Value travel in focus

If 2022 was the year of revenge travel, then 2023 is shaping up to be a year focused on value-for-money holidays, noted industry players at ITB Berlin.

By Karen Yue

Having quenched their thirst for travel in 2022, travellers are now scrutinising their travel plans and spend for 2023.

A recent Skyscanner travel and tourism outlook report found that while global travellers plan to spend on average 31 per cent more on travel in 2023 compared to 2022, they are also looking to make their money go further this year as the rising cost of living impacts trip decisions.

When thinking about where they would go and how they would spend during their trip, 36 per cent of respondents would pick a destination where their currency goes further, 32 per cent would seek savings from hotel accommodation, and 52 per cent would cut general expenditure.

Travel and tourism sellers at ITB Berlin 2023 said land components have to be reworked to help travellers afford holidays this year, especially as airlines continue to trend high (see story below).

Le Thi Thu Thuong, deputy general manager of Hanlo-headquartered IndochinaTravelland, told TTG Show Daily that airfares are a “big problem” for travellers, particularly for those travelling from far away to Asia.

“Airlines can make up about 30 per cent of a traveller’s total budget,” said Le. However, the heightened price watch doesn’t just outweigh the expense of destination experiences, find industry players.

“They are all about the perception of what your money can get you,” said Laurent Granier, co-founder & general manager of Laos Mood Travel.

“When travellers are ‘forced’ to spend more on what is perceived as non-value, like air tickets, which is an unavoidable travel expense, then they certainly want to make sure that what they do in the destination will be worth it,” he reflected.

Dat Nguyen, marketing manager with boutique travel agency Saffron Travel, which has operations in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, said travel agents who used to favour private tours before are now happy to join others to share the cost of a good escorted programme. As a result, Saffron Travel is doing brisk business with small group tours of no more than 10 travellers.

“To keep costs low, we are prioritising business with close partners and small and medium-sized local suppliers that tend to charge slightly lower fees than the big boys. This not only keeps prices down, but it also allows us to channel earnings to small local business owners,” said Nguyen.

Laos Mood Travel has “lightened up on some inclusions” – meals are recommended, not included, for example. Bicycles and trains are also used to get around, which adds flavour to the experience.

Similar to Skyscanner’s findings, Le said travellers are turning to more affordable hotel options for savings instead of cutting back on tours and activities.

Indeed, Laufrei Pristiawan, director of sales with Courtyard by Marriott Bali Seminyak Resort in Indonesia, said his mid-range hotel has done very well among value-conscious travellers.

“To earn against cost pressures and price scrutiny, sellers say volume and duration are critical. “We cannot raise the price of tours, neither can we switch prices for cheaper ones. So, to make sure that the itinerary remains affordable while allowing us and our partners to make money, we have to drive greater volume,” said Le.

“Enrich tourists to stay on longer, Courtyard by Marriott Bali Seminyak Resort runs a popular long-stay promotion where a minimum six-night stay gives the guest access to special room rates plus add-ons like complimentary laundry and one-time dinner.”

Dominic Ong, general manager, Tour East Singapore emphasised that value-focused travellers are not simply looking for cheap deals. To present Singapore as a destination worth travellers’ time and money, Ong’s company is pushing for longer stays in the same hotel, which will grant travellers better hotel offers, and provide at least two unique tours that offer a deeper look into the country.

Airfares not coming down: airlines

By Marissa Carruthers

Airfares are not slated to decrease any time soon due to surging fuel surcharges and taxes, regional airlines predict.

Nga Hoang, deputy director of Vietnam-based Vietravel, said despite a “boom” in travel demand experiences, find industry players.

“Value is all about the perception of cost of living impacts trip decisions. For value-conscious travellers, find industry players.

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Trip harnesses ChatGPT for customer service

Trip.com has launched TripGen, a chatbot designed to provide potential travellers with live search assistance powered by artificial intelligence (AI).

The chatbot allows users to enter any travel-related question and receive instant suggestions for pre-trip recommendations, as well as in-trip arrangements.

TripGen is integrated with the OpenAI API, which developed ChatGPT based on GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) architecture.

Amy Wei, senior product director at Trip.com Group, told TTG Show Daily: “Users can make more complex requests, such as suggestions for a romantic holiday. Business travellers (with packed schedules) can easily enquire about one- or two-day tours. This is an efficient way of finding out and narrowing down information for time-starved travelers.”

Most of TripGen’s users will likely be Gen Z-types of travellers, who are well “immersed in the digital world”.

So far, the response to TripGen has been good, according to Wei. User numbers have been doubling every day since it launched, with users asking four to five questions during their searches.

TripGen supports English, Japanese, Korean and traditional Chinese, with more languages to be added in the future. Work is also being done to allow users to book directly with Trip.com after TripGen searches, and to integrate with the new WhisperAPI for speech-to-text transcription and translation.

However, concerns around information validity still exist, as ChatGPT’s knowledge is limited to 2021 data.

“This is why we are working on embedding booking links. This way, we will be able to verify if the product, such as a hotel or tour, still exists,” Wei said.

— Rachel Al Lee

Trip.com Show Daily
Events’ sphere of influence to do good

Australian business events stakeholders are guiding planners towards cultural inclusions that support the country’s Aboriginal community.

Tourists heading back to Asia: WTTC

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has revealed positive signs of recovery for the Asian travel and tourism sector, with five major metropolitan seeing a significant economic rebound.

The WTTC’s Cities Economic Impact Report, researched in partnership with Oxford Economics, analysed key indicators such as travel and tourism’s contribution to GDP, employment and visitor spending in 82 cities from around the world.

There were five Asian cities among the top 25 whose travel and tourism sectors have the greatest impact on their local economies. According to the study, the highest performing Asian cities in 2022 were Bangkok, Beijing, Seoul, Singapore, and Tokyo.

Following continued border closures and strict travel restrictions, the report shows that in these major powerhouses, travel and tourism’s direct contribution to GDP is recovering, albeit at a slow pace. While it is a slightly different picture for international visitor spending, all cities are starting to show signs of economic recovery thanks to overseas travellers spending once again.

Most of the cities’ sector job levels are also increasing once again, with the exception of Tokyo, whose sector job market is recovering at a slower rate.

The report shows that in 2019, the travel and tourism sector contributed US$8.1 trillion to the economies of these five countries combined. However, the pandemic has had a damaging and long-lasting effect on the region with only Beijing recovering close to 2019 levels.

As the largest city destination in Asia, Beijing is showing the strongest signs of recovery. In 2022, the GDP contribution from the sector was just four per cent below 2019, at US$52.6 billion, thanks to a strong recovery of domestic tourism.

Tokyo has the next largest travel and tourism economy in the region, worth US$7.18 billion in 2022, but this is still 30 per cent lower than in 2019.

In Seoul, the GDP contribution last year was US$8.9 billion, 33 per cent lower than in 2019. In Singapore, the GDP contribution last year was 45 per cent lower than in 2019.

In Bangkok, the GDP contribution last year was 54 per cent lower than in 2019.

Julia Simpson, WTTC president & CEO, said: “Asia has long been a world-favourite destination and after more than two years of disruption, it is great to see tourists and business travellers heading back. Tourism provides a massive boost to the economy and job creation.”

“Cities Economic Impact Report shows that we expect Beijing to overtake Paris to become the world’s largest city travel and tourism economy within the next decade.

“It is crucial that the national and local governments continue to recognise the importance of travel and tourism for the local and national economies, jobs, and businesses.”

In brief

SWISS readies for cabin renewal

Swiss International Air Lines will unveil a new and more personalised air travel experience from 2023, with the centrepiece of the new offering being a redesigned cabin for its long-haul, aircraft fleet.

The cabin of the future will feature warm and muted tones, Human-Centric Lighting which helps alleviate jet lag’s effects, as well as a state-of-the-art “SilentWings” entertainment system with bigger screens and expanded connection options.

SWISS First suite promises greater privacy, while SWISS Business cabins will offer more seating options, such as double seats for passengers travelling together, and sliding doors for select seats.

SWISS CEO Dieter Vranckx said the cabin renewal is the “most comprehensive” in the airline’s history.

Home makes home in Bali

Homm, a brand of Banjaran Group, continues its expansion in Asia with the opening of Homm Saraman Baturiti. Located in Bali, Indonesia’s central highlands, the resort features 81 spacious rooms and villas, offering guests a warm sense of comfort amid lush natural landscapes and a backdrop of the picturesque Bedugul mountains.

Homm first debuted two years ago with the opening of Homm Bliss South Beach Patong in Thailand. Today, Homm is present also in Thailand’s Bangkok and China’s Huzhou.

Parkroyal arrives in Langkawi

Pan Pacific Hotels Group opened its ninth Parkroyal property on March 7. The 301-room Parkroyal Langkawi Resort in Malaysia is a beachfront resort that sits along the pristine beaches of Pantai Tengah, and offers guests a range of dining and recreational options.

Room types vary from deluxe rooms to two-bedroom apartments that are perfect for small families. There are one- to three-bedroom villas too.

By Karen Tye

The business events community’s quest to establish meaningful legacies for the host destination can find fulfilment in Australia, where convention bureaus and industry suppliers are doing even more today to provide beneficial engagements with the land’s original owners.

Business Events Sydney (BE Sydney) is pushing a wide range of experiences that allow event delegates to immerse in First Nations culture and perspectives. Such experiences include a Welcome to Country ritual by a local custodian of the land, on which the group meets; climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge with an Indigenous guide to see the city through a lens that is thousands of years old; and taking on an Indigenous cooking challenge.

International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney) itself has committed to a reconciliation journey in support of the country’s Close the Gap campaign, which aims to close the health and life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation.

It recently made its Gadigal Dreaming - The Sacred Country of the Gadigal People augmented reality content available to event planners hosting at the venue. The content comprises eight scenes covering gathering, fishing, corroboree, crafting, tracks, hunting, camping life and cosmology legends of Sydney’s original custodians.

Gadigal Dreaming, created by Bilbie XR Labs - a First Nations digital storyteller, inclusions that support the country’s Aboriginal community.

“Ours is a legacy”.

It also hosts events that connect Sydney’s business community partners with First Nations-owned businesses.

Over in the Northern Territories (NT), where Aboriginal history is especially significant, making culture an integral component of any business event staged in the destination is common practice at NT Business Events.

Director Rebecca McCaig told TTG Show Daily that such experiences can contribute to greater awareness. “Enlightening cultural exchanges can come in the form of a Saltwater Ceremoniy in the Darwin Waterfront Precinct La goon or a dot-painting art class led by an Aboriginal artist who will not just impart knowledge about the art form but also the community’s traditions and culture.

McCaig observes that the “‘global marketplace increasingly expects business events activities to also add value to the host destination and where possible, leave a legacy”.

Join a guided Aboriginal tour at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney

According to the study, the highest performing 25 whose travel and tourism sector contributed US$106.9 billion to the capitals of these five countries combined.

Recovery for the Asian travel and tourism sector is starting to show signs of economic rebound. The tourism economy in the region, worth US$32.6 billion, thanks to a recovery thanks to overseas travellers from the sector was just four per cent below 2019 levels.

In Singapore, the GDP contribution last year was 33 per cent lower than in 2019.

Julia Simpson, WTTC president & CEO, said: “Asia has long been a world-favourite destination and after more than two years of disruption, it is great to see tourists and business travellers heading back. Tourism provides a massive boost to the economy and job creation.”
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HIG
Getting the basics right
Rosa Ocampo shares how the Philippines is focused on improving overall tourist experience

The Philippines has gone back to basics in providing for the rudimentary needs of tourists. This course of action, lauded by stakeholders, is to improve the overall tourist experience in a number of destinations being challenged by a lack of, among others, restrooms, signages, information centre, medical clinics and hospitals. Thus, when Christina Garcia Frasco became tourism secretary in mid-2022, one of her first moves was to provide 10 tourist rest areas in the middle of key destinations, seven of which have already broken ground as of press time.

Designed with Filipino elements and endemic organic materials, each 300m² tourist rest area will have restrooms, chargers for electronic devices, a coffee shop, tourist information area, and pasa-lubong – a souvenir centre. Frasco pointed out that “one of the most basic essentials for any journey is the need to have a clean and decent restroom and yet it’s the most neglected aspect of travel in the Philippines”.

Noting that the country is unable to become a tourism powerhouse in Asia, Frasco said “this time we have chosen to look inwards to examine what it is that we can do apart from promoting the Philippines”.

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WHAT’S HOT

Night tours
Centuries old Intramuros has its share of dark history and a different way of experiencing it is a night-walking tour. Eerie yet edifying, and cooler after dark, the tour can be tailored to one’s preferences. It can include places such as Fort Santiago, Baluarte de San Diego, Manila Cathedral, San Agustin Church, and even sites near Intramuros.

Nature bootcamp
Coron Natural Farms has assorted offerings – farm stays, farm-to-table feasts, river and forest expeditions, and birdwatching. Enjoy the health benefits of yapak or earthing by walking barefoot on muddy, sandy, grassy, and rocky terrains. An accredited learning site for agriculture, the farm has courses on urban agriculture, land-based and marine-based organic farming, livestock, biocomposting, and more.

Sustainable ingredients
Hyatt Regency, Nobu and Nuwa hotels at City of Dreams Manila serve up food from social, ethical and environmentally responsible enterprises – rice is chemical-free and fully traceable, from grain sourcing to planting and processing; hydroponic vegetables; organic herbs from rooftop gardens; responsibly-sourced seafood; and cage-free eggs.

New hotel at Clark
The new Swissotel Clark is located within the Hann Resort Casino complex at Clark Freeport Zone in Pampanga. It features 372 rooms, a Swiss Executive Lounge, five meeting rooms, 10 specialty restaurants, a resort-style infinity pool, kids’ pool and babysitting services on demand.
Village charms

Tourism villages in Indonesia provide sustainable, immersive, local experiences where travellers can enjoy and also give back to the communities meaningfully. By Dhini Oktavianti

Tourism village development is a major focus in the sustainable tourism development programmes in Indonesia, with the aim to accelerate the revival of tourism and national economic growth.

Its development is not only within the domain of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (MoTCE) but is also supported by other related government agencies, including the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration.

MoTCE is collaborating with strategic industry partners to explore the potential of creative economic products and financial literacy programmes, provide technical guidance and human resources development; as well as conduct tourism awareness campaigns.

Besides, the ministry will be working with Mister Aladin, an online travel company, to provide a platform for the tourism villages to sell their tour packages.

It is also collaborating with the Indonesia Sustainable Tourism Council Certification Institute to carry out the Sustainable Tourism Village certification.

In the last two years, MoTCE has conducted the Indonesian Tourism Village Award (APVII) to develop tourism villages throughout Indonesia.

Vinsensius Jemadu, deputy minister for tourism products and events, MoTCE, said: “We apply several eligibility criteria for a tourism village. This includes good governance and management by applying the concept of community-based tourism, providing equitable economic benefits for local communities, implementing the CHSE (Cleanliness, Health, Safety and Environment) protocol, as well as making the local cultural wisdom a tourist attraction.”

So far, the ministry has curated 100 eligible villages across the country and the target is to add 150 more leading up to 2024, while providing additional mentorship, training and marketing assistance to them, according to Vinsensius.

Among the top-scoring villages are Nglanggeran Tourism Village in Yogyakarta; Penglipuran Tourism Village and Bandung.

A three-day Alamendah Trip itinerary includes a traditional martial art class on the first day, followed by teaching at an elementary school in the morning and practising agriculture in the afternoon, complete with a farm visit to wash, feed, and milk the cows on the second day. On the third day, travellers can learn more about plants along the way to the waterfall. International travellers typically stay up to a week, according to Wendiansyah.

Meantime in Bali, Samsara Living Museum in Karangasem is a village with a development concept based on the sustainable Balinese way of life.

Ida Bagus Gumathawa, also known as Gus Agung, the co-founder of Samsara Living Museum, said: “The concept of this living museum is to present people’s daily lives as they are, no scenarios, no artificial things, no excessive touch-ups for the sake of meeting certain standards.”

He explained that the village has not been developed primarily for tourism but to respond to the development of tourism in Bali which was not all positive”.

The village’s comprehensive value chain development includes conservation, preservation, education and cultural innovation, and aims to minimise the negative impact of tourism to Balinese culture.

Programmes such as cooking classes, water blessing ceremonies and canoe-making (for offerings) are conducted as part of the locals’ daily activities. These activities drive tourism earnings straight to the community.

WHAT’S HOT

Suwatu by Mil & Bay

Located at Sumberwatu, Sambirejo, Prambanan, this modern restaurant exudes a lush and artistic vibe thanks to its stylish interiors and panorama of rice fields, Mount Merapi, Prambanan Temple and Kalasan Temple in the distance.

Guests particularly enjoy the sunset views here, as well as a variety of comfort dishes such as mendan fried tempeh (cake made of fermented soybeans), pecel (vegetable with peanut sauce), transcam (spicy row veggies salad), and others.

Tip Tap Toe

This new day club in Yogyakarta combines a rustic atmosphere with an playful ambience, and is recognised as the place to be for quality dining and curated cocktails. Since its opening in September 2022, the social venue has gained a loyal following. Tip Tap Toe is managed by Artotel Group and can seat 450 guests.

Amanjiwo and Kereta Api Wisata

The Kereta Api Wisata tourist train takes travellers on a magical adventure filled with inspiring views of Java’s rolling countryside and ever-changing landscape.

Suitable for up to 10 guests, the private carriage offers comfort throughout the seven-hour journey from Jakarta to Yogyakarta. Excellent hospitality is served up by the Amanjiwo team – from freshly prepared meals to cultural and historical insights from resident anthropologist, Patrick Vanhoebrouck.

This train treat is only available once a month and advance booking is strongly recommended.
Feel at home around the world

Sincerely Yours
Vietnam welcomed more than 2.95 million foreign visitors in the first 11 months of 2022, a little more than half its target for the year of five million. South Korea topped the table, followed by the US, with a report by travel data and analytic company ForwardKeys predicting a 77 per cent decrease in arrivals for 2022 compared with 2019.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism has been organising a series of events to promote the country, with a focus on sustainable and green tourism. Throughout 2022, it ran Visit Vietnam-Quang Nam, which saw the central province receive 4.8 million visitors – 13 times higher than the previous year.

The south-central province of Binh Thuan will host Visit Vietnam Year 2023 under the theme, Binh Thuan – Green Convergence. The province will host a series of activities that throw the spotlight on green products and clean energy, cultural heritage and sustainable tourism development. Activities include an international food festival, summer camp, as well as sport, musical and carnival events.

In line with its promotion of green tourism, in December 2022, the Thai Hai Reserve Area of Ecological Houses-on-Stilts Village in the northern province of Thai Nguyen was named one of the 32 best tourism villages by the World Tourism Organization. Sitting one hour’s drive from Hanoi, the 70-hectare site is home to 30 traditional stil houses belonging to the Tay ethnic people.

Prior to that, in November, Tam Dao, a popular retreat built by the French in the northern province of Vinh Phuc, was named the world’s leading tourist town at the 2022 World Travel Awards. Located 90 kilometres north-east of Hanoi, Tam Dao (or three islands) served as a lauded summer retreat for French officials in the late 19th century.

The northern highlands town of Moc Chau was also nominated as Asia’s leading nature destination. In May, the world’s longest glass bridge, Bach Long, opened in the area. The 632m-long bridge has proved a draw for tourists.

In a bid to rekindle the tourism sector, Vietnam resumed its visa exemption in March for 24 countries for stays of 15 to 30 days. For 80 countries and territories, it is issuing a 30-day, single-entry e-visa service.

WHAT’S HOT

Bridge crossing
Stealing the title of the world’s longest glass-bottomed bridge, Bach Long Bridge spans 632 metres and is suspended 150 metres above a lush valley in northern Vietnam’s Moc Chau region. It connects Moc Chau Island Mountain Park and Resort with a neighbouring mountain and is built to hold about 500 people at once.

Beach escape
Anam Mui Ne is a 127-key, five-star beachfront property in southern Vietnam’s beach town of Mui Ne. It features three F&B outlets, spa, pools (outdoor and indoor), water sports centre, fitness centre, as well as ballroom and conference facilities. The resort boasts six room categories, including suites with private pools.

Family getaway
The 248-key Mövenpick Resort Phan Thiet brings Swiss-inspired hospitality to the vast entertainment complex by NovalWorld, which consists of a golf course and collection of theme parks. Located in the capital of Binh Thuan Province, the resort is geared towards families, couples and adventurers.

Discover wellness
Regent Phu Quoc offers 176 suites and 126 villas, which range from one- to two-bedrooms. Wellness journeys can be personalised by the resident holistic wellness coach, along with a well-equipped Health Club. The property also has four swimming pools and six F&B outlets.
Igniting a spirit of adventure

Adventure Travel Trade Association’s (ATTA) is an unfamiliar name in this part of the world. Will you give us a flash introduction to the association?

Originating in the US and established in 1990, ATTA advocates for adventure travel. Anybody who touches the adventure travel trade can be an ATTA member – from adventure tour operators, travel agents who buy adventure tours, gear and accommodation providers, tourism boards and media representatives.

ATTA’s current global membership is around 30,000 – forty per cent of that are tour operators. A majority of our members come from the US, followed by Europe, where only six per cent are from Asia and four per cent from Oceania.

Within this region, our biggest representation is in Japan, Nepal, India, Australia and New Zealand, while in Vanuatu, Bhutan and Mongolia we have a small community of operators.

My role is to cultivate ATTA’s Asian membership, develop business, and look at ways to work with our partners to bring out the potential of adventure travel for destinations in this region.

I’ve been in Asia for so long, so I know that there are fantastic opportunities for adventure throughout the region.

ATTA provides opportunities for members to meet international buyers, which is so important in post-lockdown as businesses strive for recovery. There are North American and European buyers who are looking to develop what they regard as newer destinations here in Asia or different ways to experience the region. ATTA can facilitate these business connections.

ATTA’s Asian members are in destinations typically associated with adventure – Nepal, Bhutan and New Zealand. That leaves you with plenty of room to grow membership in destinations seldom seen as an adventure paradise.

Absolutely! There are many countries with great adventure offerings but where we have, not so much members – such as Thailand and Malaysia.

There is a belief that adventure tourism is a very niche segment. Is it truly that niche, or are we in Asia-Pacific missing something?

The answer is no – adventure travel is not a niche segment at all.

In terms of monetary value, adventure travel is a growing segment. There was a 2018 study done on the size of the global adventure travel market, and it showed the market contributed US$683 billion to the worldwide economy.

(What’s important to note) is that a lot of this money actually stays in the community. According to ATTA studies, 65 per cent of adventure travel expenditure stays in the destination and 45 per cent of adventure tourists use a local operator, such as a specialist with local knowledge.

Is adventure tourism all about intense activities though? How does ATTA define adventure?

Yes, that is another misconception. The word adventure often brings to mind something extreme, like jumping off a plane or climbing a mountain. At ATTA, we define adventure as something that combines three elements – activity, nature and culture. For us, an adventure could be a challenge, a transformational experience or a wellness pursuit.

Hence, going on a food tour and learning to cook a local dish, or taking a walk along a river in a new city can be adventures too.

Now, with this definition, you will realise that the traveller does not need to leave the urban environment for an adventure or to participate in something extreme. That broadens the opportunity for destinations to develop adventure travel offerings and for more people to participate in adventure travel.

Furthermore, by defining soft adventures as being part of the wider adventure travel mix, it becomes clear that adventure can be for everyone.

Since adventure tourism is defined as comprising nature and culture, can building an adventure tourism front influence the destination and its tourism stakeholders to be more mindful of sustainability?

Definitely. For ATTA, sustainability is a core value. Sustainability is also at the heart of adventure travel because you need both the environment and the people for the formation of authentic experiences. People could refer to indigenous people, and the environment could refer to indigenous cultures, for instance.

We have been hearing more talk from governments about wanting to go after quality tourism – that is quality over quantity – post-lockdown. Adventure travellers tick those boxes. But it remains to be seen if governments will stick to their quality tourism approach as travel recovers.

Destinations that are serious about attracting adventure travellers must truly walk the talk. Adventure travellers are very aware of their impact on the environment and are wary of greenwashing.

ATTA has a set of adventure travel guidelines developed with the help of a steering committee and relevant organisations, and one of them is about interpretation – how can an experience be interpreted in the local context. For example, when a traveller goes on a forest trail, he will learn about the environment, the native wildlife and how local lives are connected with the forest. This interpretation is also very powerful for communities, as it lets them realise the value of the place they live in and encourages them to preserve the natural environment.

When local communities realise the financial benefit of (travellers coming to visit their natural environment), they will no longer need to engage in activities like poaching or logging to make a living, which then contributes to sustainable development. Tourism job opportunities can also encourage youngsters to stay in the community (which then preserves culture) instead of leaving for the big city.

So, the sustainable benefits of adventure travel is wide-ranging.

From your observations, which destinations in Asia-Pacific are doing great with adventure tourism development and which have the potential to do more?

New Zealand is known as the capital of adventure travel here in Asia-Pacific, while Australia has positioned itself so well for adventure and indigenous culture.

Japan is also pushing very well on the adventure travel front. ATTA has worked with Japan for years now – these efforts culminate with our 2023 Adventure Travel World Summit in Hakkoaido. South-East Asia can do so much more to demonstrate its adventure potential, but it is also important that destinations develop the necessary infrastructure before bringing in adventure seekers.

Tell us more about the Adventure Travel World Summit – what does ATTA hope to achieve and who should attend it?

This is an annual event that brings about 800 people together from across the world. It focuses on adventure travel and discusses issues faced by stakeholders. There is also a marketplace and a meet-the-media session.

The Summit is unlike most trade events. (It runs) across four days, and kicks off with Day of Adventure for attendees to pick an adventure they wish to experience in the host destination. It presents a fun and informal platform for attendees to network and break the ice.

Our recent Summit was held in Switzerland, with Japan for years now – these efforts culminate with our 2023 Adventure Travel World Summit with Japan for years now – these efforts culminate with our 2023 Adventure Travel World Summit. Switzerland Tourism’s Swissainstainable tourism initiative.

There is a lot of hype over the Summit this year because it is a part of the first Japan. The Summit has only rotated across the Americas and Europe previously.

Furthermore, Japan is a desirable destination among people from most parts of the world, and many outside of Asia are not familiar with Hokkaido. Our members in Europe and the Americas are eager to experience Hokkaido along with its Ainu indigenous people.

The Summit in Asia will hopefully attract more Asian attendees due to ease of access.

What other ATTA trade events are lined up for 2023?

We have Adventure Elevate happening in Maine (the US) in May, an annual North American event. Although it brings mainly North American trade together, the marketplace feature sees the participation of some Asian destinations and sellers looking for a chance to meet North American buyers.

There is also Adventure Connects, a series of member meetings sessions. Most are held in North America, but we also have a presence post-World Travel Market in London and at ITB Berlin.
The green way forward

Associations need to form partnerships and encourage their members to develop ESGs in order to create a tipping point in sustainability. By Rosa Ocampo

As associations are taking their sustainability commitment further up a notch, and are taking collective action to form partnerships with other organisations, while ensuring that their members are also practicing in their chosen professions.

**ESGs are equally important**
Antonio Ongsiako, liaison officer and director, Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (FINEX) reiterated at the 10th Associations Summit of the Philippine Council for Associations and Association Executives (PCAAE) that sustainability is not just a byword, but a practice.

Ongsiako added that these days, lenders also evaluate the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) standards of a borrowing company, and investors tend to avoid putting their money in companies that do not have ESG rating.

As sustainability practices are increasingly being demanded by the market and required by regulatory agencies, ESG is the way to go, said Ramon Isberto, auditor of the board of trustees of International Association of Business Communicators Philippines.

“If you are not yet on sustainability goals, you are already behind,” Isberto warned, adding that sustainability is “already a market thing, and not just an advocacy.”

**Combining resources**
As for the Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and the Pacific (ADFIAP), the association is ahead of its time, having published a sustainability report back in 2008. Currently, ADFIAP has several UNSDGs in place, one of which is number 17, Partnership For The Goals.

ADFIAP secretary-general Enrique Florencio explained that sometimes associations do not have the resources to pursue sustainability hence, it is important to forge partnerships, be it bilateral, multilateral or talks with like-minded institutions and associations.

Ongsiako further asserted that sustainability is a whole ecosystem, where people and organisations are all working together for the greater good.

PCAAE founder and CEO, Octavio Peralta, agreed: “Associations and other membership organisations wield an influence on their industry sectors, professions, communities and stakeholder groups. They are conduits for addressing sustainability issues via a whole sector and profession approach rather than acting individually.”

“Associations that have been active in the sustainability sphere include the UN Global Compact (UNGCI), the world’s largest sustainability initiative with more than 12,000 companies and 3,000 non-business signatories in over 160 countries and with 69 local networks around the world.

UNGCI’s local networks are association-like entities that help members align their strategies and operations with the UNGC Ten Principles including those on human rights, and the environment. The association also takes strategic actions to advance broader societal goals such as the SDGs.

Peralta, who is also the executive director of Global Compact Network Philippines, shared that another example of associations banding together for sustainability is the UK-based Climate ActionZero.

Another collective initiative is Pacific Asia Travel Association’s (PATA) efforts through its various chapters. It is an influencer “because the World Tourism Organization pays attention to PATA’s advocacies,” said Bob Zozobrado, chairman of PATA Philippines Chapter.

**A new lens**
Overall, there is still need to drive home the message that associations are key drivers to sustainability action.

Jane Vong Holmes, GainingEdge senior manager Asia, advised that associations “can, and should, include clauses that will address these sustainability issues in their RFPs for their conventions.”

The first step is for the associations to review their existing RFPs and see if there are gaps that require attention.

“Besides climate change and environmental issues, DEI – Diversity, Equality and Inclusion – are also important goals that associations, as communities, can push through their meetings and conventions,” Holmes pointed out.

She said every organisation and community has the power to make changes, including destinations, host venues, and business events suppliers.

“Associations should also factor in anticipated impacts from their conventions that will contribute SDG goals. If they do not, then savvy destinations should offer convention legacies leading to the achievement of SDGs as part of their bidding strategy,” she noted.

Vong Holmes pointed out that the Covid-19 crisis has helped “hit the reset button”, hence there is no better time for associations to look at how they can contribute to the achievement of SDGs.

She further encouraged associations to think about the new “definition of success” of a conference, instead of focusing on the traditional measurement of success through attendee numbers.

**Associations can contribute to the achievement of SDGs**
Holidays and destination experiences do not always come easy for differently-abled individuals, but some tourism players are making sure that their welcome is equally warm for all guests. By Karen Yue

Travel accessibility is improving after more than three years of disruption. However, for people with mobility, mental and/or sensory issues, the definition of travel accessibility takes on a much deeper meaning. While differently-abled, these consumers share the same wanderlust as everyone else and look to destinations and tourism suppliers to provide the support they need to fulfill their travel dreams.

Spain, whose tourism appeals range from big-city draws, star-studded football clubs, historical landmarks and tantalising cuisine, says all these and more welcome travellers with disabilities. Fifteen cities across the country whose historical centres and urban spaces have been declared UNESCO World Heritage Sites promise universal accessible routes.

Take Ávila for instance. The destination, renowned for its medieval city walls, is regarded as one of the leading accessible tourist destinations in Spain. The Visitor Reception Centre offers wheelchair ramps for loan, while travellers relying on hearing aids can communicate with a magnetic loop installed at the information desk. Typographical scale models of five of the nine gates in the iconic city walls enable travellers with visual difficulties to learn about the monument through touch. Furthermore, audio-visual guides are available in nine different languages, including international sign language and a version adapted for children.

As differently-abled travellers explore Ávila’s best sights via a specially-designed accessible route that threads through town, they will notice that commercial establishments with basic accessibility requirements are identified by the international symbol of access on their doors along with the Ávila Accessible label – the latter awarded by the Ávila Town Hall and the Municipal Board for the Disabled.

To further assist differently-abled travellers, Turespagna has created the Spain is Accessible website that allows users to search destinations by theme or disability.

The Spain is Accessible website helps users to search destinations by theme or disability

People needing to consider accessibility can now easily find accommodation options from specialist providers like Spinal Life’s Healthy Living Centre which has personal support workers, to traditional hotels with accessible rooms such as the Cairns Novotel Oasis Resort,” said Mark Olsen, CEO of Tourism Tropical North Queensland.

Disabled Mission Beach journalist Imogen Kars has trialled a selection of accessible accommodation and tours, and has produced a series of blogs on travel options in Cairns, Palm Cove, the Cassowary Coast, Port Douglas and the Atherton Tablelands.

To align tourism operators with its accessible tourism goal, the NTO led a ‘Making Tourism More Accessible Workshop’ at the Spinal Life Healthy Living Centre. Trade participants got to learn about opportunities in the accessible tourism market, access business case studies, and hear from people with physical disabilities about what they are looking for in a destination.

Senior access officer and advocate for Spinal Life Australia, Dane Cross, said the accessible tourism market represented a largely untapped opportunity for tourism operators.

“Often, tourism operators don’t know where to begin on their journey towards better accessibility – this workshop enables people to ask simple questions and find out more about where to begin. We’d love to help tourism operators understand how to be more accessible and to secure a larger part of this market,” said Cross.

Accessible sandy paradise

Recognising that the Maldives is usually physically out of bounds for differently-abled travellers, one private island resort has made it its mission to make its space welcoming for everyone, including those with additional mobility, sensory and cognitive requirements.

Taking guidance from Inclucare, a UK-based organisation that works to remove barriers to travel for disabled people across the globe, Amilla Maldives Resort has ordered staff training on inclusion excellence and has had its facilities audited by Inclucare officials.

General manager Jason Kruse told TTG Show Daily that Amilla Maldives Resort is equipped to meet inclusive travel needs. “It already boasts many universally accessible villas on the ground level, all designed with wide doorways and accessible showers. These units also come with beach wheelchair, floating wheelchair for swimming, and in villa phones that light up when they ring, for the benefit of hearing-impaired guests.

Soon to come are deaf-alert systems, induction hearing loops, magnifying glasses, adaptive yoga, aroma and sound experiences through the jungle for vision-impaired holidaymakers, and facilities that regulate sensory input for guests on the autism spectrum.

Taking ground control

Thailand-based travel operator and distributor Tripseed recently launched a range of accessible travel programmes and experiences such as inclusive tours for elderly and disabled travellers.

Extensive audits have been conducted across properties, tour locations and transportation – all to evaluate ramp inclinations, availability of grab bars, manoeuvrability of important rooms, and to advise agents and partners on the most suitable travel options based on the level of assistance required.

Looking to support travellers with invisible disabilities, Tripseed is standing by specialised guides who are trained in American sign language, British sign language and Thai sign language, as well as those trained to assist guests with audio-visual impairments.

Tripseed’s differently-abled guests can enjoy top-selling tours, such as an evening street food experience in an electric tuk-tuk, specially-outfitted with a built-in wheelchair ramp and unique wheelchair restraint system – a first in the industry.

Tripseed also scrutinises tour routes to ensure that travellers are not met with navigation difficulties.

Founder Evan Chuckie told TTG Show Daily that his company has a few international accessible tour bookings lined up through to mid-2023. It is also working with Wheel the World to reach out to more differently-abled travellers.

Skylark Rainforest Cabins is an accessible tourism experience. Photo by Dane Cross, Spinal Life Australia; Tripseed’s electric tuk tuk are designed to bring ease of movement to differently-abled guests.

TTG Show Daily
Indonesia highlights

From elegant city stays to breezy resorts, Indonesia’s accommodation specialists are rolling out a warm welcome to travellers

SANTIKA INDONESIA HOTELS & RESORTS

Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts, Indonesia’s largest local hotel chain, owns and manages a collection of four attractive resorts in the country’s top island destinations, Bali, Lombok and Belitung.


The Kayana Beach – Lombok comprises four villa types: Deluxe, Duplex, Beach Front and Hillside. Each villa is decorated with ethnic Lombok handicrafts and has its own private pool and sundeck, offering the highest level of comfort and privacy, with a personal butler on hand 24 hours a day. Other facilities include The Blues Restaurant and Saxum Spa. The Blues Restaurant is located on a hill, boasting stunning views of the Lombok Strait, the three Gili Islands, and in the distance, the majestic cone of Bali’s Mount Agung. The restaurant also features a deck that can be used for weddings.

The Anvaya Beach Resort – Bali is the first five-star hotel that is wholly managed and owned by Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts. Located on iconic Kuta Beach, the resort offers unrivalled service and facilities, various room types, and authentic architectural and interior designs. There are 495 rooms across seven different types: Deluxe, Premiere, Deluxe Suite, Premiere Suite, The Anvaya Suite, Beach Front Suite, and The Anvaya Villa. Kumiyi Restaurant and The Sands Restaurant provide a full range of breakfast and dining options. The resort also features a wine cellar, swimming pool, kids club, spa, meeting rooms, ballroom and in-house fitness centre.

The Samaya Seminyak – Bali promises a pampering experience for every guest. It boasts direct access to Seminyak Beach and offers 52 villas, each with private swimming pool. Guests can enjoy breakfast at any time, and, at day’s end, the promise of a beautiful sunset view.

Meanwhile, Hotel Santika Premiere Beach Resort – Belitung is one of the finest resorts in the Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts network. The four-star hotel in Dusun Ulu, Sijuk has 128 rooms and suites as well as one villa, all of which have balconies with stunning views of Tanjung Tinggi beach. Premiere rooms have direct access to the swimming pool and lagoon pool. Other facilities include meeting rooms, a ballroom, restaurant, lounge, spa and gym.

Santika Indonesia Hotels and Resorts currently manages 112 hotels under seven main brands: the five-star Anvaya Beach Resorts; four-star Hotel Santika Premiere; three-star Hotel Santika; three-star “insta-genic” Kampi Hotel; Amaris Hotel, “smart” hotel brand; and The Royal Collection, with its boutique villas The Samaya and The Kayana.

https://www.mysantika.com

MERUSAKA NUSA DUA, INDONESIA

Nestled along a pristine stretch of Mengiat Beach, Merusaka Nusa Dua is a five-star resort that offers a haven of relaxation and rejuvenation.

There are 455 well-appointed contemporary styled rooms, suites, and villas that exude a refined Balinese charm, with architecture inspired by the seven Hindu goddesses and Penglipuran Village. The resort features all-day multiple dining options, bars, a full service spa, fitness centre and kids club. Active guests will delight at the resort’s three-tier infinity pools overlooking beautiful gardens and turquoise ocean, beach pool with jumping board, river pool on the village, and communal pools at the Deluxe Room Pool Access, and jogging and bicycle tracks that wind around the property.

Guest are treated to opulence from the moment they arrive; they will feel as though they have been transported to a tropical paradise.

The hotel is also equipped with a variety of meeting rooms armed with the latest technology as well as outdoor event venues.

It is located in the exclusive and secure gated compound of Nusa Dua area, and surrounded by interesting places such as Peninsula Island, Water Blow, Bali Collection shopping centre, dining venues, museum, theatre and Mengiat Beach. Guests enjoy easy access to Garuda Wisnu Kencana cultural park, Pandawa Beach and Melasti Beach, while Ngurah Rai International Airport is a convenient 30 minutes’ drive away.

The blend of facilities and excellent location makes Merusaka Nusa Dua the perfect destination for both leisure and business.

www.merusaka.com
Tipple with a twist

With the opening of these unique bars in Asia, every night out promises to be a fun one with friends. By Melissa Anne Tan

Only Negroni
The first-of-its-kind Negroni concept bar in Mumbai, the Native Bombay Bar is also a cozy fine-dining restaurant serving pan-Indi-an cuisine. Sitting at the island bar, there is a welcoming vibe as one ponders over the selection of drinks from the menu. Drinks not to be missed are the Passion Sbagliato and Marmite-infused Negroni that has been aged in barrels for two weeks – other favourites include Coco & Curry and White Negroni.

Camp and cocktails
Enjoy sipping on cocktails in a tent at Rimbar KL, Kuala Lumpur’s first camping-themed bar. A play on the words “rimba,” which means jungle in Malay, and “bar”, Rimbar brings a sense of playfulness to the area where tables are set in tents, giving a sense of privacy in this novel setting – making it perfect for those Instagram photos! Plus, drinks match the camping theme with names like Hammock, Tent and Starry Starry Night.

Beer on tap
The first international outpost of Hong Kong’s craft beer brewery Carbon Brews is now open in Tokyo’s Akasaka area. There are six types of IPA and lager on tap, plus one beer that will change seasonally. Order by the pint or by the glass, there are also colourful cans to take home. The dishes served are modern takes on Hong Kong classics like the typhoon shelter squid sprinkled with curry powder, mapo tofu cheese fries, and the pineapple buns with char siu egg or anko raisin butter fillings.

Drink up doc!
Have an immersive cocktail experience at Apothecary Saigon, a vintage club that looks like a medical clinic, with drinks served on a surgical tray while medical charts and artwork don the walls. The cocktails are named after famous scientists, such as Isaac Newton, Marie Curie and Charles Darwin. Situated in a little old house on a small street in downtown Saigon, the bar also houses a life-sized stuffed ostrich.

Cool hangout
Located in Seoul’s Hongdae university district, D’Still is a little different from the usual party-hard venues. The bar’s décor matches its approach to cocktails – calm and skilled, yet unconventional. With shelves stacked with whisky, gourmet bar bites and cool tunes in the background, this is a hangout that is not just for the young but for those well past graduation age. D’s still also utilises seasonal ingredients paired with the perfect cocktail, such as miyeok seaweed in the winter and dureup shoots in the spring.
Asia brings warmth to ITB

By Caleb Richard Lai
Pan Pacific Hotels Group Singapore’s Joanne Seah (right, seated)

Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts’ L Sudarsana (seated)

Tourism Promotions Board Philippines’ Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles (third from left, standing) and Department of Tourism’s Shahlimar Heke Tamaso (third from right, standing)

Penang Global Tourism Malaysia’s Yeon Pauline (left)

Riu Hotels and Resorts Spain’s Oliver Kloth (left) and Mar Mora Mediavilla

Bali Mandira Beach Resort & Spa Indonesia’s Lenny Willyana (left, seated)

Japan National Tourism Organization Germany’s Sayaka Usui

Hong Kong Tourism Board Germany’s Anette Wendel-Mecke (centre) and her team

ITB BERLIN

15 • March 8, 2023
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THE SAMAYA
The Samaya Seminyak - Bali
Jl. Laksmana Seminyak, 80361
Bali – Indonesia
P. (+62-361) 731149
E. info@thesamayabali.com

The Samaya Ubud - Bali
Banjar Bung Desa Sayan, Ubud 80571
Bali – Indonesia
P. (+62-361) 973 606
E. info.ubud@thesamayabali.com

thesamayabali.com

THE KAYANA
The Kayana Seminyak - Bali
Jl. Raya Petitenget, Kerobokan Kelod
Kuta Utara, Bali – Indonesia
P. (+62-361) 8476628, (+62) 899 0116 789
E. info@thekayana.com

The Kayana Beach - Lombok
Jl. Raya Selongggi, Kecinan - Lombok Utara, Nusa Tenggara Barat
83352 - Indonesia
P. (+62-370) 6199 000, (+62-21) 2700027
E. lombok@thekayana.com

thekayana.com