approach to promote responsible travel among Muslim travellers. Efforts are encapsulated in the Responsible, Immersive, Digital and Assured (RIDA) Framework, which is designed to ensure that the services offered to Muslim travellers comply with faith traditions and promote sustainability and responsible tourism practices.

How do you see the halal tourism sector evolving in the next 50 years?

I foresee exponential growth, driven by the global Muslim population's burning desire to explore the world in alignment with their faith.

What challenges lie in the way?

The primary challenge confronting the halal tourism industry over the coming decades is the pervasive misunderstanding of what it entails, compounded by a negative media narrative surrounding Muslims and the rising tide of Islamophobia in certain regions. This complex issue affects not just the perception of halal tourism, but also the broader context within which Muslim travellers navigate.

Misunderstandings often stem from a lack of knowledge about the

principles guiding Muslim-friendly travel. Misconceptions can lead to the belief that halal tourism segregates Muslim travellers from others. The challenge is further exacerbated by negative media portrayals of Muslims, which can foster stereotypes and prejudice. Such narratives can influence both the reception of Muslim travellers in various destinations and the willingness of non-Muslim majority countries to embrace halal tourism as part of their tourism offerings.

What are the opportunities?

Advances in technology offer the chance to enhance the halal travel experience through digital platforms, apps for locating halal services, and virtual reality tours of Islamic heritage sites. Blockchain can also be used for secure, transparent transactions and certifications.

Furthermore, the halal tourism sector has the opportunity to lead sustainable tourism practices. By incorporating eco-friendly and ethical travel options, it can appeal to a broader audience beyond Muslim travellers, including those interested in responsible travel.

Halal tourism can act as a bridge for cultural exchange, fostering understanding and respect between Muslims and non-Muslims. Promoting immersive experiences that celebrate Islamic culture and heritage while encouraging interaction with local communities can enhance global interconnectedness. There's a vast opportunity for innovation in creating unique, immersive, and faith-based experiences. This includes developing halal-friendly leisure activities, themed travel packages, and educational tours that cater to the diverse interests of Muslim travellers.

A bright future ahead

The Borneo Convention Centre Kuching is taking bold steps to enhance the experience for guests

Going into its 15th year of operations, the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCCK) is optimistic about the future and remains committed to providing a memorable experience for event attendees.

With an eventful 2023, a commitment to innovation, and focus on sustainability, the award-winning BCCK is on track to ring in another successful year.

This year, it has secured a diverse lineup of international conferences, including the Asia Pacific Neurocritical Care Conference; Asia Pacific Green Hydrogen Conference & Exhibition; IEEE International Conference on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics; International Conference for Tropical Medicine & Malaria, and World Congress of Herpetology among others.

In 2023, BCCK hosted 496 events and attracted over 300,000 visitors and delegates, with events across sectors such as healthcare, technology, travel and business, bringing in around US\$5.5 million (RM26 million).

A momentous event was the 2023 Juh Sungkei di BCCK Ramadan buffet, which saw over 50,000 diners in attendance.

"BCCK remains unwavering in our commitment to excellence and innovation. Our focus is on creating memorable experiences and contributing to the growth of Sarawak as a competitive business events destination," said Eric Van Piggelen, chief executive officer, BCCK.

"The achievements of this year are a result of the collective efforts of all stakeholders such as Business Events Sarawak (BE Sarawak), Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB), Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture Malaysia (MTCP), and Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) and the immense support received from our Chairman and the Board of Directors of BCCK," he added.

Over the years, BCCK also clinched multiple accolades such as the the Venue Award in the Exhibition Venue category at the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2024 in Laos and



Established in 2009, BCCK is constantly upgrading and improving its facilities and infrastructure to create memorable experiences for every visitor

Anak Sarawak Award 2023 for Meeting Venue Excellence from BE Sarawak.

Additionally, the Centre also received three awards from the Malaysia Business Events Award 2023, organised by the Malaysia Association of Convention & Exhibition Organisers & Suppliers (MACEOS), under the categories: the Purpose-Built Convention & Exhibition Centre Excellence Award (Total saleable space 15,000m² & below), New Homegrown Event Excellence Award (Consumer Exhibition with a minimum gross space of 2,000m²), and New Homegrown Event Excellence Award (Congress/Convention with a minimum of 200 delegates).

Reflecting on these achievements, Datuk Hajah Raziah Binti Mahmud-Geneid, BCCK's chairperson, said: "These accomplishments not only reflect our relentless pursuit of innovation and excellence but also highlights the collective efforts of our exceptional management team and employees. Together, we will continue to set new benchmarks and exceed expectations, ensuring BCCK remains a symbol of excellence and innovation in the years to come."

The awards received underscore BCCK's commitment to excellence, sustainability, and innovation, solidifying its reputation as a premier destination for events of all scales.

For over a decade, BCCK has served as the one of the largest and best-equipped convention centre in Borneo. It continues to evolve and enhance its products and services to future-proof itself and welcome its international and domestic clientele.

Improving infrastructure, sustainability and collaboration

To provide the right environment for events, BCCK adopts an innovative approach to its infrastructure.

It has enhanced its modular system that converts its indoor parking space into a sealed off area, providing a more versatile space for event organisers.

Also in the works is an upgrade of its wifi

system to handle up to 20,000 devices concurrently to ensure uninterrupted high speed internet access, as well as the expansion of the deck of the Raintree Restaurant to accommodate over 300 diners.

On the sustainability front, BCCK is working with a farm in Kuching to reduce food waste and transform segregated waste into organic fertilisers. From January 2022 to September 2023, BCCK recycled 1,662kg of carton boxes, 316kg of papers, 36kg of aluminium cans, 3,070kg of scrap iron, and 9,870kg of used cooking oil.

Adopting a collaborative mindset, BCCK has also partnered with other convention centres across Asia to establish the Asia Venue Alliance (AVA).

Founding members include the Ariyana Convention Centre Danang from Vietnam, Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center from Indonesia, ICC Tainan from Taiwan (ROC), and Setia SPICE Convention Centre from Malaysia.

The alliance aims to foster collaboration through the exchange of events, cross-promotion, and sharing of industry insights. Additionally, it also serves to gather like-minded individuals for collaboration, strengthen networks within the business events industry, and promote mutual growth and development.

BCCK will continue to work closely with local stakeholders, state and national bureaus, and industry partners to bring further world-class events to Sarawak and Malaysia.

To host your next event in Kuching, visit bcck.com.my.



Upward and onward

AirAsia Aviation Group's Tharumalingam Kanagalingam, better known as Bo Lingam in the industry, shares his thoughts about the future of air travel

/ By S PUVANESWARY /

What changes have you witnessed in Asia's air travel since the 1990s?

In the last three decades, we've seen profound changes in the air travel industry, driven by technological advancements, evolving consumer preferences and a surge in economic growth — just to name a few.

The rise of budget carriers has also contributed greatly to the democratisation of air travel, making it more accessible to more people.

Technological innovation also greatly played a pivotal role in enhancing the air travel experience — this especially rings true for AirAsia. From the adoption of digital technology for ticketing, check-in and inflight services — the industry has wholeheartedly embraced innovation to enhance operational efficiency and the guest experience.

Guests' expectations have evolved significantly over the years, prompting airlines to not only invest in a modernised fleet but also focus on enhancing the guest experience by improving its inflight food and entertainment.

Could you highlight some key milestones in the airline's journey that have contributed to the transformation of air travel in our region?

Since our inception in 2001, AirAsia has been committed to breaking down barriers and making flying more accessible to travellers from all walks of life. One of our biggest milestones that stands out in our pursuit of this mission is our digital transformation which took a rapid upward turn during the pandemic.

As we embraced the digital era, AirAsia heavily invested in technology that would streamline operations and enhance the booking experience for our guests.

In 2020, right at the height of the pandemic, we rolled out the airasia Superapp, now renamed AirAsia MOVE — a one-stop platform for all things travel,

lifestyle and more. With the app, our guests could seamlessly perform their online check-in and in-flight purchases, which was crucial at a time when social distancing was practised everywhere.

AirAsia has also embarked on an aggressive expansion strategy — resuming popular routes, connecting previously underserved cities, and creating a vast network of routes across Asia. This facilitated greater regional connectivity and opened up new travel opportunities for millions of individuals.

Looking ahead, the next 50 years certainly present a fascinating prospect for the future of air travel in Asia.

How do you foresee the demand for air travel evolving in Asia over the next five decades?

With the rapid economic and urbanisation growth we expect to see in Asia's growing middle class, we foresee a heightened demand for air connectivity as more individuals seek to travel for business, leisure or pilgrimage reasons.

Technological advancements will continue to play a vital role in the aviation industry; while current and future innovations that are specially curated to elevate the guest experience will influence travel demand.

South-east Asia will continue to be our stronghold, with Indonesia and the Philippines on a strong growth trajectory post-lockdown. We look forward to expanding with a new airline in Cambodia soon.

With growing awareness of environmental sustainability, we can see an increased emphasis on eco-friendly aviation solutions to drive the adoption of greener

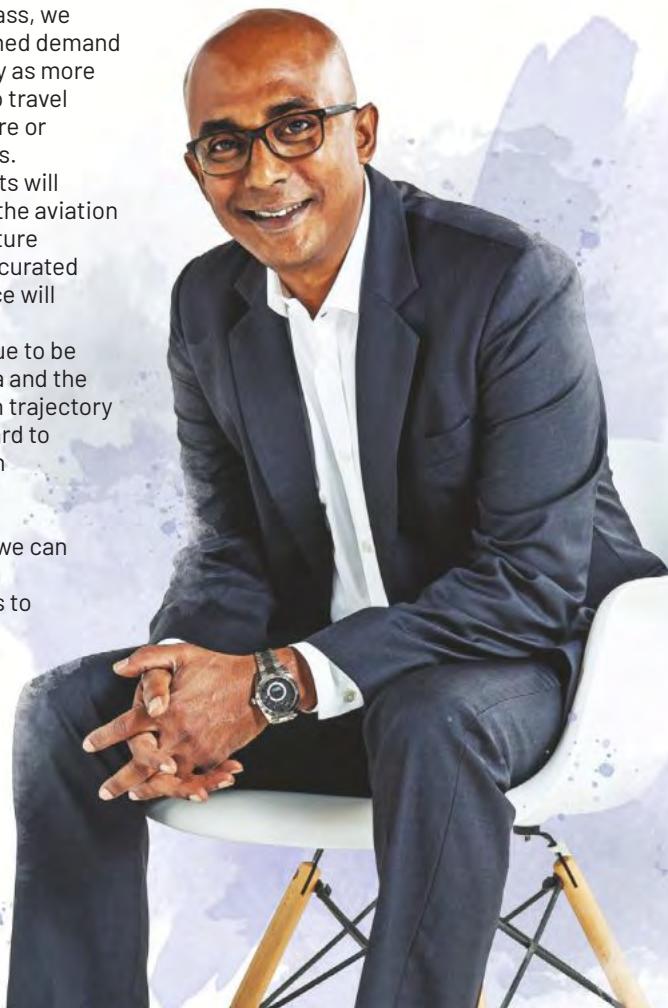
technologies and practices, leading to a higher influence on consumer choices and allowing for more demand on better sustainable air travel options.

How do you perceive the future of tourism in Asia over the next 50 years, taking into account changing travel trends and emerging destinations?

We can expect more technological integration into the travel experience with more travellers opting to fully digitise their journeys. Also, as Asia's diverse landscapes and cultures become more accessible, new and exciting destinations are likely to emerge as sought-after travel spots. Hopefully, this will also lead to a deeper appreciation for cultural exchange which also results in more tourism opportunities.

THARUMALINGAM KANAGALINGAM

Group CEO, AirAsia Aviation Group



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Here on prime land

Asia is increasingly seen as an attractive place for investment and development among hotel chains and developers, says BWH Hotels' president and CEO, Larry Cuculic

/ By RAINI H R /

You first joined BWH Hotels in 2009 as general counsel. How was Asia perceived by global chains such as BWH Hotels through those years?

BWH Hotels has always viewed the Asian hotel industry as an enormous opportunity. The business travel segment continues to grow as Asia evolves as both a manufacturer and consumer of goods. Further, leisure travel is expanding as world travellers recognise Asia's rich cultural history, the welcoming people of the region, and its diverse landscapes – from beaches and rainforests to mountains and bustling cities.

An important turning point for Asia has been experiential travel, which we are still benefitting from, and we expect the trend to continue. Guests want to create beautiful lasting memories, making Asia the perfect destination.

What will always differentiate hotels in Asia from others around the world are the people and the culture.

Whenever the topic of how Asia's hotel industry is changing is discussed in your boardroom today, or among peers, what are you hearing?

Hotel owners and developers recognise that guest expectations are evolving. Today's guests want a hotel to be not only a place to stay overnight, but a memorable part of their travel experience.

Of course, rooms need to be clean and comfortable, but guests also want hotels to provide amenities and public spaces that enhance the experience. This includes providing spacious rooms, inviting lobbies and dining venues ideal for gathering. Developers are recognising and embracing this theme.

Many hotels in Asia also offer expansive accommodations and amenities that cater to families, which lends well to the recent boom in multi-generational travel.

Additionally, there is a considerable amount of discussion right now about growth markets like Vietnam and India. Further, there are conversations about China's current economic conditions and the impact it will have on outbound travel, especially in the midscale segment.



LARRY CUCULIC

President & CEO,
BWH Hotels

What trends in hotel development in North America are you watching closely that are coming to this part of the world?

We are seeing growth opportunities in Europe and Asia for boutique properties, soft branded hotels, and longer-stay hotels.

In the boutique segment there is incredible growth potential in WorldHotels Crafted and Aiden by Best Western, brands uniquely positioned to leverage the momentum of guests seeking experiential travel.

Trends are also pointing to the growth of soft branded hotels, including all WorldHotels properties, BW Premier Collection and BW Signature Collection. This growth will continue as hotels seek to retain their independence while leveraging our sales, marketing, technology and distribution platforms.

Lastly, we are witnessing a surge of longer-stay travellers – both business and leisure. As a result of this demand, we created our newest brand @Home by Best Western.

In future, what will differentiate hotels in Asia from others in the world?

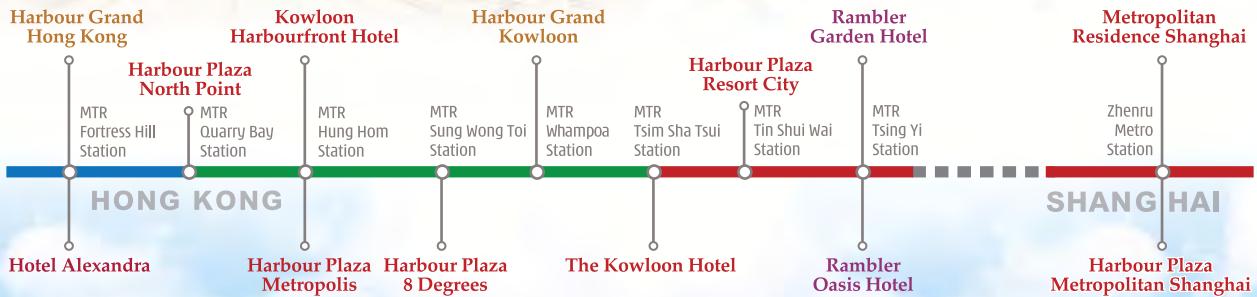
What will always differentiate hotels in Asia from others around the world are the people and the culture. Throughout my travels through Asia, I have always experienced the caring culture and spirit of Asia – welcoming, warm and gracious.

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Banyan Group is a pioneer in wellness, and you grew up with it. Through the decades, what's the most significant change in this space?

It is the shift from a focus on the self to a deeper, more holistic understanding of well-being that takes into account nature and community. For example, nature-based therapies like forest bathing and grounding have been embraced widely, while social connections and community have been acknowledged as an essential factor in longevity.

I'm glad to see this because it suggests that well-being is not an isolated state of trying different therapies, bootcamps and detoxes to just feel better. It is a state and practice of being connected to self, others, and nature.

How will this shift change hotel wellness?

I think we will see a blend of therapy with traditional spa experiences. For example, couples counselling, individual therapy, and pioneering practices like CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) or TRE (Tension & Trauma Release Exercises). We are offering TRE as part of our inaugural Beyond Retreat in Buahan, a Banyan Tree Escape and the response is positive.



HO REN YUNG
Senior vice president,
Brand HQ, Banyan Group

I also hope for and anticipate a stronger connection between well-being and sustainability imperatives. Similar to the organic food movement that improved farming practices, the wellness industry can contribute to sustainability by emphasising the connection between health and the environment.

Banyan Group's Beyond is said to guide the client through a restorative journey wherever they may be. What is your vision for it?

People need to change in order to improve their true well-being. Facilitating this change is a three-step process: the awakening, which is usually an in-person experience of a therapy or stay at one of our properties; sustained practice, which is about integrating small changes in daily life; and lastly transformation, which usually occurs in a retreat setting, when one can take a pause from his or her daily life, identity and routine.

Beyond addresses the sustained practice phase with a digital companion, which features expert practitioners from multicultural healing traditions. Practices are woven into journeys, or sequences of practices, with a specific outcome according to each of the eight pillars of Rest, Nourishment, Connection and so on.

The transformation phase is addressed with Beyond Retreats, a series of curated experiences across our global properties, with inaugural events scheduled at Buahan, a Banyan Tree Escape, followed by Banyan Tree AlUla.

My vision is to extend the Banyan experience beyond physical boundaries, addressing the growing demand for sustainable solutions that cater to overall health and well-being.

Will we also see changes in design? Destination spas all look the same to me.
Absolutely! Currently, many destination spas share a similar aesthetic, often characterised by a minimalist, beige approach. As the wellness customer base diversifies both in segments and cultural backgrounds, we can expect a broader spectrum of design choices.

Moving forward, we anticipate a shift towards more diverse, lush and vibrant designs that resonate with a wider audience. Wellness design will become more inclusive, reflecting a global perspective and catering to the unique preferences and needs of individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

There will also be a move towards more targeted designs, addressing specific states of being. For instance, spaces that evoke the sensation of being in a womb, as seen in innovative concepts like float tanks.

Drawing inspiration from unique locations, such as the white cave in Banyan Tree Veyá Valle de Guadalupe, will add a layer of authenticity and creativity to wellness designs.

While the aesthetics may evolve, certain principles will remain timeless. Design that fosters a sense of safety, holds space for introspection, and incorporates biophilic elements that connect individuals with nature will continue to be at the forefront of wellness spaces.

Better wellness

People are more thoughtful about wellness, which impacts how hotels design restorative experiences, says Banyan Group's Ho Ren Yung

/ By RAINI H R /

Beyond borders

Mike Williams, acting CEO and senior consultant at GainingEdge, reflects on how technology has transformed the tourism industry, and suggests how to approach impending global challenges

/ By RACHEL AJ LEE /



MIKE WILLIAMS

CEO and senior consultant,
GainingEdge

What are the most notable industry-wide changes or trends that have shaped the travel and tourism landscape since you started in it years ago?

The evolution of technology has revolutionised the industry, bridged gaps, and transformed the way we work. My early work experience involved the use of telex, fax machines, floppy disks, and typewriters highlighting the remarkable journey from analogue to digital. Today's landscape is vastly different with instant communication platforms, digital documentation, and a universal knowledge bank creating greater efficiencies and automation.

We now cannot imagine a world without mobile technology, event planning software, automated registration systems, virtual and hybrid event applications, and analytical tools to enhance event outcomes and optimise processes. In this digital era, the industry thrives on connectivity, agility, and instant access to knowledge.

How do you think the travel and tourism industry will evolve over the next 50 years?

My vision for the industry is that the future is a world where sustainability is not just a buzzword but an integral part of business practices. It is where Diversity,

Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are ingrained in the industry's DNA. It is also where events leave positive social and economic imprints that are by design rather than accidental by products.

The future is also a world where there is a harmonised balance between technology and human experience. This is where technology streamlines processes and efficiencies and frees up time for human creativity and mental well-being.

How can the travel and tourism industry proactively address and navigate potential challenges, such as geopolitical shifts, climate change, or global health crises, in the long term?

To address today's challenges effectively, we must foster greater collaboration and knowledge sharing across local, regional, and international levels. A bipartisan approach to future planning and problem-solving, while considering local and regional nuances, is essential.

As an industry, we need to cultivate agility and resilience in response to our rapidly evolving work environment, embracing DEI is a great starting point to encourage more innovative thinking

and contribute positively to solving complex issues.

Industry organisations such as the Events Industry Council, Joint Meetings Industry Council, ICCA, and Australian Business Events Association, all play a crucial role in fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and problem-solving across diverse sectors.

Imagine you are a time traveller and could witness any historical moment related to travel and tourism. Which event would you choose, and how would it influence your understanding of the industry today?

The pandemic was a watershed moment for our industry, a wake-up call highlighting many of the vulnerabilities within our industry including an undervalued labour force, lack of sustainable business planning and practices, lack of government recognition as a key economic contributor, and lack of technological advancement.

We know and talk about the importance of our industry but we have not convinced our external stakeholders that the business events industry can be a key driver of economic recovery and growth. We need to further substantiate the real value of the business events industry to our respective governments and industry investors highlighting the ROI in their terminologies.

How do you see the reliance on destination management strategists like GainingEdge changing over the years?

Destination management strategists need to be agile and be able to adapt to market forces. Our growth to date has been organic where we have evolved our consulting services alongside client needs. We are tackling projects and subject matters that were not on the radar when the business started 20 years ago.

We also operate as a virtual company, which allows us to be less reliant on one geographical region for business with an increased capacity to reach global markets from as far afield as the Yukon, Canada, to Asia-Pacific and Africa.

As long as destination management strategists stay customer-centric, customise solutions, and embrace unchartered waters, they will remain relevant and in demand.

“We need to build a stable workforce and create desirable career paths for the next generation.”



It takes just five minutes to get to Hengqin from Macao

Multi-venues, multi opportunities

The MICE² Macao x Hengqin partnership ushers in a new era for events

Since the launch of the MICE² Macao x Hengqin partnership in June 2023, event planners have access to a broader spectrum of venues and experiences, enabling them to craft innovative and memorable events that leverage what Macao and Hengqin have to offer.

This strategic alliance between Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) and the Economic Development Bureau of Hengqin introduces a multi-venue event model where itineraries can include both cities, offering attendees a wider variety of experiences.

In total, there are over 261,000m² of event space and more than 57,000 hotel rooms.

“Holding MICE events in Macao and Hengqin simultaneously can offer the best of both worlds and generate industrial opportunities, which is an advantage

unique to these two places. The cross-border co-operation enables event organisers to fully utilise the supporting resources in both places and also boosts industrial co-operation and economic development of both places,” said Song Xiaodong, president of the Macao Convention & Exhibition Association.

The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry’s (UFI) 2024 Asia Pacific Conference recently concluded in March. This two-day event brought together more than 300 MICE industry leaders.

Hosting more international MICE activities in Macao can bring leading international MICE participants to the city, and improve Macao’s image as an international MICE city. Driven by the “Industry + MICE” pattern, it will also bring new impetus and opportunities for synergistic development with Hengqin.

Other successful multi-venue events held recently included BEYOND Expo, Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum and Exhibition (MIECF) and The Macao International Travel (Industry) Expo (MITE).

Innovative and fresh experiences

The MICE² Macao x Hengqin Partnership offers more creativity and innovation in event planning. Event planners can seamlessly blend business with leisure by hosting conferences in Macao and organising team building activities in Hengqin.

Macao’s status as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy is hard to beat with its 400-year old culinary legacy and 16 Michelin-starred restaurants, as well as 17 Macao restaurants honoured by the 2024 Black Pearl Restaurant Guide. It is also home to 30 UNESCO World Heritage



Event planners can make their itineraries more diverse with excursions to the the Historic Centre of Macao and Hengqin's attractions such as Chimelong Ocean Kingdom (top)

Sites, including the Ruins of St. Paul's, A-Ma Temple, and Dom Pedro V Theatre, showcasing its unique blend of Portuguese and Chinese heritage.

Meanwhile, Hengqin's tourist and cultural attractions make for exciting itineraries.

Blend learning and leisure at the Chimelong Ocean Kingdom, the world's largest marine theme park, explore nature at the Stone Exposition Park and Hengqin Chishawan Sand Dune Relics, as well as learn about the value of red sandalwood at China Red Sandalwood Museum, and Hengqin oyster farming technique.

Seamless journey

The proximity of both cities is one that cannot be beat. Separated by a bridge, it takes just five minutes from Macao to Hengqin Port.

Furthermore, Macao offers visa and entry permit exemptions to citizens of more than 80 countries and regions. Those visiting for conventions and exhibitions enjoy a

simplified visa application process to enter Hengqin as well.

One-stop Service

Organising a multi-venue event is made more seamless and streamlined thanks to the One-stop Service for MICE bidding and support offered by IPIM and the Economic Development Bureau of Hengqin.

Comprehensive services range from providing the latest MICE information about both regions to coordinating with government departments for administrative procedures. Personnel services extend from pre-event planning to post-event support, including holding activities in local communities to enhance participant experience.

Event planners keen to explore more of Macao and Hengqin and craft exceptional events for their attendees will receive dedicated support from IPIM and the Economic Development Bureau of Hengqin.



The 2024 UFI Asia Pacific Conference brought together more than 300 MICE industry leaders



MICE Appeal Macao and Hengqin

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WEBSITE www.invest-hengqin.cn



Seismic shifts

Raphael Pasdeloup, senior vice president, enterprise customers and consulting services, CWT, discusses the evolution of TMCs, and its role in the future

/ By **Rachel AJ Lee** /

RAPHAEL PASDELoup

Senior vice president, enterprise customers and consulting services, CWT

What are some of the industry-wide changes or trends that have shaped the corporate travel landscape since you first started?

We have come a long way since I first entered the industry 17 years ago.

The travel industry in general, and business travel in particular, has been slower than many other sectors in transitioning to digital technology. When CWT launched its mobile app in 2011, we were one of the first TMCs to do so.

Today, travellers can book and manage most aspects of their trip independently, and when they do need assistance they can use channels such as messaging to quickly access support on the go. In terms of the priorities of corporate travel programmes, we have seen the emergence of traveller well-being and sustainability climb to the top of the agenda, alongside managing costs.

Many companies today also have "mobility" teams that oversee business travel, meetings and events, transportation, and expense management.

What was one change you least expected the corporate travel industry to make, but did?

TMCs and corporate travel buyers have long acknowledged shortcomings in the "transaction fee" pricing model that is widely used in our industry. Still, there has been little impetus to change.

When the Covid-19 pandemic started, TMCs saw their revenue streams dry up almost instantly, forcing them to cut costs by reducing headcount. When restrictions eased and travel resumed, customers faced service level challenges as their TMCs were unable to scale up their workforces quickly enough. This reignited the debate and discussion around commercial models.

Most in the industry are still hesitant to move away from transaction fees for fear of the unknown, but there

is interest in exploring alternative pricing structures from some very large customers. We have had several customers, even in Asia-Pacific, sign up for our subscription fee model since we launched it in mid-2022.

How do you foresee the travel and tourism industry evolving over the next 50 years?

With the rapid technological advancements we see today, it feels like anything might be possible in 50 years – we could be teleporting between cities, or having incentive trips on Mars!

What I hope – and expect – to see is tremendous progress with respect to decarbonising travel, as many governments and companies have set net-zero emission targets for 2050. A lot of investment is being poured into building high-speed rail networks around the world, which could boost multi-modal travel, as well as finding ways to power aircraft using alternative fuels.

The continued development and proliferation of technologies like AI and biometrics promises to make the entire travel experience more efficient, secure, and accessible. Also, we might be using AI algorithms to create a distinct travel policy for each trip based on various contextual factors.

How can the industry proactively address and navigate potential challenges, such as geopolitical shifts, climate change, or global health crises, in the long term?

Close collaboration between different stakeholders will be absolutely critical to navigating future challenges and crises. For example, during the pandemic, we saw many different governments, airlines, and technology players developing digital health passports, but with everyone working in silos and not agreeing on a set of standards, these solutions were not interoperable, which resulted in a clunky experience for travellers.

There is also something to be said about protecting the travel and tourism industry from major events affecting revenues and threatening the sustainability of companies in the sector. Will we see the emergence of a "crisis tax" collected on each "transaction" across the travel value chain, funding an emergency fund for times of crisis?

How do you see the reliance on TMCs changing?

When I joined the industry back in 2007, someone told me that with the rapid growth of online booking tools, TMCs may become obsolete. But 17 years later, I am happy to report this has not been the case.

Our purpose has evolved from being a ticketing agency to a platform that brings together all the products and services that our customers need to create efficient, sustainable, and employee-centric travel programmes.

Looking ahead, I see us continuing to play the role of a tech integrator and trusted advisor in helping clients understand which trips generate the most value for their business.

How has Indonesia's MICE landscape evolved through the years?

Large government events have served as a means to introduce Indonesia to the world of MICE. Events such as the Non-Aligned Movement Summit (in 1992) in Jakarta, the 2007 United Nations Climate Change Conference with over 16,000 participants, the APEC Summit in 2013, the G20 in Bali in 2022, and the ASEAN Summit in Labuan Bajo last year all strongly reflected the capabilities of both the country and its professionals in hosting significant events.

Indonesia was a leader in MICE among ASEAN member states in the early 1990s, when the others had yet to focus its tourism development in this direction. Joop Ave (director general of tourism who later became minister of tourism, posts, and telecommunications) identified this business potential and issued regulations for MICE Business Procedures (1991) and established a MICE directorate. Since then, businesses in this field have emerged, with Pacto Convex being established in 1992.

Initially, human resources in our industry learnt by doing, but with the growth of the industry, prospects for its development gained recognition. MICE as a discipline began to be introduced in polytechnics (in Jakarta), as well as in tourism schools in Bandung and Bali. Now, there are more MICE courses in tourism schools, although still concentrated in Java and Bali.

Overall, we now have professional talents that we can rely upon.

How has infrastructure development impacted the industry?

Much of the development was triggered by significant government events. The Jakarta Convention Centre was built in 1991 for the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in 1992. In 2013, the Bali Nusa Dua Convention Centre and new hotels were established, and the first toll road in Bali was opened to support APEC Summit that year. More facilities emerged to host the G20 in Bali in 2023. Several projects in Labuan Bajo were expedited for the ASEAN Summit in 2023.

At the same time, the government is promoting MICE development in regions by designating 10 MICE destinations, such as Yogyakarta, Medan, and Makassar. These are considered tier two or three cities due to venue capacity and accessibility.

However, destinations do not necessarily need large facilities to

Faith in the future

Indonesia was among the first in the region to pursue a MICE strategy, and has the power to rise in the region, says Raty Ning, vice president director of Pacto Convex and chair of ICCA Indonesia

/ By **Mimi Hudoyo** /



compete with tier one cities for major events. There are many medium-sized events, such as medical conference, that are suitable for regional areas. Pacto Convex has organised numerous events in Padang and other cities in Sumatra, adapting to available capacity.

Where does Indonesia stand today among Asian MICE cities?

We are number four in South-east Asia (according to ICCA rankings) and 10 in Asia-Pacific. However, we need to be cautious as Vietnam is catching up. Some companies have closed their businesses in Indonesia and moved elsewhere.

We do have the Omnibus Law (enacted in 2023 to create more job, expand economic activities, and empower SMEs), but its implementation needs to be observed closely.

Can Indonesia rise higher?

Indonesia has successfully hosted significant events, mostly government-led, where all stops can be pulled. However, (more can be done for) international events like global association conventions. We lack government support, especially financially, and functioning CVBs.

Singapore's significant investment to bring Taylor Swift to perform there (as the only stop in South-east Asia) is a business strategy that will have a significant economic impact across various industries in the country.

What can industry players do then?

We (Pacto Convex) used to bid for international conferences with industry associations in medical and healthcare. Even now, when leads go directly to convention centres in Bali, for example, we are often invited to collaborate on follow-ups. However, the industry's capacity is limited, and we don't have an active convention bureau.

How will Indonesia's MICE industry look 50 years from now?

Considering Indonesia's demographics and the government's long-term development plans, if the government is committed to the MICE sector and implements its policies effectively, Indonesia can excel in Asia-Pacific.

RATY NING

Vice president director, Pacto Convex and chair, ICCA Indonesia



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SAILINGS MAY 2024 - MAY 2025

DEPARTS FROM SINGAPORE

2N Port Klang (KL)
Cruises (Wed/Sun)

2N Weekend Getaway
Cruise (Fri)

3N Port Klang (KL) -
Penang Cruise (Sun)

3N Penang - Port Klang
(KL) Cruise (Tue)

3N Phuket Cruises
(Tue/Sun)

RESORTS WORLD ONE

SAILINGS 30 MAY - 9 JUN 2024

DEPARTS FROM SINGAPORE

5N Ho Chi Minh / Con Son
Island / Pulau Redang (Thu)

5N Bangkok (Laem Chabang) / Ko
Samui / Pulau Redang (Tue/Sun)

SAILINGS 14 JUN - 1 JUL 2024

DEPARTS FROM JAKARTA, INDONESIA

5N Cruise to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur

SAILINGS 12 JUL - 27 AUG 2024

DEPARTS FROM TAIWAN, KEELUNG

2N Miyakojima Cruises
(Fri) - 12 Jul & 9 Aug

2N Ishigaki Cruises
(Fri) - 19 Jul & 2 Aug

2N Naha Cruises
(Fri) - 26 Jul & 16 Aug

5N Kumamoto - Kagoshima - Naha
Cruises (Sun) - 14 Jul & 11 Aug

5N Kagoshima - Kumamoto - Naha
Cruise (Sun) - 21 Jul

5N Sasebo - Kagoshima - Naha
Cruise (Sun) - 28 Jul

5N Kumamoto - Nagasaki - Naha
Cruise (Sun) - 4 Aug

SAILINGS AUG 2024

DEPARTS FROM TAIWAN, KAOHSIUNG

4N Naha-Ishigaki Cruise
(19 Aug)

4N Naha-Miyakojima
Cruise (23 Aug)

2N Ishigaki Cruise
(27 Aug)

What lies ahead

Asia-Pacific's two important tourism source markets

Experts are certain that China will continue to be the world's top source market while recognising that the country's inbound tourism is getting more official attention for the role it can play to boost the national economy.

Their outlook is based on factors such as unilateral and bilateral visa-free travel in 2024 announced since China exited its pandemic lockdown; a China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) report stating that at least 15 cities are providing incentives to boost business events; and the upgrading of travel infrastructure, and in lower-tier cities during the pandemic, fuelled by domestic demand.

According to Alexander Glos, CEO, China i2i Group, China's rapid economic growth is the result of China's emerging middle-class.

He said: "Less than 14 per cent of Chinese citizens have passports and even with this relatively low penetration rate, more than 150 million Chinese travelled globally in 2000.

"Envision the potential if 30 per cent of Chinese citizens possess passports in the next decade. This could result in 300 million people travelling worldwide annually."

For Glos, one of the most significant milestones of the past decade has been the open skies between Europe and China, facilitating affordable flights between these two major economic and cultural hubs, and catalysing international travel for both Chinese and European travellers. This continues to be the primary driver behind the sustained economic growth and ongoing travel between these regions.

Wolfgang Arlt CEO of China Outbound Tourism Research Institute (COTRI) and CEO of Meaningful Tourism Center, observed: "In China, everything happens later, but faster. Tourism is no exception."

He recalled the absence of outbound travel, missionaries or adventurers in Imperial China and tourism development delays in the 20th century due to revolution, wars and politics.

"Only after the start of reform and opening policies did China start to develop domestic tourism slowly, followed by inbound tourism and finally (after in 1997 when new regulations were issued) outbound tourism," he said.

"Within 15 years, China (became the top) outbound tourism source market as well as the biggest domestic tourism market by far."

To boost inbound tourism, Arlt said new efforts and policies are needed.

"China is still concentrating on first-time visitors, marketing the Forbidden City, the Great Wall and pandas. It has much more to offer and needs to develop sustainable tourism for different interest groups, including visits to national parks and other nature-based activities, cooking classes, and special interest trips," remarked Arlt.

Confident in the lasting appeal of China's "diverse natural features and historical landmarks, alongside modern cities and vibrant cultural landmarks", Wong Hong, Delta's president of China, said crucial steps toward boosting inbound and outbound tourism must include simplifying the visa application process and reducing processing times.

He said: "While China leads the way in mobile payment, it must fully address the barriers foreign tourists face in using popular platforms to make it a more attractive destination."

On the business front, Julien Delerue, founding and managing partner, 1000meetings, said the rapid development of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) – encompassing China, Hong Kong and Macau – bodes well. Enhanced access in this region has created a host of opportunities for business travellers and economic activities.

Waikin Wong, regional director, ICCA Asia Pacific, added that China has stayed strong in the annual ICCA Country – and City – Rankings for Association Meetings even though it was the last country to lift all pandemic barriers in 2023. China has hosted more than 100 association meetings, indicating business activities are active and organisers are confident with local services and solutions.

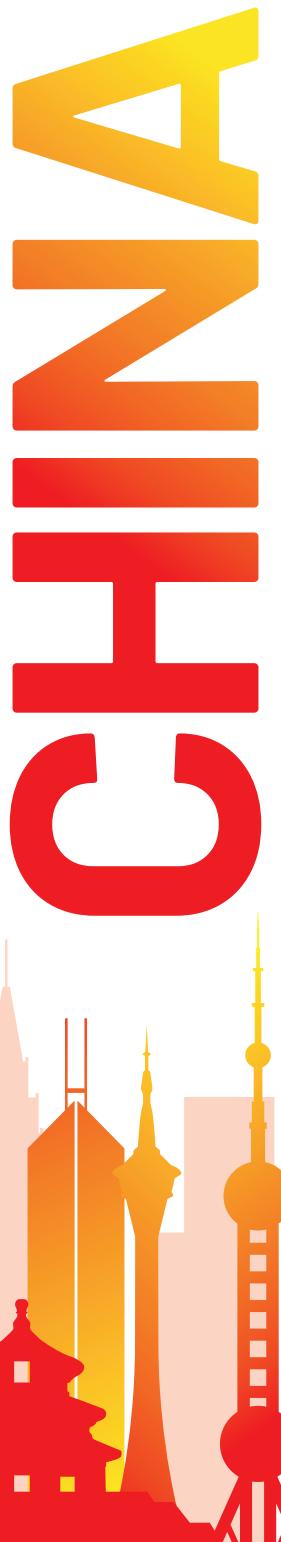
"ICCA Asia Pacific believes China is recognising that events and business travel can play a significant role to drive the multi-disciplinary/cross-sector synergy approach to connect international business opportunities and diversification of its economy base."

"Moreover, many cities in China are welcoming international collaboration, and the establishment of the ICCA China office in Beijing is a great example." – **Caroline Boey**



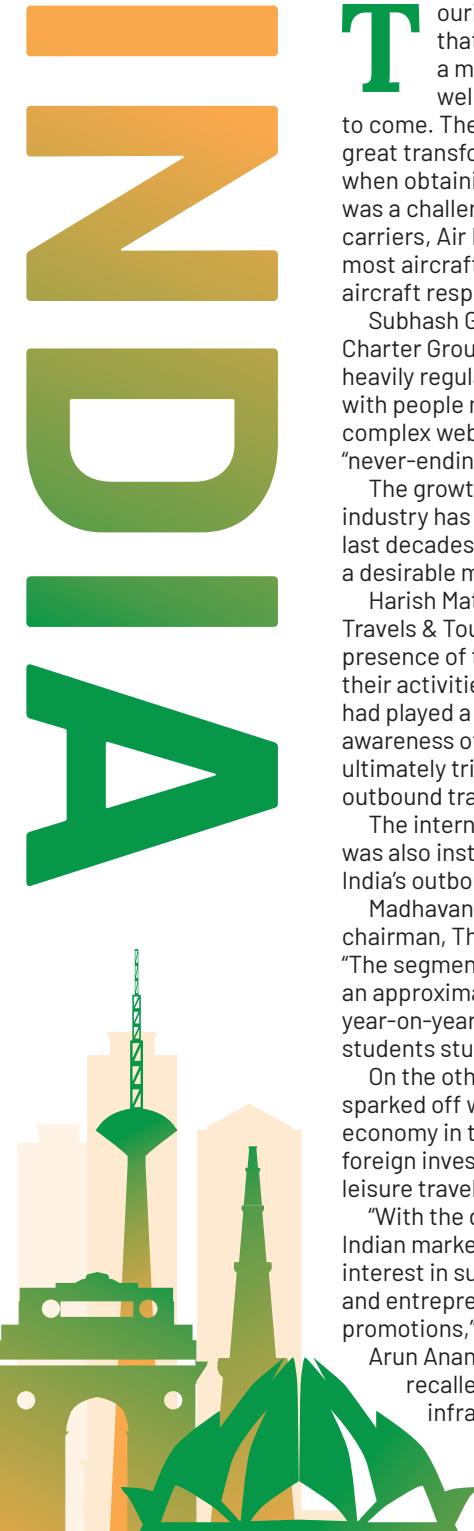
China has much more to offer...

WOLFGANG ARLT
CEO, China Outbound
Tourism Research
Institute



for the giants?

and destinations have witnessed immense growth



Tourism stakeholders in India are confident that the country will continue to rise as a major contributor to global tourism as well as a tourism destination in the years to come. The tourism landscape has witnessed great transformation, from a time in the early 70s when obtaining a passport and foreign exchange was a challenge for locals to last year, when Indian carriers, Air India and IndiGo, set a record for the most aircraft placed in a single order – 470 and 500 aircraft respectively.

Subhash Goyal, chairman – STIC Travel & Air Charter Group, recalled how travel was heavily regulated in the beginning, with people made to go through a complex web of bureaucracy and fill “never-ending forms”.

The growth of India's outbound industry has been immense over the last decades, turning the country into a desirable market for many NTOs.

Harish Mathur, president, Concord Travels & Tours, recalled how the presence of these NTO offices and their activities since the early 2000s had played a part in raising the awareness of destinations overseas, ultimately triggering demand for outbound travel.

The international student segment was also instrumental in growing India's outbound travel potential.

Madhavan Menon – executive chairman, Thomas Cook (India), said: “The segment has been witnessing an approximately 25 per cent growth year-on-year, with almost 1.5 million students studying overseas this year.”

On the other hand, India's inbound potential sparked off with the liberalisation of the Indian economy in the 1990s, which led to an influx of foreign investment, benefitting business and leisure travellers.

“With the decade seeing the opening up of the Indian market, states like Kerala took an active interest in supporting tourism related businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as marketing/ promotions,” said Menon.

Arun Anand, managing director, Midtown Travels, recalled the privatisation of airports and infrastructure improvements that followed.

A real gamechanger for the sector was the introduction of an e-tourist visa facility for international tourists in 2014.

“At the time I was the president of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), and the association worked relentlessly with the government to introduce an e-tourist visa facility in India which turned out to be a very positive decision for the industry,” said Goyal.

Menon also highlighted the launch of the *Incredible India* campaign in 2002 playing a critical role in showcasing the rich cultural heritage and diverse attractions of India to the world.

Goyal beamed with pride when asked to project India's tourism industry in the next 50 years.

He said: “By 2047, India is expected to be a US\$35 trillion economy and a fully transformed developed nation. Indian carriers will have more than 2,500 planes, and India will have more than 250 airports, out of which 50 to 60 will (serve) international (flights). In the next 50 years, about 100 million people will be travelling overseas from India annually.”

Anand sees many more tourism development opportunities across India – particularly in the country's 7,500km-long coastline that the government is eyeing for cruise tourism development.

“India will emerge as a leading player in the cruise segment,” he stated, adding that smaller cities

will get their own international airports in the next 50 years, facilitating both inbound and outbound travel.

However, industry players urge the government to be more proactive in tourism development.

“India needs tourism marketing representatives in all the major source markets of the world,” noted Goyal, adding that the Indian Ministry of Tourism had closed down all of its offices abroad.

“We also need an open skies policy to become an aviation hub, just like Dubai and Singapore,” he added. – **Rohit Kaul**



“...the e-tourist visa facility (enforced in 2014) turned out to be a very positive decision for (India's tourism) industry.”

SUBHASH GOYAL

Chairman,
STIC Travel &
Air Charter Group



The Mega Fam Gala dinner held on the last day made for a spectacular finale

Leading the future of event success

Sands Resorts Macao paves the way for stellar experiential MICE events by offering extraordinary experiences, personalisation and sustainability

Amidst the ever-evolving meetings landscape, Sands Resorts Macao aims to set the stage for the future of exceptional events. In its mission to facilitate world-class, on-trend meetings and exhibitions of any size catered to various needs, the integrated resort believes that the recipe for success lies in the seamless fusion of extraordinary experiences, personalisation, and sustainability.

Extraordinary experiences take centre stage

Sands Resorts Macao aims to provide experiences that are unique to its location or property — and it led by example with its five-day mega MICE familiarisation

trip, Sands Lifestyle #ReDiscover Macao 2023, held from October 30 to November 3, 2023.

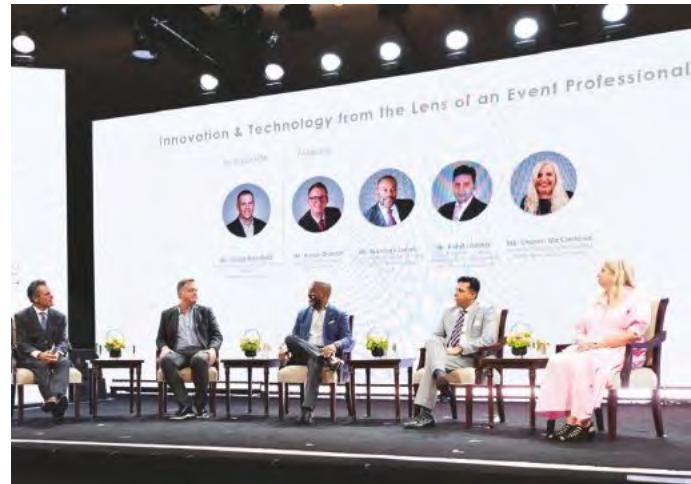
Extraordinary experiences were at the heart of the programme and the 200 leading MICE professionals in attendance were treated to a glittering finale with a gala dinner.

Delegates gathered for pre-dinner cocktails in what appeared to be a run-of-the-mill hotel ballroom. However, a surprise was in store when the curtains dropped to reveal that they were standing in the multi-purpose amphitheatre-style auditorium of The Londoner Arena, The Londoner Macao.

This set the scene for an unforgettable evening for the audience who travelled



Exploring local spots such as Coloane



Panel session on innovation and technology

from across the world, while also showcasing some of the company's event strengths including gastronomic prowess, exciting entertainment, and state-of-the-art production capabilities.

Another extraordinary setting, utilised this time for the showcase dinner, was The Venetian Macao's stunning Colonnade, which was complemented by a dramatic catwalk fashion show by a leading local designer.

For the team building component of the programme, delegates got to participate in their own version of a reality cooking show dubbed the Chef's Challenge, with a professional TV chef personality as emcee. A roving camera crew captured all the action, which was then live streamed to a giant LED screen, engaging the audience with an up-close view of the culinary battles.

Adding the personal touch

At Sands Resorts Macao, any touch point that can be personalised to elevate a person's experience will be.

The mega fam introduced a build-your-own concept where attendees could create their own local exploration

itinerary and choose from an array of activities from eight themes based on their personal interests.

Another form of personalisation offered to guests was in the form of a memento they could take home. These included a framed portrait in each delegate's room and destination-specific souvenirs such as handmade items by local artisans.

Daily amenities were also thoughtfully planned to suit the programme such as bath bombs on the day with a long day of sightseeing, adding a touch of luxury to bath time.

Combining extraordinary experiences with personalisation and event space diversity can also be impressive. The well-received Wellness Programme, which was held at the immersive art space teamLab SuperNature Macao, offered delegates the chance to choose from three wellness classes that all took place within the unique exhibition.

In a first-of-its-kind move to offer guests an even better personalised service, since March 2024, Sands Resorts Macao has also introduced a check-in and direct bus transfer service to Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA).

Championing sustainability

Beyond the glitz and glamour, Sands Resorts Macao remains steadfast in its commitment to sustainability.

The Sands ECO360 event planning tool used by its Green Meetings Concierge serves as a comprehensive guide for planners to craft a customised sustainable meeting or event.

Sands Resorts Macao ensures that every event aligns with its environmental goals, providing clients with detailed impact statements that cover energy and water consumption, recycling rate, and carbon emissions.

Beyond planning tools, it is committed to reducing its carbon footprint through practices such as LED displays to minimise printing, water dispensers to eliminate single-use plastics, and air conditioning set at eco-friendly temperatures.

Other initiatives include targets to further reduce its carbon footprint and renewable energy certificates to offset operational emissions.

The accolades and certifications, including the ISO 20121 for event sustainability management, affirm Sands Resorts Macao's position as an environmental steward in the MICE industry.



Delegates got to show off their culinary skills in an interactive culinary challenge

For world-class, on-trend meetings and exhibitions of any size, Sands Resorts Macao aims to be the partner of choice. Visit sandsresortsmacao.com for more information.

Melting pot

From cultural experiences to relaxing moments, be it for business or leisure, Asia-Pacific and beyond has plenty to offer

/ By **MELISSA ANNE TAN** /



Discover what's new at Gold Coast

Kirra Point Precinct is the newest chic attraction at Southern Gold Coast, offering retail, hospitality and tourism offerings. Kirra Beach House, a rooftop dining destination and beach club encompassing three bars, restaurant, Med-style cabanas and views of the coastline is the perfect venue for galas, events, weddings, and corporate functions. Downstairs, the iconic Kirra Beach Hotel has been refurbished and later this year, Kirra Point Stays will bring the addition of luxe accommodation in the form of oceanfront holiday apartments.

For those seeking relaxation, Native State is a luxe bathhouse and studio gym which takes a holistic approach to health, wellness and performance – facilities include an infrared sauna, heated vitality pool, cold plunge pool, steam room, cedar sauna and meditation lounge.

Contact: kirrapoint.com.au / nativestate.com.au



Frasers Hospitality maintains steady growth within Asia-Pacific

Fraser Hospitality is continuing its upward trajectory within the region with the signing of Fraser Suites Bangkok located in One Bangkok, a landmark development in the Thai capital late last year, and is on track to open Modena by Fraser Vinh Yen in Vietnam by 2024. Within China, five properties will open its doors within the year, including the 238-key Fraser Place Chengdu that is situated in the heart of Chengdu's high-tech zone.

Contact: www.frasershospitality.com



Bintan Triathlon 2024 returns in full force

The 20th edition of the Bintan Triathlon is set to take place on June 1-2, 2024, at Lagoi Bay in the Bintan Resorts Tourism area. Anticipated to attract over 1,500 participants from 40 countries, this event is designed to accommodate athletes of various skill levels, from professionals to beginners. Participants will face the challenge of physical endurance across various categories, ranging from the Enduro, covering a 1.5km swim, 80km bike ride, and 20km run, to Olympic and Sprint categories, which are relatively lighter. There is also a Kids Splash and Dash for teenagers and children.

Contact: bintantriathlon.id



Luxurious sanctuary

One Farrer Hotel's Saranggong Villas has been created for celebrating milestones, anniversaries, weddings, and for those looking for hybrid solutions, in-person meetings, personalised events, chef-driven dining offerings and more. Wisteria is a one-bedroom villa which seamlessly converts into a dining area with a skyline view, and accommodates up to 40 guests. Camellia is a one-bedroom villa inspired by haute couture fashion houses, with quality beds and amenities, personal check-ins and direct calls for room service. Lastly, the light-filled Dahlia is the only villa with a private garden that easily accommodates up to 80 guests.

Contact: www.onefarrer.com



Celebrating 30 years with three new Singapore properties

Worldwide Hotels Group marks its 30th anniversary with the opening of three hotels over the past six months – Novotel Singapore on Kitchener, Hotel Mi Rochor, and Mercure Icon Singapore City Centre – which contribute a total of more than 2,000 rooms to the hotel scene in Singapore. The company also acquired Oakwood Studios Sukhumvit Bangkok in 2022, for more than S\$41 million (US\$30.5 million).

Contact: www.wwhotels.com

Santika offers stays at historical cities

Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts has built a reputation for promoting local cultural values across all of its properties, with hotels in iconic historical locations across the archipelago.

These include the 192-room Hotel Santika Premiere Linggarjati – Kuningan, a four-star hotel offering views of Mount Ciremai and great for travellers interested in learning about the events of the 1946 Linggarjati Agreement, which played an important role in ensuring Indonesian independence. The other two hotels, Santika Bukittinggi Hotel and Santika Blitar Hotel, are three-star properties, also located in areas of rich historical significance.

In addition to these three hotels, Santika is also present in other historical cities, such as Yogyakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya.

Contact: www.mysantika.com

RIU Hotels in Mauritius to be most energy efficient of the chain

RIU will open two new hotels in the Mauritius Islands in May – the adults-only Riu Palace Mauritius, a four-star hotel with Elite Club service, and the four-star Riu Turquoise. Both hotels will be located at the base of the renowned Morne Brabant, and will apply all the new sustainability measures, opening as RIU's most energy efficient establishments thanks to the 2,418 solar panels distributed on their roofs.

Contact: www.riu.com





A beach destination for everyone

Atlas Beach Club in Bali offers many options for both friends and families, and even corporate events. The premium Beach Club VIP area includes exclusive access to a VIP only pool, the Solitaire Island Daybeds for small groups, and daybeds specially for the little ones. Private parties can be held at the Pavilion, which accommodates from 180 to 250 pax, and the Rooftop Deck that holds up to 300 pax for standing events. For larger events, the Atlas Super Club showcases Bali's vibrant nightlife, and caters up to 1,500 pax. There are also a wide variety of daily activities such as a Bali Fire Dance Show, LED Butterfly Stilt Walkers, encounters with exotic reptiles and birds of Bali, plus many more.

Contact: new.atlasbeachfest.com



Nila's culinary journey

ONYX Hospitality Group has debuted a new dining concept, Nila, at Amari Bangkok. Chef Bharath S Bhat, the esteemed winner of Thailand's Iron Chef, leads this attractive establishment that promises to set a new standard for Indian cuisine, blending traditional recipes with contemporary flair. The menu features fresh seafood recipes influenced by Portuguese cuisine from Goa and the Malabar coast, as well as European culinary traditions along India's eastern coast.

Contact: www.amari.com/bangkok



Delivering exceptional results for premier MICE destinations

JCIM has been representing premier MICE destinations across the Asia-Pacific region, including Melbourne, Auckland, Queenstown, and Taipei. Over the past five years, JCIM has effectively organised major incentive movements and events for notable clients such as Amway China, Taiwan and Japan, Perfect China, AIA Life Insurance Hong Kong, Cathay Life Taiwan, and IDA Congress, International Conference on Emergency Medicine, Harvard World Model United Nations, and many more, all hosted within the destinations JCIM promotes.

Expanding its reach, the JCIM team is now poised to extend its services to other clients seeking to explore new destinations. In the last two years, JCIM collaborated with Visit Malta to stimulate interest from Singapore, resulting in a tenfold increase in inquiries.

Contact: info@jcim.com.hk

Silversea's largest-ever voyage collection for 2024/2025

Silversea Cruises' new 2024-2025 voyage collection comprises 341 new sailings that will unlock 695 destinations in 120 countries between March 2024 and May 2025. Highlights include the brand-new 18-day Silver Cloud voyage in April which will explore East Africa's Indian Ocean islands; Silver Spirit and Silver Whisper will offer access to the Nabataean ruins of Hegra in north-west Saudi Arabia, a UNESCO World Heritage Site; Silver Muse and Silver Nova will offer an expanded variety of options in Alaska; Silver Wind, Silver Spirit, Silver Dawn and Silver Ray will journey to 105 destinations in Northern Europe; the inaugural seasons for Silver Nova in Australia and Silver Cloud in The Kimberley region; and many more.

Contact: www.silversea.com





Resorts World One comes to Singapore

Resorts World One will join Genting Dream in Singapore for the school holidays from May 25 to July 3, 2024. Resorts World One will depart from Hong Kong on May 19 on a one-way seven-day repositioning cruise to Singapore with calls to Nha Trang, Ho Chi Minh City, Con Son Island and Redang Island.

While homeporting in Singapore, she will offer six-day cruises to Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur departing on June 18, 23, 28 and July 3; Ho Chi Minh City, Con Son Island, and Redang Island departing on May 25 and 30; as well as to Bangkok, Ko Samui, and Redang Island departing on June 4 and 9. For a short getaway, the ship will have a three-day Singapore-Jakarta cruise departing on June 14.

Resorts World One will thereafter return to Hong Kong and offer one-way repositioning cruises from selected cities – there is the one-way three-day Jakarta-Singapore cruise, or the seven-day Jakarta-Singapore-Nha Trang-Hong Kong cruise, which will depart on July 6. Alternatively, there is the one-way five-day cruise from Singapore to Nha Trang and Hong Kong departing July 8.

Contact: rwcruses.com



Garden of art

Come July 12, visitors to Gardens by the Bay's Flower Dome will get to experience an exhibition that combines multi-sensory immersion and the beauty of nature with *Impressions of Monet*. There will be two distinct but complementary aspects of the exhibition – all centred on the art, life and gardens of French painter Claude Monet. First is *Impressions of Monet: The Garden*, a floral display that recreates the landscapes of the renowned gardens of Monet's home in Giverny, France; and the second is *Impressions of Monet: The Experience*, a multi-sensory immersive experience that celebrates the works and life of Monet and his contemporaries. Visitors also have the chance to examine the Impressionists' sources of inspiration via photographs and video displayed alongside their works.

Contact: www.gardensbythebay.com.sg



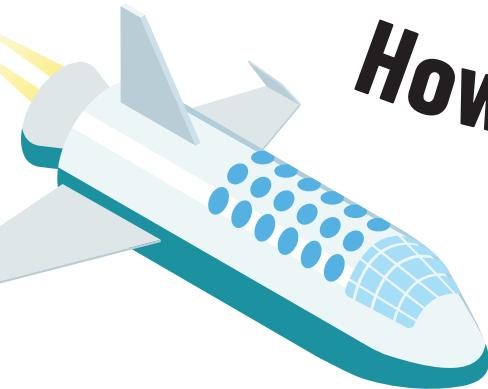
Harbour Plaza widens reach

Harbour Plaza Hotels & Resorts has expanded its portfolio with the opening of Harbour Plaza Metropolitan Shanghai and Metropolitan Residence Shanghai in China last year. The two properties add 1,144 rooms to the overall portfolio of 13 hotels across Hong Kong and Shanghai.

The hotel firm also recently unveiled a refreshed Harbour Plaza Metropolis, which now features revitalised guestrooms. Thanks to the new Shatin to Central MTR line, the hotel is now easily connected to the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wanchai.

Contact: www.harbour-plaza.com

How would travel look in the future?



"Everyone would have fulfilled their travel bucket list by then, including travelling to the moon, so travel desires are now back to good, old basics - lazy weekend getaways!"

Mimi Hudoyo
Editor, Indonesia

"Earth's surface is a bit crowded, so humans are getting away from it all. Space bubble gardens are a thing, so are underwater hotels."

Adelaine Ng
Correspondent, Australia

"There is no more doubt about the effects of global warming and everyone makes a conscious effort to protect the planet. Hence, access to ecologically sensitive locations, like the Himalayas or coral reefs, is reserved for responsible travellers. There is also an additional cost for visiting such places."

Fish Chan
Designer

TTG's editorial team is strapped into Dr Brown's DeLorean and ready to blast forward 50 years to see how travel and tourism would be like

"Space tourism is so common now, with many private companies in the field and operating with government subsidies. Everyone can afford a sojourn in space."

Rohit Kaul
Correspondent, India



"Social media will disable geotag functions for travel content related to ecologically sensitive locations and living heritage sites, so that travellers cannot identify and swarm these destinations. Access to hidden gems of the world are only via authorised, sustainable-certified local residents who are topic experts."

Karen Yue
Group editor



"Decision-making on travel destinations and tourism options is now led by VR and AR experiences. Tourism show exhibitors, travel agents and tour organisers use this technology to help travellers choose where and when to go, as well as what to see and do."

Kathryn Wortley
Correspondent, Japan

"Checking out destinations ahead of booking is now a multisensory experience. You can see, touch, hear, smell, and interact with destination and communities of interest. This can be done at an incredibly low cost, making comprehensive travel planning accessible to all."

S Puvaneswary
Editor, Malaysia



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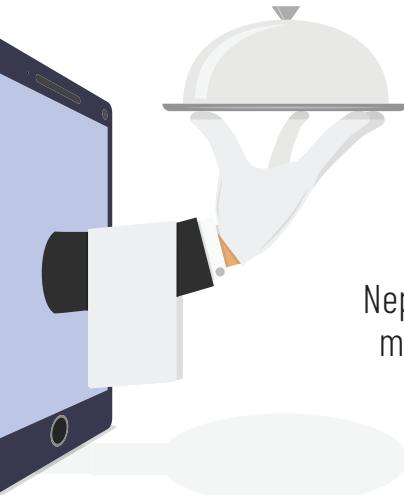
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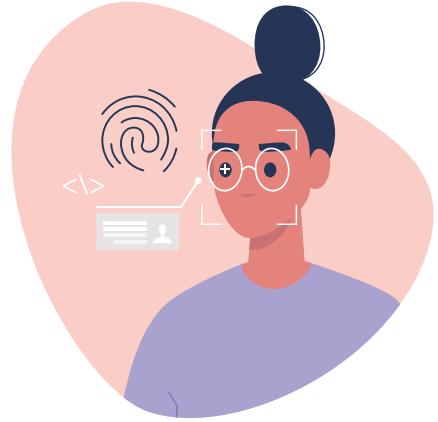
Scan here for more details

A collage of images showing various attractions at Jewel Changi Airport, including the Canopy Park, Rain Vortex, and various mazes.



"Advanced AI now allows me to access my travel memories and recreate episodes, like watching a Netflix series, of places I have visited, from cruising on the Amazon River to explore Brazil's rainforest to trekking up Mt Annapurna in Nepal. Furthermore, supersonic travel allows me to order and get delivery of some of the amazing food and meals from overseas."

Caroline Boey
Senior correspondent, China/special projects



"No more passports!
Biometrics is the way to go for travel globally."

Melissa Anne Tan
Sub-editor

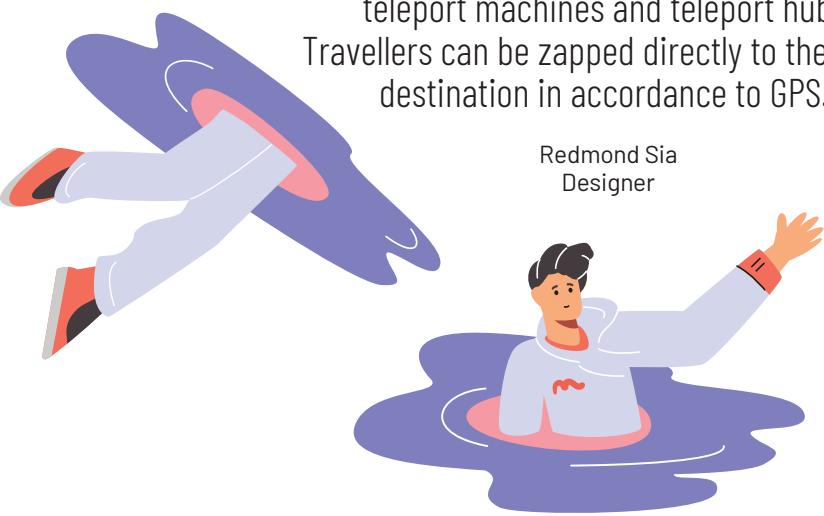


"Air travel, including on space rockets, is finally built for the comfort of economy class passengers. No more middle seats while double-decker economy seats are an option. Airplanes also now feature lighting adjustments to regulate circadian rhythms and noise reduction measures."

Rachel AJ Lee
Assistant editor,
TTGmice/TTGassociations

"Airplanes and airports are replaced by teleport machines and teleport hubs. Travellers can be zapped directly to their final destination in accordance to GPS."

Redmond Sia
Designer



"Travellers are not allowed to leave anything bad behind, so they will need to carry home their non-biodegradable trash. Some destinations or hotels may offer an incentive for travellers to do so."

Feizal Samath
Correspondent, Sri Lanka



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Diversity thrives in every corner at this biggest beach club in the world. Atlas stands as a place of inclusivity, consistently celebrating the local and global traditions.

Here, entertainment transcends ordinary, blending party vibes with a daily showcase of authentic Balinese art and culture, such as The Legend of Danu Goddess and Kecak, both are ancient spectacles from Hindu mythology.

Atlas transforms with festivals like the Chinese New Year, Halloween, even Australia Day. With endless events and celebration, Atlas Beach Club is not just a destination it's the ultimate getaway for everyone.

PLAN YOUR VISIT



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ATLASBEACHFEST.COM



Amari Bangkok



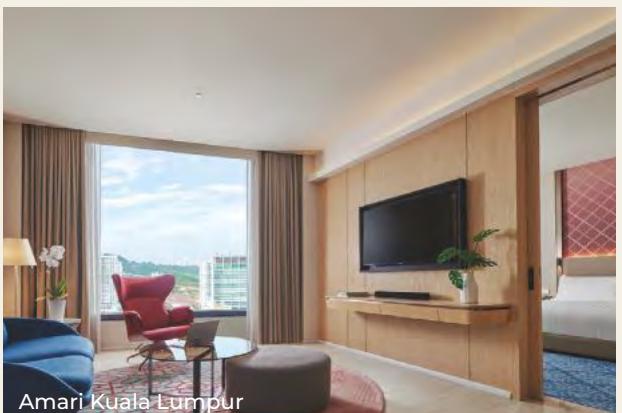
Oriental Residence Bangkok



Amari Koh Samui



Shama Lakeview Asoke Bangkok



Amari Kuala Lumpur



Amari SPICE Penang



ONYX Hospitality Group

Satisfying the needs of corporate voyagers and leisure explorers effortlessly, we offer four distinctive brands across Thailand, Malaysia, China (including Hong Kong), Sri Lanka, and Laos. Our portfolio comprises over 40 properties, including hotels, resorts, residences, and serviced apartments, with additional properties scheduled to open in the next few years.



Amari Vogue Krabi



OZO Chaweng Samui

People of

You are one of the longest serving staff and leadership at TTG Asia Media. How has the company evolved through the decades?

We went from a 100 per cent publishing business at the beginning to one that also organises trade events since the early 1990s – and I must say that we have become rather good at delivering trade events with quality content and high transaction value for our participants.

Diversifying into travel trade events management made sense for us, as we could leverage our extensive reach across the industry and our strong database. Our track record through the years includes a number of ASEAN Tourism Forum Travel Exchange.

We also have our own signature series, IT&CMA/CTW Asia Pacific and IT&CM China/CTW China, which are held yearly in Bangkok, Thailand and Shanghai, China respectively. IT&CMA is in its 32nd edition, CTW Asia Pacific is in 27th, IT&CM China/CTW China are both in their 16th edition this year.

These events continue to help many events suppliers and destinations in the region to generate a significant amount of business. We know how much they appreciate the IT&CM and CTW platforms, as we see many repeat participants.

By understanding our strengths and leveraging the advancement of communication technology, we have also grown organically to provide integrated marketing solutions that benefit our customers.

With every communication advancement, critiques heralded the demise of print news. How has TTG Asia Media evolved its news products as a result, and how relevant do you see travel trade news today?

The advancement of communication technology has changed how news is produced and delivered. Our production processes are a lot more efficient now compared to the 80s and the 90s. Our titles are produced across traditional print and digital formats, and content is designed for the different mediums, taking time sensitivities into consideration. An example of this difference is that our print issue carries more in-depth analyses and evergreen destination features, while our online news site

...reliance on trusted business news sources (has intensified).

conveys breaking news. We also have a video news channel that features industry opinion leaders discussing current issues.

Communication technology changes have impacted the way people consume news. While the Internet has made information so readily available to everyone, it has also given rise to information overload and the question of authenticity.

As travel and tourism continues to be a critical pillar in the global economy, reliance on trusted business news sources also intensifies. Hence, our role as the publisher of trade news remains valid and relevant.

Has TTG Asia Media's relationship with industry professionals changed through the years? What's driving these changes?

Industry suppliers have more exacting demands when it comes to marketing communications. This is

DARREN NG
Managing director



TTG

An organisation's success is the sum of its people's efforts. Here are some individuals that have a big part to play in maintaining TTG Asia Media's continued presence in Asia-Pacific's travel, tourism and business events industry

/ By **KAREN YUE** /

understandable, as competition for business is intense, particularly during and after the Covid years, and as travellers expect marketers to engage them more precisely and creatively.

Marketers, therefore, want to understand how a news and events company like ours can serve their business needs best while we, as TTG, must be well versed with marketers' objectives and be supportive. For this to happen, a close relationship that is built on mutual benefit must exist.

Today, the company has dealings in news production, business events ownership and management, as well as traveller services. What other business areas can it potentially explore?

We are always exploring new ideas that allow us to leverage our assets for expanded business opportunities that also serve to boost our range of channel offerings to travel, tourism and business event organisations.

We recently invested in a couple of online platforms for e-commerce. One of which is a WeChat mini programme targeting the Chinese consumer market. Another is a B2B2C platform that pushes attraction tickets. These initiatives are part of TTG Asia Media's Global Commerce business unit, and efforts are underway to scale these up.

After holding your position for so long, leadership transition must by now be on your mind. What qualities must the next managing director of the region's leading travel trade media company possess?

The leadership role requires a candidate that possesses a good business sense, good people management skills, and good knowledge of technology, and to use these qualities to propel TTG forward for the next many decades. I see potential in the current publisher and head of integrated solutions, Pierre Quek. He has strong technology background and management qualities. With a little more mentoring, he can be a strong candidate to take over the baton from me.

As the company celebrates its 50th birthday, what wishes do you have for the company and its people?

We survived so many crises in the past 50 years, including Covid-19. All our accomplishments were due to the people of TTG, past and present. With TTG's continued focus on building and retaining a committed and hardworking team, I believe the company will continue to thrive for many years to come.



LINA TAN

Secretary/
editorial assistant

You joined the company in 1983. Do you still remember how work was back then?

I first joined as a secretary to two advertisement directors, where I also did ad coordinating work for the Tourism titles, like the *Map of Singapore* which initially was called *Lion City*. I was overwhelmed at first, as back then there were only typewriters with no memory, so I had to type out three-page-long contracts. How did I manage to do all that, I wonder!

What roles have you played in TTG throughout your long service?

I moved on to become secretary to the publisher of *TTG Asia*. By then, my coordinating duties were taken away. Then came an economic downturn and the company had to downsize. When the editorial assistant resigned, I took on the portfolio. That was the start of my duty as mother hen to the editorial team, taking care of their needs when we went on trips. Besides supporting the Singapore-based editorial team, I also handle administrative tasks for overseas editorial staff and correspondents.

My colleagues tease often that my job title should be universal manager, as I have to handle everything under the sun!

What are your fondest trips with the team?

The PATA Conference in Hawaii many years ago was definitely unforgettable! Most of the staff extended our stay in Hawaii. Being a PATA delegate, we could rent a two-door sports car for just US\$1 per day to tour the city.

Another great trip was a team-bonding event in Mauritius. We joined a quad bike excursion. It was fun, but I drove mine into the bushes!

You have been leading TTG Asia Media's titles for the Chinese market for as long as I remember. How have you seen the presence of TTG in Greater China changing all these decades?

I was one of the project members to launch *TTG China*. *TTG China* and *TTG-BTmice China* have been around for 26 and 21 years respectively, so that gives you an indication of my tenure with the company.

In the early days, we had to spend a lot of time introducing TTG to industry players in order to secure interviews. These days, not anymore, as TTG's brand presence is so strong that we get invites to interview leaders in the business.

Also, our news focus has expanded from tourism bureaus, airlines, hotels and travel agencies to a broader spectrum comprising cruises, theme parks, exhibitions, incentive travel, and more. This reflects the impressive development of the travel and tourism industry.

Our content today appears on

print, digital and online platforms. Many industry players told me they were happy to be able to read *TTG China* and *TTG-BTmice China* during the three-year pandemic lockdown. That's how resilient and present our titles are!

How does understanding the behind-the-scenes of travel influence the way you travel for holidays?

I can travel independently, and am usually tasked with planning my family's annual trips. I like creating unique and flexible itineraries that allow us to make wonderful memories together.

People often say that writing about travel and tourism is a dream job. What do you say to this?

Well, going to different cities for interviews certainly broadens personal horizons, so this is a dream job. However, staying up late frequently to write and proofread stories is not easy. I also had to balance travel and motherhood. Back then, when my sons were still little, I had to think about news angles while checking their homework.



PENNY CHANG

Chief editor,
TTG-BTmice China
and TTG China

What do your friends think you do for a living?

Because of my frequent travels and cheerful disposition, my friends think I am a tour guide. Thus, I am always asked to share recommendations for good places to visit and best restaurants to dine at. It is hard to explain what goes on behind the scenes in travel and tourism to people outside of it, so I would just do my best to help when friends approach me for travel recommendations.

As one of the longest serving staff with TTG, do you think you have changed the company culture or has the company changed you?

I have been with the company for 26 years, and I think the influence goes both ways. I have been able to shape how the team functions in TTG Asia Media's Hong Kong office over these long years, but at the same time I have also adjusted the way I work to match the pace of the Singapore headquarters. Company's people and culture are both alive, and it is natural for both to change with the times and leadership of the moment.



CHIMMY TSUI

Publisher,
TTG-BTmice China
and TTG China

You are an important part of the TTG Maps & Guides Publishing business unit. Can you tell us a little of what you do?

I manage and create content for the business unit's two websites, Southeast-Asia.com and singaporetravelholic.com, along with

COLEEN LEONG

Editor, TTG Maps & Guides Publishing



You are one of TTG Asia Media's youngest managers. What led you to the business events specialisation?

It all began, 12 years ago, with a friend's referral that led me into a world I had never envisioned for myself. The business events industry was not part of my initial career plan, but it became a significant chapter in my professional life.

The early days were undeniably challenging. What kept me rooted in the industry is the opportunity for professional growth and the resilience I got to develop when dealing with diverse challenges.

At the same time, interacting with many individuals, each with unique backgrounds, helped broaden my horizons and enriched my professional life.

You left TTG Asia Media for a short period, and returned in 2023. What led you back?

I was drawn back by TTG's positive work environment that promotes work-life balance, instils a sense of belonging, and encourages employees to be their best selves. Another essential reason

LYNETTE TEY

Event manager,
TTG Events

is the ability to call the people I work with friends. These friendships contribute to the positive work environment and great corporate culture.

For me, it was an easy decision to return to TTG.



What advice would you give to the young ones interested in an events management career?

Work is not easy. It is fast-paced, with many deadlines and every day is different. However, one will gain self-confidence with the completion of more and more events. One will also learn the value of hard work and team work, for no great or successful event was ever pulled off without good people.

the respective social media platforms; The Map of Singapore (English); and SG Maps & Guides app.

How do you see yourself influencing the way travellers experience Singapore?

Through our features and social media posts, I hope to encourage tourists and travellers to discover the different sides and hidden gems of Singapore, and experience the best that the Lion City has to offer. For beneath the impressive exterior of Singapore's skyline is a vibrant melting pot of culture, history, heritage, cuisines and attractions waiting to be discovered.

What are your personal favourite haunts in Singapore?

Little Farms for grocery essentials, Grain Traders for nourishing grain bowls, Chinatown Complex Food Centre and Amoy Street Food Centre for hawker faves, Long Phung Vietnamese Restaurant for affordable *pho*, Siri House for date nights, Toast Box for my tea fix, and my neighbourhood parks for some natural vitamin D!

You are as visible as the TTG brand at major trade shows, as you wield the camera and go around taking photos of important attendees and ongoings. What kept you going as TTG's news photographer for all these years?

While the tradeshow landscape may echo familiar names and faces, it brings me joy to see fresh smiles and excitement from participants whenever they see me with my camera – it's like a reunion of friends.

It's also especially satisfying when I hear a loud "whoa" from event attendees when they see what I have shot on my camera or themselves on the *TTG Show Daily* pages.

How is it like shooting for TTG's editorial team?

I've worked with many companies, so believe me when I say that working for the TTG editorial team is like working as a family. Despite being a freelancer, I am so well taken care of by the entire team. The editors give me their trust and a free hand in how I want to deliver the photos, which motivates me to take even better images for their stories and pages.

RICHARD LAI

Photographer



The TTG editorial family spirit is tangible, especially when we face difficult times or crises. It's heartening to see everyone coming together to solve problems as one.

Can you share one incredible incident on assignment?

It was IT&CMA in September 2017. As usual, I wore my TTG uniform – a bright red polo-tee, forgetting that Thailand was still in a year-long mourning for their beloved King Bhumibol Adulyadej. When I arrived at the venue of the opening ceremony, I stood out awkwardly in the crowd of at least 50 photographers all dressed in black or dull-coloured clothes. However, being outstanding has its advantages. When the VIPs lined up in front of all the photographers, guess who got their attention?

Units of TTG

TTG Asia Media is more than just the news titles that you often encounter, as the company comprises three other business units that altogether serve the travel and tourism industry



TTG Travel Trade Publishing

The Travel Trade Publishing business unit shoulders print and online titles that span the leisure trade, corporate travel, business events, and luxury travel domains, reaching key decision-makers, influencers and professionals in each sector around the world. The titles – *TTG Asia*, *TTG China*, *TTG India*, *TTGmice*, *TTG-BTmice China*, *TTGassociations*, *TTG Asia Luxury* and *TTG Show Daily* – are widely acclaimed as the industry's preferred read and chosen by advertisers as an effective marketing platform.



TTG Events

The TTG Events business unit promotes business opportunities by staging international trade events that bring industry suppliers and buyers together at a single marketplace.

Its most prominent product is the Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings (IT&CM) Events, a series of tradeshows for the business events community that are held every year in Thailand (IT&CM Asia) and in China (IT&CM China).

It also owns and manages the Corporate Travel World (CTW) Events.

TTG Events' strong industry network earned it several appointments as secretariat to manage the ASEAN Tourism Forum Travel Exchange (TRAVEX), and the team delivered successful buyer-and-seller meetings at editions such as Manila 2016, Ha Long Bay 2019, and Brunei 2020.



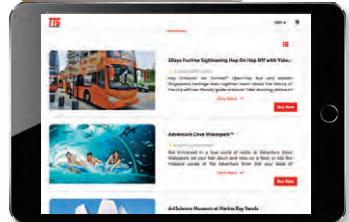
TTG Map & Guides

This business unit is the pioneer in equipping tourists to Singapore with handy traveller maps that pack in concise destination information and offers from attractions and retail establishments. These maps and guides boast the widest audited circulation and are endorsed by Singapore Tourism Board, Singapore Hotel Association, and Les Clefs d'Or Singapore. Core titles include *The Map of Singapore* (in English, Chinese and Japanese editions) and *The Official Singapore Map – Cruise Traveller's Edition*; *Travelholic – Singapore Maps & Deals* is the online complement to the print titles and expands the group's reach to potential visitors worldwide.



TTG Global Commerce

The Global Commerce business unit advances solutions that advocate business collaborations between the Asia-Pacific travel trade and the rest of the world's industry players. It also produces a one-stop platform for consumers in the Asia-Pacific region to book attractions, tours and experiences in Singapore.



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BEHIND THE NAME

Nicole Ho

Creator, Nicole Cruises



You made an interesting shift in your career recently – from a travel agency (Jetour Hong Kong) to leading your own YouTube channel, Nicole Cruises. Why?

With my father's extensive experience in the tourism industry, I was fortunate to have been immersed in the realm of travel from a young age. However, a decade ago, cruising primarily appealed to a privileged demographic, which didn't resonate with my age group. In recent years, the cruise industry underwent a transformative shift, offering new ships and exciting experiences that appealed to a broader audience. Recognising the untapped potential in the Asian market and the growing interest among younger travellers, I seized the opportunity to showcase the fun and adventure of cruising through my YouTube channel.

Why do you think more needs to be done to promote the idea of cruising holidays?

After engaging with individuals in a similar age group, I discovered common perplexities such as boredom, price transparency, and cruise selection. To effectively promote cruising holidays, the focus should shift from merely highlighting the ship's hardware to showcasing the unique experiences on offer. This includes emphasising the diverse onboard activities, entertainment options, quality gourmet experience, and the chance to explore fascinating destinations. By highlighting enriching experiences and tailor-made offerings, we can dispel misconceptions and address the concerns that potential cruisers may have.

Ship or port calls – which matters most to an excellent experience?

That depends on the traveller's company and goals. For solo travellers seeking inspiration and solitude, the destination holds great significance. When travelling with children, the focus shifts to the ship's facilities designed for kids. Cruising also presents an ideal setting for couples, friends, and families to gather for (special) occasions. Comfortable accommodation, diverse onboard activities, and dining options are sought after. Understanding these preferences allows cruise lines to tailor their offerings for exceptional experiences. – Karen Yue

APPOINTMENTS



Alan Christie



Candice D'Cruz



Daniella Foster



Wong Kar Ling



Soon-Hwa Wong

Alan Christie

Alan Christie is now senior director – growth & business development, Asia, Middle East and Africa for La Vie Hotels & Resorts. He will take charge of growing the company's portfolio across Asia, Middle East and Africa and increasing awareness of this business model.

Candice D'Cruz

As vice president of luxury brands for Asia Pacific, Candice D'Cruz is responsible for leading Hilton's luxury brands, Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts, LXR Hotels &

Resorts and Conrad Hotels & Resorts, across Asia-Pacific.

Daniella Foster

Daniella Foster has been appointed as vice chair of the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (SHA). She will work alongside Wolfgang Neumann as vice chair, supporting SHA as it works towards implementing its new five-year strategy.

Wong Kar Ling

As chief strategy officer, Ascott and managing director, South-east Asia, Ascott,

Wong Kar Ling will drive the development of Ascott's global strategy and seek opportunities to chart the course of growth through strategic initiatives.

Soon-Hwa Wong

In his new role as PATA ambassador for Greater China, Soon-Hwa Wong will serve as its representative in the region, and will work towards achieving the goals of PATA, facilitating collaboration among stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry, and enhancing the presence of PATA in Greater China.



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DASTA

amazing
THAILAND

PATA
Pacific Asia Travel Association

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with fresh &
upgraded ideas



Meet like-minded
leaders & influential
decision-makers



Gain latest
travel/tourism
insight & knowledge



Explore
Cha-Am, Phetchaburi
in depth

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Discover the world

Get a sneak peek at the luxury travel specialists that will head to ILTM Asia Pacific this July

Avalon Waterways

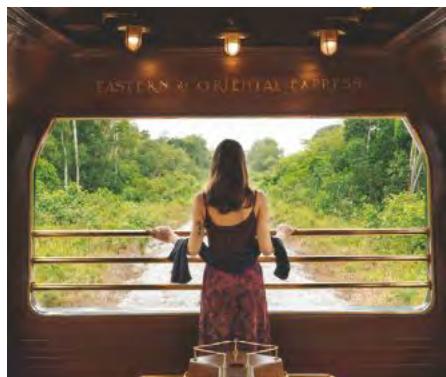
Delivering unparalleled experiences and boundless exploration, Avalon puts the guest in the captain's seat to navigate their bespoke journey, fuelling passions and steering clear of the unexpected while cruising down the world's most memorable and mesmerising waterways. Guests can see how the tides are changing with one step aboard the modern, luxurious Suite Ships with the grandest views in cruising.



At each ILTM event, we bring together our community to not only build connections, but celebrate our continually renewing luxury travel industry.

Alison Gilmore,
Portfolio director, ILTM

“



Belmond

After a four-year hiatus, Eastern & Oriental Express, a Belmond Train, returned to the tracks of South-east Asia in February 2024.

Offering restyled interiors alongside elevated onboard cultural and gastronomic experiences, the train offers two seasonal journeys departing from Singapore and travelling through Malaysia's ever-changing landscapes and vibrant cities: the Essence of Malaysia (November to February) and Wild Malaysia (March to October).

Crown and Champa Resorts

The resort management company will be introducing Jawakara Islands Maldives, a 290-villa resort in the Lhaviyani Atoll. In addition to the largest Kids' Club in The Maldives, facilities include the largest nine-hole golf course in the Maldives, two infinity pools, tennis and badminton courts, a fitness centre, and a volleyball court.

Another island that will be profiled is Kagi Maldives Resort and Spa, a boutique 50-villa resort in the North Malé Atoll that recently welcomed the first Pickleball court in the Maldives.



Wilderness Safaris

The conservation and hospitality company will see several new openings this year.

The new Wilderness Mokete opened in May 2024 in the Mababe wilderness area on the eastern fringe of the Okavango Delta. In July 2024, the Wilderness Desert Rhino Camp in the Palmwag Concession in Namibia's Damaraland is set to reopen. The camp is a celebration of the ongoing protection of one of the world's last free-roaming black rhino populations.

Also, September 2024 will see the unveiling of a new intimate lodge, Bisate Reserve in Rwanda.



Abercrombie & Kent Travel Group

The Abercrombie & Kent Travel Group (AKTG), attending ILTM Asia Pacific for the first time, will showcase its portfolio of luxury brands including Crystal, Sanctuary Retreats, and Abercrombie & Kent.

It has been a big few years at AKTG with the relaunch of Crystal, the opening of new Sanctuary Retreats lodges in Namibia and Kenya, and new A&K offices in Costa Rica, Colombia and Saudi Arabia.



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Travelling by train is a great way to take in the sights while moving from one destination to another. Marissa Carruthers picks up some luxurious options from around the world

Enjoy the rail life



▲ Eastern & Oriental Express

Discover the wonders of Malaysia aboard The Belmond's luxury train. Capturing the essence of a classical bygone era, the train features classical designs with polished wood-panelled corridors, an Olde Worlde dining carriage, a Bar Car that harks back to the 1920s jazz club era, and opulent sleeping carts. It offers various journeys across Malaysia.

◀ Glacier Express

Dubbed the world's slowest express train, the Glacier Express offers a unique glimpse into the Swiss Alps. The eight-hour 291km-route passes through 91 tunnels and crosses 291 bridges as it snakes from St Moritz to Zermatt. The train features an exclusive bar, on-board entertainment, concierge service, and personal travel guides.



▲ The Maharajas' Express

The Maharajas' Express has earned itself the title as one of the world's most opulent trains, where guests can discover India like royalty. The train operates four routes that take in 10 destinations in the north-west and central regions, with a focus on the royal state of Rajasthan.

▲ Orient Silk Road Express

Discover the world's most famous trade route on the luxurious Orient Silk Road Express, which travels through Central Asia's Stans. The private train journey takes in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, offering five categories of train compartments, dining cars, legendary views, and local experiences aplenty.



▲ Kyushu Seven Stars

A truly time-honoured way to discover the Japanese island of Kyushu is on board the country's version of the Orient Express, which stops at each of the island's prefectures. With three journeys to choose from, experiencing local culture is key – and style sits at the forefront, with each of the seven carriages boasting opulent décor.

Top 5 headlines this month



From left: More sustainable aviation fuel mandates will be enforced in the near future; The "World's Best MICE City" global campaign showcases Singapore's impact-driven approach to MICE events; and TCEB's MI Plus Roadshow

Move towards green flights triggers reviews of travel policies

As more mandates on sustainable aviation fuel usage surface, corporate travel managers are reviewing their travel policies to better meet responsible travel objectives and identify savings.

GBTA introduces Global Sustainable Procurement Standards

GBTA Foundation, The charitable arm of the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), has launched GBTA Sustainable Procurement Standards, an educational resource that corporate travel buyers worldwide can utilise to make informed

procurement decisions and deliver on their organisation's sustainability objectives.

GSTC publishes new MICE Criteria

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) has released the GSTC MICE Criteria. These criteria are tailored for Venues, Event Organisers, and Events & Exhibitions, aiming to help businesses adopt sustainable practices in line with the increasing emphasis on sustainability.

STB rolls out global MICE campaign

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has initiated a new global marketing campaign aimed at positioning Singapore as

the "World's Best MICE City" for business events. This campaign is the first of six global efforts by the STB to boost Singapore's economy.

TCEB's MI Plus Roadshow highlights business opportunities for Taiwan buyers

Thailand is actively seeking increased business events participation from Taiwan by organising the MI Plus Thailand Roadshow Edition in Taipei. Led by the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), stakeholders included the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Thai Airways International, Thailand Incentive and Convention Association, and 15 suppliers.

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Perspectives

Embracing the future: The resurgence of event tech in a post-pandemic world

CEO of Searix, Lance Li Sheng, discusses the evolution of the events industry post-pandemic, and the seamless blend of in-person and digital experiences shaping the future of events.



Gerodenkoff/Shutterstock

Q&A



Fields of plenty

Sarah Goldfinch, Adelaide Convention Centre's new general manager, is all geared up and ready to bring about a wave of unforgettable events to South Australia's thriving business events sector.

Dishing up plates of culinary creativity
Lynell Peck, ICC Sydney's director of culinary service, demonstrates how event venues can have a powerful impact on local economies and communities through their culinary selection.



The IMEX logo, featuring the word "IMEX" in a bold, white, sans-serif font with a registered trademark symbol (®) to the left of the "I".

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Coastal gems

The Gold Coast continues to evolve in its ability to serve up a mix of exciting and refreshing experiences for event delegates

By **Adelaine Ng**

Destination Gold Coast's annual destination showcase for business event planners, This is Gold Coast 2023 (TIGC2023), proved to be an eye-opener for many individuals tasked with sourcing ideas and experiences for their upcoming events.

TIGC2023, hosted last August, treated delegates to a range of destination experiences such as stand-up paddleboard yoga at Tallebudgera Creek, distilleries and breweries that dot the coast, dinner under the stars at Sea World's The New Atlantis Precinct, and a gala event at The Langham, the Gold Coast.

Reflecting on her TIGC2023 experience, Carol Ru, general manager for PTC Express Travel, which represents markets in South-east Asia, China and Taiwan, said: "It's been a real help for a DMC as ours because so much has changed after the pandemic and we needed to refresh our contacts with suppliers. I've been inspired by new ideas that I wouldn't even have thought of before."

For planners looking to craft an elite programme that will impress VIPs, the Gold Coast's newest luxury event venue – Level 18 at The Darling – is one to



Level 18 at The Darling

consider. A part of The Star Gold Coast's portfolio of event spaces, Level 18 boasts coastal views in expansive light-filled spaces that can cater to functions of all sizes. The Miami rooms and Penthouse come with wraparound balconies that offer guests panoramic skyline views.

Also new is Kirra Point Precinct in southern Gold Coast. This area is packed with retail, hospitality and tourism offerings, with Kirra Beach House as the main draw, comprising a rooftop dining destination and a beach club with three bars, a restaurant and stylish cabanas. There is also an option to spend a night or two at the new Kirra Point Holiday Apartments in its hotel-style one-, two-, or three-bedroom units.

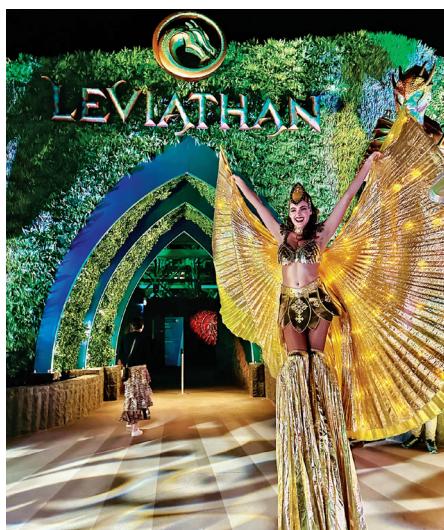
Should event delegates expect a wellness element amid all that wining and dining, planners will be pleased to know that Native State in Kirra Beach, can deliver a serene bathing experience with an infrared sauna, heated vitality pool, cold plunge pool, steam room, traditional cedar sauna and meditation lounge.

Besides all the sparkling new draws, Experience Gold Coast has also partnered with TravConsult, an Asian market and cultural expert, to provide 50 Gold Coast operators with market insights and cultural etiquette on key markets including China, Japan and South Korea.

Experience Gold Coast's head of business events, Brooke Campbell, said re-establishing and strengthening the connection between Asia and the Gold Coast is part of the city's plans to grow the visitor economy and continue rebuilding the international business event pipeline.

"China was our largest international source market by total visitors and total expenditure pre-pandemic, and we want to put our best foot forward as we welcome back these international delegates," Campbell said.

"It's a fiercely competitive market and we need to always be pushing the Gold Coast as a premier destination for conferences, exhibitions and incentive group travel," she said.



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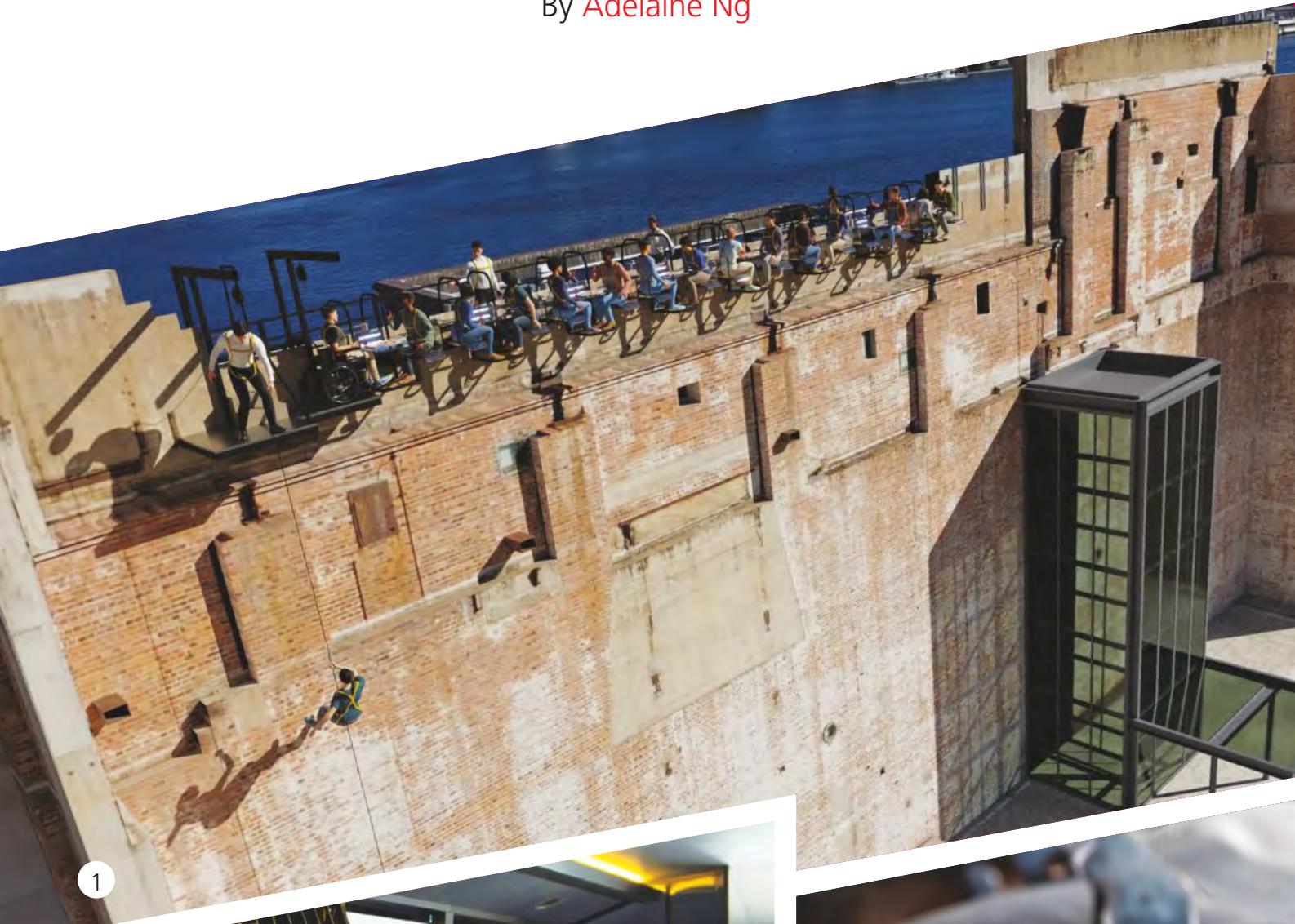
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Experience makers

From creative dining to exploring the final frontier, here are some compelling event ideas that turned up at AIME 2024

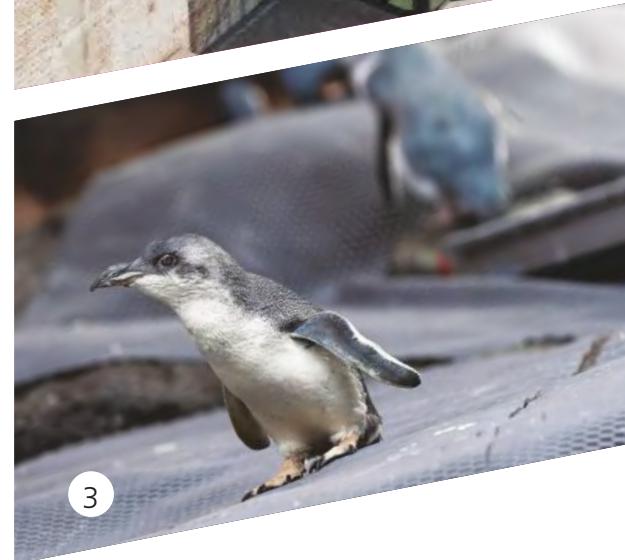
By **Adelaine Ng**



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1. Vertigo, Brisbane

Only 12 guests can experience this exclusive gastronomic dining experience overhanging Brisbane Powerhouse's industrial façade. Vertigo is where guests don safety harnesses and experience sky-high city views with a 17-metre drop beneath their feet.

2. Luxcoach, Melbourne

Australia's first luxury coach comes complete with a cocktail bar and butler service. It hosts up to 20 guests and includes a 50-inch LCD TV, powder room and toilet facilities. The front of the bus also has an executive meeting setting for four VIPs.

3. International Antarctic Centre, Christchurch

Get the chills and thrills of Antarctica much closer to home. Visitors can go on a bumpy ride on the Hägglund field trip, experience a simulated cruise to Antarctica, see little blue penguins and learn about the first expeditions and modern-day life on Scott Base.

4. Grazeland, Melbourne

Dubbed an outdoor foodie playground, Grazeland has an extensive array of bars, food trucks and stalls echoing Melbourne's multicultural population. The multitude of stalls means menus can be customised for unique events and there are two stages for live performances.

5. Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, Melbourne

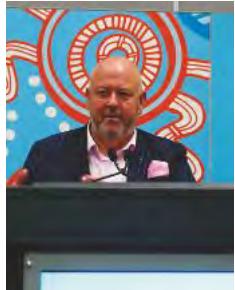
The Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne offers a picturesque Australian native setting for a garden lunch. As a seasonal pop-up, the Alto Structure on Dog Flat Lawn accommodated 350 seated guests for AIME 2024's Sunday brunch. A cocktail setting would fit 500.



A winning formula

AIME 2024 fuses business and pleasure, where networking thrives, collaborations flourish, and connections inspire innovation

By **Adelaine Ng**





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W E L C O M E T O

Australia's GOLD COAST

No one does business quite like the Gold Coast. Ours is a culture that embraces creativity; a spirit inspired by the natural playground that surrounds us. Driven by open minds and innovative thinkers, ideas flow here - as clearly as the pristine waters of Tallebudgera Creek.

Our world-class venues and conferencing facilities are designed to inspire. From intimate creative spaces to our vast and versatile Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre, we've got just the place for your next event. It's no wonder we attract a record number of delegates from across the globe.

We live to entertain, and creating custom events to inspire and delight is our specialty. Roll out the red carpet on the white sands of Broadbeach for a gala dinner like no other. Brainstorm with the birds on Tamborine Mountain. Get those creative juices flowing with a private ride on the southern hemisphere's fastest roller coaster. Or discover how simply walking along Burleigh Beach can be enough to take your breath away.

Little or large, simple or spectacular, our team is here to make your vision a reality. We can't wait to show you what's in store.

IF IT CAN BE IMAGINED, IT CAN HAPPEN ON THE GOLD COAST



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