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Work-life balance is real



Raini Hamdi
Senior Editor

“Meetings will undergo a big change going forward in order to keep Gen-Y’ers absorbed, interested and inspired.”

I’m not a Gen-Y’er (unfortunately!) and, for most of my business travel in my career – for meetings, conferences and travel trade shows – it was work and no life.

Bleasure or bleisure – combining business with pleasure or leisure (the focus of our cover story this issue) – was *unheard* of. Less time in the meeting room and more time outside in the sun? Waah. More meetings in a resort or resort-like environment, in stylish meeting rooms that have the best views or their own putting greens? Waaaah. Half a day set aside for spa time, tours or play? Waaaaaaaaaaaaah.

If this were done in my generation (Gen-X, ok, not baby-boomers), we would be accused of wasting company’s money and time.

We ourselves would feel bad and guilty – never mind that we were always complaining that we never saw anything on our trip beyond the four walls of the conference centre or hotel room.

Have meetings gone soft? The answer, of course, is no. Bleasure is a direct offshoot of today’s Gen-Y lifestyle and if you don’t heed it, you are likely going to be doing less effective meetings.

The reality is company CEOs globally are most concerned about people development – it’s what they worry about the most and where they feel they have the least capability to handle. Are they attracting the right people?

How to retain them? How to develop them? How to keep them engaged? Gen-Y’ers, also known as Millennials, are from Mars. These are people who don’t even like an office structure and who cling dearly to work-life balance – imagine them being cooped up in a meeting room or talked down to by a conference speaker.

This is why meetings – and not just surface aspects like blue-skies gatherings and more time for play – will undergo a big change going forward in order to keep Gen-Y’ers absorbed, interested and inspired. My advice is to focus even more on content, as Gen-Y’ers are typically quick to see if it has real substance or is mediocre. After all, they are far more intelligent; they studied in high school what we were studying in university.

Secondly, focus on employing technology to keep them challenged pre-, during and post-event. Gen Y’ers like a lot of interaction through social media, for example, so speak their language in channels they use.

Thirdly, think of new ways of bonding them and giving them a relevant work-life balance – team exercises and theme parties that were popular once might not cut it anymore.

It is an issue that is real and worth thinking about.

I’m beginning to like this idea of work-life balance in meetings. Bring the bleasure on! ■

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Sun shines on resort

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Talk of the Trade

TALKING NUMBERS

3 The number of new hotels in Myanmar Accor has recently signed on. Two of them – the 168-key MGallery hotel in Naypyidaw and the 366-room Novotel Yangon Max – will open this year, while the 280-key Novotel Mandalay Mingalar will be ready by 2015. All will offer event facilities.

5 The amount in millions of Singapore dollars (US\$4 million) the Singapore Tourism Board will issue under the new Kickstart Fund, which is aimed at supporting lifestyle concepts with strong tourism potential, such as pop-up entertainment, dining, retail or arts events. Other forms of support will also be given to boost tourism productivity.

AUSTRALIA

Tourism Australia gets more funds for Asia

By Karen Yue



McEvoy: Asia focus

Tourism Australia will receive A\$12.5 million (US\$12.8 million) for the second tranche of the government's Asia Marketing Fund by July 1, an amount dedicated to growing Asian footfalls during the 2013/2014 financial year.

The Asia Marketing Fund comes on top of Tourism Australia's overall budget for destination promotion across the world.

According to Andrew McEvoy, managing director of Tourism Australia, part of the second phase of funding will be used to "up the ante on business events in Australia".

He said: "We will invest some of the money into doing what we do well in this business events sector. That means the usual trade shows, road shows, but more importantly, efforts to get planners to come to Australia. We will be doing familiarisations bigger and better.

"We have Dreamtime (a premier incentive business showcase) at the end of this year (in Melbourne), and we will do that exceptionally well. We will have 125 (MICE) buyers from around the world, a lot of them – perhaps half or a little more – will be from Asia."

The fund will also be used on "aviation attraction or aviation partnerships" across Asia to create more air access from the region into Australia.

Continued from page 8

TAIWAN

TAITRA takes over MICE promotions for Taiwan

Another four-year MICE promotion programme has been put in place beginning 2013, following the conclusion of the *Taiwan MICE Advancement Program* last December.

Initiated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs' Bureau of Foreign Trade (BOFT) and executed by the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), the new *Taiwan's MICE Industry Pilot Program* will continue to focus on grow-

ing the number of corporate meetings, incentives, international conferences and exhibitions held in the country.

The new programme will also take a keen interest on using technology to further Taiwan's event capabilities. For instance, cloud technology would be used to build a systematic MICE database that event organisers could access at any time.

A MICE e-institute has

also been created to provide education and expand existing database, enabling better job matches for professionals and volunteers.

For greater efficiency, TAITRA has brought the three departments of Overall Implementation, International Marketing & Promotion and International Meeting Hosting under one roof, leaving the Training & Certification department to retain its own office.

Commenting on the Taiwan's MICE Industry Pilot Program, GIS Group's CEO Jason Yeh said: "It has been a scant month after TAITRA took the lead on the MICE project and I have not seen much information on its new objectives. If (TAITRA) can really (focus) their energy (on) promoting Taiwan as a meeting destination, that would be a great push for the market." – **Prudence Lui**

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PHILIPPINES

Bigger appetites for outbound M&I

By Karen Yue

Strengthening business performance among corporates in the Philippines is spurring greater demand for overseas meetings and incentives, said MICE specialists at AIME 2013 in February.

Simon Ang, operations manager of Manila-based Celebrate Life TLC Corp, told *TTGmice*: “Companies in the Philippines are doing really well as the current leadership is good, and the global economy is starting to see signs of improvement. As a result, my clients are raising their budgets for overseas meetings and incentives this year by as much as 25 per cent.”

Jefferson R Catalan, general manager of BC Travel and Tours Corp in Quezon City, also reported a 50 per cent increase in his clients’ budgets, which was spent on better quality accommodation in boutique and



Bhutan is hot among well-to-do companies

five-star hotels.

Catalan commented that some clients were involving more attendees in their programmes and buying up destinations that offer unique experiences. He said that interest towards Australia on the whole was growing as “most venues offered here cannot be found in Asian cities”.

Meanwhile, Ang also noticed that clients were willing to visit newer and

farther destinations, such as Bhutan and Dubai, while China’s Shenzhen was also gaining ground for its lower prices and proximity to Hong Kong, enabling day trips.

Meanwhile, Travelexperts Makati City’s vice president – business development, Janice T Go, noted a rise in meetings and incentives bound for Europe, the US and secondary cities in Japan.

“A lot of our clients don’t like having their events in a (domestic) venue. They prefer to go overseas, which will ensure a captive audience and allow delegates to take home a memorable experience. As such, we have to be aware of unusual venues available in any destination, and Australia is great for that. But we need to get in touch more with the cities (to know what event products and experiences are available),” said Go.

MALAYSIA

Malaysians halt outbound business events for elections

Malaysian corporates are reacting to news of a possible general election between now and May with a freeze on outbound meetings and incentives, said Malaysian MICE specialists.

HTT Travel Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, head of events, operations & accounts services, Yeong Hock Meng, said: “Many Malaysians want to cast their votes at this coming general election, and are therefore postponing overseas trips. That has badly impacted the company, as we have no corporate outbound business

from Malaysia throughout the first half of 2013.”

Panorama Holidays Malaysia, sales manager for MICE – outbound tours, Yong Y H, said clients had postponed travel to as late as the third quarter. “We will just have to sell much harder to catch up after the general elections and during the remaining months of the year,” said Yong.

However, MICE Hubs Travel and Tours managing director, Konrad Ong, observed a different reaction from clients, reporting a surge in last-minute meetings and incentives

with lead times as short as two weeks as they “rush out their trips”.

Ong added that many of these clients had delayed trips planned for end-2012 due to talk about a possible general election at the end of the year.

“But that didn’t happen and when news broke that the government would call for an election in March or the following months, these clients knew they had to execute their meetings and incentives as soon as possible or risk further postponements,” he explained.

According to him, the company received in January four bookings with a lead time of two weeks, bound for nearby destinations of Singapore, Penang and Langkawi.

That said, Ong noted that some clients were still going ahead with outbound meetings and incentives from now till June 2013.

“We had 15 events confirmed in January, which is quite rare for the company and perhaps even for the industry, as the start of the year is usually slow for MICE,” he said. – **Karen Yue**

Cairns wins hearts of the Chinese

By Karen Yue

Business Events Cairns & Great Barrier Reef (BECGBR) has seen rising interest and bookings for Chinese meetings and incentives this year, driven by factors including improved air access and strong trade links between the city and China.

Rosie Douglas, director of business events, BECGBR, said a number of Chinese business events had been confirmed for 2013, with most hailing from the insurance and pharmaceutical sectors.

"We have a group of 150 top achievers that will be coming



Steele: bilateral trade links are a boon

Chinese incentive groups tend to stay two to three nights.

Ross Steele, general manager of Cairns Convention Centre, who has also seen "real growth" in Chinese attendees at association events, pointed

over in April and a 100-pax pharmaceutical incentive group in May," Douglas said, adding that

out that strong business links between companies in China and Cairns were also fueling growth in Chinese MICE arrivals.

Meanwhile, access has been boosted by China Eastern Airlines' decision to extend its trial period for two to three weekly direct flights from Shanghai to end-2013.

BECGBR will continue to study the market, support Tourism Australia's trade activities in China and produce destination marketing collaterals in Mandarin.

PAL blazes new routes

Philippine Airlines (PAL) will roll out six new international flights over the next few months, upping its total number of international services to 34. The network expansion begins with the launch of Manila-Kuala Lumpur flights on May 1. Services to Darwin, Brisbane, Perth, Guangzhou and Abu Dhabi will follow.

New airport in Sri Lanka's south

Sri Lanka's second international airport, Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport, opened in Hambantota on March 18. It can accommodate Airbus A380 aircraft.

More frequent flyer points

Singapore Airlines and Virgin America are building on their codeshare agreement with a new frequent flyer programme partnership.

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CHINA

Wuzhen puts faith in trade shows

By Karen Yue

The historic water town of Wuzhen in Zhejiang Province is banking on international trade shows to raise its profile among foreign meeting and incentive planners.

Yao Jie, marketing director, sales department, Wuzhen Tourism Co, told *TTGmice* that the tourism body had exhibited at several international trade shows in recent years (such as IT&CM China), and its participation at AIME 2013 was its second to-date.

Yao said: "We did not get many business leads from AIME 2012, but our presence helped place Wuzhen in the minds of buyers. I realised that many buyers this year came to us with an existing knowledge of Wuzhen, which was not the case in 2012. We had buyers from Singapore, Malaysia and Australia who came by to say that they were...considering taking events to Wuzhen."



Wuzhen lures event planners with its heritage venues

She added: "We get 1,000 domestic meetings and incentives on average a year, but international events come nowhere close. It is a shame because Wuzhen has many top quality resorts and unique venues that can do wonders for high-end corporate events."

She believes that stronger branding is needed, and said Wuzhen Tourism Co would continue to showcase the destination's MICE capabilities at international trade shows.

Continued from page 4

Stronger website

Tourism Australia's efforts to attract more Chinese leisure and business travellers will get a financial boost too.

McEvoy said: "Last year we undertook our second-tier city strategy in China. We have been very active in 11 cities around Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. This year we've gone into Chengdu, Chongqing and Qingdao. A good example of our success is Sichuan Airlines' launch of its first direct flight from Chengdu to Melbourne. That will really help to open up the rest of the country directly to Australia."

Meanwhile, Tourism Australia has beefed up the Business Events Australia website (www.businessevents.australia.com) with an intensive library of events case studies.

SOUTH KOREA

Pacific World partners Kims Travel

Pacific World has established a strategic partnership with a local inbound expert, Kims Travel, to expand into the growing MICE destination of South Korea.

The move is part of Pacific World's strategic thrust to increase presence in emerging MICE markets.

In 2011, UIA statistics ranked South Korea as the sixth most popular country and Seoul the fifth most popular city for international meetings, topping cities like Berlin and Tokyo.

Founded in 1991, Kims Travel specialises in the arrangement of ground services for large congresses and conferences.

Harsha Krishnan, strategic development director, Pacific World, said: "South Korea is a top-class meetings and incentives destination, and with the expansion of Pacific World into South Korea, we are now able to deliver outstanding experiences to our clients in this new destination."

Chun C Kim, CEO of Kims Travel and advisor to Pacific World South Korea, said: "South Korea has become a much-coveted destination for international conferences, meetings and incentive solutions in recent years for its versatility. South Korea is a perfect venue for both small and large functions due to its cutting-edge IT technology, historical and cultural sites of many thousands years and last but not least, the K-pop culture (which is) spreading like wildfire."

2013 Calendar

April 14-16

Great India Travel Bazaar
Jaipur, India

April 17-19

IT&CM China
Shanghai, China

May 6-9

Arabian Travel Mart
Dubai, UAE

MALAYSIA

MyCEB mobile app for conferences

Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) is developing a mobile application as part of its support programme for conferences in the country with at least 500 international participants.

Set to be launched in Kuala Lumpur in May, the technology will comprise two components – a conference application and a conference delegation welcome kit.

The conference application will contain updated conference information and features that allow delegates to vote and respond to surveys on their smartphones.

The conference delegation welcome kit will include listings of places of interest and dining privileges, as well as public transportation details and street maps.

MyCEB general manager sales & marketing, Ho Yoke Ping, told the magazine that the mobile application would add value to international conferences secured in Malaysia and attract more of such events to the destination.

Other Malaysian states, such as Sarawak, Sabah and Penang, will get their hands on the mobile application at a later stage. – **S Puvaneswary**

SINGAPORE

MICE Hubs expands presence

By Karen Yue

Malaysia-headquartered MICE Hubs Travel and Tours, which specialises in managing events for the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors, has established a Singapore branch to grow its business reach.

The new branch, led by director Lawrence Hing, is staffed by two other persons.

MICE Hubs' managing director, Konrad Ong, said: "The Singapore office will focus on developing business leads out of Singapore for meetings and incentives bound for Malaysia and beyond, and manage



Ong: potential across the border

Singapore-bound business events from clients based in Malaysia."

According to Ong, Singapore has always

been a hot destination for his Malaysian clients, and having a team in the Lion City to help with events there would ensure smoother operations.

"Singapore's pricey hotel rooms rates and the weaker

Malaysian ringgit are not a major deterrent because meetings and incentive groups from Malaysia can travel overland by coach instead of taking a flight, which offers huge savings. Moreover, Singapore has a variety of attractions that appeal greatly to our clients, such as the Universal Studios Singapore theme park, the Singapore Flyer and the two integrated resorts," Ong said.

MICE Hubs is also deepening its product depth with specialisation in training and teambuilding programmes.

MICE WINS

KL to welcome top concierge

More than 400 of the world's best concierge from over 43 countries will sweep into the Malaysian capital for the six-day 61st Les Clefs d'Or UICH International Congress next year. The event will include activities such as a street food fair.

Discover bags two events

Singapore-based events specialist Discover Holidays Asia will lead two corporate groups to Singapore this month. One will be a 220-pax meeting and incentive group from a regional cosmetics firm, the other a 200-pax incentive from a Middle Eastern insurance company.

CORRECTION – The name of Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre's executive chef was spelt wrong in last issue's *Mega Leadership Seminar 2012* case study. His name should be Tony Panetta.

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COVER STORY



Sun shines on res

Resorts are said to be more popular these days for MICE because people want more playtime even when they meet. **Raini Hamdi** looks at the 'bleasure' phenomenon, a blurring of lines between business with pleasure or leisure, which is forcing meeting organisers and venue providers to look at work-life balance seriously.

The quest for work-life balance among today's road warriors has crept into the meetings sector, where providing wellness to delegates has become a serious thinking point of meeting planners and venue providers instead of an after-thought.

Research by at least three chains shows that 'bleisure' or 'bleasure' – a mixing or blurring of business with leisure or pleasure – is a real phenomenon.

Hilton HHonors' survey, for instance, shows one in three UK employees invite partners and families along on business trips, and a high percentage of employers (45 per cent) are sympathetic and supportive of their staff creating their own bleasure stays.

Even Chinese travellers today are "not shy" to mix business with pleasure, a Wyndham Hotel Group survey shows. More than two-thirds of Chinese travellers (67 per cent) say they bring a spouse or a family member along on business trips and 59 per cent extend business trips to include leisure time.

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) in South-east Asia notes a 50 per cent

rise in bleasure bookings among meeting delegates, who add on a leisure stay pre- or post-meeting. Not only that, it claims that the bleasure phenomenon is also changing the way people meet: resorts are becoming a more popular destination for business travel and meetings; less time is being spent cooped up in the boardroom (reduced to an average of a day, with as many as two or three days spent in break-out sessions); and more time is being spent on programmes that include working with social and environmental charities. In fact, IHG said around 25 per cent of enquiries now required at least a half-day be set aside for delegates to enjoy the spa or local excursions.

As a result of these findings, IHG is promoting blue-sky thinking and self-improvement meetings, according to Mark Flower, director of commercial, IHG South-east Asia.

Changing supply

Hotels and venues are rewiring to meet bleasure aspirations, with new properties having a better go at this.

The Crowne Plaza Phuket Panwa Beach



orts

Resort, for example, has a meeting room with its very own golf putting green.

The best spaces are also going to meetings, no longer in the basement like before. An example is The Summit, a meeting room at the top of a mountain offered by InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort.

The design of meeting rooms too is being redefined. The new Pullman Bangkok Silom Hotel G, for instance, has a meeting space called The Gallery, done in a New York-style art gallery. Apart from its conceptual decor and minimalist furnishing, the room offers plenty of daylight and is peppered with iPads for delegates.

"Clients want more flexibility, reactivity, multi-tasking, connectivity, which impacts the interior design and even the service," said Xavier Louyot, Pullman's vice president global marketing.

Integrated resorts (IRs) such as Marina Bay Sands (MBS) Singapore see themselves as inherent venues for pleasure, due to the multitude of pleasure options available – spa, entertainment, art, F&B, theatre, casino, etc. And while delegates can enjoy these at leisure, the IRs come

Resorts more popular

Meetings in resorts or in resort-like venues are more attractive to participants as they offer various opportunities for pleasure, from swimming to sports to relaxing spas, agrees Monette Iturralde-Hamlin, president and founder, TeamAsia Manila. It is also easier on the organiser as these venues are already set up for pleasure, she added.

"Our experience is that executives are more likely to join business meetings or conventions if there are opportunities for relaxation such as golf or if they can bring their families or partners for some family time before or after the meeting. And, as golf aficionados know, business is conducted on the golf course and important deals closed. Since networking or developing



relationships are an important consideration in meetings, providing opportunities for networking in a relaxed atmosphere allows participants to get to know each other better," she said. – **Rosa Ocampo**

up with ideas for groups, such as the Dine Around at MBS, which leverages on the property's six celebrity chef restaurants. Delegates start with cocktails and canapés at the first restaurant, then move on to subsequent restaurants for starters, mains, desserts and digestifs. "This allows clients to have a leisurely culinary adventure that they may not normally get to enjoy on their own time," said John Mims, senior vice president, worldwide sales and resort marketing Asia, Las Vegas Sands Corp.

"Expectations of business travel have changed. More and more, pleasure is a priority than ever before and they expect a higher level of comfort and service while on business. Being seasoned travellers, they also expect to be surprised by new and innovative offerings that they have not come across before in other destinations – comparing, contrasting and making mental notes of what they like," he said.

Have meetings gone soft?

But does pleasure put meetings in danger of becoming soft, pandering to a desire for more play-time?

Corporate chiefs such as David Levitt, president talent development of Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide, who organised O&M's Asia-Pacific conference in Kyoto last year, said the success of a meeting still lies fundamentally in how well it has been thought through by the company.

"A lot of meetings follow a formula that is outdated and predictable. Because they lack a real set of tangible, aspirational meeting objectives, some well-thought out theatricality and sufficient investment in the areas that matter, disappointment can set in early.

"There is usually too much input/talking at, top-down, death by powerpoint and long-winded status updates, combined with a lack of real participation (not to be confused with insufficiently planned and thought through break-out sessions). Most meetings also suffer from over-packed, crammed agendas that would benefit from being ruthlessly pruned and focused. And finally, not enough imagination applied to breaks, meals and fun – this is not about cost, it's about imagination.

"We have learnt the hard way that meetings need to be given a serious amount of careful thought well in advance – not simply because of the cost but to define what their purpose, motivational benefits and value are, and how to be able to sustain the momentum and commitments afterwards. All our significant face-to-face meetings receive a great deal of work in the planning stages."

That said, Levitt agrees that his meetings are not all work and no play. "There needs to be reward in several forms," he said. Asked if hotels were pushing the work-life balance too far, he said: "We ourselves are mindful of trying to get this right. I suspect some try to do so more than others, especially if it is a resort location which, by the way, is a pointless location selection by meeting planners if all they intend to do is keep their participants in a windowless meeting room with no time to enjoy the location except for a token dinner by the pool or on the beach.

"We have learnt to seriously think more about the locations we choose, why and how to ensure they are relevant to the meeting's goals and objectives and the wishes of participants." ■

All meet, no play makes Jack dull

Corporate end-users agree bleisure brings out the best in Jack. They tell *TTGmice* reporters why and how bleisure changes the way they choose event venues



Meetings with more pleasure elements are more effective, especially for conferences

that run longer than three days. This is an opportunity for busy people to bring their families along. Spouse and children can enjoy themselves in the resort while the delegate attends meetings. There is still quality family time spent, especially at breakfast and dinner. Should the delegate come alone, (he could take the) chance to relax, de-stress and reflect.

This is why I especially like beach and jungle resorts. If it is a city hotel, it must have flavours of a resort.

We add the pleasure elements after, not during, meetings, so there's no concern about having too much (fun). We add spa and massage treatments, or go out to a venue that has good music and a dance floor. Malaysia is still lacking in this area. Bangkok and Singapore have better options. ””

Lulie Melling

Congress general, 15th International Peat Congress 2016 in Sarawak, and Tropical Peat Research Laboratory Unit Director, Sarawak Chief Minister's Office



Amway hosts incentive trips combining business and pleasure with an aim to foster team spirit and trust.

In past incentive trips, participants jogged together in scenic Hangzhou, played basketball on a Mediterranean cruise, and so on. This year, there will be incentive trips to Hawaii and Taiwan, combining business sessions and pleasure.

In addition to business updates and outlook, speakers with weight and appeal add essence to the meeting. Break-out sessions and panel discussions are important, but so are pleasure elements that make participants feel unique and recognised. We have to have the right (content) for meetings and also set aside adequate time for pleasure. ””

Louisa Chan

General manager, Amway Hong Kong



Meetings are definitely more effective when some fun is injected in them.

Medical meetings are generally informative and educational, so relaxing locations and venues with a different atmosphere or unusual decor will help to lighten the mood. Some hotels also offer all-day coffee breaks, which are welcomed by delegates as they don't have to stick to fixed coffee break timings.

However, the quality of service is most important to doctors and medical practitioners, not pleasure elements. ””

Rivadee Rattananuangchote

Office administrator with a medical company in Thailand (company name withheld)



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Blue-sky meeting venues

Don't box your delegates into a room. Here are some unique ideas for blue-sky meetings. By **Raini Hamdi, Liang Xinyi Pholsena** and **S Puvaneswary**



M23 at Centara Grand Bangkok

Centara Grand's new M23 event space is designed as an intimate setting with a high degree of social interaction. Covering more than 1,000m² on the hotel's 23rd floor, the space is divided into four boardrooms with capacity ranging from 18 to 50 pax, and offer abundant natural light and views of Bangkok's skyline.

The four meeting rooms are equipped with the latest comprehensive audio-visual capability, each with built-in LCD projectors and screens, high-speed Wi-Fi Internet access, personalised stationery, coffee machine, and stocked with a selection of soft drinks, still and sparkling mineral water and tasty lozenges. Meeting rooms M1 and M2 also have interactive screens.

A highlight of M23 are its four exclusive spaces that are kitted out for bleasure. Upon arrival, delegates are greeted in My Foyer, a reception area with modern interior design and plush seating. My Kitchen is a show kitchen and bar that can cater to tea breaks, luncheons and social events, with tables and high-seats for delegates to enjoy nibbles and refreshment during coffee breaks. The adjoining My Terrace features alfresco views of the bustling city below and is perfect for cocktails or a standing buffet. My Lawn is a 50m-long open-air patio with a putting green that adds a casual, fun element to corporate retreats, and can be used as a spot for post-meeting cocktails, dinners or BBQs.

Meet in a 'hut' at Best Western Premier Hon Tam Resort & Residences



Aside from being on a private island – Hon Tam Island in Nha Trang, Vietnam – this resort has a unique Flamingo Meeting room that immerses delegates into their surroundings with its original hut concept and outdoor environment. The hut can accommodate around 100pax.

The resort features 49 oceanfront villas, a stunning beachfront location and an array of leisure facilities including a huge driving range and other recreational activities. Amenities include iPod docking stations, LCD flat screen TVs and free Wi-Fi access.

Playful W Bangkok

The new 407-key W Bangkok aims to stir the Thai capital's meetings scene with stylish and playful design ethos.

W Bangkok offers more than 1,300m² of meeting and event space, featuring seven meeting rooms and an outdoor space outfitted with adaptable conference furniture and state-of-the-art audio/visual equipment.

The 425m² pillarless Great Room boasts nine-metre ceilings outfitted with shades of LED lighting for sparkling and electrifying occasions.

For meetings booked under the W's Sensory packages, planners can get ideas flowing with mood music and the hotel's signature scents, while the Recess packages offer a menu of activities, including a tangle toy for delegates to play with and de-stress as they attempt to 'untwist' it. Meeting planners can also throw in customised activities such as cooking, deejaying or mixology classes for delegates to get out of the mid-day rut and learn new skills.

Escape from mild meetings at W Bali

W Retreat & Spa Bali – Seminyak aims to be the perfect hotel for work and play through creative approaches and innovative design.

Its meeting rooms, including the Strategy Room, 1 Below, Studio or the 350m² Great Room, may be small spaces, but the hotel is big on bleasure ideas.

A programme called *Work Your Style* gets attendees to design their own T-shirts or shoes, while the *W Runway* turns them into runway models. There are programmes for fitness buffs too, such as *W Olympics*, where your group can compete in a variety of sports such as mini-soccer, beach volleyball or dodge ball. There's even a 45-minute *Calorie Burners* session, which is a mix of cardio activities incorporating aerobics, martial arts movements and stretching that you can weave into the meeting programme.



Meet at The Summit at InterContinental Danang

Set in the Son Tra Peninsula (also known as Monkey Mountain during the Vietnam war) with its own private bay, the 197-room InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort celebrated its grand opening on March 28.

Located on the highest point of the 39-hectare resort, The Summit events space comprises a main 296m² ballroom, an auditorium and four meeting rooms ranging between 36m² and 83m². The entire events area features an imaginative and grand design, blending an airy architecture with contemporary interpretation of Vietnamese design elements, such as green and yellow meeting chairs to offer interesting twists for delegates.

The adjoining terraces open onto spectacular views of the surrounding lush mountains and turquoise sea; the close proximity to nature will lighten the mood and bring delegates out of the typical “boxy” meeting room setting. Also, delegates can enjoy a sumptuous coffee break over spectacular views of the mythical Monkey Mountain on the terraces.

Jeff's Cellar at Banjaran Hotspings Retreat

This 25-villa wellness resort in Malaysia's Ipoh has a conference room that can seat 18 pax boardroom-style, but for a more unique venue, there's its wine bar, Jeff's Cellar, a 280-million-year-old cave which, on request, can host meetings.

Jeff's Cellar can comfortably accommodate 30 delegates, said Lybanor P Godio, resort manager.

The environment and philosophy of Banjaran Hotspings Retreat are designed to encourage renewal through wellness. Meeting delegates can opt for with yoga and breathing or tai chi exercises before breakfast. After the meeting, a Banjaran signature massage which combines the therapeutic and healing effects of Malay, Chinese and Indian techniques will follow.

Delegates staying at the resort for two nights or more can opt for a 30-minute wellness consultation to assess their lifestyle before a programme for weight loss, rejuvenation, longevity and detoxification is designed for them.

They can also detress after a day of meetings at the geothermal hotspings or, for the adventurous at heart, follow a jungle walk trail to enjoy the flora and fauna.

Meaningful fun at Pullman Lijiang

At Pullman Lijiang Resort & Spa, conference groups may learn about the history and culture of the local Naxi people including their Dongba hieroglyphics, dance and music, or discover Accor's Planet 21 environmental and sustainability programme while exploring the resort gardens and learn about local flora.

They can also race and navigate radio controlled boats around Camellia Lake or play PC games.

These are just two of various expert recommendations the resort team has up its sleeves to ensure business is mixed with a fine dose of pleasure.



COVER STORY

Life's a beach on the Margaret River

Break for a few hours to kayak, surf or fish on the beach in front of the Pullman Bunker Bay Margaret River, or to engage in teambuilding in its gardens or on the beach.

Cooking or wine master classes can also be held in the garden and function rooms, while wine-tasting, whale watching and cave exploration are all within 20 minutes of the hotel. Welcome drinks and canapés on its terrace come with unrivalled views of the Indian ocean and guests can watching whales breach between August and December.



Master the art of zen at Sofitel Plaza Hanoi

Following a top-to-toe renovation by Singapore-based architects DPD + Design in 2011, the 317-room Sofitel Plaza Hanoi was relaunched in April 2012 to further highlight the French art de vivre at its lakeside location. Its 10 meeting venues were also given a new look.

Overlooking the leafy Pho Duc Chinh street, the Hoi An room features large windows and roofs that can be partially opened to let in abundant sunlight, as well as natural finishings such as wood to create a Zen-inspired space. The black-lacquer windows adorned with pictures of bright-orange goldfish add splashes of colours to room, while potted plants deflect negative energy with their relaxing hues.

On the ground floor, the magenta-hued Library features a six-person board table, sofa, 50-inch TV, as well as framed black-and-white photographs, offering a cosy setting for small business meetings.

Le Panorama on the 19th floor has a large terrace where guests can take in clear views of the two lakes – Truc Back Lake and West Lake.

When the meetings have ended, head up to Summit Lounge, the penthouse-style rooftop bar on the 20th floor for 360-degree views of the city's skyline.

Cross over to GTower Hotel Kuala Lumpur

This 180-room hotel is on level 11 to 13 of GTower. Apart from the meeting and relaxation facilities provided on these three floors, guests can use the Club Floor facilities on Level 28 and gym facilities on level 7, which include a heated swimming pool, both of which are managed by Goldis, which owns and runs the hotel.

All hotel guests are entitled to Club Floor access. The venue's highlight is its Bridge Bar – a bridge connecting the two towers that form GTower. The Bridge Bar is a great place to chill after meetings and provides great views of Kuala Lumpur's skyline. Parts of the floor are made of see-through glass and, looking down, one can see the traffic 28 levels below.

Other Club Floor facilities include three soundproof boardrooms with seating for 10 to 20 pax and a lounge area with Wi-Fi access, ideal for informal discussions.

Check out also the Rooftop Bar on the 29th floor, the highest point of GTower. It provides panoramic evening and night views of Ampang Hills and Titiwangsa mountain range.



Fun convention centres?

Think convention centres and what come to mind are halls, more halls, even more rooms and equipment – not exactly a place for bleisure.

But these venues beg to differ.

"We take the work-life balance seriously and we want to ensure that delegates have the best possible experience while they are in Kuala Lumpur and at the centre," said Angeline Lue, director of sales & market-

ing of Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) in Malaysia.

Lue gave examples of how KLCC helps delegates achieve a work-life balance through initiatives such as free cultural activities – henna art, Chinese calligraphy, batik painting, pewter-smithing, songket and basket weaving and gamelan and wood carving – for delegates who do not have the time to explore Malaysia's multicultural diversity and arts and craft heritage.

The centre occasionally hosts art exhibitions of local and international artists in designated public areas.

On KLCC's top-most level – level four – there are informal sitting rest areas littered with bean bags, offering delegates a chance to relax and take in the beautiful views of the well-manicured park. The level also offers free Wi-Fi access.

Give me a real break

Industry players share their favourite coffee break experiences



"We have seen some interesting ideas for coffee breaks. One is a university campus set-up with activities such as pinball and soccer board games offered at the Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok. Another is neck and shoulder massages offered in an Osim or Oto massage chair at the Langham Place, Beijing Capital Airport's club lounge meeting room."

Rosanna Leung

Head of Project and Business Development, Towa Tours/MICE WORLD Hong Kong



"One of my favourites is the Trebuchet Challenge at InterContinental Samui Baan Tal-ing Ngam Resort. Delegates are

given instructions on how to build a medieval catapult – a Trebuchet – and compete to fire watermelons as far as possible, or water balloons at each other. What a great way to release mid-meeting tension!"

Mark Flower

Director of commercial South-east Asia, InterContinental Hotels Group

"My favourites are massage stations providing foot, head, shoulder and neck

messages at coffee breaks. I also like the Hammer Game, like those found in carnivals. Delegates use a mallet to whack the base as hard as possible, causing an object to shoot upwards and ring a bell."

Saini Vermeulen

Senior manager, inbound tours, Panorama Tours Malaysia

"We do several unique coffee breaks. One of them involves well-known local tai chi masters leading meeting delegates to stand up and follow their moves. The activity gives delegates an opportunity to de-stress and relax their muscles, and soft music is played in the background as they practise their new skills.

We can invite famed local musicians to teach delegates how to play music instruments such as traditional Vietnamese drums. The musician will introduce the background of the instrument, then break participants into groups and let them take turns at playing the instrument.

At the end, everyone will come together to form an orchestra, and even perform at their gala dinner.

We can also create a mini golf driving range and install a backdrop printed with different company targets. Meeting delegates are required to hit the various targets with a golf club and golf balls.

Kritidech Srabua

Founder and CEO, Oriental Events Thailand



"Amari Orchid Pattaya has 27 themes for enhancing a coffee break into an energising experience. Probably the most energising of themes and my favourite, is the Formula 1. It's designed to reinvigorate delegates between conference sessions, based around the Grand Prix.

Meeting planners have options of a Lite or Deluxe themed Formula 1 break, depending on their budget.

As delegates arrive at the Formula 1 themed coffee break, they are welcomed by Pit Stop Babes waving black and white chequered flags.

Atmospheric crowd and motor sound effects complement the backdrop scene. A large screen presents a montage of Grand Prix races and movie clips from the Italian Job and Fast and Furious.

An ice carving in the shape of a Formula 1 car and other motoring-themed props, such as tyres and spanners, add to the mood and tone.

Themed table linen decorates the coffee station and tall cocktail tables. Radio controlled cars race around a miniature track to engage delegates and to tease out their inner Schumacher."

David Barrett

Executive director, events, Amari Watgate Bangkok and Amari Orchid Pattaya

One of its dining establishments, The Park View Restaurant, offers iconic views and is flooded with natural light. It caters to special dietary requirements.

There is also a concierge service at KLCC. Event attendees can obtain information and recommendations on places to eat and shop, offerings within the KLCC precinct and directions to the covered pedestrian walkway connecting the shopping centres and hotels along the Bukit Bintang area to KLCC.

Over in Hong Kong, AsiaWorld-Expo CEO, Allen Ha, said convention centres are "definitely pleasurable places".

Ha noted that there had been a crossover of B2B and B2C events at the centre over the past few years, creating a new breed of events called "EXPOtainment".

AsiaWorld-Expo also works with attractions in the Lantau neighbourhood – Hong

Kong Disneyland, Ngong Ping 360 cable car, the Big Buddha, SkyCity Nine Eagles Golf Course and Citygate Outlets mall – to provide pleasure to delegates.

Ha said: "Together it all adds up to create an ideal integrated business and leisure location for the MICE sector. Events would be greatly enriched by the collaboration between AsiaWorld-Expo and third-party attractions, enabling event organisers to create itineraries that seamlessly blend business with pleasure," he pointed out.

Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) managing director, Monica Lee-Müller, said to cater to a growing number of exhibitors and visitors and to give them work-life balance, the in-house F&B team creates unique and enjoyable dining experiences.

The seven F&B outlets inside HKCEC offer an array of international cuisines

including Italian, Japanese, Thai, Indian, Shanghaiese and Cantonese.

Flexible and convertible venues also allow event organisers and production houses to create innovative and unique catering events.

Lee-Müller added: "In addition, HKCEC is located right in the heart of Hong Kong, on the prime waterfront of famous Victoria Harbour. The floor to ceiling windows inside most of the meeting rooms, Grand Foyer and restaurant provide the best harbour view for event attendees.

"Furthermore, HKCEC is adjacent to a variety of leisure and shopping options and tourist attractions including Golden Bauhinia Square, shopping malls in Causeway Bay and Pacific Place. Visitors can simply take a 10-minute ferry trip to Tsim Sha Tsui." – **S Puvaneswary and Prudence Lui**



Jakarta builds for the future

Indonesia's buoyant economy makes the city red hot for business events, but the lack of guestrooms and trade show venues creates a painful restriction, writes **Mimi Hudoyo**

Jakarta is expecting exhibition, convention and conference sectors to boom over the next couple of years, in line with Indonesia's buoyant economy.

Cucu Ahmad Kurnia, promotion director of the Jakarta City Government Tourism and Culture Office, believes that the MICE sector has great growth potential in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia and where most businesses are headquartered.

"In fact, MICE demand in Jakarta has been growing in tandem with the country's economic progress," said Kurnia, adding that the MICE sector "can also foster growth in other tourism businesses, such as shopping and golf".

Reflecting the city's allure as a destination for major business events is the growing presence of international



Cucu Ahmad Kurnia

Promotion director
Jakarta City Government
Tourism and Culture Office

exhibition companies. Jakarta Convention & Exhibition Bureau (JCNEB) executive director, Indra Sukirno, pointed out that specialists such as UBM and Reed Exhibitions – forming Reed Panorama Exhibitions in partnership with local firm Panorama Group – had established offices

"It is not easy for organisers to find an exhibition space here unless they book way in advance."

in Indonesia.

Unfortunately, Jakarta is packed to the rafters for business events.

Sukirno told *TTGmice* that while a number of international associations had visited Jakarta for site inspections, none of them were converted into real pieces of business because of the lack of space.

Sharing the same observations, Kurnia said: "The city is lacking in convention and exhibition facilities. It is not easy for organisers to find an exhibition space here unless they book way in advance.

"There are also times when booking a hotel room is difficult, let alone securing a meeting venue."

Jakarta Convention Center (JCC) deputy general manager, Trikarya Satyawan, said some events, such as the annual Jakarta International Java Jazz Festival and the Indonesia International Motor Show, had moved to Jakarta International Expo in the north of the city, as they had outgrown the venue.

Construction works are now underway to remedy Jakarta's space constraints.

Tangerang, a city 25km west of Jakarta, is set to welcome the Indonesia International Expo & Convention Center (IIECC) in 2014 and the Jakarta International Congress and Convention Centre (JICCC) in 2016.

Phase one of IIECC, comprising 10 exhibition halls covering 60,000m² and a convention centre for 10,000 people, is slated for completion in 2014. The second phase, which will be built at a later stage, will include a 22,000m² exhibition hall, a convention centre for 15,000 people and a 17-floor office building.

JICCC, located 30 minutes from the airport by car, will have a total exhibition area of 60,000m² including a multi-purpose arena with retractable seats for up to 18,000 people. There will also be a 6,000m² ballroom and 66 meeting rooms, as well as parking space for 6,000 cars, 2,000 motorcycles, 150 buses and a marshalling area for 48 trucks.

Sukirno said: "We (already) have five bookings for major exhibitions between 2016 and 2019 at the JICCC, (and these events are) in the areas of electricity, building and construction, among others."

Kurnia said: "These facilities will ease the problem Jakarta is facing, which is the lack of venues for large exhibitions and conventions.

New hotels with meeting facilities will also be added to Jakarta's tourism infrastructure. IIECC has a 300-key, three-star hotel planned for its first

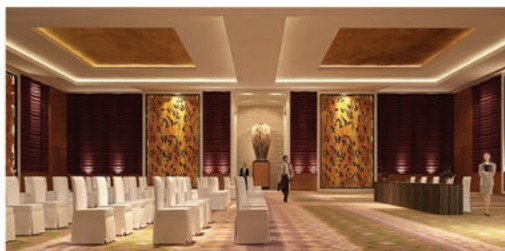
BNDCC PHASE 2

“No days without event”



Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center (BNDCC) is proud to announce its upcoming Phase 2. With a 24.000 sqm total area; this 3-storey building has a total 17 multi task and comprehensive function rooms. BNDCC Phase 2 features new designs and will finish in a beautiful touch and rich in Balinese art.

Scheduled to open in July 2013, BNDCC Phase 2 aims to make more innovative and creative conference facilities as well as positioning a better portfolio in Mice Business. For more information and details, stay tuned on the most updated and brand new conference venue at “Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center”.



phase of developments, as well as a four-star hotel with 250 keys and a budget property with 350 rooms for its second phase. Three hotels ranging from three- to five-star categories will be built near the future JICCC site, supporting event organisers with some 1,000 rooms.

But event planners need not wait that long for more hotel options. Accor has opened three new properties in the city. Grand Mercure Maha Cipta in Central Jakarta has 483 rooms, a ballroom for up to 1,200 people in a cocktail setting and six meeting rooms. The 230-room Novotel Gajah Mada offers 12 meeting rooms and a ballroom for up to 600 guests. Mercure Jakarta Simatupang in southern Jakarta has 232 rooms and four flexible function rooms that can accommodate more than 200 guests.

Local hotel company, Parador Hotels & Resorts, is also in on the action. It is building the 136-room Atria Inn Paramount Serpong in Tangerang, arming it with four meeting rooms, each able to host events with up to 100 guests.

Also under construction is Atria Hotel & Conference Slipi in Central Jakarta's Paramount City. It will have 342 rooms, five meeting rooms, six conference rooms and a ballroom. Joining this property close by is the Atria Inn Slipi with 199 rooms and three meeting rooms.

Over the next few years, Jakarta will also welcome several high-end hotels, such as The St Regis Jakarta and W Jakarta in early-2016, and a Fairmont in the Senayan area.

Meanwhile, Jakarta is fending off competition from sister destination, Bali, which in the last 10 years has gained in popularity among business event planners. Furthermore, the emergence of new conference and exhibition facilities in Bali has

made the island a strong competitor.

Industry sources lamented that Jakarta's weak destination promotion had made it a "best kept secret".

The Ritz-Carlton Jakarta, Pacific Place's general manager, Karim Tayach, said: "The city needs more publicity. We have all that is necessary to be a major player in the MICE business, not only regionally but also globally. We just need to tell the world what Jakarta can offer. We need to be active and aggressive at major travel and MICE shows."

Jakarta's solution to this issue may come in 2014.

Kurnia revealed: "At a recent meeting between Jakarta's tourism stakeholders and the new governor Joko Widodo, the latter approved our request for the city administration to channel 30 per cent of its tourism income into destination promotions, provided that the private and public tourism sectors are able to come up with solid programmes to justify the investment."

The tourism sector contributed 2.6 trillion rupiah (US\$268.5 million) to the city's total direct income of 17.83 trillion rupiah last year, a 17.9 per cent increase over 2011.



Grand Mercure Maha Cipta

Clearer roads ahead

Jakarta's new administration under governor Joko Widodo, who came into power in October 2012, has made improving the city's public transport system its priority. It is determined to reduce traffic congestion and flooding incidents that Jakarta has become notorious for.

Jakarta Monorail, part of the Jakarta Mass Rapid Transit System, is expected to begin development within the next couple of months. The initial project will cover over 54km, connecting Bekasi, Cibubur and Jakarta and transporting more than 190,000 people daily. It is expected to be operational in two years' time.

Other measures on the drawing block include a possible increase in the number of TransJakarta fast-lane buses and better connectivity through other modes of transport.

These improvements are welcomed by tourism and MICE stakeholders who are certain that Jakarta's poor transportation system is one of the factors hampering business into the city.

Hotel Borobudur Jakarta director of sales – catering & MICE, Anggoro Ruskasjanto, said: "Traffic and flooding in Jakarta are the biggest challenges to business from overseas organisers."

"So, we are looking at a tourism budget of some 654 billion rupiah," Kurnia said hopefully. The current budget is a mere 80 billion rupiah.

Sukirno expects a better future for Jakarta, as Widodo "wants Jakarta to actively bid for international events". Widodo is well regarded for his success in developing the MICE industry in Solo, Central Java when he was its mayor.

"Jakarta also stands a chance (at winning over more business events from Bali), as there are businesses such as pharmaceutical companies that no longer allow conferences to be held in a resort destination," added Sukirno, who observed that Bali attracted a stronger conference and incentive mix, while Jakarta drew more exhibitions and conferences.

According to industry sources, the capital city has been hosting a healthy number of large retail exhibitions and B2B trade fairs in the last 15 years, a segment they said Bali is not suited for.

Jakarta is also a preferred destination for government and corporate meetings.

Sukirno said: "Domestic and regional corporate meetings with 300 to 800 delegates are plenty, and JCNEB has been channelling such businesses to the hotels here. Out of the 53 four- and five-star MICE hotels in Jakarta, 10 to 15 of them are equipped to accommodate regional association meetings with up to 800 people. There are also three-star properties which have meeting spaces for up to 300 delegates."

Hotel Borobudur Jakarta, whose MICE contribution to total business in 2012 was 25.1 per cent, is expecting an increase of 14 per cent this year. It already has several medical events and government meetings on the books.

The Ritz-Carlton Jakarta, Pacific Place has received 50 per cent more MICE enquiries to-date, compared to the same period last year, while its sister hotel The Ritz-Carlton Jakarta, Mega Kuningan is hoping to draw 25 per cent of its total business from corporate events this year.

Tayach revealed: "We have a major regional event confirmed in May this year, with approximately 1,000 delegates and 500 room nights. We also have some strong leads, especially during the fourth quarter this year."

With a heftier destination marketing budget coming on-stream and the development of new MICE facilities, Kurnia expects Jakarta to be able to compete effectively with other Asian MICE cities within the next three to five years. ■

Ideas

Go on a post-show shopping trip in Jakarta

Morning

Begin your day in a posh district in Jakarta. Head to Jalan Surabaya, located in the upmarket Menteng area, and stroll along the streets which are lined with small shops selling antiques such as silverware, wooden sculptures, masks, lamps, coins and others. Feel free to bargain for a better price.

From here, drive on to Jatinegara in East Jakarta and visit the Jakarta Gems Centre where gemstones of all kinds are sold. You can create your very own piece of jewellery here.

Afternoon

Stop for lunch at any local restaurants for a feast of flavourful Indonesian specialties.

Once recharged, proceed to the



state-owned SMESCO (Small and Medium Enterprise and Cooperative) Tower on Jalan Gatot Subroto. The retail and commercial promenade showcases top quality products carefully selected from all over the country, such as handicraft, traditional cloths, pottery, household goods, home decorations and many more.

Next stop – Senayan City Shopping Mall, one of Jakarta's premier shopping

malls. It is home to numerous top international fashion brands such as Bottega Veneta, Gucci, GAP and Max & Co.

It is worth making a beeline for Alleira on the second floor, a boutique selling fine batik cloths and ready-to-wear for men, women and children. The shop is able to demonstrate the various ways of transforming a piece of batik cloth or scarf into a tank top, blouse, skirt or sarong for casual and formal occasions.

Now that you are done indulging the shopaholic in you, it is time to chase away the exhaustion. Swing by The Bimasena Spa on Jalan Dharmawangsa for a massage. The Chocolate Treatment is one of the many signature services there. Email bimasena@cbn.net.id for reservations.



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NEED TO KNOW

**Great new spaces on Level 8**

The Ritz-Carlton Jakarta, Pacific Place has opened the doors to Level 8, a new venue set within its garden.

Covering 348m², Level 8 comprises an indoor space and an outdoor lounge. The indoor space can host standing receptions with 300 guests or banquets with 150 people. Fitted with floor-to-ceiling windows, the venue lets in plenty of natural light and offers guests a view of Jakarta's cityscape.

The outdoor 8 Lounge, a perfect spot for guests to relax and socialise at the end of a busy day, features a wide variety of premium champagne, wines, cocktails, whiskies and bar nibbles. It has a 12-seat bar, lounge seating for 24 guests and can accommodate standing cocktails with 70 people.

Get connected anywhere

The Jakarta city administration has made free Wi-Fi available in several public locations such as city parks, the TransJakarta fast-lane bus shelters and Business districts.

The complimentary networks can be found under the name *DKI_Free hotspot*.

There are plans to expand the Indonesian capital's Wi-Fi capability, with hospitals and places of worships being next in line.

More flights from Dubai

Emirates has increased its Jakarta-Dubai direct services from twice to thrice daily from March 2, providing greater access into Indonesia for Middle Eastern travellers and those who are continuing their journey from Europe where the airline also operates. Travellers can choose to fly on a morning, mid-day or evening flight.

PHM expands 101 hotel brand

PHM Hospitality will launch several 101 hotels, a three-star product that targets savvy leisure and business travellers, across Indonesia this year and the next.

The first in the pipeline to open will be The 101 Jakarta Dharmawangsa in mid-2013. Hotel guests will be able to easily access important precincts such as Fatmawati, Kemang and the business districts of Gatot Subroto and Sudirman.

This will be followed by The 101 Bogor Suryakencana and The 101 Yogyakarta Mangkubumi by the end of this year.

PHM Hospitality has also been appointed by Ulimo Baseliob to manage The 101 Palembang, due to open in mid-2014. The 101 Bandung Dago and The 101 Bali Petitenget will come into the market in 2014 too.

There is currently one property under this label – The 101 Bali Legian.

Glittering gemstones

MICE planners who are putting together a spouse programme for ladies may want to look at the Jakarta Gems Center in Jatinegara, East Jakarta. The three-storey shopping centre is home to more than 1,000 traders selling various local and international gemstones such as rubies, sapphires and emeralds.

These gemstones are priced from 25,000 rupiah (US\$3) to more than a million rupiah each, and can be bought separately to be custom-made into a piece of jewellery on site.

Visitors can also see how the gemstones are processed by workmen who form and polish the beauties by hand or with polishing machines made from bicycle wheels.

**Meet and play at a golf club**

The 27-hole Royale Jakarta Golf Club is offering event planners the option of marrying meetings with a friendly golf tournament, as it is equipped with a hall and six VIP rooms with lockers and showers.

The golf club can also cater to corporate parties in its hall, good for up to 400 people in a standing reception set-up, or an outdoor barbeque for 240 guests.

Event planners can also consider the Royale Palace Restaurant, which specialises in oriental cuisine.

For more information, visit <http://royale-jakarta.com>.

Best Western opens in Semarang business district

Best Western International's newest Indonesian property, Best Western Star Hotel, has opened its doors in the city of Semarang, Central Java. The 258-room, newly-built hotel is located in Semarang's business district. Facilities include a rooftop pool bar, a restaurant and nine meeting rooms covering more than 620m², the largest of which can hold 180 guests. Free Wi-Fi is also available in all guestrooms.

Plumping up for business

Convention centres in popular cities are churning out more event venues to satiate rising demand, and all eyes are on Sydney's transformation, writes **Karen Yue**

Sydney get a new business events and lifestyle precinct by 2016



Tourism Australia

Australia's growing popularity as a destination for business events has spurred the country's convention centres to undertake extreme makeovers to grant them greater capacity.

Andrew McEvoy, managing director of Tourism Australia, revealed that 930,000 visitors arrived in Australia last year for business events. A significant proportion – 350,000 – came for conventions and 65,000 came for trade shows, trade fairs and exhibitions.

McEvoy believes that Australia needs more events space. "There's more demand for face-to-face meetings in the world. Conventions are getting bigger, not smaller. The desire for human interaction has never been greater. So much so, convention spaces here are expanding," he said.

Some convention centres have unveiled additional venues in recent years, while others are in the midst of reconstruction or expansion.

In early 2012, Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre opened a new convention wing on Grey Street, adding to its inventory 20 meeting and event spaces in-

cluding two tiered auditoria with 430 and 620 capacities, two executive boardrooms, two presentation centres and a ballroom.

In the same year, the Adelaide Convention Centre unveiled new riverfront spaces. Even more venues will come by mid-2014, a result of a massive expansion costing A\$350 million (US\$358 million). Stage one will comprise 4,300m² of multi-purpose convention space, pre-function areas and meeting rooms. Stage two, which will replace the current Plenary Building with a multi-purpose facility with plenary capacity of up to 3,500 seats, is expected to finish in June 2017.

The Star in Sydney celebrated the end of its transformation with the opening of the Event Centre in January. Armed with an overall capacity of up to 3,000 pax in theatre-style, the Event Centre joins other new facilities at The Star, such as a luxury hotel and renowned restaurants.

The Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, which is running at full capacity and has to reject 30 per cent of business due to space limitations, has appealed to the government for a nod towards 12,000m² of additional event space.

The talk of the town today is the reinvention of Sydney's Darling Harbour precinct. Carrying the working title Darling Harbour Live, the precinct will boast The Theatre, the International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney), ICC Exhibition Centre, a 900-key hotel and refreshed public spaces by 2016. But for that transformation to happen, the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre and the Sydney Entertainment Centre must be closed for construction works by December this year. The interim Glebe Island Expo is expected to be ready by then.

Some business event organisers have decided to relocate their shows until the Darling Harbour precinct is ready. Several trade sources believe that the G20 summit in November 2014 was awarded to Brisbane due to a lack of facilities in Sydney, while other events such as The Australian Fitness & Health Expo will relocate to Melbourne for the time being; Vforum organisers are also looking at interstate alternatives.

Tracy Baker, director of sales – associations & not-for-profit sectors, Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, told *TTGmice* that the number of enquiries had spiked since news of the centres' closure broke. "Organisers had to look at alternative (venues). Most of these enquiries are for rotating conferences and association events, and some have confirmed (their shift to Perth)," she said, adding that her facility has the capability to "welcome even more of these movers".

On the other hand, several events, such as the 2014 Rotary International Convention and the Australian International Motor Show, are staying put in Sydney and will shift to alternative venues.

Ian Honnery, board member and chief executive of Maritime Australia, the organisation behind the International Maritime Exposition (Pacific), held annually at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, is also committed to keeping the show's anchor in the city.

"Glebe Island Expo will be a waterfront site, which is just perfect for Pacific," he said. ■

The wonder that is Wangaratta

By Karen Yue

Sitting 2.5 hours from Melbourne's city centre by car is a hidden gem. The Rural City of Wangaratta, which comprises Wangaratta, Milawa Gourmet Region, King Valley, Glenrowan, Boorahman and El Dorado, has long been loved by the locals for its splendid wines, great food and scenic landscape.

However, it seems that this juicy fact is unknown to most foreign incentive planners who tend to turn to the more popular Yarra Valley in Victoria state for programmes themed around wine and gourmet food. To raise the awareness of the destination among international event planners, the Rural City of Wangaratta hosted a group of buyers on a familiarisation trip in the lead up to AIME 2013 in February.

The familiarisation trip showcased various unique dining venues, cellar doors, vineyards, teambuilding and city tour ideas, as well as a number of hotels and venues that are experienced in hosting corporate events.

Emma Keith, business events & tourism development coordinator with the Rural City of Wangaratta, who led the familiarisation programme, told *TTGmice* that the last time the destination was featured at AIME was in 2009.

"We had a stand at the show back then, but there were no destination



materials for MICE. So after four years, we decided that we are ready to return to AIME 2013 and this time we have a dedicated planner guide to introduce Wangaratta to (buyers)," said Keith.

The Rural City of Wangaratta published its first *Conference and Event Planner Guide* in late-2012. The book details the venues, accommodation options, activities, attractions, dining and catering solutions and event support services that are available in Wangaratta and the neighbouring regions of Milawa Gourmet Region, King Valley, Glenrowan, Boorahman and El Dorado.

The Wangaratta Central Business District (CBD), although compact, is well-equipped to welcome corporate meetings, conferences and even trade

shows. Delegates can be accommodated at the 4.5-star Quality Hotel Wangaratta Gateway which has seven conference and meeting rooms that can take up to 400 delegates.

Within walking distance is the Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre, which has hosted seminars, conferences, business meetings, exhibitions, cocktails and dinner events at its collection of venues. Over three days in March, it hosted the Rotary Club's District 9810 Conference.

The centre has a 520-seat theatre, a conference room for 36 people in a boardroom setting, the Green Room with capacity for 23 pax in a classroom layout, and the Memorial Hall which comes with a custom-built marquee, good for 800 pax in a theatre setting.

Penny Hargrave, venue manager, said: "While we are a performing arts centre, our spaces are flexible. The Green Room, usually used by performers prior to their shows, can be a breakout venue or secretariat office. The theatre has hosted many cocktails and small dinners on stage and we can arrange for a pianist to entertain guests. This has worked very well with our clients, as guests are treated to an unusual dining experience."

Solemn meetings and workshops can be held at Wang Central in the heart of

Ideas

Two days of gastronomic adventures in the rural city

Day 1

Depart Melbourne in the morning for the Wangaratta CDB. Break the journey with a coffee stop at Fowles Wine Cellar Door Café.

Arrive at Dal Zotto Wines in time for lunch. Start off with a tasting of Dal Zotto wines, then feast on a wine pairing lunch. Journey onwards to Pizzini Wines and A tavola! Cooking School for a lesson on baking your own apple strudel.

Check into Quality Hotel Wangaratta Gateway and rest. Regroup for a

home-style Italian dinner at Rinaldo's Casa Cucina.

Day 2

Explore Milawa Gourmet Region on a bicycle today. Pick up a complimentary set of wheels at Brown Brothers Milawa Vineyard and pedal down the flat, scenic



roads of Milawa to explore various cellar doors and gourmet producers. Swing by Milawa Mustards, Milawa Cheese Factory, The Olive Shop and Ciccone Wine Cellar.

End the cycling adventure at Brown Brothers and take a tour of the facility. Another adventure awaits when the tour is done. Hop onto a helicopter for a ride over the region's vineyards and arrive at the Banksdale Vineyard, set atop a hill 485m above sea level. Chilled prosecco, canapés and a breathtaking view await. Hear about the art of winemaking from a Brown Brothers wine expert.

Later, take the helicopter back to Brown Brothers Milawa Vineyard and make a beeline for its Epicurean Centre restaurant for one of the best meals in the gourmet region.



WHAT'S NEW ON AUSTRALIA'S EAST COAST?

The latest business event offerings in three Australian cities



Get close to nature and sky high in Melbourne

Melbourne's proximity to stunning natural landscapes easily allows an event program to include an experience in Australia's great outdoors and an evening in the cultural city centre in just one day.

Groups can take exclusive use of the nearby Phillip Island Nature Park to get close to Australian wildlife, glide into the stunning Yarra Valley in a hot air balloon to sharpen their appreciation of Australian wine, or cruise along the Great Ocean Road to marvel at the stunning natural wonder of the Twelve Apostles.

After a day-long excursion outdoors, return to Melbourne city for an evening of cultural entertainment before retiring to one of the many outstanding hotels on offer.

Soon to take over Melbourne's skyline is the development of the Australia 108 hotel. Aptly named, the 388-metre high hotel will have 108 floors and is set to be the tallest building in the Southern Hemisphere.

Australia 108 will boast state-of-the-art facilities for business events, a six-star hotel, 600 apartments, two restaurants and two bars which will spectacularly extend nine metres out over the side of the building.

New 'Mandarin Climb' goes to great heights in Sydney

There's no better way to view the innovative and spirited city of Sydney than from the top of the Harbour Bridge. Climb to the peak of the icon 134 metres above sea level and absorb the city's glittering harbour, urban landscape and leafy green suburbs.

Providing the perfect activity to reward and recognise Chinese groups, BridgeClimb Sydney has launched a new Mandarin Climb where climbers are accompanied by Mandarin-speaking guides.

This unique experience can be captured by a photographer or videographer and is available for incentive and conference groups, or team building programs.

Accommodating large groups, BridgeClimb can cater for up to 100 climbers with Mandarin-speaking guides and interpreters, and 800 climbers with English speaking guides.

Stylish hotel in Queensland's tropical capital offers new business option

The down-to-earth, friendly city of Brisbane offers fresh and exciting options for rewarding incentive experiences. Whether your program includes a breathtaking Story Bridge Adventure Climb, exploration of nearby Moreton Island, or a day at Queensland Raceway for a V8 car driving experience, you will be looking for a comfortable retreat to accommodate your top achievers.

A new 32-storey hotel will soon boast 246 stylishly appointed guest rooms and suites in the heart of Brisbane's central business district.

The new development, Four Points by Sheraton Brisbane, will open in early 2014 with free high-speed internet and 200 square metres of function space for meetings or incentive events.

With a number of upcoming events planned to take place in the down-to-earth, friendly city of Brisbane - such as the G20 Leaders Summit in November 2014 - this is a perfectly planned build.

Visit www.businessevents.australia.com to start planning your next business event in Australia.

Wangaratta CBD. The office block boasts its own function space, which comprises two state-of-the-art meeting rooms that can be combined for larger events. The Aurora Room and Coromandel Room can accommodate 14 and 20 people respectively in a U-shaped layout.

Rental of the meeting rooms are available at hourly, half- and full-day blocks, and special rates are offered to not-for-profit organisations.

Wang Central also offers a spacious outdoor deck that overlooks the serene Merriwa Park, suitable for relaxing coffee breaks and delegate luncheons.

The regions beyond the Wangaratta CBD make attractive destinations for incentives and post-show tours. King Valley at the foothills of the Victorian Alps, for instance, throws up a splendid selection of vineyards owned by Italian migrant families and inspires groups to explore a trail themed around prosecco. Participants can sample a variety of local wines and savour Italian dishes at six King Valley winemakers – Dal Zotto, Brown Brothers, Chrismont, Ciccone, Pizzini and Sam Miranda.

Katrina Pizzini, who runs Pizzini Wines vineyard and cellar door and A tavola! Cooking School with her family, is eager to attract more corporate group bookings. Pizzini Wines can host dining events indoors or on its lawn, while the cooking school offers teambuilding programmes that are paired with a sit-down dinner.

“We have been popular for family gatherings for a while now, but we would like to see more corporate clients. Perhaps with the new planner guide we may start to see more corporate interest,” Pizzini said.

Annalee Humphry, managing director of Nolan Media and Events, is excited about the Rural City of Wangaratta’s move to raise the region’s tourism appeal among international MICE buyers.

Humphry, whose overseas clients mostly use Melbourne for their business events, said: “This region does not get many international business events but I see great potential in it. It is an easy drive from Melbourne, with some lovely restaurants along the way where groups can stop for a rest, and there are available infrastructure for meetings and incentives.”

She believes that the region’s reputation for “great food and wine” and its “pristine environment” make it suitable for high-end incentives. ■

NEED TO KNOW



Melbourne's value proposition for incentives

Melbourne Convention Bureau has rolled out a series of offers for incentive travel planners, developed in partnership with more than 30 hotels, venues, attractions and teambuilding companies in the city.

Aimed at luring new incentive business to Melbourne, the *Melbourne Values You* programme tantalises planners with perks such as room upgrades for organisers or VIPs, complimentary in-room Wi-Fi, complimentary hour-long cocktail reception for in-house groups, and complimentary venue hire and beverage package upgrade at participating hotels and venues.

Terms apply, on top of a set of criteria established by the bureau, which includes a minimum of two nights’ stay in Melbourne by at least 100 delegates travelling at the same time by December 31, 2014. Groups must also be confirmed for Melbourne between now and December 31 this year.

Cairns dangles special treats for conference delegates

Conference attendees in Cairns will get to enjoy special deals at hotels, restaurants and retailers under the new *Cairns Delegate Advantage Program*.

Launched at AIME 2013 in February, the programme is a joint initiative of Business Events Cairns & Great Barrier Reef, the Cairns Convention Centre and the Cairns Chamber of Commerce. It aims to provide event planners an added reason to take their events to the destination.

According to Ross Steele, general manager of Cairns Convention Centre, the special deals may change over time, as participating merchants are given the flexibility to create promotions suitable for the season. A flyer on available special deals will be placed in delegates’ conference satchels. They can also watch out for merchants with a *Cairns Delegate Advantage Program* label on the door.



Hunter Valley Convention Bureau

Do good in Hunter Valley

Hunter Valley Convention Bureau has created a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme that helps conference organisers support local charities, community and environmental objectives. The programme highlights a variety of CSR options that organisers can adopt, such as *Tikes on Bikes* which tasks delegates with assembling new bicycles for underprivileged children from a local charity group.

New spaces at Hamer Hall

Arts Centre Melbourne’s Hamer Hall reopened on July 2012 after a two-year renovation and is now armed with plenty of new spaces and a new entrance at the Yarra River level.

The Riverside Bar on a mezzanine is among the latest additions. It is perfect for private cocktails with 150 guests. Also new to Hamer Hall is Trocodero which has a 60-seat restaurant and a bar with an outdoor terrace that offers great views of the city skyline and the Yarra River. The bar is good for a 110-pax standing reception.

The seafront Raffles Hainan opened in March, bringing a suite of event venues to scenic Clearwater Bay, Hainan's latest tourism hotspot



Surf's up for Hainan island

A battle is brewing on the sunny destination's 1,500km coastline as resorts jostle for a slice of the attractive business events pie, discovers **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

Dubbed China's answer to Hawaii, Hainan is seeing a resort boom as international and domestic hotel brands alike flock to launch outposts on the tropical isle.

While competition is undoubtedly becoming stiffer in the hospitality sector, this development spells great news for event planners and incentive houses who are now spoilt for choice.

The traditional epicentre of Sanya's tourism development, the 25km Sanya Bay, continues to see a massive buildup of hotels. The 370-room Four Points by Sheraton entered the market in the second half of 2012, while upcoming properties include the 196-room Park Hyatt Sanya Sunny Bay and the adjacent 183-room Andaz Sanya Sunny Bay.

"The opening of more hotels and resorts in Sanya is helping to generate greater awareness of the area as a MICE

destination and bringing more business to the city," said Jackson Wong, general manager of the 495-key Ramada Plaza Sanya, which launched on January 30 this year on Sanya Bay.

"We have been receiving many enquiries from small and mid-size corporate groups since our pre-opening last year, and we have already confirmed our first 80-pax group arriving in mid-March, plus several enquiries under negotiation for 2013. As a new hotel, we are very flexible with rates, so I am optimistic on the MICE business this year."

The 7.5km Yalong Bay has also upped its ante with the debut of the 401-room St. Regis Sanya Yalong Bay in late-2011. According to senior sales manager, Danny Li, the resort's exclusive partnership with the on-site Sanya Yalong Bay Yacht Club – which offers fully staffed vessels for private charters – as well as two in-house movie theatres offer myriad opportuni-

ties for top-tier incentives and corporate events.

Further north, the 43km Haitang Bay is the newest battlefield for high-end hotels, where brands such as Renaissance, Sheraton, Conrad, DoubleTree by Hilton, Kempinski and The Royal Begonia have emerged. In the pipeline are The Westin, opening this July, and Crowne Plaza and Hotel Indigo next year.

Downplaying concerns over the rapid rise in luxury inventory, Nicolas Solari, general manager of the 449-key Haitang Bay Gloria Sanya, which officially opened in February this year, believes the availability of more upper five-star rooms in Haitang Bay is an "advantage" as more resorts will "create further synergy".

He added: "The government has focused on improving the infrastructure – proof is the new highway placing Haitang Bay 35 minutes from the (Phoenix International Sanya) airport. The state-of-the-art



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GBTA China Conference 2013

www.gbta.org/china
15 to 17 April 2013 | Jin Jiang Tower Hotel

GBTA is the world's premier business travel and meetings organization. With China forecasted to overtake the United States as the largest Business Travel Spender as early as 2014, this China conference aims to offer a true insight into the business travel management challenges and opportunities in this important country and how to deal with Chinese business travellers domestically and internationally. The GBTA China conference is timed to dovetail with IT&CM China.



China (Shanghai) International Meetings & Conferences Forum

www.cimcf.org
16 to 17 April 2013 | Shanghai Marriott Hotel City Centre

Learn how to organise and manage meetings and events successfully and professionally in China. Get expert advice through keynote speeches, panel discussions, educational presentations and case studies at this one-and-a-half day forum.



Association Professionals Competencies Briefing

17 April 2013 | Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center

Specially tailored for personnel working in societies and



associations, Association Professionals Competencies Briefing is a higher education programme based on the internationally acclaimed Certified Association Executive (CAE®) designation. It is co-offered by the Australasian Society of Association Executives and the Canadian Society of Association Executives. Hundreds of professionals have benefited from the CAE® programme. Learn more about its benefits and highlights during this briefing.



Fundamentals of Business Travel Management™ Course – Associate Level

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IT&CM China 2013

www.itcmchina.com
17 to 19 April 2013 | Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center

Since 2007, IT&CM China has established itself as China's leading international Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) business, education and networking event, dedicated to "Promoting China to the World and the World to China". Featuring 3 days of exhibition, business appointments, seminars and networking events, IT&CM China is the platform for international and leading Chinese players in the MICE industry to explore business opportunities on all fronts – inbound, outbound and domestic. IT&CM China 2013 is co-organised by TTG Events, a business group of TTG Asia Media, CITS International M.I.C.E. and MP International.



ICCA Association Database Workshop

18 to 19 April 2013 | Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center

During this 3-hour workshop, ICCA members will learn a variety of database skills

including the use of the ICCA database, how to locate business leads and the use of other ICCA business tools. The training will be conducted in English and is suitable for all levels of database users.



IMEX-MPI-MCI Future Leaders Forum

18 April 2013 | Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center

Aimed at nurturing the future leaders of the MICE Industry, this full-day programme is catered to students pursuing degrees in meetings and events management, tourism or related business or administration studies. It offers the best and brightest students a chance to experience real-life industry challenges and an insightful glimpse into a dynamic MICE career. This event is held in conjunction with IT&CM China 2013.



TTG China Travel Awards 2013

www.ttgchina.com/ttg-awards
19 April 2013 | The Longmont Hotel Shanghai

The TTG China Travel Awards has been recognising the best of Greater China's travel industry since 2008. This prestigious annual event honours stellar Travel Suppliers across Airlines, Hotels & Resorts, Serviced Residences and Travel Services segments in the region. Respected as one of the travel industry's most prestigious travel awards, The 6th Annual TTG China Travel Awards 2013 will applaud 60 exemplary industry partners for their success in maintaining quality standards to ensure a stellar experience for all. This TTG Travel Trade Publishing event is proudly organised by TTG China, with the support of TTG-BTmice China, TTG Asia, TTG India and TTGmice.

Hainan 301 hospital is located on the same compound as our resort, and the largest duty-free shop in China is well underway in Haitang Bay."

Elsewhere in Sanya, the 122-key Anantara Sanya Resort and Spa, nestled between Xiaodonghai Bay and Luhuitou Bay, began operations in August 2012, whereas the 299-key Raffles Hainan has just opened in March in Clearwater Bay on the island's south-east coast.

And it is no longer just Sanya netting MICE business on Hainan island.

The Haikou government has set up the Haikou Convention and Exhibition Bureau – the nation's first – in June 2012 and has pledged RMB35 million (US\$5.6 million) to support the development of the MICE industry in the provincial capital.

Also banking on Haikou's growing reputation as a MICE destination is Shangri-La Hotel, Haikou, which debuted in November last year, sitting adjacent to the 136,200m² Hainan International Convention and Exhibition Center (HICEC).

"We work closely with HICEC in order to cater to MICE groups. The meetings segment has been the strongest for the hotel," said general manager, Jordon Xu.

The 337-room hotel recently hosted the Snooker World Open Haikou 2013 from February 25 to March 3, in addition to two meetings with 100 attendees each in mid-March. The property is also gearing up for full occupancy in April when a five-day, 200-pax meeting will be held in conjunction with the Book Expo 2013 at HICEC.

The proximity to facilities also makes Haikou popular with business event planners and business travellers.

Coming up next in the city is The Westin Haikou, due to open on May 1, as well as a Hard Rock Hotel in 2015. They will join existing resorts such as Crown Spa Resort Hainan, HNA Beach & Spa Resort Haikou and Sheraton Haikou Resort. ■



Haitang Bay Gloria Sanya offers many event venues

Shanghai's many challenges

By Pamela Hong Xu



Shanghai's conference and meeting sector did well in 2012, having hosted 780 international gatherings last year, up from 754 in 2011.

But the real figure could be much higher, noted Justin Yang, director, MICE Promotion Department, Shanghai International Conference Management Organization. "There are a lot of domestic conferences and meetings that escape our data collection each year, and we believe that there are, in fact, far more business gatherings held in the city," Yang said.

The rising demand for conferences and meetings in Shanghai is met by the lively development in the city's hotel sector, "allowing ample supply to keep room rates affordable", said Patrick Chen, deputy director, International Tourism Promotion Department of the Shanghai Municipal Tourism Administration (SMTA).

He said the average room rate for four- and five-star hotels in 2012 was RMB950 (US\$153) – RMB50 lower than was what recorded in 2011.

"Hotel rates in Shanghai are not as high as most buyers expect from a key commercial city," he added.

The number of exhibitions in Shanghai last year stayed flat, however, according to Chen, who explained that the lack of new exhibition centres in the city had restricted growth potential for the trade fair sector.

While Chen and several MICE sellers in Shanghai are generally optimistic about business performance this year, they are also wary of obstacles to growth. The strained political relations between China and Japan is one of the concerns raised by industry players.

"The number of Japanese arrivals to Shanghai has declined in the last few months, therefore we will not be investing much (in destination promotion) in this market. Instead, we hope to attract more leisure and business travellers from other Asian sources," said Chen.

Chen is also concerned about the limited air capacity into the city.

"Outbound travel from Shanghai is on the rise and there is no longer any low travel season to speak of. When these travellers return home, they take up air seats that business event visitors need to get into Shanghai," he explained. "Furthermore, airfares are getting pricier. That adds more pressure on event organisers who are already faced with rising costs in the city."

Although room rates would not rise in 2013, Cynthia Lim, director of sales & marketing of Grand Hyatt Shanghai, said the appreciation of the Chinese yuan would affect planners' decision to take their events to Shanghai and China in general.

Ella Zhou, Department of Exhibitions, Shanghai Spring International Travel Service, also warned that "rising tourism costs" in Shanghai, coupled with an economy still in recovery mode and an anticipated dip in the number of government-led conferences and event spend, would make 2013 a difficult year for MICE players.

Adding to these challenges is the state of intensive competition between MICE destinations. While acknowledging that such competition is part and parcel of the business, Chen believes that Shanghai has strong advantages.

"Shanghai is one of the most important cities in China and many international associations want to explore this market," Chen said, adding that the next step for Shanghai is to focus on improving service and management standards of existing event venues. ■

Additional reporting by Karen Yue

NEED TO KNOW

Surprise the Charlie Bucket in your delegates

The world's first chocolate theme park has opened in Shanghai, occupying eight pavilions that were once used during the Shanghai World Expo 2010.

Chocolate Happy Land features eight themed venues that house exhibitions, performances, chocolate-tasting opportunities and interactive activities. Watch out for cars, soldiers, horses and an Eiffel Tower made of chocolate at the exhibition.

Visitors who love both the sweet treat and Roald Dahl's famous *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* story will rejoice – scenes from the movie version are captured in Chocolate Happy Land.

**Sip a cup of Chinese tea**

Shanghai's tea culture is not lost amid the rapid commercial development across the city. For a taste of what people of the past used to enjoy, head to Huxingting Tea House in the middle of Yu Garden Bazaar.

Have a cup of quality tea and accompany that with delicious snacks such as preserved plums and small glutinous rice dumplings. Guests are entertained by classical Chinese music played by musicians on traditional instruments.

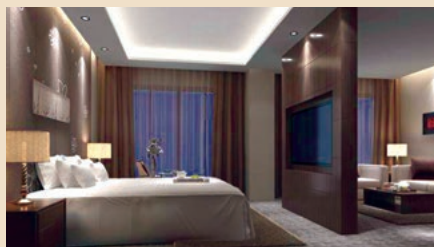
The tea house also has a private room where demonstrations of a Chinese tea ceremony can be held.

Swiss-Belhotel now in Wuxi

Jiangsu Province's Wuxi city gained another international hotel brand with the opening of Swiss-Belhotel Liyuan Wuxi in March.

The four-star hotel features 202 well-appointed rooms and suites, two restaurants with nine private dining rooms of various sizes, and two fully equipped meeting rooms.

Business travellers staying at the property can easily access the Wuxi Liyuan Economic Development Zone.

**Italian feasts in stylish environs**

The stylish 8 1/2 Otto e Mezzo Bombana joins Shanghai's growing list of top-notch dining establishments.

Located on the sixth floor of the Associate Mission, a historical building on Yuanmingyuan Road, the dining establishment comprises a cocktail bar, a main dining hall, four private dining rooms, a balcony with eight tables, a terrace ideal for private functions, and a wine cellar.

Owner and chef Umberto Bombana specialises in Italian cuisine, and had first won the hearts of discerning diners at his Hong Kong outlet, located in Landmark Alexandra.

**Unwind at T8 Shanghai**

Award-winning T8 Restaurant & Bar, which is loved for both its food and soothing ambience, is stepping up its charms to lure business warriors away from the office and into its embrace. A selection of cocktails, wine, house spirits and draft beers goes for RMB45 (US\$7.20) a pop from 17.30 to 18.30pm every weekday. Each happy hour drink comes with complimentary tapas.

As the week nears its end, T8 celebrates with *Thursday Martini Night* and *2-4-1 Late Friday Night Mojitos*.

The restaurant and bar is located in Shanghai's Xin Tian Di North Block.

Visit www.t8-shanghai.com for more information.



Seoul Tourism Organization is offering subvention to entice meeting and incentive planners; Seoul City's busy skyline pictured here

Glowing hot for Asian incentives

The addictive beat of *Gangnam Style* and South Korea's relatively fresh appeal as a destination have Asian incentive buyers mesmerised, writes **Karen Yue**

Asia has done well for South Korea's incentive segment in 2012, according to Soyeon Mun, manager, incentive & exhibitions team of Korea Tourism Organization (KTO).

Tourism statistics published on KTO's website showed that total visitor arrivals for 2012 numbered 11,140,028, up 13.7 per cent over 2011's figures, 950,000 of which were MICE arrivals. While data on MICE arrival by country is not available, Mun told *TTGmice*: "Asia is a strong region for us in 2012, and China did especially well. We believe Asia's performance was largely due to the markets' proximity to South Korea and the strong influence of the Korean Wave among Asians."

She believes that Asian consumers' love for Korean pop culture has influenced incentive planners to cast their eyes on South Korea as a destination.

"*Gangnam Style* (an upbeat pop song by South Korean musician PSY which topped the music charts of many countries worldwide in 2012) was so popular that we developed incentive programmes that

showcase the Gangnam District of Seoul and the high-end lifestyle associated with it. The programmes include a walking tour, dinner in a fancy restaurant and time for shopping," she said.

Steve Yong, director of KTO Singapore office, also reported a similar trend stemming from the popularity of *Running Man*, a wildly comical version of *The Amazing Race*. He said: "We are getting a huge interest in teambuilding activities themed around *Running Man*, as well as those that incorporate experiences with traditional food and crafts."

Sheraton Seoul D Cube City Hotel has also observed an increase in incentive bookings from Asian markets such as Hong Kong (five per cent) and China (seven per cent), while Japan continues to be one of its key source markets.

General manager David Cuddon said: "More recently, China has become an important source market of incentive groups for us. We believe that the appeal of Hallyu has had a positive impact on destination marketing. The tourism authorities have also done a good job to promote

South Korea as a MICE destination.

"The growth is also partly due to...bigger budgets, particularly from Hong Kong clients who are willing to spend more on accommodation compared to other Asian markets. Asian incentive groups bring lots of opportunities to our property. They stay three or four days on average and spend more than 180,000 won (US\$162) just on the room."

Mun expects Asian incentive business to do well again for 2013, as "the Asian economy is strong and companies are doing much better than in the past".

"We have secured several small incentive groups for 2013, and are in the process of bidding for a few major ones," she revealed. "Most Asian incentive groups have already done Singapore and Hong Kong, but South Korea is still a fresh option for them," she added.

Simon T Ang, operations manager of Manila-based Celebrate Life TLC Corp, agrees, noting that most of his incentive clients in the Philippines favour Singapore, Thailand and Macau.

Ang said: "We have done a lot of

leisure traffic to South Korea, but not for incentives. We hope to change that. I'm especially interested in what Seoul Tourism Organization (STO) is doing to attract corporate meetings and incentives. I think that is enticing."

Ang was referring to STO's financial support for corporate meetings and incentives with at least 50 international participants staying two nights or more in the capital city. Eligible events may receive support in the form of promotional souvenirs, airport welcomes, ground transfers, banquets, performances, tours and up to 20,000 won for each participant.

Cuddon, however, holds a more cautious view. "We expect 2013 to have some challenges, mainly due to the strong Korean won and the weak Japanese yen. Given the fact that Japan is still the largest market for Seoul, this is not good news for the industry," he said, adding that more attention will be paid on luring South-east Asian incentive groups and tightening partnerships with Chinese PCOs.

In the sphere of conventions and exhibitions, Mun said cities such as Busan and Yeosu were getting popular. Yeosu on the country's southern coast came into the spotlight after hosting Expo 2012 from May 12 to August 12, and is now attracting incentive groups keen on cruise programmes.

Busan is home to the Busan Exhibition & Convention Center (BEXCO), said to be the second largest facility of its kind in South Korea. According to Baek Sang Hyeon, who is with the exhibition & convention division of the Busan Metropolitan City, Busan draws more trade show attendees than events held in Seoul.

Baek said: "When the Lions Club came to Busan last year, it set a world record with 50,000 attendees. This year we will welcome the 2,500-pax International Population Conference. Come 2016, we will host the International Vacuum Congress, also with 2,500 attendees.

"Busan also has many hotel rooms to support large events, and our room inventory is still growing."

Park Hyatt Busan opened in January with 269 rooms and suites, five event salons on level one, three ballrooms and a pre-function space on level two, and four function rooms on level 33.

"Furthermore, the area around BEXCO is being developed as a multi-use convention zone. There are malls around BEXCO, a museum (Busan Museum of Art) and some hotels, and joining all that is a complex with two hotels and two theme parks which will be completed by February 2017," said Baek, adding that one of the hotels would be a 770-room ibis property, and the other a 300-room Pullman.

Despite South Korea's rising status as a quality MICE destination, KTO does not have an overarching MICE strategy for the country. Instead, according to KTO Singapore office, the headquarters has identified Beijing, Singapore, Bangkok, New York and London as key markets to tap for MICE, and each of the offices are responsible for their own MICE promotions.

Yong revealed that the Singapore MICE market had been growing steadily. Not one to be complacent, Yong has been pushing for even closer cooperation with trade partners to "develop more exciting MICE programmes to further entice MICE travellers".

"We are organising regular product trainings and seminars to improve trade members' knowledge of South Korea, and are interacting with clients directly for feedback and to provide them with information and suggestions for their (events)," he added.

Meanwhile, KTO will continue to bank on the annual Korea MICE Expo to showcase the destination and generate interest, according to Mun. She said: "This event has always created a lot of business leads for South Korea, besides helping to link overseas MICE buyers with local sellers."

This year, the Korea MICE Expo will be held from June 26 to 27 at COEX in Seoul. ■

Ideas

Explore Seoul and its surroundings in five days

Day 1

Arrive at Incheon International Airport in the morning and check into your hotel. A spa session awaits after a light lunch at the hotel. In the evening, take in the sights of Seoul. Start off with a traditional Korean dinner at Korea House, then head up to N Seoul Tower for a spectacular view of the shining city before hopping on a Hangang Riverboat cruise.

Day 2

Take the morning to get acquainted with South Korea's regal history. On the itinerary is the National Palace Museum of Korea, Gyeongbokgung Palace, Unhyeongung Royal Residence and Deoksugung Palace.

After lunch, explore the Namsan Hanok Village and master a few sleek taekwondo moves, enjoy traditional

music at the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts and learn to make kimchi.

Spend the evening in Samcheongguk, once the venue for the banquet of North and South Korean representatives and today a place where cultural performances are celebrated. Enjoy a traditional dinner before catching a performance.

Day 3

Get active today. Learn to ride a horse at the Horse-riding Club of Starpia, then go on a Geo-Hunt using mobile GPS devices to discover hidden items and complete a mission (www.we-can.co.kr). Return to the hotel for a rest before regrouping for a themed dinner party.

Day 4

Set off on a day trip to Yeosu. Go cycling along Ipobo Reservoir and learn how to

make pottery at the Icheon Pottery Village.

Day 5

The final day in the capital city is dedicated to retail therapy. Hit Cheongdam-dong Myeongpunggeori for a spot of luxury shopping, and onwards to Insa-dong, Myeongdong and Lotte Hotel Duty Free Shop. Depart Seoul later that day.

Itinerary by Korea Tourism Organization



NEED TO KNOW



Get inspired on Facebook

Korean Tourism Organization has launched its own Facebook page (www.facebook.com/KTOMICE) to showcase activity ideas for corporate groups and information on taking business events to South Korea, allowing planners to glean fresh and unique ideas for their next event. The Facebook site also highlights corporate incentives or teambuilding events held recently in the country, as well as lists upcoming trade and public events that planners can weave into their itinerary.

Walk around an arty village

Gamcheon Culture Village in Busan has earned itself nicknames such as "Busan's Santorini", thanks to its many colourful houses that cover the hillside, overlooking the sea below. Some 300 homes have been transformed into galleries, cafés and cultural facilities, and the alleyways are filled with quirky art installations.

Corporate groups headed for an event in Busan should pay this village a visit to take in the sights, shop for art pieces and sip a cup of coffee at a lively café.

A stronger alliance

The Seoul MICE Alliance, a partnership between the Seoul Metropolitan Government, Seoul Tourism Organization and private organisations, has grown its membership scale with the addition of 41 companies from nine different industries.

Most of these new members will provide services that will improve the overall quality of international meetings held in the capital city. These new members are expected to encourage international MICE buyers and event attendees to seek more local services.

The Seoul MICE Alliance was first launched in 2010 with 47 members. Today there are 113 companies working together to enhance Seoul's global MICE competitiveness.

Have a bowl of herb flower rice

But before you do, explore the vast space of Sangsoo Herb Land, an attraction located 30 minutes by car from Daejeon. It is home to 550 types of herbs, all set amid a soothing landscape of rock sculptures, ponds and streams.

When you are done exploring nature's gifts, head to the in-house restaurant for a satisfying bowl of herb flower rice. One can also purchase natural products such as herb soap and herb candles.

Haedong Yonggung Temple



Empty your mind at a temple

The ocean-front Haedong Yonggung Temple is one of the major Buddhist temples in Busan.

Built in 1376, the temple's location grants it scenic views and a peaceful ambience, a potent mix that will help busy city-dwellers to relax their minds.

There are several restaurants and street stalls around the temple, so one could grab a bite before hiking up 108 steps to the house of worship.

Swing by the Garden Expo

Suncheon Bay, one of Korea's main ecological tourism attractions, will host the Garden Exposition Suncheon Bay Korea 2013 from April 20 to October 20 this year.

The event showcases green initiatives such as solar energy, sustainable garden development and electronic transportation. Visitors to the event can also take the chance to explore the coastal wetland, and catch a glimpse of the Hooded Crane, otter and Spoonbill.

Suncheonman Bay



Over coffee with...



Are you and your brother now running the business completely?

What's happened is, mum (Panga Vathanakul) has taken the managing director/chairman position. Think of it as a football team – I'm in the forward position, the striker; my brother (Vathanai Vathanakul, 36, vice president) is the defence.

Our responsibilities are clearly defined: I look after sales and marketing, business development and investment. My brother looks after operations, service, maintenance, engineering, etc. Sometimes there are overlaps of course. For example, business development needs to contribute to design, so if we're building a new restaurant or improving on our design, I would give input based on market feedback, recruit an interior designer, then my brother would take over the responsibility for the contractors, engineers, etc.

So where's mum in the football field?

She's the coach, the manager. She's very involved, i.e., she also plays as well, in fact sometimes she comes in as the striker.

My mum has always been a hands-on kind of person and has always taught us of the need to be so. As owners, we can't take the position of just standing back and letting the general managers do their thing. We're owner-manager, so we're very involved in the day-to-day management, sales, reservations, etc.

Why are you the striker and your brother, defender?

My strengths are in presentation and sales skills. I enjoy meeting people. I'm energetic and an extrovert. My brother enjoys sales too, and he's not an introvert, but he prefers not to travel too much. He likes the service and operations part of the business and he's careful and detailed in the way we provide our service.

It's funny: growing up, I was actually shy and introverted. For some reason, this changed as I grew. I'm still shy at heart though.

“ I think I've put more youthfulness into Royal Cliff. ”

Vitanart Vathanakul

The next generation is now running the Royal Cliff Hotels Group and Pattaya Exhibition & Convention Hall. **Raini Hamdi** speaks to the 30-year-old striker in the family, executive director Vitanart Vathanakul

Are you close to your brother and do you work well together?

Oh yes, he's very supportive. I'm blessed to have him as a brother. He's the trailblazer for me; he led the way for many things in my life. I studied in the UK because he went there first and told me how great it was, that it wasn't just the excellent education, but learning multiple skills – sports, making friends from all over the world, understanding different cultures. He went when he was 11 years old; I went when I was eight.

You've been in the role for three years now. Is it difficult being back in Thailand, then holding the fort as striker?

Yes, the transition was quite challenging. My education was not in hotels at all. I graduated in electronics engineering from Cambridge and my Masters degree was in physics.

Did you want to be a hotelier?

I always wanted to be a hotelier, but I always enjoyed those subjects – math, science, technology – and my parents let us do what we wanted in college/university; we just had to make sure it was a proper subject, challenging and taught us analytical thinking. So when I chose electronics engineering, they said that's fine, you could use the math skills and apply that to the business environment. I chose physics for my Masters because studying science in Cambridge was a dream.

How was the transition challenging?

When I came back, it was quite difficult to acclimatise in every sense of the word.

I have to use different skills now. While analytical skills still apply in decision-making, people skills are definitely needed. The biggest challenge is managing the team.

I also need multi-tasking skills and prioritising skills. Every day in a hotel is different. For some jobs, it's different days, same things. For hotels, it's different days, different things.

Another challenge is delegating and trusting, because I want to do everything myself. But sometimes, you have to say to the team, "Help me with this", and monitor their progress. It's a steep learning curve.

My mother also always throws me in the deep end, giving me the most difficult job as that's the best way to learn.

So what's the biggest goal you've scored to-date?

The biggest thing I did was set up our Internet marketing team. It was an area we lacked in. Of course our sales managers were developing OTA distribution, but I needed fresh eyes to look at this in totality. I needed the young generation who were experienced in digital marketing to look at social media, OTAs, search engine optimisation, website optimisation, email marketing – the whole arena. My team of 12 staff in this department is the youngest in the whole Royal Cliff.

Our online sales rose in the first year by 30 to 40 per cent. I remember we had K-pop (Korean pop) idols staying here in (January) 2011. Once we knew there were going to be over 20 bands, with the most famous K-pop stars coming over, we marketed it through social media. Within five hours of announcing it to the

online community, we had over 500 rooms booked.

I had to go to the reservations room and tell the staff to relax – he was so tired because the phone calls kept coming in. Our fan base was 1,000. By the end of the K-pop programme, it was 5,000.

I think I've put more youthfulness into Royal Cliff. When I came in, I also initiated projects such as our new restaurant right on the beach, Breezeo, offering 'be yourself' dining with fun things like a menu of over 100 cocktails. If you don't like the 100 cocktails, there's also a menu from which you can create your own cocktail, choose your own liqueur, glassware, decoration, even ice.

I always emphasise the importance of creativity, being adventurous and taking risks.

And what's a big mistake that you've learnt from?

Once, we had a lot of requests from bloggers to review Royal Cliff. I declined and I regret it to this day. I didn't think I could get the best ROI from it. Some also felt the way I declined was rude, though I'm never rude to anyone. I learnt from that mistake, redeemed the relationship and they all came back.

Sometimes I can also get impatient with business partners and we have unnecessary arguments. But I've learnt to be more patient.

Do you see a younger clientele now at Royal Cliff?

Yes, we're trying to tap the younger generation. I had a problem in that a lot of them felt Royal Cliff was unreachable – 'a five-star plus product for my parents'. We're saying, no, this is for young, sophisticated business travellers or for people who want to reward themselves and their families, and that it is reachable.

We've done a major rebranding exercise, from Royal Cliff Beach Resort previously to Royal Cliff Hotels Group, to emphasise that we have four different hotel products, one convention centre and 11 restaurants. And far from just a name change, we followed through with a one billion baht renovation and an investment on human resource training.

(The four hotel products are: the 544-room Beach Hotel, pitched as "casual luxury". Aside from new, modern Mini Suite Plus rooms, it has a new infinity-edge pool and the beach restaurant, Breezeo.

Do you meet other young hotel owners and how are you all different from the older generation?

Oh yes, there are lots of them in Bangkok and Pattaya. The younger generation is starting to take over from their parents. I studied with some of them and we now exchange notes. In Pattaya, we meet for dinner sometimes, exchange ideas and do partnerships as well.

I don't see them as competitors. If I'm hosting a 10,000-pax convention, no way can I accommodate them all at Royal Cliff, so I always recommend this and that hotel and ask them to send me their contract to send to the MICE organisers.

The younger generation of hotel owners are very driven. We want to do a lot in a very short time. ■

"I had a problem in that (younger travellers) felt Royal Cliff was unreachable – 'a five-star plus product for my parents'. We're saying...it is reachable."

Case studies

43rd Union World Conference on Lung Health

Distance was no barrier for the conference team in Paris who took up the challenge of organising the world's largest meeting on lung health in Kuala Lumpur, discovers **S Puvaneswary**



The conference drew an impressive 2,600 delegates in attendance and raised US\$140,000 in funding

Malaysia was chosen to be the host country of the 43rd Union World Conference on Lung Health due to its ongoing efforts to improve the health of its general population and its support for new medical research in the areas of tuberculosis and lung disease.

According to Nils E Billo, executive director of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (Union), other winning factors that swung the decision to take the world's largest annual meeting on lung health to Malaysia were the opportunity to draw local delegates, the strong support from partners such as the Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB), the Malaysian constituent member of the Union, Malaysian Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis (MAPTB) and "the beautiful Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC)".

The event aims to bring innovation, expertise, solutions and support to address health challenges in low- and middle-income populations.

Aptly themed *Driving sustainability through mutual responsibility*, the five-day conference featured speakers from 65 countries.

Significant highlights of the conference included the *Run for your Lungs* activity,

which was jointly organised by the Union and MAPTB as a fun run that stressed the importance of lung health, as well as the launch of *The Union Centennial Campaign for Research and Education*.

Although the conference has been organised every year, Billo told *TTGmice* that there were challenges in putting it together.

He noted that the organising team was based in Paris, while the event was slated to take place in the capital of Malaysia.

"The distance...was a bit challenging. It helped that we had very strong support from MyCEB, G2 Public Relations in Kuala Lumpur, MAPTB, KLCC and the French-Malaysian Chamber of Commerce, as well as our Union staff at The Union Asia Pacific Office in Singapore.

"We also worked successfully with a number of local vendors and suppliers," he said, adding that the organising team had to make several site visits to Kuala Lumpur.

All that long-distance coordination and intensive communication paid off, as the 43rd Union World Conference on Lung Health turned in a shiny performance report. It drew more than 2,600 world experts on lung health from over 122 countries. Some 200 Malaysian delegates

Event

The 43rd Union World Conference on Lung Health

No. of pax

More than 2,600 delegates

Venue

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

Date

November 13 to 17, 2012

Objective

To bring together delegates from around the world to discuss challenges in lung disease, and to bring about innovation, expertise, solutions and support

Challenges

The conference team was based in Paris, while the event was held in Kuala Lumpur

Solution

The conference team depended on strong support from the Malaysian MICE bureau and other business partners in the destination

attended and benefited from the conference.

Billo said: "We consider this an excellent turnout since these are difficult times economically for many public health organisations and advocates.

He also revealed that US\$140,000 was raised at the 1st President's Centennial Dinner, and the money would be channelled into research and education programmes.

"On the whole, this conference was highly rated and very successful. The standards of the facility, food, entertainment and settings were all very high, which left a very positive impression on our delegates," he said.

MyCEB's CEO, Zulkefli Sharif, said: "MyCEB was supportive of this conference as it facilitates the opportunity for professional development, knowledge exchange and best practices in the local and regional health sectors, particularly in respiratory health. This will impact positively on Malaysia as a model developing country." ■

12th Asia Superyacht Rendezvous

The need for a temporary private jetty on the beachfront and a wet weather programme are no issues at all for Angsana Laguna Phuket, and it delivers the annual event immaculately, writes **Karen Yue**

Some 120 owners, captains and crew members of the world's best sail and motor superyachts – luxury pleasure craft that measure over 100 feet – swept into the Thai resort destination of Phuket in December last year.

They were there to attend the 12th Asia Superyacht Rendezvous, an annual social event that included private parties, competitive sailing races and a gutter boat race. It was held at the Angsana Laguna Phuket, part of the Laguna Phuket integrated resort.

Kamolux Israngkul Na Ayuthaya, spokesperson of Angsana Laguna Phuket, said the resort was chosen for the event as it was the “newest resort in Laguna Phuket with the biggest beach club in Phuket”.

Angsana Laguna Phuket opened on December 1, 2011 after an extensive refurbishment costing US\$50 million in 2012, which gave it a fresh and lively vibe along with material comforts.

Kamolux added: “The resort was also ideal as the organiser was looking for a new venue on Bang Tao Bay where guests can enjoy the event at different locations every night, while allowing all yachts owners, captains, crew and guests to see their (craft) and other participating ones parked along the bay.

“Although not all participants stayed at the resort – many of them chose to stay on their yachts – it was very convenient for them to get onto the beach and to the (event venues in the) resort because there was a private jetty and private speedboat on standby throughout the event.”

The event kicked off in Tabak and Phak Tob meeting rooms. All participants, as well as local and international sponsors, media and guests, were greeted at a media welcome and captain's briefing before heading to an opening cocktail onboard *S/Y Silolona*, one of the participating superyachts. A private jetty was constructed on the resort's beachfront and speedboats were provided to get guests onto *S/Y Silolona*.

A race commenced on Bang Tao Bay the next day, and come evening, the delegates adjourned to Xana Beach Club



Angsana Laguna Phuket

Event

12th Asia Superyacht Rendezvous

No. of pax

120

Venue

Angsana Laguna Phuket, Thailand

Date

December 16 to 18, 2012

Objective

To bring together some of the world's greatest sail and motor Superyachts through this annual social gathering

Challenges

Government permission must be sought for the installation of a private jetty and the usage of a public beach for private functions related to the event; provisions must be made for rain

canapé selection featured Thai and international cuisine.

Samantha Caalsan, event manager of Asia Pacific Superyacht, was all praises for the dinner selection. She said: “Buffet food is never good but I have to give it to Angsana Laguna Phuket – the quality of the food was exceptional.”

The event culminated on December 18 with a gala dinner on the beachfront of Xana. Angsana Laguna Phuket arranged for Thai dancers to entertain guests during the pre-dinner cocktails, and then surprised everyone with the appearance of a baby elephant.

Dinner commenced under a white purpose-built marquee on Bang Tao Bay. A combination of buffet lines and live cooking stations provided a stream of popular local dishes such as Thai green curry and chicken massaman to keep delegates' tummies happy.

Kamolux recalled that a wet weather programme had to be put in place for the Feadship Challenge and cocktails, as it was held outdoors and the weather in December had been unpredictable. If the sky had broken with rain, the event would be shifted to the resort's Market Place Restaurant, which offers beautiful lagoon views and has both an air-conditioned indoor area and a sheltered outdoor space. ■

for the Feadship Challenge, a gutter boat race in which competing crew must build a model boat from a simple kit and blow it quickly down a three-metre gutter course.

A standing cocktail was also arranged on Xana's garden. The buffet line and

Appointments



Hans Loontjens



Katharina Kustos



Fergus Stewart



Alex Willats



George Koumendakos



Agus Suananda



Andrew Abram



Mohd K Rafin



Debbie Chee



Anthony Gill

HONG KONG

Hans Loontjens has been made general manager of **Renaissance Harbour View Hotel Hong Kong**. He was previously general manager of Renaissance Beijing Capital Hotel.

INDIA

The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore has placed **Shane Krige** at its helm. Krige joins The Ritz-Carlton from his role as general manager of The Plaza New York, where he led the hotel's three-year US\$450 million renovation.

INDONESIA

Agus Suananda is now hotel manager of **Centra Taum Seminyak Bali**. He has more than 20 years of hospitality industry experience, and was general manager of Fivelements Puri Ahimsa, a five-star boutique hotel in Bali.

GHM has appointed **Katharina Kustos** as

director of sales and marketing for both **The Chedi Club Tanah Gajah** in Ubud and **The Legian on Bali**. Kustos has held sales positions in the Jumeirah Group and Park Hyatt Dubai.

MALAYSIA

John Autelitano has been promoted to group general manager of **Sunway Resort Hotel & Spa**. In this role, Autelitano oversees the operations of five Sunway hotels including The Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat and the pre-opening programmes for SP3 Hotel and Sunway Velocity Hotel, which are due to open in 2016.

PHILIPPINES

Alex Willats has moved from Dusit Thani Bangkok to **Dusit Thani Manila**, where has taken on the role of general manager. He is joined by new hire **Anna Patricia Villareal**, director of sales. Villareal was area director of catering

sales at Crimson Hotel and Resorts and Quest Hotel.

SINGAPORE

Park Hotel Group (PHG) has promoted **Mohd K Rafin** from senior vice president to chief corporate officer. Mohd K Rafin joined PHG in 2007 as vice president and was promoted to senior vice president after two years. Prior to PHG, he undertook leadership positions with reputable hotel chains.

The Sentosa, A Beaufort Hotel has appointed **Ian Ekers** general manager. Prior to this, Ekers was general manager of Parkroyal on Kitchener Road for three years.

THAILAND

Chris Ehmann now leads the upcoming **Hilton Sukhumvit Bangkok** (opening this month) and **DoubleTree by Hilton**

Sukhumvit (opening May) as general manager. He was most recently general manager at Hilton Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.

UAE

Andrew Abram has been appointed general manager of **Raffles Dubai**. Abram joins from the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, where he held a number of positions since 2003. He was most recently general manager of the Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

VIETNAM

The Nam Hai Hoi An, Vietnam is now led by **Anthony Gill**, who joins from La Residence Hotel & Spa on Vietnam's central coast. The luxury resort also welcomes **Debbie Chee** as director of sales and marketing. Chee was instrumental in getting Le Méridien Khao Lak back on the map after

the 2004 tsunami. She also opened the Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa in 2010.

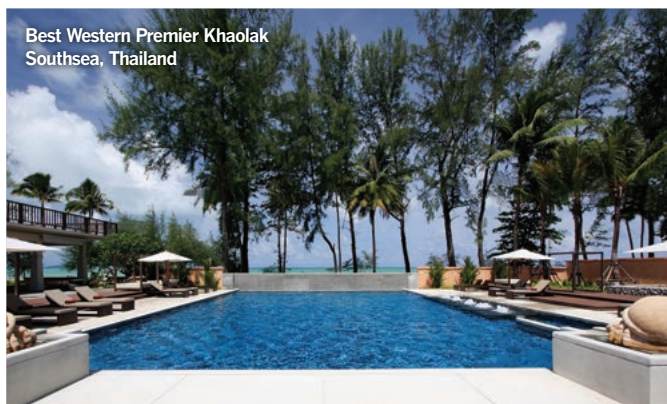
George Koumendakos

has been appointed as general manager of the upcoming **InterContinental Hanoi Landmark 72** in Vietnam. Koumendakos brings with him over 20 years of hospitality management experience in various locations worldwide. He was previously the general manager of ANA Crowne Plaza Kobe.

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG)

has named **Fergus Stewart** director of operations, Thailand & IndoChina. Based in Vietnam, Stewart first joined IHG in 2008 as general manager of ANA InterContinental Tokyo and went on to become regional general manager in 2010, overseeing the group's properties in the Greater Tokyo area.

Hotel updates



Best Western Premier Khaolak Southsea, Thailand



Four Points by Sheraton Bangkok, Sukhumvit 15, Thailand

Anantara Xishuangbanna Resort & Spa, China

Located in China's Yunnan Province, the five-star Anantara Xishuangbanna Resort & Spa offers 80 deluxe guestrooms and 23 pool villas set amid lush gardens and water features. It is supported by fully-equipped event venues, which include a large function room for up to 100 people, two meeting rooms and a boardroom.

www.anantara.com

Best Western Premier Khaolak Southsea, Thailand

Best Western International has opened the new 125-room Best Western Premier Khaolak Southsea in southern Thailand. Boasting luxurious trimmings, the resort features event spaces, a 24-hour business centre, two restaurants and an outdoor pool. Incentive planners will find the resort conveniently located close to an array of leisure facilities including world-class diving sites in the Similan and Surin Islands.

www.bestwestern.com

Bintan Lagoon Resort, Indonesia

The 473-key Bintan Lagoon Resort

opened its new Conference Centre at the end of February, enhancing its ability to cater to large events.

The three-storey building houses a column-free banquet hall capable of hosting up to 1,300 guests, an outdoor roof terrace and spacious pre-function and foyer areas.

It also boasts the latest in lighting and audiovisual capabilities and high-speed wireless Internet throughout.

www.bintanlagoon.com

Four Points by Sheraton Bangkok, Sukhumvit 15, Thailand

The hotel now has two new event venues on its rooftop. Breeze, an indoor space with glass walls and overlooking the Sukhumvit skyline, can be used for meetings and other functions. For larger events, Breeze can be combined with Garden Terrace, which comes with a retractable roof. Combined, both venues can accommodate events with up to 400 guests.

www.fourpoints.com/bangkoksukhumvit15

Hilton Garden Inn Gurgaon Baani Square, India

The mid-priced Hilton Garden Inn



Hotel Éclat Beijing, China

Gurgaon Baani Square has opened in the Indian city of Gurgaon.

The hotel sits near prime corporate, commercial and residential districts, and is a 10-minute drive from the DLF Cyber City central business hub.

Facilities include four meeting rooms, various dining establishments, as well as the brand's signature perks for business travellers – complimentary Internet access, 24-hour complimentary business centre facilities, complimentary remote printing service from the guestroom to the business centre and the 24-hour Pavilion Pantry convenience mart.

www.hiltongardeninn.com

Hotel Éclat Beijing, China

Nestled in a glass-and-steel tower capsule within Parkview Green, this 100-room-and-suite hotel boasts a stylised lobby featuring original works by Salvador Dali, Andy Warhol, Zeng Fanzhi and Chen Wenling. A member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, the hotel is also home to the largest private Dali art collection in China. It is located close to Beijing's key cultural sites.

www.eclathotels.com/beijing

Kempinski Ambience

Delhi, India

Luxury hotel brand Kempinski has taken root in the commercial district of Shahdara in East Delhi.

The 480-key Kempinski Ambience Delhi comprises two towers, each with its own dedicated entrance, lobby and check-in counters. Both structures are connected by a sky bridge.

The hotel houses banqueting facilities of over 6,503m² including a pillar-less ballroom that can accommodate up to 6,000 guests.

Other facilities include four specialty restaurants, two fitness centres and two outdoor heated swimming pools.

www.kempinski.com/delhi

Vana Belle, a Luxury Collection Resort, Koh Samui, Thailand

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide debuted the Vana Belle in Koh Samui on February 6.

Part of the company's The Luxury Collection, the resort offers 80 suites and villas, each with a private pool and balcony, as well as two restaurants, a lobby lounge and the Vana Spa.

Vana Belle is located near Samui International Airport.

www.luxurycollection.com/vanabelle

Packages



SOUTH KOREA

Conrad Seoul is offering a series of incentives and meeting packages for events held between April 1 and November 30.

One of the perks is a cash-back benefit. For every US\$50,000 spent on meetings at the hotel, the event booker will gain US\$2,500 in credit. Two complimentary guestrooms for organisers and free Internet access for all event delegates will also be provided.

A full-day meeting package is on offer too. Priced from US\$100 per delegate (excluding tax), the package includes two refreshments breaks and use of a meeting room, audio-visual equipment, projector and screen.

Bookings must be made by May 31.

Visit www.conradseoul.com

VIETNAM

InterContinental Asiana Saigon in Ho Chi Minh City is offering an *InterContinental Residential Meeting Package*, priced from US\$175⁺⁺ per person per guestroom per night.

The package includes accommodation in a deluxe room, a half- or full-day meeting arrangement, a welcome cocktail with canapés at the Purple Jade Bar, complimentary high-speed Internet access, complimentary pressing of one item per day and one complimentary guestroom for every 20 paying guestrooms.

This offer is applicable for new bookings of at least 10 guestrooms per night from April 1 to July 31.

Contact: events@icasianasaigon.com

CHINA

Sheraton Huzhou Hot Spring Resort in China is offering half- and full-day meeting packages priced at RMB530 (US\$85) and RMB580 per person respectively.

The offer includes use of Salon function room, choice of *Scent to Inspire* from the hotel's Mystic Spa selection of energising aromatherapy oils, complimentary coffee and tea, distilled water, candy and dried fruit throughout the meeting, morning and afternoon coffee breaks, lunch, and other perks.

A minimum booking of 20 persons is required. All rates are subject to a 15 per cent service charge. The offer is valid until December 31.

Contact: reservation.3414@sheraton.com

MALAYSIA

One World Hotel in Petaling Jaya, a 45-minute drive from Kuala Lumpur International Airport, is offering full- and half-day meeting packages for the whole year.

A full-day meeting deal with welcome coffee/tea, two coffee breaks and lunch is priced at RM175⁺⁺ (US\$56.40) per person, while an arrangement without lunch is priced at RM140⁺⁺.

A half-day package with welcome coffee/tea, one coffee break and lunch is priced at RM165⁺⁺ per person, while an option without lunch costs RM130⁺⁺.

The package also includes complimentary Internet access for eight hours per day in the meeting room, a complimentary welcome refreshment counter with brewed coffee, tea, *teh tarik* and an assortment of home-made cookies, and complimentary use of an LCD meeting sign, among other perks.

Contact: cne@oneworldhotel.com.my



THAILAND

Kirimaya Golf Resort Spa in Thailand is offering an event package for meetings and incentives.

The *Nature Inspired @ Kirimaya Package* includes one night's accommodation in a Plantation View Room and breakfast. Planners can opt for a meeting package including use of a meeting room from 08.30 to 17.30, or a round of golf with dinner and 30 per cent off spa treatments.

Packages with single occupancy go for 4,555 baht (US\$152). Double occupancy is priced at 5,666 baht. Special group rates for additional nights are also available. Offer valid until October 31. Terms and conditions apply.

Contact: reservation@kirimaya.com

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