

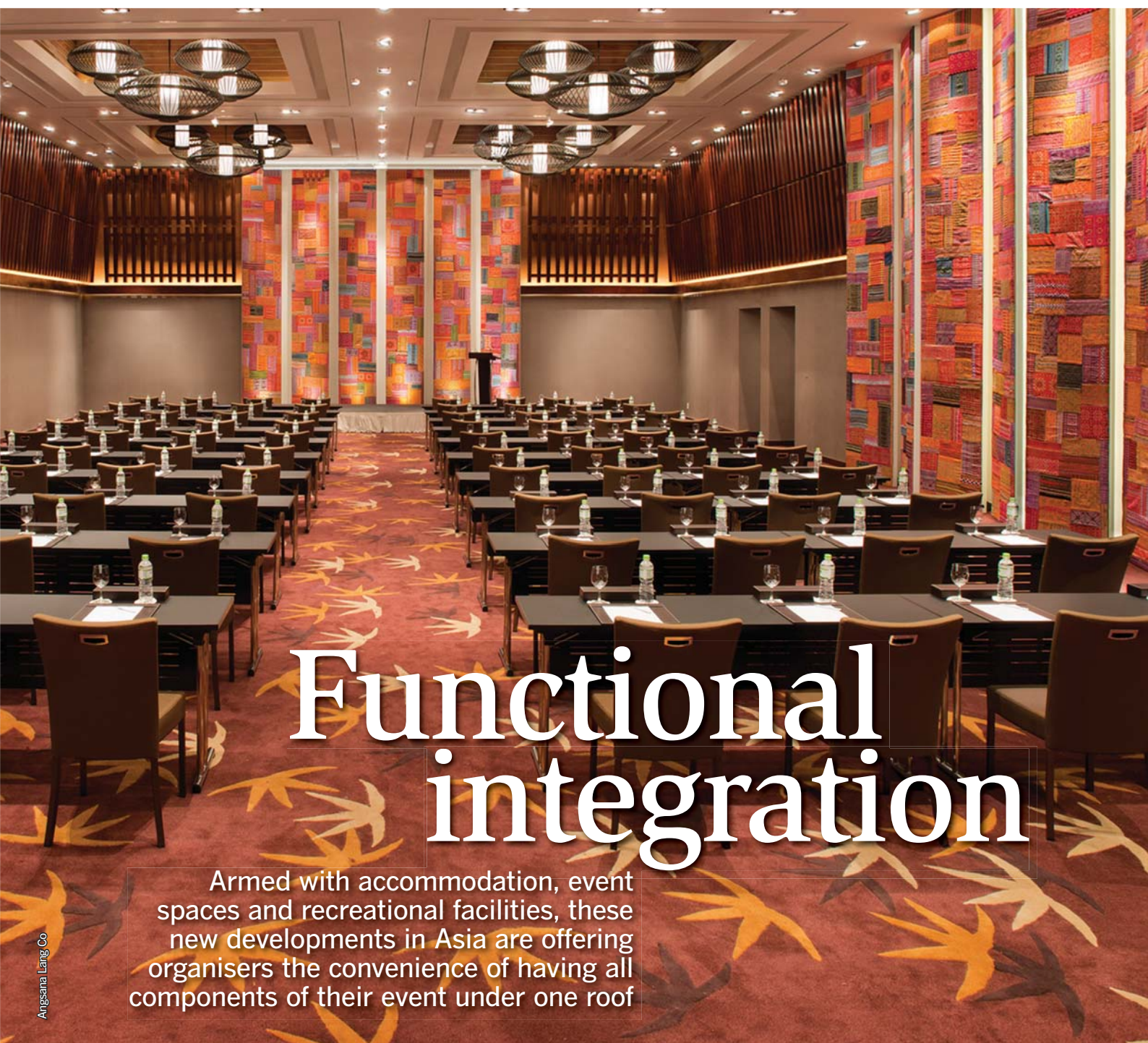
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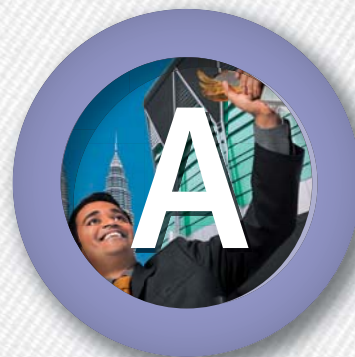
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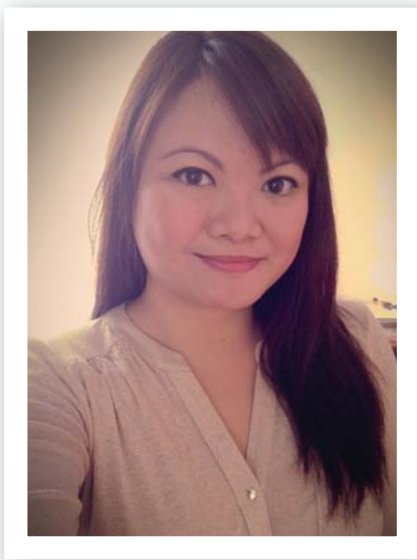


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To our readers

We strike gold again



Karen Yue
Group editor

“The award truly motivates us to keep raising the high editorial standards that *TTGmice* is already known for.”

Mere days after celebrating the completion of our August issue, my team and I were given yet another – and far bigger – reason to rejoice.

A letter from the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) arrived to inform us that *TTGmice*’s cover story in the July 2012 issue, *A brighter shade of green*, had clinched the 2013 PATA Gold Award’s Travel Journalism – Business Article Award.

We are thrilled, as this is not an easy award to win. The annual PATA Gold Award draws many contenders for each of its award categories, and this year’s edition saw 165 entries from 60 PATA and non-PATA organisations around the world.

TTGmice earned the same recognition in 2009 for its September 2008 cover story, *DMCs defined: The real knights of creativity*, and in 2011 for its November 2010 cover story *Rebuilding the team*.

A brighter shade of green examined the degree to which green credentials of Asia’s convention and exhibition centres had influenced show organisers’ choice of MICE venues. It also spotlighted a selection of notable green venues in this region.

This cover feature was actually a frustrating piece to write, as I was baffled by how environmentally-conscious MICE centres in Asia were not given the credit they deserve in the venue selection process by Asian clients.

I hope that with this award and the publicity surrounding *A brighter shade of green*, more business event organisers will take a second or third look at the article and be more aware of the immense efforts MICE centres put into delivering sustainable hardware and software. More importantly, I hope they will be encouraged to choose environmentally-conscious venues for their next event.

The award truly motivates us to keep raising the high editorial standards that *TTGmice* is already known for. To do that, we would like you, our readers, to tell us what you would like to see more – or less – of in the magazine; which destinations you would like us to feature; and how we could make every issue even more useful in your event planning process. In short, help us continue to make *TTGmice* yours.

I’m sure you know how to reach us! ■

TTGmice

SEPTEMBER 2013



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Functional integration

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Seoul is hot for MICE, but so are her sister cities, and the country's tourism bureau is eager to prove just that to business event planners. By **Karen Yue**

22 MICE links on the rise

With China's MICE travellers heading abroad in greater numbers with bigger budgets, Malaysia is now bidding for this increasingly affluent market segment as air access between the two countries grow, writes **S Puvaneswary**

28 The Indian shortfall

Hong Kong is seeing fewer Indian arrivals due to the depreciating rupee, strong competition from other destinations and volatile global economy. By **Prudence Lui**

31 In good taste

Australia is cooking up a storm with food and wine specialists to offer Asian business event planners more ways to spice up their programmes, writes **Karen Yue**

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TTGmice

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Talk of the Trade

INDIA

Air India lifts MICE business

By Rohit Kaul



Air India's new flights from New Delhi to Sydney and Melbourne have fueled expectations among Indian MICE specialists of stronger MICE traffic to Australia.

The carrier commenced on August 29 a daily triangulated service from New Delhi to Sydney and Melbourne, flying New Delhi-Sydney-Melbourne four days a week and New Delhi-Melbourne-Sydney on the other three days.

Sydney currently attracts marginal MICE business from India compared with more popular South-east Asian destinations, according to trade sources.

Vikram Madhok, managing director, Abercrombie & Kent India, said: "Closer countries like Singapore, which has good direct connectivity with India, generate more demand."

However, the trade is confident that things are set to change with the launch of the new flight. Naveen Rizvi, senior vice president-India and head, TUI Meetings & Incentives, said: "Direct connectivity is always helpful in selling a destination as it saves both time and money for the traveller."

Rizvi expects more MICE bookings for Australia, with most demand coming out of Northern India. He intends to tap Air India's direct flight connectivity for an up-coming group from New Delhi to Sydney.

Nishant Kashikar, country manager for India with Tourism Australia, said the bureau was eager to tap the Indian MICE market and insisted that the depreciating Indian rupee would not affect the destination's MICE prospect.

Continued on page 6

TALKING NUMBERS

600 The total number of buyers expected at IT&CMA this year, which will be held from October 1-3 at the Bangkok Convention Centre at CentralWorld Bangkok.

35 The percentage of exhibitors at IT&CMA that are new this year. Debuting exhibitors including Tourism New Zealand, Fukuoka CVB, Federal Hotels International, Safaris Adventures Travel and Cargo and Solar Empire.

45 The amount, in millions of US dollars, of sales transacted as a result of IT&CMA last year, according to a study conducted by the event organiser, TTG Asia Media, in April 2013. The aggregate procurement value through IT&CMA 2012 was estimated to be US\$120 million.

SINGAPORE

International Special Events Society forms new chapter

Singapore's events sector will get a boost in standards in the near future, as the International Special Events Society (ISES) gets ready to unveil a Singapore chapter within the next few months.

Benjamin Fox, general manager at Turning Point Solutions and president of the ISES Singapore Chapter, said: "It is a very exciting time for the local events sector because everyone is looking at raising the industry standards today, so this is an appropriate time for us to come in."

ISES, which aims to "deliver creative

excellence and professionalism in special events", currently comprises more than 7,000 professionals across 36 countries. Hong Kong is the only country in Asia with an ISES chapter so far.

Fox said: "This will be an internationally-recognised platform that brings all the people in the events industry together, to network, advance their businesses and improve their quality. Members of this Singapore chapter will be able to participate in educational seminars and networking events."

He added that ISES' monthly seminars would raise topics such as risk management and how to ensure safety during events.

With six other committee members, Fox said he was targeting roping in at least 40 members once the chapter was officially up and running.

Open to "good and reputable" event specialists from all industries, Fox said annual membership fees started at S\$500 (US\$393) and would vary according to company size. – Lee Pei Qi

MyCEB sweetens deal for planners

By S Puvaneswary

Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) has launched *Malaysia Twin Deal++* (MTD++), aimed at supporting Tourism Malaysia's objectives of increasing arrivals to 28 million next year under the Visit Malaysia Year 2014 campaign.

Targeted at international meeting and incentive groups, MTD++ entitles international groups of at least 50 delegates to enjoy various value-added support.

Following a similar concept as the *Malaysia Twin Deal programme* (MTD), MTD++ maintains the approach of having two deals – one to reward event participants and the other aimed at planners.

MTD++ is also collaborating with 31 hotels in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Langkawi, Sabah and Sarawak to provide perks such as discounts on meeting packages, complimentary rooms with a minimum of 25 paying ones and free welcome amenities.

Tailored to enhance the meeting and incentive group experience in Malaysia, the privileges included in Deal 1 range from limited edition welcome gifts to a complimentary dinner for

the group. Deal 2 offers various rewards for planners, such as a vacation for two in Malaysia and an iPad mini. This is applicable for planners who bring in an accumulative 500 participants and more.



Ho: more carrots for planners

Ho Yoke Ping, general manager of sales and marketing, MyCEB, said: "Our aim is to provide more interesting options and ideas for planners, which would facilitate them to influence their clients in choosing Malaysia as their next destination (for incentive programmes)." MTD++ is limited to confirmed bookings made between August 1 and December 31 for arrivals in 2014.

Commenting on the programme, Alex Lee, CEO of Ping Anchorage Travel & Tours, hopes MyCEB will consider incentivising small but high-yield international MICE groups, and feature hotels from more Malaysian states under MTD++ so as to encourage MICE organisers to explore other parts of the country, such as the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

"This will indirectly benefit the rural communities," Lee said.

TTGmice scores PATA Gold Award for sustainable feature

TTGmice has won the 2013 PATA Gold Award's Travel Journalism – Business Article Award for its July 2012 cover story, *A brighter shade of green*, which looks at the Asia-Pacific MICE industry's reception of environmentally-friendly convention centres, spotlighting sustainable venues including the Cairns Convention Centre and the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

This makes the third PATA Gold Award for TTGmice, which was awarded the same recognition for its cover feature in the November 2010 and September 2008 issue.

In a congratulatory letter to TTG Asia Media's group editor, Karen Yue, Ross Steele, general manager of Cairns Convention Centre, said: "At the Cairns Convention Centre we pride ourselves on our environmental and social practices, and are humbled to be featured as part of your *A brighter shade of green* cover story. We hope stories such as yours will inspire the meetings industry to continually push for sustainability."



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THE PHILIPPINES

TCEB backs bilateral trade MoU with Philippine firms

By Marianne Carandang



Supawan: ready for more Philippine MICE

The Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has inked an MoU with two major private business organisations in the Philippines to enhance bilateral trade between the two countries.

The MoU with the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and Chamber of Commerce of the Philippine Islands (CCPI) will help to develop MICE opportunities, and facilitate trade missions and an exchange of trade economy information. TCEB will tap PCCI and CCPI business networks which comprise veteran companies, mostly established for 25 years or longer.

The Philippines was the third country, after Vietnam and Laos, to be selected as a strategic MICE partner because of its size and overall potential, said TCEB president Nopparat Maythaveekulchai.

"In the last few years we've seen

more businessmen from the Philippines attending trade fairs in agriculture, food, FMCG (e.g. cosmetics), energy, medical and healthcare," he noted.

To encourage growth in trade visitor numbers, TCEB will employ its 100 A-Head trade visitor promotion programme, which offers a US\$100 subsidy per visitor for groups of 15-500 pax.

The Philippines sent 16,745 MICE visitors to Thailand in 2012, mostly for incentives and corporate meetings, according to Supawan Teerarat, TCEB's vice president, strategic and business development. Teerarat projects a 15 per cent increase in that number in the coming year.

In line with the MICE objectives of the MoU, TCEB has conducted a business event at the end of July for 20 key Thailand MICE players and 100-150 Manila-based travel companies, as well as a fam trip in August for selected Philippine travel consultants, in partnership with the Association of Thai Travel Agents and Thai Airways. TCEB hopes to increase traffic to Pattaya and Khon Kaen, beyond popular destinations such as Bangkok.

2013 Calendar

September 15-17

PATA Travel Mart
Chengdu, China

October 1-3

IT&CMA and CTW
Bangkok, Thailand

Continued from page 4

Stronger demand for Australia

"The Australian dollar has been relatively stable vis-à-vis the Indian rupee for the past few months and we have been seeing a lot of mid- to big-sized corporate groups travelling to Australia," said Kashikar. "Companies are looking at experiential trips to incentivise their customers – Australia is a perfect choice."

Meanwhile, Thomas Cook (India) has stepped up efforts to promote Australia on the back of Air India's new flights. Rajeev Kale, COO of MICE, domestic, sports holidays and cruises, said the company had launched new MICE and teambuilding itineraries in Australia, including meeting cricket celebrities, culinary experiences with Michelin-starred master chefs, luxury helicopter tours and specialised wine tours.

ASIA-PACIFIC

Watch out for pricier travel in 2014: CWT

It will cost more to travel for business in 2014, according to Carlson Wagonlit Travel's (CWT) 2014 Travel Price Forecast, which indicated that prices will rise moderately in tandem with the limited economic growth expected across the globe, but airfares in Singapore are expected to witness some of the biggest jumps within Asia-Pacific.

Airfares in Singapore may surge by as much as 5.1 per cent. On the other hand, fewer business meetings and events in Singapore are likely to keep the city-state's hotel rates flat, with growth between 0.9 and 3.7 per cent.

Airfares in the Asia-Pacific region are expected to soar by four per cent, with prices varying by country.

Middle-class demand in China is likely to drive demand for leisure travel while business-travel demand remains persistent. These twin engines of growth could fuel a rise in airfares by almost seven per cent next year.

Meanwhile, hotels in key business destinations are expected to operate near capacity in the coming year. Prices are

predicted to leap by up to 4.9 per cent.

On the MICE front, Asia-Pacific's meetings and events industry is likely to witness growth in group size by three to five per cent, while daily costs per attendee could jump four to five per cent.

This is in line with CWT's forecast that meetings and events providers will raise prices across the world, leading to across-the-board rises in daily attendee costs.

THAILAND

Phuket mixes business with pleasure

By Greg Lowe

Phuket is strengthening its MICE offering by incorporating more customisable leisure components into its meeting and event packages in response to rising demand for “bleasure” products, according to travel trade experts speaking at a recent roundtable event.

Corporate clients were increasingly looking for ways to add more leisure activities into what were traditionally business-focused meetings, noted Andre Gomez, general manager of Hilton Phuket Resort & Spa, which organised the roundtable.

“Travel used to be seen as an incentive in itself, but this is no longer the case as many people are travelling for work these days,” he said. “Clients are realising this and many companies are helping employees achieve a better work-life balance. We are seeing more demand for an increased leisure component in our MICE activities as a result.”

Gomez said the precise mix of business and leisure would vary with each client.

The hotel, however, has seen some general trends with clients from longhaul markets enabling delegates to bring their

family, while those travelling from South-east Asia are increasingly offered discounted room rates for extended stays.

Meeting duration is also being reduced with the increased leisure and teambuilding elements helping to raise productivity by keeping delegates more engaged, according to Gomez.

James Drysdale, group director of Inspired Events Travel Asia, said the “bleasure” trend helped clients to leverage their spending and build employee loyalty at the same time.

“We are working with hotels and local suppliers to arrange

activities for delegates and their spouses, partners and children, both onsite and offsite,” he said.

Pornthip Hirunkate, secretary-general of Thailand Incentive and Convention Association, said Phuket’s unique mix of MICE facilities and leisure products was a key driver of the “bleasure” trend.

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau will be doing more to actively support Phuket’s “bleasure” products, including promoting local trade partners at AIME next February.



Gomez: better productivity

THAILAND

Heritage post office doubles as event venue

Impact Exhibition Management has landed the management contract for the 80-year-old Grand Postal Building in Bangkok, marking the first time the Thai company is managing a venue in the city centre outside its own complex in Muang Thong Thani.

Located on Charoen Krung Road, the restored landmark was officially opened on August 4. It will continue its postal service but also serves as an event venue.



Paul Kanjanapas, managing director of Impact Exhibition Management, said the Grand Postal Building would serve as a “unique” venue for corporates, the government and private individuals.

“We expect to earn over 100

million baht (US\$3.2 million) from managing Grand Postal Building during the first year of operation,” he added.

Impact has earmarked more than 100 million baht over the next few years to enhance technology systems and F&B services at the architectural icon, Paul revealed.

Grand Postal Building provides various indoor and outdoor venues for meetings, exhibitions and events. – **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

IN BRIEF

Glebe Island spills details

Details of the Sydney Exhibition Centre @ Glebe Island have come to light, with work on the temporary venue already underway to meet its February 2014 opening. Located on the foreshore near the Anzac Bridge, it will offer 25,000m² of space, fully air-conditioned and featuring waterfront views. The venue will be serviced by a regular, scheduled ferry from Darling Harbour as well as shuttle buses from Central Station, providing delegates easy access to Darling Harbour hotels and dining and entertainment options.

Brisbane revamps planner

The Brisbane Event Planner, an online city directory (www.BrisbaneEventPlanner.com.au) for the conventions and events industry, has undergone a significant revamp to mark its first birthday. It now boasts a refreshed layout and design, an enhanced search engine, a live Twitter feed and other social media tools, and many other useful features to assist event planners. The Brisbane Event Planner is also accessible on iPhone and iPad.

MICE WINS

Port city wins

Yokohama has won the bid for two association congresses – the 12th International Stereotactic Radiosurgery Society Congress (ISRS) in 2015 and the Asian-Pacific Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association (A-PPHBA) Regional Congress in 2017. The Japanese port city beat Hong Kong to clinch ISRS 2015, which will be held at PACIFICO Yokohama, and defeated Indonesia to secure hosting rights for A-PPHBA Regional Congress, which is expected to attract over 3,000 researchers.

Brisbane scores big

Brisbane Marketing Convention Bureau has secured seven conferences at the start of the 2013/14 financial year in July. The events, which include the Asia-Pacific Model United Nations Conference (2014), are expected to bring 5,600 delegates to the city and inject more than A\$16 million (US\$14.7 million) into the city’s economy.

COVER STORY





Functional integration

Armed with hotels, resorts, event spaces and recreational facilities, these new developments in Asia are offering organisers the convenience of having all components of their event under one roof

COVER STORY



Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts



Angsana Hotels & Resorts



Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts

Laguna Lang Co, Vietnam

Vietnam's Laguna Lang Co held its grand opening in April, with the first of its hotels now ready to receive guests. More accommodation options and facilities will be added to the vast 280-hectare site over the coming years, with the integrated resort eventually set to emulate the scale of the successful Laguna Phuket.

Like its Thai sister, Laguna Lang Co is targeted at a broad spectrum of high-end travellers. Banyan Tree Lang Co offers luxury with its spacious private pool villas, while Angsana Lang Co's room inventory ranges from modest deluxe rooms to rooftop pool suites. Rates start from US\$280⁺⁺ at Angsana Lang Co and US\$735⁺⁺ at Banyan Tree Lang Co.

MICE business is integral to the business plan, with top-end meeting facilities in the form of a 392m² ballroom, four

meeting rooms, a 12-seat conference room and the capacity to cater to major events outdoors.

Other facilities include a world-class Nick Faldo-designed golf course, two spas and an activity centre.

To capture the eye of event planners, the integrated resort has launched a MICE campaign that includes tantalising perks. Bookings of at least 10 guestrooms will earn event planners complimentary rooms, transfers, use of a mobile phone with a local SIM card, and more.

A dedicated MICE website for the development will materialise later this year.

Sitting amid UNESCO World Heritage sites – Hoi An's ancient town, the Cham ruins of My Son and the imperial city of Hue – Laguna Lang Co provides day-trip access to all three. That said, the location also means the resort is somewhat out on a limb. It is best reached via Danang International Airport, a 40-minute drive away.

George Ehrlich, general manager of Exotissimo Vietnam, told *TTGmice*: "(It) is an option for groups that will be happy to just stay in-house. For dining out or excursions, many hotels on the Danang Strip (are) more convenient."

"At present almost all our customers request hotels or resorts in the centre of Danang city, but Laguna Lang Co is an attractive and exciting new development that we will consider in the future," said Vietravel's director of marketing, Nguyen Minh Man.

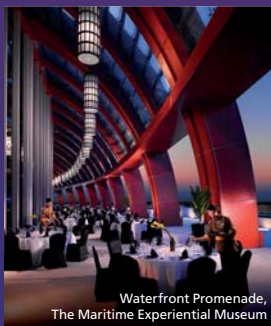
Khiem Vu, general manager of Indochina Travelland, believes that the combination of the Laguna brand, the beauty of Lang Co bay and its location between Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, will make it a success. – **David Lloyd Buglar**

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COVER STORY

Lagoi Bay, Bintan, Indonesia

Following its launch in 2007, the 1,300-hectare Lagoi Bay in Bintan will be opening key facilities from the second half of this year. They include beach and lakeside resorts, a mall and first-of-its-kind recreational activities. The entire development – including an airport in Busung, Kuala Lobam, a 30-minute drive south-west of Lagoi Bay – is scheduled to be completed by 2015.

Plaza Lagoi, a cluster of dining establishments, retail shops and impressive fountains that sits within the sprawling Lagoi Bay Beach Village Mall, will be among the first facilities to open. According to Asad Shiraz, marketing director with Bintan Resorts International (BRI), the spacious grounds of Plaza Lagoi will be used to host annual festivals.

Geared to take off in October this year will be the Air Adventures Flying Club Bintan, an ultra light aircraft ride centre and flying school that claims to be South-east Asia's first seaplane facility offering an open cockpit seaplane experience to seasoned pilots as well as novices.

Adventrees, a new canopy adventure trail in the forest surrounding Lake Lagoi will also be ready by October for teambuilding activities involving ropeways, as will an off-road rally car circuit. On the accommodations front, The Sanchaya will debut 19 luxury villas and nine suites in November, while Alila Villas Bintan and Swiss-Belhotel Lagoi Bay, Bintan will further plump



Close to completion now, Plaza Lagoi will be an energetic lifestyle destination for guests of Lagoi Bay integrated resort

up the inventory with over 250 new rooms by early next year. Room rates are estimated to range from S\$80 (US\$65) for beach cabanas to over S\$4,000 for four-bedroom pool villas.

A 45-minute ferry ride from Singapore's Tanah Merah ferry terminal, travel consultants said Lagoi Bay had potential to draw meetings and incentive groups.

Judy Lum, group vice president – sales & marketing with Tour East Singapore, a company that offers Bintan for corporate events, most often for Russian groups with 450-600 attendees, said: "Bintan...is a good alternative to Singapore's Sentosa (and) is more attractive for MICE groups because resorts there can accommodate large groups of up to 600 pax, which allows us to conduct meetings and teambuilding activities. Beaches there also allow for larger beach parties that can go on through the night, unlike in Sentosa where we have to keep the noise level down after 23.00.

"Based on the updates we've seen on Lagoi Bay, it seems that the integrated resort will have mostly villas, which are more suitable for smaller groups. Large corporate groups usually need to stay together. We have to wait until Lagoi Bay is completed then can we assess its suitability (for MICE)." – **Lee Pei Qi and Karen Yue**

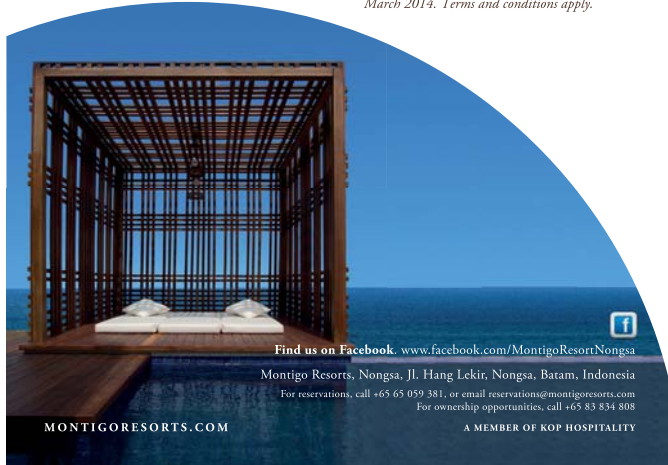


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(From top) The Sanchaya's grand arrival courtyard and luxurious Thai Villa

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14:30 – 17:30 (星期五 / Friday)



COVER STORY

Fantasy Island, Riau Islands, Indonesia

Situated between Singapore and Batam, Fantasy Island on Riau Islands is envisioned to be the world's largest eco theme park with residential, commercial and tourism components, which will be rolled out in batches from mid-2014.

At 328 hectares, the island itself is two-thirds the size of Sentosa in Singapore, with 70 per cent of its total area preserved as a nature sanctuary.

In the first phase is a five-star deluxe resort development run by Meritus Hotels & Resorts, comprising a 200-room condotel, 230-suite hotel and 413 villas. Eco-themed activities such as aquaculture tours and nature trails will also be available, as well as a beach club that will offer a slew of sea sports from diving to parasailing.

To be revealed later in 2015, one of the highlights will be a heart-shaped islet, which will have a 1,000-pax banquet hall and a wedding chapel. There are six islets in total.

Fantasy Island Development director, Michael Yong, said at least one million visitors are expected to arrive annually once the island is fully completed in 10 years' time.

He said: "We are targeting Singaporeans and international visitors who come through Singapore."

Located 16km off the coast of Singapore, Fantasy Island will be accessible via a 20-minute ferry ride from the HarbourFront ferry terminal. – **Lee Pei Qi**

Desaru Coast, Johor, Malaysia

Adding to Johor's growing bag of tourism products is Destination Resorts and Hotels' (DRH) Desaru Coast, a 17km beachfront stretch at the south-eastern tip that will comprise hotels and residences, water theme parks, golf courses and a retail village, among other offerings.

The integrated resort will have a strong business event appeal, thanks to a convention centre which will be managed by Sheraton Hotels & Resorts. Located adjacent to Sheraton Desaru Resort with close proximity to the Riverwalk, the entertainment hub of Desaru Coast, the venue offers approximately 1,200m² of exhibition space, banquet capacity of up to 1,000 pax, meeting rooms, VIP lounges, pre-function rooms and a beautiful landscaped courtyard.

The 1,600-hectare integrated resort will be developed over three phases, with the first targeted for completion in 2015.

Lau Yin May, senior vice president, programme management & corporate communications, DRH, said: "There will be a number of world-class brand names such as the Aman Country Club and Aman Villas, situated along pristine beachfront; Sheraton Desaru Resort, also with direct beach frontage; and Datai Desaru, nestled on a hilltop. Plantation Hotel will be a four-star hotel integrated with two theme parks."

At Ocean Quest and Ocean Splash, guests will be able to interact with marine animals and play at the salt water wave

Fantasy Island will boast a luxury resort development managed by Meritus Hotels & Resorts





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COVER STORY



Desaru Coast will offer two championship golf courses, perfect for friendly games before a conference or meeting

pool respectively, while The Els Club Malaysia will feature two championship golf courses – a 27-hole course designed by Ernie Els and an 18-hole course designed by Vijay Singh – as well as exclusive villas.

There are several tourist attractions within close proximity to Desaru Coast, providing event planners with recreational options for pre- and post-meeting programmes. They include a fruit farm and an ostrich farm.

Further out, a scenic one hour drive will take guests to Puteri Harbour, where accompanying family members can spend a day at The Little Red Cube, a lifestyle complex that is also home to an indoor theme park. Legoland Malaysia is a five-minute drive away.

From Kuala Lumpur, Desaru Coast is a four-hour drive using the North-South Highway or a 45-minute flight to Senai International Airport, followed by a 45-minute drive. From Singapore, it is a 30-minute ferry ride from Changi Ferry Terminal to Tanjung Belungkor Ferry Terminal in Kota Tinggi, followed by a half hour's drive. By land, it is a 90-minute drive from the Second Link or Causeway.

World Avenues executive director, Ally Bhoonee, added: "Due to its close proximity to Singapore, it will make a perfect pre- and post-tour option for MICE events held in Singapore."

– **S Puvaneswary**

Grand Kawanua International City, Manado, Indonesia

Growing air access into Manado, North Sulawesi will provide a lift for the Grand Kawanua International City (GKIC), which will see hotels, hospitals and a water park rising on its 300 hectares over the next few years.

Developed by Jakarta-based AKR Group, GKIC is already home to the 176-room Novotel Manado Golf Resort & Convention Center and the 6,500m² Grand Kawanua Convention Center that can host up to 4,000 people. There are also residential properties and public facilities such as tennis courts and a swimming pool.

Currently, Novotel Manado's room rates are between Rp400,000 (US\$38) and Rp800,000.

A number of projects are scheduled for completion this year, including the conversion of the 15-hole golf course to an 18-hole one, as well as the Citiwalk Shopping Mall and a wedding chapel.

Earlier this year, the six-country Regional Secretariat of Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security also set up base here, with ensuing marine conservation activities expected to drive more visitors to the destination. Other recent additions include an art gallery with US\$3 million worth of Indonesian art and painting collections, and Siloam Hospital.

AKR managing director, Widiyanto, said some 10,000 more rooms were needed over the next few years, and noted that a 100-hectare site had been earmarked for hotel development.

He said: "Lion Air is opening Manado as a hub for its regional routes to Hong Kong, China, Japan and Singapore, in line with the arrival of new aircraft. This will add to existing direct services from Manado to Singapore and Davao, as well as the route network within Indonesia."

Incito Travel managing director, Ng Sebastian, said GKIC had succeeded in positioning itself as a MICE destination.

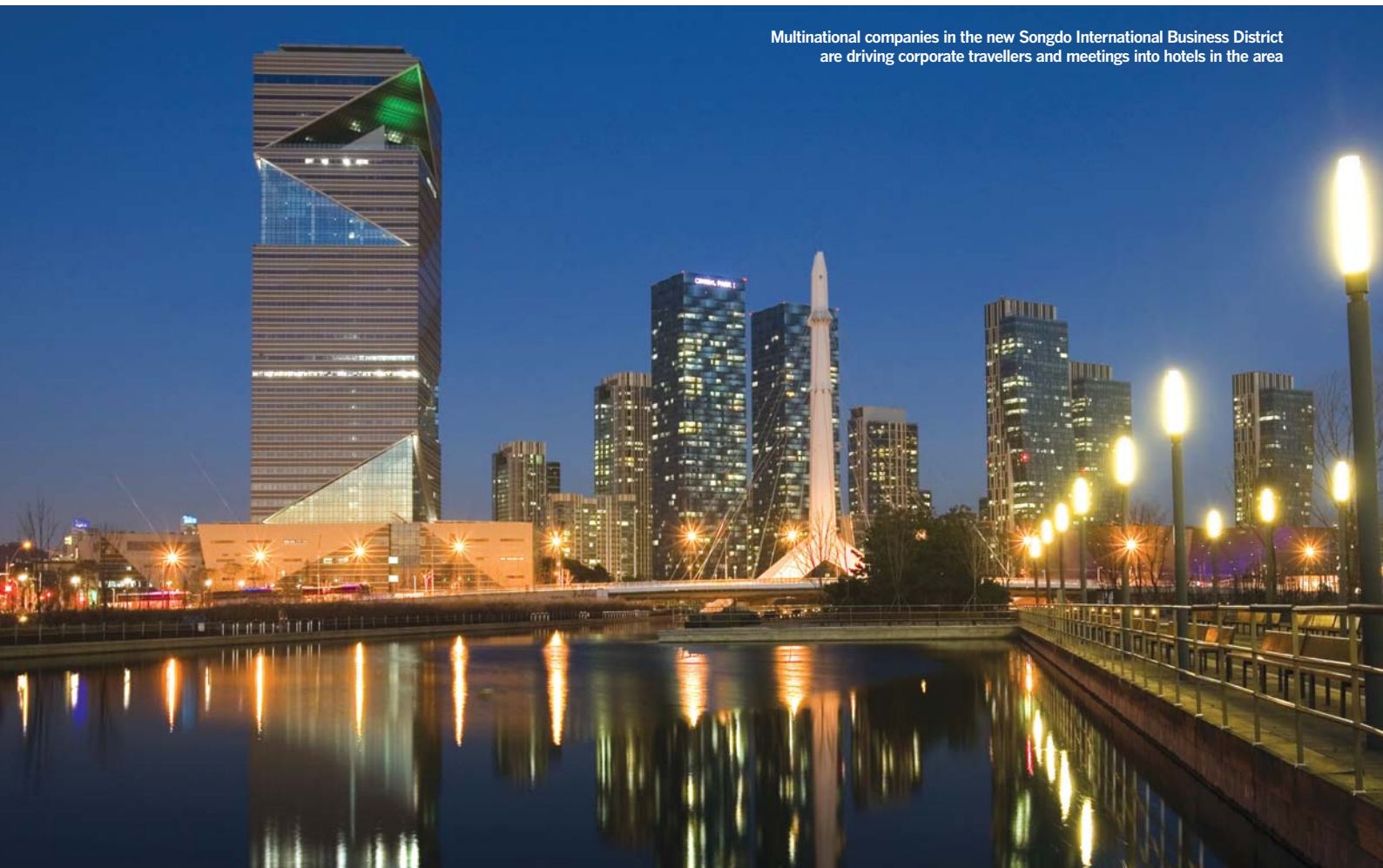
Mapanget Mega Wisata Tours and Travel managing director, Reenaldo Wangkar, added: "We can develop golf packages to Manado when the 18-hole golf course is ready. The water park may also add facilities for corporate teambuilding and gatherings."

Meanwhile, the North Sulawesi and Manado City Government are developing supporting infrastructure such as a ring road connecting Manado with surrounding areas like Bitung and Tondano, to be ready in two years. – **Mimi Hudoyo**



(From top) Aerial view of the sprawling Grand Kawanua International City and Novotel Manado Golf Resort & Convention Center

Multinational companies in the new Songdo International Business District are driving corporate travellers and meetings into hotels in the area



Beyond the capital

Seoul is hot for MICE, but so are her sister cities, and the country's tourism bureau is eager to prove just that to business event planners. By **Karen Yue**

South Korea has been scaling UIA's top meeting countries charts steadily since its entry into the top 10 list in 2010. From eighth position in 2010, a year that saw it hosting 464 qualified international association meetings, South Korea rose to sixth spot in 2011 with 469 meetings and then to fifth in 2012 with 563 meetings.

Charm Lee, president of Korea Tourism Organization (KTO), attributed the country's success in the business events sphere to a combination of factors, with the strong cooperation between public

and private sector players being the most critical catalyst.

"Campaigns such as the *2012 Korea Convention Year* serve to create a consensus in the country over the importance of the tourism business, and they have proven to be very useful in bringing the public and private sectors together towards a common goal. It is through collaborative activities that South Korea is able to move (up the UIA charts)," said Lee in an interview with *TTGmice* during the Korea MICE Expo 2013 (KME) in Seoul.

While South Korea stands prominently

among UIA's top 10 meeting countries, only Seoul has made it to the organisation's top 10 meeting cities charts in the last few years. The capital city leapt into the limelight at ninth spot in 2009 with 151 meetings and secured its position at number five over the next three years. Despite holding the same spot, Seoul's popularity as an association meeting destination has in fact soared. It welcomed 201 meetings in 2010, 232 the following year, and 253 in 2012.

Lee is not surprised that Seoul stands out from its sister cities.

He said: "Naturally, people know more about Seoul and are drawn to it. It is always the case with capital cities. But there's much more to South Korea than Seoul, and we are working hard to get the other cities on the map and show that they are all capable of hosting business events."

"Take Busan for example. Being a port city, it is a lot more fun than Seoul. That's the way port cities are, as they are the first in the country to open up to the rest of the world. Busan's natural environment is very attractive, with coastal areas and mountains. Its breathtaking skyline can be enjoyed on a yacht – a good activity for corporate groups. The city also has many traditional markets and conserved architecture that introduce visitors to Busan's past. When you compare that to Seoul, which is a modern, commercial city, Busan holds a different appeal. Then there is Busan Exhibition & Convention Center, a great facility that is younger than Seoul's Coex."

To drive MICE traffic to other cities, KTO will organise familiarisation trips for planners and media.

Lee said: "The cities themselves are committed to destination promotion. City mayors often attend MICE trade shows to talk about their city and meet planners. Many cities have their own CVBs and destination marketing organisations."

Incheon, Daegu and Jeju are being promoted by KTO as MICE destinations to watch, and were featured in an intensive post-KME familiarisation trip.

Songdo International Business District, one of the three regions of the Incheon Free Economic Zone, has catapulted Incheon into the MICE arena. Many multinational organisations like the Green Climate Fund, Cisco, Amcor, POSCO and Samsung Bioepis, which have set up offices in the new business district, are seen as a major source of MICE business.

Richard Suter, general manager of Sheraton Incheon Hotel, said these companies would generate meetings for the property and keep it busy for a long time. "Average occupancy rate stands at 80 per cent, and we are sometimes full. Our meeting rooms enjoy 50 per cent occupancy. We are doing quite well and are not feeling any effects of the weak economy."

While Suter noted that Songdo International Business District will have five to six hotels with more than 1,000 rooms in the near future – the city will be completed in 2020 – he is confident that there is enough business to go around.



Discover Gyesan Cathedral (in the foreground) and other iconic and historical landmarks in Daegu

Hyatt Regency Incheon's director of sales, Chris Kim, also reported strong meeting and incentive demand. Gearing up for further growth, the hotel has recently added a new tower to double its room inventory to more than 1,000, making it the largest Hyatt Regency property outside of the US. The new and existing buildings are connected by a tunnel on the second floor, allowing event planners convenient access to function rooms in both wings.

Songdo International Business District, which is also home to Songdo ConvensiA, will eventually be a one-stop MICE complex complete with retail, F&B and tourist attractions, according to Kangwook Cho, manager of Incheon Convention Bureau.

Further down, towards the south-east of the country, the city of Daegu has carved a niche in trade events related to sports, manufacturing, energy, medical, IT and textile industries, according to Kwon Myung-Hee, director, brand strategy team, Daegu Convention & Visitors Bureau.

"Our city is also well positioned for technical tours, as the factories and offices of major companies such as Samsung, POSCO and Hyundai are located close by, and we host many of such trade missions," said Park Yung-Ho, director general of the bureau, adding that the city was equipped with "all the necessary MICE infrastructure".

However, Kwon conceded that Daegu was "not as famous as Seoul and Jeju" and event attendees were not staying in the city as long as the bureau would like.

"The average length of stay now is three to four days. We hope to encourage MICE travellers to extend their stay by

showing them what they can do here for leisure. To achieve that, we have opened the Daegu MICE Information Center in the city centre, a place for organisers and delegates to get destination details. We have also appointed two travel companies to handle tour bookings and organise tours for delegates," she said.

Daegu's heritage trails are among the compact city's tourism highlights. Weaving through parts of the city centre, these trails feature landmarks such as the old house of Lee Byung-Chull, the founder of Samsung, the stunning Romanesque and Gothic structure of the Sisters of St Paul of Chartres, St Mary's Shrine and Gyesan Cathedral. A perfect introduction to Daegu's past is a stroll down the 350-year-old Oriental Medicine Market Street, an area fragrant with the scent of herbs. Visitors can stop by Yangnyeongsi Oriental Medicine Culture Centre for a herbal foot bath and have a hearty lunch of *samgye-tang* (Korean ginseng chicken soup) at one of the restaurants along the street.

Jeju, which sees the bulk of convention bureau funds being channelled into international marketing, has also done well in the competition for business events, according to Cho Jin-hun, marketing director of Jeju Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Cho said: "The latest UIA rankings placed Jeju second in South Korea, after Seoul, and 22nd in the world. The island has been busy with trade events, especially since being named one of the *New 7 Wonders of Nature* (by Swiss-based New 7 Wonders Foundation). We have since hosted many events related to environmental conservation."

"However, we could do with more international business. Travel visas are not required into Jeju, unlike the rest of South Korea. Unfortunately this unique selling point is overshadowed by the limited number of international direct flights."

Another selling point that Jeju wields is its Jungmun Tourist Complex, according to Oh Soo Chul, MICE business department director of ICC Jeju, the island's main convention centre.

Oh said: "ICC Jeju is part of this complex, which puts event delegates within easy reach of quality hotels and resorts like Hyatt Regency Jeju and The Shilla Jeju, malls and tourist attractions. It provides a one-stop destination for corporate groups. We intend to convey this appeal and ICC Jeju's facilities to more international MICE buyers and will do so by participating in trade shows such as IT&CMA and ITB Asia." ■

Karen Yule

NEED TO KNOW

Feed the soul at Donghwasa Temple

Built in 493 AD during the Silla Dynasty, the Donghwasa Temple in Daegu takes visitors back in time with beautifully conserved architecture and *sarira* stupas. Visitors can enjoy the intricate designs on revered buildings such as the Priest Inak Monument, Chilseonggak Hall, the 18th century Daeungjeon Main Worshipping Hall, Geumdan-gam Hermitage and Biroam Hermitage.

The Tongil-daebul Buddha statue that reaches 30m into the sky is one of the most photographed structures in Daegu.

If time is lacking, delegates can simply participate in a traditional tea ceremony in serene surroundings.



Karen Yue

Cruise down Songdo's park

If you are hosting a meeting in the youthful Songdo International Business District in Incheon, leave some time for a leisurely cruise down a 1.8m man-made waterway.

The 30-minute ride showcases the various modern skyscrapers and buildings that dot the high-tech business district, as well as the beautiful landscaping along the banks.

Water taxis, which come with indoor seating and outdoor observation decks, can be fully chartered for private functions at a price of US\$100 per ride. Cocktails and canapés can be arranged onboard at a separate cost.

Contact (82-32) 721-4402-9 or approach the Incheon Convention Bureau (www.incheoncvb.co.kr) for itinerary assistance.



Korea Tourism Organization

To market, to market

Incheon's Sinpo Traditional Market, a network of alleys filled with shops selling almost everything, from piping hot local snacks and colourful traditional cakes to cheap fashion accessories and household products, is a great place to get acquainted with the local way of life.

A casual dine-around experience can be enjoyed at Sinpo Traditional Market. Dig into *jjolmyeon* (spicy cold noodles), *gonggalppang* (crispy, hollow bread), *kkalguksu* (soup with chopped noodles) and the immensely addictive spicy fried chicken that Koreans so love.

Event planners can purchase coupons from the tourist centre within the market, which delegates can use to buy products from selected merchants.



Korea Tourism Organization

Blast from the past

Houses, fishing villages, government offices and other structures found in Jeju during the 1890s are recreated in the Jeju Folk Village Museum.

Details such as furniture and household products typical of that era are also captured, giving visitors a clearer idea of how people of the past lived. So realistic is the environment that the attraction has been used in the filming of several popular period dramas such as *Jewel in the Palace* and *Dong Yi*.

Visitors can rent audio guides that narrate stories behind the exhibits in various languages.



Karen Yue

A day at the museum

Opened in November 2012, Bonte Museum on Jeju island draws the eye with its cold but striking wood and concrete structure, surrounded by a lake and dark trees. Designed by world-renowned architect Ando Tadao, the museum houses a private collection of Korea's traditional handicraft and art pieces.

Guided tours of the exhibits for no more than 50 pax can be arranged, and private functions can be held in some of the museum's spaces. An in-house kitchen provides catering for events.

The exhibition hall and adjoining outdoor foyer can host standing receptions for up to 200 guests. The Bonte Music Hall, which comes outfitted with the latest audiovisual equipment and boasts excellent acoustics, can be used for seminars, conferences and presentations. It seats 20 guests comfortably.

Café Bulthaupt, which offers both indoor and outdoor seating, makes a good venue for private dining events.

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The rAWr Awards recognises event management excellence in various disciplines across four major industry categories, namely; **Exhibitions, Conventions, Incentive** and **Business Events**.

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For further information on participation criteria and application process, sponsorship opportunities or the awards night, go to www.beawards.com.my

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Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (in the foreground) is stepping up its marketing presence in China to woo more Chinese MICE business

MICE links on the rise

With China's MICE travellers heading abroad in greater numbers with bigger budgets, Malaysia is now bidding for this increasingly affluent market segment as air access between the two countries grow, writes **S Puvaneswary**

Malaysia is steadily rising as a destination for Chinese MICE travellers on the back of increased air connectivity between the two countries over the last two years.

The improved air connections, plus the ease of getting a visa, have led to a 30 per cent year-on-year hike in demand for Malaysia, said Shanghai CYTS Tours Corporation MICE centre assistant, Shiny Shi. She said: "Malaysia is considered an affordable destination for corporate trips, with direct flights of five hours or less. It is also good for shopping and sightseeing."

Malaysia's comparative affordability over Singapore as well as Kuala Lumpur's good budget air links with China's first- and second-tier cities have helped to "bring down fares and budget-conscious companies do not mind travelling on LCCs," pointed out Leo Qin, brand strategy development department manager of CDMC Group, which saw a 15 per cent year-on-year rise in outbound travel to Malaysia, driven mainly by meeting and incentive groups.

There are currently 184 weekly services between mainland China and Malaysia, providing a total of 39,350 weekly seats between the two countries. Improvements in air connectivity in the last 18 months were largely due to enhanced services provided by Malaysian carriers.

AirAsia commenced daily Kota Kinabalu-Guangzhou flights in December 2012, while AirAsia X has expanded its Chinese network with the launch of six weekly flights to Shanghai from Kuala Lumpur from February 19 and ramped up its Kuala Lumpur-Chengdu route to daily services from July 1 this year.

Meanwhile, MAS has doubled its Kuala Lumpur-Beijing frequency to twice-daily since March 2012, marking a 100 per cent rise in seat capacity with 1,974 more weekly seats on this route.

Suppliers in the Malaysian capital are generally positive that the inbound meeting and incentive business from China will see growth this year, as Chinese companies continue to incentivise staff with overseas trips.

Sunflower Holidays managing director, Mint Leong, who forecasted a 10 per cent year-on-year increase in MICE business from China, noted that the budgets of Chinese companies were generally about 20 per cent more than their MNC counterparts; these homegrown firms were still on a business and staff expansion drive while MNCs were trimming budgets in accord-

SANDAKAN'S CONSERVATION THRILLS

Convening for business in Sabah's Sandakan entails a meaningful time of leisure. Follow in the footsteps of a journalist on a short trail of some of the city's preserved treasures worthy of any pre- or post-event activity.

The 40-minute flight from Kota Kinabalu to Sandakan was an immense enjoyment for a start. My airplane flew low enough over and above the famous Mount Kinabalu and a vast expanse of rainforests and seas. Swiftly after it touched down, I was whisked away by a very efficient guide to the Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre. This is where rescued and seriously endangered orang utans are being cared for before being released back into the natural wild some day.

No wonder the guide was in such a hurry. A tad later we would have missed the feeding session at 10am. After a short boardwalk through the forest, we reached the feeding platform, where a crowd of eager visitors had already gathered.



As the ranger appeared with a basket load of fruits, several apes suddenly and very agilely swung down the trees from all directions. I was somewhat put to shame as these gentle creatures displayed far better manners than some of my fellow human beings – they did not fight, push or snatch but coolly waited for their turn. A particularly playful one tickled the audience with its relentless tugging of the ranger's pants. It would be a great shame indeed should Earth lose this beautiful and peace-loving species of primates. I salute the centre for its great work.

My next stop pertains to salvation of, well, quite a different nature. The St Michael's and All Angels Church is one of historical Sandakan's oldest buildings and continues to serve



the local multi-racial community. The Anglican church was constructed in 1893 and survived World War II as one of the very few remaining stone buildings in Sabah. Its beautiful stained glass windows were donated by Australians to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of the war. Walking down the aisle in the gothic interior and listening to my own echo as I asked the young caretaker questions, I thought (guiltily) that if this were my church, I might just faithfully attend it every week.

Yet another attempt to conserve the important past is the Agnes Keith Museum, formerly the two-storey bungalow home of the Conservator of Forests, Harry Keith, and his American author wife Agnes Keith from the 1930s to 1942. Agnes' first book about pre-war Sandakan popularized the old seafarer's romantic name for Sabah in its title, "Land Below the Wind". Her second book documenting her war experiences was made into a movie. A gallery on the first floor tells the story of this remarkable woman, her books and her family. Indeed I gained some insights into life during British North Borneo through the furnishings of reproduced colonial furniture and antiques. I also bought three of Agnes' books at a special promotion price. I had to understand what caused this foreigner woman's deep love for Sabah.

My ill-fated tour was unfortunately called to a halt by the sudden rain, though the greater spoilsport was in fact myself, who had forgotten my poncho. The guidebook did warn of frequent showers despite the year-round summer weather. Anyhow, I would need another day or two to check out Sandakan's many other laudable conservation efforts: the Labuk Bay Proboscis Monkey Sanctuary, Turtle Island Park, Rainforest Discovery Centre, Sandakan Memorial Park... the list goes on. Back at the newly opened Four Points by Sheraton, in my comfortable hotel room overlooking beautiful Sandakan city doused in light showers, I managed a warm cup of coffee and gave the itinerary for my next trip – rain or shine – a good thought. *By Kathy Neo.*

All photos courtesy of Sabah Tourism Board.



ance to company-wide policies.

Leong elaborated: "Our clients with headquarters in the US and Europe are mostly opting for four-star international brand hotels and simple gala dinners with little emphasis on entertainment and decorations, whereas China-based companies will consider local brands as long as it is a five-star hotel and gala dinners must also have a "wow" factor with entertainment and frills. Both local and international MNCs from China will spend an average of five to seven nights in Malaysia but China-based companies tend to visit more attractions as they have a (comparatively) bigger budget."

Pearl Holiday Travel & Tour's general manager, Jimmy Thoo, also expected a 10 per cent growth in incentives from China this year. In addition, he observed that repeat clients from China's first-tier cities such as Shanghai and Beijing have traded up from four-star accommodation during their first trip to Malaysia a couple of years ago to five-star hotels now, although companies from second-tier cities tend to save on airfare and accommodation by travelling on budget airlines and staying at four-star local branded hotels.

Resorts World Genting's intensified efforts since last year to work with high-end MICE planners in China to attract high-yield business have bore fruits, as the destination has witnessed a 10 per cent

year-on-year increase in expenditure per delegate, according to sales & marketing manager, Andrew Leong.

To step up destination awareness of Malaysia among China's business event organisers, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre general manager, Peter Brokenshire, said the centre will keep its focus on maintaining a presence in key Chinese markets of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou and at relevant trade shows.

He remarked: "We also have relevant corporate materials such as corporate videos and business presentations in Mandarin as well as Mandarin-speaking marketing staff to better engage with potential Chinese clients."

Said Steve Woon, vice president of sales & marketing at Lexis Hotel Group, which has seen a 60 per cent year-on-year surge in Chinese arrivals: "In previous years the (Chinese) numbers were negligible as many delegates used less expensive hotels. Now they have bigger budgets and are looking for unique experiences, such as staying in our water chalets. Organisers from China are easy to work with and they also know Port Dickson as a destination."

Pearl Holiday's Thoo added: "Kuala Lumpur, Resorts World Genting and beach destinations such as Langkawi are must-visit destinations for first-timers to Malaysia. But repeat visitors are looking



Steve Woon

Vice president, sales & marketing
Lexis Hotel Group

"Now (the Chinese) have bigger budgets and are looking for unique experiences."

for new destinations – we are getting more requests for Sarawak."

While Sarawak was never high on the radar for Chinese MICE planners, this is set to change as Sarawak Convention Bureau (SCB) has recognised Greater China as its second most important international market after Singapore and will focus its marketing efforts on the Chinese MICE market from this year onwards.

Said SCB managing director, Mike Cannon: "We must act now and capitalise on China's growing outbound market as other countries are already doing so."

Together with Sarawak Tourism Board, SCB will appoint a marketing representative in China by end-2013 to educate the Chinese trade on Sarawak, according to Cannon. Both bureaus have plans to woo more Chinese meeting planners through collaterals in Mandarin and a targeted media programme for the Chinese market.

Ideas

Serving up the capital's tropical flavours



Day 1

After arrival, delegates will check into the hotel and settle in. At 16.00, meet at the hotel lobby for a transfer to Starhill Culinary Studio located at Starhill Gallery for a half-day culinary session. Delegates will be served a non-alcoholic drink upon arrival at the studio, following which they will partake in a hands-on cooking class to prepare two Asian or western dishes.

Day 2

After breakfast at the hotel, delegates will meet at the hotel lobby for a half-day experience at Jungle Lodge Alang Sedayu, Gombak.

The lodge is located in the outskirts of the city. Driving past Malay villages, delegates will be able to catch a glimpse

of locals going about their daily chores. The first stop is the Aboriginal Museum in Gombak, which is home to a collection of hunting weapons, clothing made from tree bark, traditional musical instruments and wood carvings.

Upon arrival at the lodge, delegates will be given a brief introduction of the place. Here, they will experience the feeling of being in a tropical rainforest while still within the city limits of Kuala Lumpur.

The guide will help to identify fruit trees, organise activities and games frequently played by local villagers, and demonstrate how to blow a blowpipe and fish with a bamboo pole at a nearby fresh water pond. Delegates may also choose to take a dip in the swimming pool, go jungle trekking or just lounge under the sun.

Transfer back to the hotel after lunch.

Itinerary by Asian Overland Services

Netting meetings

The 25-villa Banjaran Hot-springs Retreat in Ipoh, Perak, which has been successful in attracting the domestic MICE market since its launch three years ago, has now set its sights on the international segment.

Since late 2012, the resort's marketing approach has turned to growing its international MICE business, with a focus on Hong Kong and China due to their easy accessibility to Kuala Lumpur with flight times of less than six hours. From the Malaysian capital, Ipoh is a mere two hours' drive on the North-South Expressway.

Banjaran is also targeting MNCs and local firms based

in Singapore as the city-state is only an hour away by air. Firefly offers twice-daily flights between Singapore and Ipoh.

Said the retreat's general manager, Lybanor P Godio: "The leisure to incentives and meetings mix was 5:95 in 2Q2013, so our plans are to double the incentives and meetings mix by this year-end.

"International MICE groups stay an average of two nights at the resort, double that of local MICE groups, and they also spend more on F&B and spa."

The Banjaran has two meeting rooms that can cater to a maximum of 20 guests each. Meetings for up to 30 pax can be held in Jeff's Cellar, a fully



The Banjaran Hot-springs Retreat has proven alluring to high-end incentive groups

air-conditioned cave that also serves as a cocktail venue.

However, the resort has attracted more incentive groups which sometimes combine a half-day meeting session during their stay rather than formal corporate business meetings, said Lybanor, who added that the resort has also hosted companies that rented out the entire property during the full duration of their stay.

"We've reached out to incentive planners, tour operators and MNCs in the banking,

insurance and pharmaceutical (sectors) in the chosen markets," she added. "We work with airlines to jointly organise familiarisation trips... We also work with our marketing arm in Sunway China to promote our resort in the mainland."

Since early 2013, the resort has been providing added value to MICE delegates by offering guided group visits to the nearby areas such as a pomelo farm in Tambun and a Tibetan Buddhist temple in Ipoh city.



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NEED TO KNOW

Breakfast moves in Penang

For delegates staying at either Shangri-La's Rasa Sayang Resort & Spa or sister property, Golden Sands Resort, in Penang, a customised tai chi/ yoga breakfast can be arranged in the lush tropical gardens of the Rasa Sayang resort.

A great way for delegates to start off their morning, this programme includes a 40-minute session of tai chi/yoga in the gardens with a certified instructor. A minimum of 30 pax is required for a standard package of RM85++ (US\$26++) per person.

Contact Rasa Sayang Resort & Spa's events team at (60-4) 888-8888 or email events.rsr@shangri-la.com for more details.



home; *A Cultural Journey* that features visits to historical sites; and *The Lost World*, which spirits guests to the secret enclaves of the million-year-old Maliau Basin in a helicopter.

These activities can be paired with a meeting at the luxurious resort's 90m² Conference Room, a venue suitable for events with up to 100 pax.

Visit www.gayaislandresort.com for more details.

Work, play at Gaya Island Resort

Opened in July 2012, the 121-villa Gaya Island Resort on Gaya Island, 15 minutes from Kota Kinabalu, has recently enhanced its guest programmes with the launch of *Tailored Trails of Borneo*, a collection of four unique tours that venture into the heart of the land.

Options include the *Real Kinabalu*, an excursion into the countryside, with visits to a Dusun village and a trek down a nature trail; the *Countryside Discovery*, an idyllic 10km bicycle ride over multiple bridges suspended over rivers and into the heart of a village

home; *A Cultural Journey* that features visits to historical sites; and *The Lost World*, which spirits guests to the secret enclaves of the million-year-old Maliau Basin in a helicopter.

These activities can be paired with a meeting at the luxurious resort's 90m² Conference Room, a venue suitable for events with up to 100 pax.

Visit www.gayaislandresort.com for more details.

Night at the Sarawak Museum

Transport your event to the glory days of the White Rajahs – the British adventurers who once ruled Sarawak from 1841 to 1946 – by offering incentive delegates a unique opportunity to relive the past with a night at the Sarawak Museum.

Dubbed the oldest museum in Borneo, Sarawak Museum was built in 1891 to house and display the ethnic artifacts and specimens collected by the famous naturalist, Alfred Wallace.

Incentive groups can now enjoy a cocktail event within the museum grounds, followed by a guided tour of the facility before rounding up the evening with an intimate dinner among the beautiful objets d'art in the main gallery. This experience can accommodate up to 50 delegates.

For details, email info@sarawakcb.com.

A city's past, present and future

Located on Jalan Raja, Kuala Lumpur City Gallery is a one-stop centre housed in a heritage building dating back to 1898.



The gallery allows visitors to learn more about the history of the century-old buildings in the vicinity, while it also offers a glimpse of the capital's future development with its display of miniature architectural models of upcoming high-rise buildings; these models are constantly updated by the management, ARCH Collection.

A D-I-Y Workshop within the gift shop enables visitors to purchase and make ARCH's Made in Malaysia wood veneer gifts.

MyCEB deal tantalises planners from Greater China

Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) has launched the *Malaysia Twin Deal Programme* to woo MICE travellers from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Deal 1 offers value-added support for groups of 50-500 pax, with privileges such as a cultural performance for gala dinner, a choice of teambuilding activity or a half-day city tour, welcome gifts, fast-track immigration clearance and shopping vouchers. For groups of over 500 pax, MyCEB also provides support towards F&B costs, personalised gifts plus police outriders for one return trip.

Deal 2 offers incentive rewards for planners who bring in an accumulative 500 pax and above, entitling them to two return business class air tickets from either China, Hong Kong or Taiwan to Kuala Lumpur, a three-night stay at a five-star hotel, a half-day city tour plus shopping vouchers worth RM2,000 (US\$610).

Terms apply. Email sales@myceb.com.my.

Say cheese!

Mandarin Oriental, Kuala Lumpur has partnered German camera specialist, Leica, to produce an interactive photography package for guests.

The *Cultural Photography Journey* is priced at RM1,875** (US\$570**) and includes two nights' accommodation, breakfast for two, a personal photography excursion from 09.00 to 13.00, transfer and guide, among others.

Offer is valid through June 1, 2014. Contact (60-3) 2380-8888 for reservations.



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- 1 "Makan-Makan" Local Cuisine Experience
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- Malaysian cultural performance

200 PARTICIPANTS AND ABOVE*

- A "Selamat Datang" gift
- 1 "Makan-Makan" Local Cuisine Experience
- 1 complimentary cocktail
- Malaysian cultural performance

Bookings must be confirmed between **1 August and 31 December 2013.**

* Terms and conditions apply. Visit www.myceb.com.my/promotion for details.

Deal 2

Incentive rewards for International Corporate Meeting & Incentive Planner

CUMULATIVE OF 500 PARTICIPANTS*

- 1 iPad Mini

CUMULATIVE OF 1,000 PARTICIPANTS*

4 Days/3 Nights Free & Easy Vacation for 2 persons to Malaysia including:

- Return air tickets
- Accommodation at a 5-star hotel
- Complimentary dinner for 2

CUMULATIVE OF 2,000 PARTICIPANTS*

5 Days/4 Nights Free & Easy Vacation for 2 persons to your 2 preferred destinations in Malaysia including:

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- Terms & conditions apply.



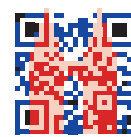
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Hong Kong enjoys radiant growth in arrivals from South and South-east Asia in 1Q2013, but traffic from India is fading



The Indian shortfall

Hong Kong is seeing fewer Indian arrivals due to the depreciating rupee, strong competition from other destinations and volatile global economy. By **Prudence Lui**

MICE from India has been identified as a potential market for Hong Kong, but the city had enjoyed only a short period of robust growth for this market until 2011, when overall Indian arrivals started to fall. The depreciating Indian rupee is believed to be the major cause.

In the first quarter of 2013, Hong Kong recorded a total overnight MICE visitor arrival of 306,016, while arrivals from South and South-east Asia saw an 8.1 per cent growth compared to the same period last year. However, total Indian arrivals to Hong Kong dropped 4.6 per cent to 86,993 visitors.

Paul Leung, managing director of Holiday World Tours, is not optimistic about 2013's performance: "With the exception of May and June, 2013 has not been great (so far). For the rest of the year, I don't

have a clue as to what the prospects will be. The depreciating rupee has doubtlessly impacted outbound trips and we haven't had many big MICE groups this year."

Leung also attributed the drop in Indian arrivals to strong competition from neighbouring countries such as Thailand, which enjoys a strong Indian market. Nevertheless, in August, his agency accompanied the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) on a few roadshows in various Indian cities in the hope of gaining more business.

Krishna Pandey, owner of Fishtail Tours & Travels in Hong Kong, said: "Across the industry, there has been a drop (in inbound business) of 20 to 25 per cent compared to last year.

"(The earlier) strikes in Air India and withdrawal of Kingfisher Airlines flights had affected our inbound business from

India. Now, although the flights have resumed, local hotel rates have gone up, and coupled with the depreciating rupee, the price of packages have nearly doubled compared to the last two years.

"All these have driven Indian traffic away to other destinations like the US and Europe, so we have to work even harder to stay in business."

Christina Cheng, general manager of the 702-key Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees, said: "Indian business to our hotel so far this year has dropped when compared to 2012, and going forward, it seems overall business for 2013 will be slower than a year ago. I believe this is due to the global economic slowdown, which has affected Indian outbound for both leisure and MICE. However, we know that some Indian MICE groups have chosen to head to Macau for its capacity for massive functions."

Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees regards India as one of its major source markets. It draws regular Indian meetings and incentives through sales support from its Indian representative office as well as attendance at India tradeshows to maintain good relationships with travel consultants, DMCs and meeting planners.

Cheng said: "India is one of the new major markets with a large population. It is also one of our top markets, (with arrivals) rising nine to 12 per cent during the peak months."

She opined that India could have fared well for her hotel as Hong Kong was among the few destinations that offered visa-free travel for Indian passport holders.

According to Cheng, Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees receives the most MICE business from India between April and June, and October and December – the very months when outbound travel from India peaks. Her company will focus on soliciting more MICE business for the next high season.

Regal Hotels International also targets

86,993

The total number of Indian MICE arrivals to Hong Kong in 1Q2013, a 4.6 per cent dip over the same time last year

the Indian traffic and within its portfolio, Regal Kowloon Hotel, Regal Oriental Hotel and Regal Riverside Hotel are popular with Indian corporate groups.

Its vice president of sales, Dora Liu, said: "India occupies just a small percentage of our market mix. However, it has leapt about 45 per cent in the past six months, compared to last year. Meetings and incentives are the two top segments from India due to our good meeting facilities and attractive packages."

Liu revealed that incentive groups from an Indian pharmaceutical company had chosen Regal Kowloon Hotel and Regal Riverside Hotel in August and September.

"We foresee stiff competition for the Indian MICE market. Therefore, we expect pressure on our hotel rates as well as greater demand and expectations for our facilities and services," she added.

In view of the volatile global economy, HKTB said many corporations had tightened their budgets for business travel. The bureau expects the growth of arrivals for meetings and incentives from China and other shorthaul markets, such as South-east Asia and India, to be relatively small.

For the rest of 2013, Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong is keen to further penetrate the Indian MICE market, with a continuous focus on the four key growth cities of New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru, since about 80 per cent of Indian travellers come from these cities. It has also partnered the Hong Kong trade to encourage MICE travel from India in 2013. An example of the collaboration was a travel mission to India in August, covering Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata and New Delhi. ■



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Ideas

Great buys and views

Day one

Embark on off-beaten-track tours in Kowloon. Visit the historical Wong Tai Sin Taoist Temple, then watch beautiful song-birds in exquisitely crafted cages at Yuen Po Street Bird Garden in Mongkok, before popping by the Jade Market off nearby Nathan Road.

After savouring fine Cantonese cuisine at Serenade Chinese Restaurant overlooking Victoria Harbour, board the Aqua Luna, one of Hong Kong's last remaining red sail Chinese junks, to take in the city's stunning skyline and harbour views.

For an authentic Chinese dinner, try the exclusive The China Club in the old Bank of China building in Central. The club boasts a nostalgic ambience, having been designed with motifs widely used in Hong Kong and Shanghai in the 1930s and 40s.



Enjoy the view of the cityscape from Victoria Peak

Day two

Hop on a tram to the top of Victoria Peak and take in the stunning 360-degree view of the city, harbour and outlying islands. Take a stroll in the area known for its highest land value in the world, and where many of Hong Kong's super-rich reside. For lunch, Café Deco at the Peak Galleria shopping complex offers a vast range of delicious Asian and Western dishes.

Next, proceed to Aberdeen Fishing Village in Hong Kong Island. A 20-minute sampan ride around the docked boats provides a glimpse of local people repairing nets, cooking and sorting the catch on their fishing boat. Then head to popular Stanley Market, a traditional open-air market, for some good bargains.

End the day dining at one of the many international restaurants in Soho District, followed by drinks and people-watching at famous nightlife haunt Lan Kwai Fong.

Itinerary by Pacific World Hong Kong

NEED TO KNOW

Catering with dedication

Hong Kong's only revolving restaurant, VIEW 62 by Paco Roncero, opened in June 2012 and is located on the 62nd floor of Hopewell Centre in Wan Chai. It has launched the Paco Roncero Catering to tap into the MICE business. For events including weddings, product launches, incentive gatherings and teambuilding activities, chef Roncero partners with the Hong Kong culinary team to set new benchmarks for culinary excellence. A dedicated events coordinator will communicate with guests and ensure a customised, memorable event.

The restaurant caters for offsite events too, and the same wow factors – from delectable menus to enticing show stations to creatively themed ambience – are promised.



Fashionable stays at boutique hotels

Hong Kong's prevailing trend of boutique hotels saw the recent launch of the 85-room Ovolo Hotel at 100 Shek Pai Wan, Aberdeen, in August. This sleek hotel located along the south coast of Hong Kong Island gives guests access to over 8,500 Wi-Fi hotspots around the city. Besides sweeping sea views from each guestroom, facilities include a 24-hour gym and the Lo Lounge. Meanwhile, the 87-room Lodgewood by L'hotel in Mongkok, opened in April, is a contemporary boutique hotel with serviced apartments too. It is close to a variety of shopping, dining and entertainment options.

Dine artistically

Newly-opened Duddell's in Shanghai Tang Central impresses with a vibrant double-storey space akin to the home of an art collector. The restaurant offers authentic Cantonese cuisine, vintage cocktails and classic wines, and boasts a Michelin-starred chef and an award-winning mixologist.

Events can be held at the chic Dining Room (for 200-pax cocktails), the more casual and cosy Salon and Library, or the lush Garden Terrace (for 180-pax cocktails).



Hold zero-carbon meetings

Zero Carbon Building is Hong Kong's first green structure that boasts zero carbon emissions. It is thus an ideal option for green meetings. It has 14,700m² of indoor and outdoor exhibition spaces, a multi-purpose hall, an eco-office, an eco-home and outdoor landscaped areas. The multi-purpose hall can cater for up to 150 pax or be partitioned into two halls. An educational guided tour available at HK\$20 (US\$2.60) shows visitors key green features in the structure. A new cafeteria has just opened to offer onsite catering services.

Goodie foodie enclave

Sham Shui Po is one of Kowloon's oldest residential neighbourhoods. It has escaped urban redevelopment and retained many traditional dining outlets. The four-hour *Hong Kong Foodie* tour takes visitors to six eateries: a Hong Kong-styled cafe, traditional Chinese pudding store, soy specialty shop, a Chiu Chow-styled restaurant, cookie store and handmade-noodle shop. Participants will experience life as a local in this working-class neighbourhood. Departures every Tuesday and Friday. Each tour takes about eight participants.



Tourism Australia

The food and wine spin is necessary to keep Australia fresh for Asian business event planners and entice them to return, according Karyn Kent, general manager of South/South-east Asia & Gulf Countries with Tourism Australia.

Kent believes that keeping Australia “fresh and desirable” is especially important for business event planners in Singapore, an important source market with a high repeat visitor segment of 82 per cent.

“Singapore ranks the fifth largest in terms of overall arrivals and is Australia’s eighth largest business events market. In the South-east Asian region, Singapore is right at the top,” she said.

“Where the food and wine theme is concerned, this could include the latest restaurants with up-and-coming chefs, established heavyweights such as Attica in Melbourne and Quay in Sydney which ranked 21st and 48th respectively in The World’s Best 50 Restaurants, farmers’ markets, produce trails, coffee crawls, tours of wine-producing regions, etc.

“There are also established products that already incorporate food and wine with iconic places found only in Australia, such as the *Sounds of Silence* dinner at Uluru (pictured left). Such experiences are usually introduced during familiarisation trips with incentive planners and key decision-makers,” said Kent.

One of Tourism Australia’s latest food and wine themed initiatives is the *Ultimate Winery Experiences of Australia*, a consortium of high-end, award-winning wineries that offer unique experiences suitable for incentive groups. Launched end-April, the new partnership includes Jacob’s Creek and Seppeltsfield from the Barossa Valley in South Australia; Leeuwin Estate and Xanadu from Margaret River in Western Australia; De Bortoli, TarraWarra and Yering Station from the Yarra Valley in Victoria; Wyndham Estate from the Hunter Valley in New South Wales; and Josef Chromy from Tasmania. Visitors can enjoy guided tours, vineyard walks, wine education sessions and gastronomy in spectacular locations.

As many of these food and wine trails go beyond the main cities like Melbourne, Sydney and Perth and into surrounding destinations, they help to spread tourism dollars and attention across the country.

The Gold Coast, for instance, which typically draws visitors with its sun, sand and sea, also offers a delectable spread for gourmands in its hinterland.

Anna Case, Gold Coast Tourism’s director of business events, told *TTGmice*

In good taste

Australia is cooking up a storm with food and wine specialists to offer Asian business event planners more ways to spice up their programmes, writes
Karen Yue

In Tourism Australia’s recent Consumer Demand Project survey, food and wine was found to be the sixth most crucial factor in holiday decision-making. On top of that, 53 per cent of respondents who had visited Australia associated the destination with good food and wine.

These results have excited Tourism Australia, which has responded with a decision to make Australia’s food and wine experiences one of the key selling points in its destination marketing efforts targeted at Asian business event planners in the new financial year beginning July 1.

that food and wine trails around the Gold Coast Hinterland were already being featured in “almost all incentive itineraries”.

Case said: “This part of the Gold Coast boasts the perfect climate for winemaking and features boutique food manufacturers such as cheese makers, organic produce and homemade delicacies. For visiting manufacturing incentive groups, a tour of the Carlton Brewhouse is in order, which highlights seven out of the top 10 Australian beers. (The experience) includes a delicious and truly unique gourmet beer degustation lunch or dinner.”

Culinary experiences in the Gold Coast Hinterland can be found at Canungra Valley Vineyards, a premium boutique cellar door that organises a variety of activities such as live entertainment, tastings, charity fundraisers and corporate days; Witches Chase Cheese, an artisan cheese factory where visitors can watch cheese makers at work; Mount Tamborine Brewery, which offers tours and tastings; and Liquid Amber Bistro and Grill, an ideal venue for corporate groups to enjoy a lunch of local produce.

Food festivals and events, especially those that can be incorporated into a pre- or post-meeting programme or an incentive itinerary, are also being promoted by

Tourism Australia. Examples of notable festivals are Melbourne Food and Wine Festival in March, Noosa International Food & Wine Festival in May and Margaret River Gourmet Escape in November.

“There is an opportunity to promote food and wine festivals as a fantastic incentive product because no two festivals are ever the same. The line-up of chefs, presenters and restaurants usually changes from year to year, (and) so will the ambience. Tourism Australia is able to put business event planners in direct contact with festival organisers for ideas on how to cater for incentive groups,” said Kent.

Melvyn Nonis, sales director of Singapore-based event specialist, M.I.C.E Matters, who has taken several corporate gatherings to Australia, welcomes the idea of featuring food festivals in incentive programmes. “We are always on the lookout for new ideas. Food festivals can offer a memorable experience for incentive participants. We must consider hotel rates during these festivals though. If the rise in rates is marginal, we can work food festivals into the programme.”

While Business Events Australia has yet to receive requests from corporate groups wanting to be part of a food festival, Gold Coast Business Events has seen a “steady



Host a networking party at Canungra Valley Vineyards

increase across the South-east Asia market in the desire to incorporate cuisine and culture into corporate incentive group programmes”.

Case said: “In response to that demand we provide assistance to connect event organisers with various food festivals throughout the year. This plays a key part in delivering incentive programmes with tangible links to our own passion for cuisine on the Gold Coast. (We) facilitate behind-the-scenes access for incentive groups to explore the culinary world through personalised consultations with chefs pre- or post-festival and may even incorporate private cooking schools or live demonstrations.”

Australia is also keen to demonstrate its ability to cater for various dietary requirements that can surface at business events with guests from different cultures.

“Australia is home to some of the biggest halal beef and lamb producers in the world. It also has immigrants from all over the world, making it a welcoming and culturally diverse country, well-equipped to meet the needs of Muslim travellers,” said Kent, who also revealed that 95 per cent of incentive groups from India put in requests for Indian food at their functions.

“At the Amway India leadership seminar in Melbourne (attended by more than 4,000 pax in December 2012), Australia showcased its ability to tailor to Indian palates and satisfy all dietary requirements for large groups. Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre’s in-house kitchen turned out 7,000 meals. At Sovereign Hills, the buffet included 600kg of dhal, 700kg of lamb korma, 450kg of vegetable curry, 350kg of lasagne, 1,000kg of basmati rice and 80kg of chopped green chilli.”

Nonis said: “It is not easy to get caterers to provide different dietary options in a single dining event. However, Australian caterers and restaurants are always flexible and able to deliver, perhaps because the country is familiar with the MICE business and its people are aware of Asian dietary needs.” ■

Choice picks of culinary experiences across Australia

A La Carte in the Park

This annual event in Gold Coast’s Surfers Paradise presents some of the finest culinary offerings in the destination, along with a sunset riverside concert of jazz, folk and opera. Visitors can jump into a cooking demonstration, sample the freshest local produce and grab a bigger bite to eat from one of the many traders. The next A La Carte in the Park (www.surferparadise.com/whats-on/major-events/a-la-carte-in-the-park) will be held on April 27, 2014.

Farmers’ markets on the Gold Coast

Filled with novelty food stalls and niche production outlets, Gold Coast’s farmers’ markets offer visitors easy access to the freshest local produce and a unique way to experience the destination and take home an edible souvenir. Some of the notable farmers’ markets are Bundall (www.yourlocalmarkets.com.au), Carrara Markets (www.carraramarkets.com.au), Emerald Lakes Gourmet Markets

(www.emeraldakesmarkets.com.au), Markets at the Wharf (www.myspace.com/thefarmersmarkets) and Southport (www.goldcoastfarmersmarkets.com.au).

Canberra & Capital Region Truffle Festival

Truffle growers, chefs and food lovers from far and wide gather every July to celebrate truffle season and the region’s prized French Black Truffles at the Canberra & Capital Region Truffle Festival (www.trufflefestival.com.au). Truffle hunts, masterclasses and cooking demonstrations by renowned chefs, and tasting sessions are among the activities.



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BUSINESS EVENTS
AUSTRALIA

NEED TO KNOW

**A fine introduction to the good life**

Leeuwin Estate in Western Australia's Margaret River region beckons visitors into its lush environment, offering daily cellar door tastings and behind-the-scene tours of its winery thrice a day at 11.00, 12.00 and 15.00.

Incentive planners can combine a winery tour with a wine pairing lunch at the estate's restaurant or organise a private gathering in Leeuwin's Art Gallery, which can be transformed into a spectacular venue for a cellar banquet or cocktail party.

The restaurant can seat 110 guests indoors or up to 250 when its bifolding doors open onto the surrounding verandahs.

Leeuwin Estate's surrounding vineyards and karri forests also offer unique settings where marquees can be erected or al fresco events staged.

Dinner under the stars

Ayers Rock Resort's *Sounds of Silence* dinner takes guests into the great outback, where their experience begins with canapés and chilled sparkling wine served on a viewing platform overlooking the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

As the sun sets, the bushtucker-inspired buffet line is declared open. Feast on dishes that incorporate native bush ingredients such as crocodile, kangaroo, barramundi and quandong, although vegetarian and other dietary options can be arranged with advance notice. Desserts, beer, wine, non-alcoholic drinks, tea, coffee and port are available in the package.

Sounds of Silence also features a didgeridoo performance and an introduction to Aboriginal culture with a traditional dance performance under the outback sky.

Later, the resort's resident star talker will decode the southern night sky and point out to guests the Southern Cross, the signs of the zodiac, the Milky Way and any planets and galaxies that are visible.

Seaduction of the palate

One of the most sought-after dining experiences on the Gold Coast, Seaduction Restaurant and Bar features lavish décor and opulent seating and serves up a contemporary menu that comes paired with an impressive local and international wine list.

The establishment can seat 90 guests indoors and accommodate 26 on a stunning al fresco balcony. There is also a private dining room for up to 10 people, which comes with an adjoining wine tasting room. Uninterrupted views of the Pacific Ocean are promised from every table.

Seaduction Restaurant and Bar is located within the Sea Temple Surfers Paradise hotel.

**Into Versace's kitchen**

The luxurious Palazzo Versace on the Gold Coast has whipped up a range of monthly *Chef Master Classes* that incorporate a farmers' market visit. Held on the second Saturday of each month, the activity commences at 07.30 with welcome coffee and pastries at the hotel. Guests will then be escorted by executive chef Geoff Haviland, or one of the hotel's dedicated chefs, to the neighbouring Marina Mirage Farmers' Market to source the finest and freshest local produce. Upon returning to the hotel, guests will partake in a half-day masterclass before sitting down to feast on a lunch of their very own culinary creations while sipping paired wines.

Palazzo Versace also offers a masterclass accommodation package.

O, there's something new!

Celebrity chef Michael Moore has launched a new Tapas Lounge at O Bar and Dining, located on the 47th floor of Sydney's Australia Square. The lounge boasts panoramic views of the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge and features exotic tapas dishes including cedar plank roasted salmon, fresh picked mud crab with finger limes and baked ricotta cheesecake dumplings.

The entire venue can be hired for private functions with up to 400 guests, standing, while a private dining room can take a seated banquet for 28 pax. The bar can accommodate 180 pax.

Case study

LED Expo Thailand 2013

MEX Exhibition and IMPACT Exhibition Management work around their differences to launch the inaugural LED Expo in Thailand this year, reports **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**



In India, the biannual LED Expo has established itself as the premier exhibition and biggest show for the light-emitting diode (LED) sector since its inception in 2009, but show organiser MEX Exhibition was keen to establish a similar event abroad by breaking into Thailand's lighting scene.

Hence, the New Delhi-based PEO approached Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau for assistance, which recommended the Indian PEO to join hands with IMPACT Exhibition Management to launch the first-ever LED Expo in the kingdom.

Coming together had its initial teething problems, as the co-organisers from two countries had to overcome differences in areas such as venue regulations and operations, but constant communications and a shared vision eventually cleared any hurdles along the way.

LED Expo Thailand 2013 finally took place at IMPACT Arena, Exhibition and Convention Center in May, with the support of Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT). The show took up 10,000m² of exhibition space, showcasing cutting-edge LED products, as well as a series of free conferences, seminars and workshops on the latest technologies and benefits of using energy-saving LED products for households and industrial sectors.

The exhibition was not without its hiccups, though. With over 200 companies and 1,500 exhibitors mostly from South-

east Asia and a short two-day preparation time, exhibitors and contractors struggled to finish constructing their booths on time. Then, some Chinese exhibitors who could barely speak English needed the aid of Chinese-speaking staff from IMPACT as well as part-time interpreters.

Some exhibitors were also too zealous in brandishing their brands and products – for instance, beaming their brand logos onto the hall ceiling or flying balloons with logos at their booths – against IMPACT's venue policies, hence the organisers had to come up with a set of terms and fines for violators.

Overall, the event gained strong interest from the Thai LED and lighting industries, media, government bodies as well as the general public. The organisers had initially expected 5,000 to 8,000 visitors but the three-day show surpassed expectations with over 10,500 visitors.

Furthermore, compared with other shows, the electricity costs of the LED Expo was a significant 35 per cent lower; besides exhibitors showcasing energy-efficient products, lights in both halls were turned off and LED tubes used in place of the conventional T8 fluorescent lamps, resulting in a show that was more energy-saving and environmentally friendly.

IMPACT Exhibition Management general manager, Loy Joon How, said: "The success of the show is a good example of our proficient partner philosophy. It gives us confidence that our veteran exhibition

Event

LED Expo Thailand 2013

Organisers

MEX Exhibition
IMPACT Exhibition Management

No. of visitors

Over 10,500 pax

Venue

IMPACT Arena, Exhibition
and Convention Center, Halls 3 and 4

Date

May 23-25, 2013

Objectives

To promote and boost the LED lighting market in Thailand, and to raise awareness of using energy-saving, LED lighting products

Challenges

Replicating an existing exhibition in a different country, and competing with the increasing number of lighting shows worldwide to woo participants for the inaugural Thailand version

team can provide total solutions to clients. With our network in the exhibition supply chain and in different industrial sectors, we can assist organisers with one-stop service and mitigate difficulty for those who plan to launch their flagship event in the market."

MEX Exhibitions director, Gaurav Juneja, said: "Thailand is the hub for the South-east Asia market. There is very good support from the government and bodies like EGAT. Also, IMPACT Arena, Exhibition and Convention Center offers a world-class exhibition venue for big events, along with its easy accessibility. That's why we choose to partner with IMPACT."

LED Expo will return to IMPACT May 22-24, 2014. IMPACT spokesperson Pattralee Mongkolsiri said the show space would be expanded to 13,500m² due to the positive feedback and rising demand. The venues will be changed to the newly built Halls 7 and 8, which are more user-friendly and better equipped. ■

Over coffee with...

“ Human beings are communal creatures, so the best event will have to be one that can pull everyone from different countries, cultures and backgrounds together. ”

Edward Chia



Beer Fest Asia is young but it is recognised as a foremost event in Singapore for all lovers of a good brew and great entertainment. Edward Chia, managing director of Timbre Group, reminds **Karen Yue** that the event's tradeshow component is just as critical to its success

This year marks the fifth instalment of Timbre Group's Beer Fest Asia. Has the event progressed as you had envisioned it would?

Beer Fest Asia has grown into an excellent platform for new beer entrants, often used to launch new beer companies and products. Some established companies, like Asia Pacific Breweries, use this event to test beers that could potentially be distributed in this region, should they be suitable for the Asian palate. Unlike HOFEX and Food&HotelAsia (held in Hong Kong and Singapore respectively and are Asia-Pacific's key food and hospitality tradeshow) which showcase many products, Beer Fest Asia focuses on the world of beers, from lagers to pilsners to ales. Beer Fest Asia also offers a look at commercial and craft beers.

The event this year had 40-45 exhibitors with 400 different beers from all over the world. We had 30,000 attendees over four days. Up to 15 per cent of that were from Asia. We want to grow this percentage. In the years ahead, we will invest more in regional marketing. In fact, the next phase for us is to increase Beer Fest Asia's presence and garner more consumer and trade attendees. Most of the trade in Singapore have attended Beer Fest Asia. It is now time for us to encourage more trade attendees from South-east Asia who are interested in marketing new beers to their market.

This is a natural progression for the appreciation of FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods). Consumers always start off with a mainstream brand before desiring something premium and unique. When that transition happens, there is a gap between demand and supply, and Beer Fest Asia helps to create that supply of more varieties of beer. South-east Asia is ready for the evolution of beer consumption.

I imagine the growing population of educated and well-

travelled Asians must play a part in this evolution.

Definitely. The increase in education, wealth and middle-class population spurs the demand for a greater variety of higher quality products. South-east Asia has the world's highest concentration of fastest-growing middle class. As the middle class emerges, trade buyers will have to supply better products. If they don't, they will lose out on tremendous opportunities.

Beer Fest Asia is an interesting concept. Besides the trade day, the event is a big party with great entertainment.

At a typical trade event, you come, you exhibit, you meet people and discuss business further at meetings later on. This formula works for some industries, like aerospace, where people don't just walk right up and say, "OK, I'll buy this jet". For FMCG companies, it is not enough to just engage the trade; they need to create a relationship with end-consumers because ultimately it is them who drive business.

Therefore we feel that Beer Fest Asia has to be a hybrid event. It has to be a trade event with a huge consumer angle so that exhibitors can build a relationship between their brands and consumers. The event also provides an annual platform that brings true beer lovers together with companies that want to test their new beers.

So the entertainment aspect plays an important role.

Absolutely. It has to be a fun event as beer is a fun product, and people need to experience it in a fun environment. Furthermore, the entertainment component of Beer Fest Asia presents a strong front for event marketing in some Asian countries where beer is a sensitive product. In our regional marketing, we would actually like to harness more of social media, but we realised that in some geography, beer is a word that is censored. You won't go

far with Google and Facebook ads. We have to respect the culture and religion of different countries.

How has the entertainment lineup on consumer days evolved through the years?

Live music goes hand in hand with beers, so we started Beer Fest Asia with a rock stage and later grew to include blues. Beyond live music, we think Asians need to laugh a bit more, so we added a stand-up comedy club three years ago. Besides entertaining people, such content also acts as a marketing tool for exhibitors. A lot of beer brands, such as Guinness and Magners Irish Cider, are co-marketed with comedy. For the past two to three years, our comedy central had Magners as the official beer.

Beer is an interesting product – it needs to be attached to emotions.

Do you think the consumer part of Beer Fest Asia has overshadowed the trade aspect? It is such a popular festival among beer lovers and party-goers.

No. Having one day just for the trade is sufficient for buyers to connect with exhibitors. Like most trade events, Beer Fest Asia acts as a platform for buyers and exhibitors to introduce themselves to one another, and further their discussions later on.

Although the event has only one trade day, we have not forgotten the importance of having a strong trade element, and are continuously investing in strengthening the event's value for exhibitors. We have added new components over the years, one of them being the Asia Beer Awards which sees an assembly of professional brew masters and established industry players judging participating beers. The awards provide an additional marketing tool for beer companies, as they can later promote their award-winning brews.

We also featured a whisky tent this year, as we believe that beer and whisky go hand in hand. We had three or four whisky companies showcasing their products in an air-conditioned tent with lounge seating and rock and jazz bands.

The consumer part of Beer Fest Asia does not overshadow the trade aspect because both are not mutually exclusive. Buyers are also consumers of beers and they must themselves enjoy what they eventually list in their restaurants, bars and hotels. We see them returning after the trade day as consumers. Remember – it is the consumer that drives FMCG demand, and it is in the interest of every beer company to make sure their beers and brands are exposed to the consumer. That creates the latent demand that encourages restaurants, bars and hotels to list their products.

Furthermore, the sale of beers during the consumer days allows exhibitors to recover some of their cost of participation. There is also nothing better than letting consumers experience the beer for themselves.

Beyond Beer Fest Asia and your hugely popular Timbre Rock & Roots, is Timbre Group looking to grow its events portfolio?

We are now at a phase where we are no longer looking to grow new events, but are instead focused on scaling our existing ones.

Our priority now is to take successful events and bring them to other cities in the world. Having said that, we will consider opportunities to develop new events.

In the case of Beer Fest Asia, we find that it is now well positioned for South-east Asia. Therefore, we would like to develop a beer festival for North Asia and make the event more accessible for trade buyers in that part of the region. We are looking at destinations like Shanghai and Hong Kong.

How close are you to materialising this North Asian version of the festival?

We have identified a couple of partners and are looking at some venues. The toughest part is in identifying the right location for the event.

Will the North Asian event be a replica of what you have in Singapore?

We will replicate the current model, as it is successful. Beer will still be the focus, and entertainment will complete the whole experience. It is best not to reinvent the wheel. Coming up with the event idea is often simple. It is the execution – ensuring that everything goes smoothly and that content is perfect and draws people – that is the most challenging.

One can always dream. If you had all the resources at your disposal now, what sort of event would you create, and why?

(Long pause, with a smile) Oh, I believe in the power of festivals. I love them, as they bring people together. If I had all the resources in the world, I would create a festival that combines the best music of all genres and the best food and beverage. Food and

drinks feed the body and music feeds the soul. Human beings are communal creatures, so the best event will have to be one that can pull everyone from different countries, cultures and backgrounds together.

Does such an event exist in Singapore today?

No. Not here, not in Asia. There are no events in this region that bring together different cultures through music, food and drinks. There are great dining events and music events here, but not a single one that offers music, food and beverage components at an equally high standard. You are more likely to find a wonderful music festival with so-so dining options, or a great dining event with average music and entertainment. Why? Because it takes a lot of resources to create something like that. It is also a very risky project because the event will need a lot of people (in attendance) to make economic sense.

Asia is a very fragmented region due to different cultures, religions and languages, so it takes a lot of effort to bring everyone to a single location. It requires immense resources and stamina to build such an event. In Singapore, where the cost of doing business is very high, events must draw huge (attendee) numbers and be very profitable from the get-go. Organisers do not have the time to grow the event slowly, or to experiment and tweak it along the way. Organisers must get the right mix and succeed right from the start. ■

“In Singapore, where the cost of doing business is very high, events must draw huge (attendee) numbers and be very profitable from the get-go. Organisers don’t have the time to grow the event slowly, to experiment and tweak it along the way.”

Appointments



Melissa Lawlor



Pieter van der Hoeven



Henry Banson



Franco Io



Philip Yu



Richard Schestak



Charles Marshall



Ng Sok Hia



Jamie Crisp



Jesselyn Koh

AUSTRALIA
ICMS Australasia has appointed **Melissa Lawlor** as event manager in its Sydney office. After working for a successful PCO, Lawlor moved to Ireland to join Amnesty International as a major giving & legacy officer before returning to Australia earlier this year.

CAMBODIA
Pieter van der Hoeven has joined **Raffles Hotel Le Royal, Phnom Penh** as general manager. He was last vice president, sales & marketing, Asia-Pacific with Outrigger and is armed with 23 years of experience with luxury hotel brands such as Outrigger, Six Senses, Peninsula and Hyatt.

CHINA
Henry Banson is now executive assistant manager for sales & marketing at **The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing**. Banson has

vast experience in the hospitality trade and had joined the Starwood family in April 2011.

Jan Blüttgen is now general manager of **Grand Millennium Beijing**. He brings more than 30 years of experience in the industry, having served in cities such as London, Hong Kong, Singapore and Jakarta. He was last general manager of Shanghai 88 Xintiandi.

The Garden Hotel, Guangzhou has named **Franco Io** as general manager. Io has more than 25 years of experience in the hospitality business under his belt. Before joining The Garden Hotel, he had held numerous senior management roles with Marriott International.

HONG KONG
Philip Yu has taken over as general manager of the **Grand Hyatt Hong Kong**. Yu first

joined Hyatt Hotels and Resorts in 2007 as resident manager, part of the opening team of the Hyatt on the Bund, Shanghai, and has assumed a number of other roles since. He was last general manager of Hyatt Regency Hangzhou.

INDIA
Vinod Ajmera has been promoted to managing director of **Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation**. He was executive director as well as additional director for tourism with the Rajasthan government.

INDONESIA
Richard Schestak has moved from Raffles Hotel Le Royal, Phnom Penh in Cambodia to oversee the opening of **Raffles Jakarta** in the position of general manager.

MALAYSIA
Charles Marshall is

now general manager of **Hilton Petaling Jaya**. Marshall has over 30 years of hospitality experience and was most recently general manager for Crowne Plaza in Kuala Lumpur.

SINGAPORE
David Donald is now general manager of **Parkroyal on Beach Road in Singapore**. He was previously general manager of the 196-room Parkroyal hotel in Parramatta in the Greater Sydney area.

Fairmont Singapore & Swissôtel The Stamford has promoted **Ng Sok Hia** to executive assistant manager, sales & marketing. She was previously director of sales & marketing for the hotel complex.

Sofitel So Singapore has named **Jessica Khoo** director of sales and business development. Khoo has held directorial positions in

sales and marketing for hospitality bigwigs such as The Ascott and The Millennium & Copthorne Group.

THAILAND
Jamie Crisp has been nominated director of sales for the Maldives, **Centara Hotels & Resorts**. Based at Centara's headquarters in Bangkok, Crisp will be responsible for the company's three resort properties in the Maldives. He was last director of sales for Evason & Six Senses Resorts in Hua Hin.

Starwood Hotels & Resorts has picked hotel veteran **Jesselyn Koh** as general manager of the hotel group's first Four Points by Sheraton property in Thailand, **Four Points by Sheraton Bangkok, Sukhumvit 15**. Koh was most recently general manager of Four Points by Sheraton Qingdao, China.

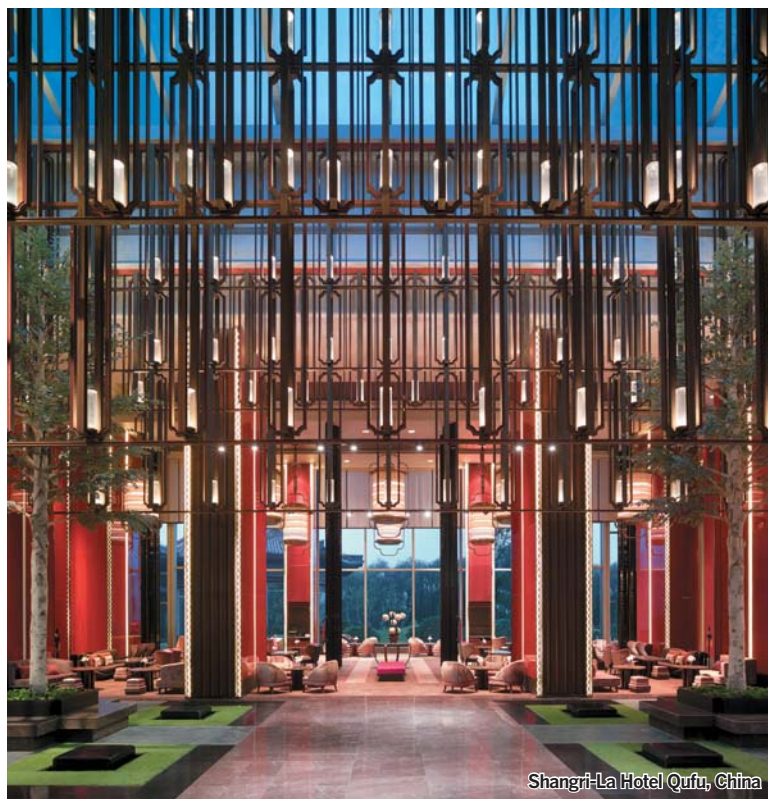
Hotel updates



Holiday Inn Express Singapore Orchard Road



Hotel J Negombo, Sri Lanka



Shangri-La Hotel Qufu, China

Holiday Inn Express Singapore Orchard Road

InterContinental Hotels Group has opened Holiday Inn Express Singapore Orchard Road, the first of two Holiday Inn Express hotels planned for the city-state. The 221-room hotel is located within walking distance of shopping malls and is easily accessible from Somerset and Orchard MRT stations. Free Wi-Fi is available and facilities include an express breakfast bar, a business centre and a laundry room.

www.ihg.com/holidayinnexpress

Grand Hyatt Shenyang, China

The first Hyatt-branded hotel in North-east China has opened. Located in a new 29-storey tower on Qingnian Avenue, Grand Hyatt Shenyang is situated near commercial areas and offers convenient access to Shenyang Taoxian International Airport. The hotel features 353 guestrooms, all equipped with free, high-speed broadband wireless Internet. There is also 3,430m² of meeting space that comes with the support of a Technology Concierge team on standby. Other amenities include the Qing Spa with six

private treatment suites, a gym and an indoor swimming pool.

www.shenyang.grand.hyatt.com

Best Western OJ Hotel Malang, Indonesia

Best Western International has soft launched its 129-room Best Western OJ Hotel Malang. The hotel is located in Malang city centre, 25 minutes from the airport, and has four room categories, five meeting rooms, an indoor swimming pool, restaurant, lounge and free Wi-Fi throughout its premises.

www.bestwestern.com

dusitD2 Fudu Binhu Hotel Changzhou, China

The new dusitD2 Fudu Binhu Hotel Changzhou, located within the Wujin Hi-Tech Industrial Zone, is 30 minutes from Changzhou Benniu Airport and railway station and 15 minutes from downtown Wujin. The hotel offers 79 guestrooms and suites, a 518m² pillarless ballroom, four multi-function rooms, a 100m² foyer, as well as three F&B outlets.

www.dusit.com/en/hotels.html

Swiss-Belhotel Balikpapan, Indonesia

Targeted at business travellers, the

four-star Swiss-Belhotel Balikpapan is conveniently situated a short distance from Indonesia's Seppingan International Airport and the city's commercial hubs. While it offers 230 guestrooms and 25 apartments, only 100 keys are available now, with the rest to be ready by end-2013. The property boasts the largest ballroom in East Kalimantan, one that is capable of accommodating up to 2,000 pax for a standing buffet. Other facilities include a gym, sea-facing pool and spa.

www.swiss-belhotel.com/Balikpapan

OZO Wesley Hong Kong

The 251-key hotel on Hennessy Road, a prime business and commercial district on Hong Kong Island, is built upon a concept of less frills and more control for guests. Guestrooms are fitted with the latest amenities, including IPTV, a multimedia connectivity panel and free Wi-Fi Internet access. For event planners, the hotel offers Talk, a multi-function space that can take a 12-pax boardroom meeting or 60-pax cocktail party. Other facilities include a grab-and-go dining outlet, O2Go, and fitness centre Tone.

www.ozohotels.com/Wesley-Hongkong

Hotel J Negombo, Sri Lanka

Located in the Western seaside town of Negombo, the new Hotel J Negombo features 34 spacious guestrooms and a suite, all designed to offer comfortable accommodation at affordable rates. All guestrooms are air-conditioned and come with free Wi-Fi Internet access and an attached bathroom with rain shower, among other amenities. Facilities include a restaurant, bar and beach-front pool. An in-house naturalist conducts nature tours for guests.

www.hotelj.lk

Shangri-La Hotel, Qufu, China

The 211-room Shangri-La Hotel, Qufu has opened in Shandong Province, within walking distance of three UNESCO World Heritage Cultural sites – the Temple of Confucius, the Mansion of Confucius and the Cemetery of Confucius. The hotel offers free Wi-Fi, a 1,600m² pillarless grand ballroom with an outdoor terrace connected to the ballroom foyer, six function rooms and a VIP room.

www.shangri-la.com/qufu

Packages



↓ MALAYSIA

InterContinental Kuala Lumpur is offering customisable meeting packages that combine accommodation with event facilities and exploratory activities within and around the Malaysian capital.

Priced from RM200++ (US\$63++) per person per day for a half-day meeting including lunch, the *InterContinental Commerce & Culture* package features activities such as birdwatching in Kuala Selangor Nature Park and beginners' rock climbing in Batu Caves.

Full information on available activities can be obtained from the concierge.

Visit www.intercontinental-kl.com.my

■ CHINA

Pudong Shangri-La, East Shanghai

has rolled out a board meeting package that features three exclusive and luxurious venues, valid from now until February 28, 2014.

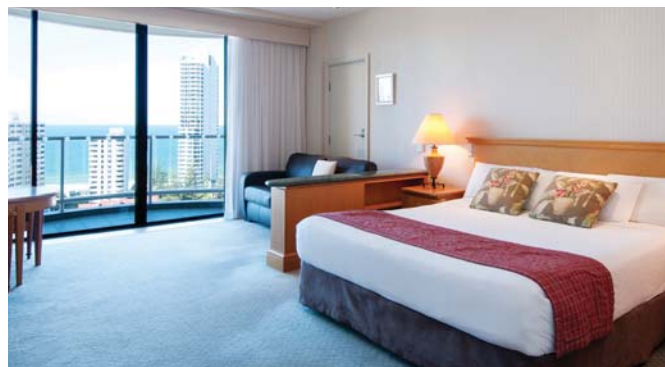
Event planners who book at least 10 rooms in the River Wing will have access to either the Chairman's Room or the President's Room. Room rates for a night's stay in the River Wing start from RMB1,688 (US\$276) per person.

Alternatively, a booking of at least 10 rooms in the Grand Tower will entitle the event planner to a day's use of the Summit Room. Room rates go from RMB1,988 per person.

The package also includes use of the Chairman's Room, the President's Room or the Summit Room from 08.00 to 17.00, morning and afternoon coffee breaks with four snacks per break, a reception table with flower arrangement, buffet lunch at Yi Café or a Western set lunch in the function room, standard meeting stationery, use of built-in audiovisual equipment and Wi-Fi Internet access.

Rates are subject to a 15 per cent service charge.

Visit www.shangri-la.com



■ AUSTRALIA

Crowne Plaza Surfers Paradise

is throwing in several perks for events or dinner functions held on its premises in September and November. Gifts include an upgraded beverage package featuring Premium Wine of the Season, chair covers with coloured sashes, coloured overlay on each table, and a choice of four centrepieces.

Terms and conditions apply. Valid for new bookings only, minimum numbers apply.

Email meetings@crowneplazasurfersparadise.com.au

■ INDONESIA

RIMBA Jimbaran Bali

is presenting an introductory offer ahead of its opening this month. Guests who book before December 22 this year for stays by March 31, 2014 can enjoy daily breakfast for two, complimentary Wi-Fi and priority access to Rock Bar. A two-night stay will entitle guests to a 50-minute Balinese massage for two per room per stay, while a three-night stay will earn guests US\$50 in resort credit.

Room rates start from US\$190++ per room per night. A 10 per cent discount applies for bookings made before March 2014.

Terms and conditions apply.

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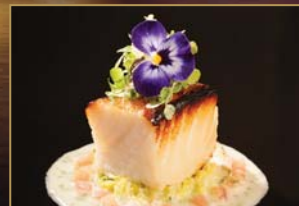
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